



Restraining Atrocity: The Conduct of King Philip's War

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OVER the centuries, warfare among European colonists and Native Americans has earned a reputation for excessive brutality. King Philip's War, 1675–76, with its horrors committed on both sides, was ultimately the war to end all wars in New England's battle for supremacy. For many historians an earlier conflict, the Pequot War of 1637, exemplifies the ruthlessness and lack of respect for their opponents that the Puritans would again reveal in King Philip's War. Descriptions of the carnage resulting from the burning of the Pequot fort, such as this from William Bradford, have been taken as evidence:

It was a fearful sight to see them [Pequots] thus frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose their enemies in their hands and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enemy.¹

Violating the sensibilities of twentieth-century American historians, such incidents from the seventeenth century have prompted comparisons with various acts of genocide and atrocity committed in the present era.² Such responses echo those of

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¹William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 296.

²See David Stannard, *American Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), and Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). Referring specifically to New England, Neal Salis-

the Indians who witnessed the scene, Puritan allies who recoiled in shock and horror at the slaughter.³

Yet "atrocities" and "slaughter," despite their implications of extremism, are relative terms. As Barbara Donagan, a historian of the English Civil War, has demonstrated, seventeenth-century English men and women viewed European wartime behavior in comparative terms, an attitude that also prevailed in the North American colonies.⁴ Civil wars, conflicts between sovereign nations, and religious wars each involved a unique set of behavioral norms, although differentiating among the types of clashes was often a subtle and challenging task. Formal political identities, cultural affinities, utilitarian motives, interpretations of the rules of war, and the actions of one's opponent all influenced the course of conduct. The Pequot War, in other words, was not King Philip's. No one war was like another, but rules were constantly brought to bear to regulate behavior. Therefore, no matter what values we might ultimately want to attach to King Philip's War, we cannot understand it in its proper historic context unless we view it against the background of contemporaneous conflicts, in both America and abroad, involving English Puritans.



Philip Vincent, an Englishman who portrayed the events at Fort Mystic for a London audience the year after they occurred, considered them rather benign in light of the atrocities Christians had committed against one another in the Thirty Years

bury was more oblique in drawing parallels between the Nazis and the Puritans when he entitled the last chapter of his dissertation "The Final Solution" ("Conquest of the Savage" [Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1973]). For essays explicitly debating whether or not the Pequot massacre constituted genocide, see Steven T. Katz, "The Pequot War Reconsidered," *New England Quarterly* 64 (June 1991): 206-24; Michael Freeman, "Puritans and Pequots: The Question of Genocide," *New England Quarterly* 68 (June 1995): 278-93; and Katz's reply in December 1995, pp. 641-59.

³Captain John Underhill reported that the Narragansett believed that English-style warfare was "too furious and slays too many men" (*History of the Pequot War*, ed. Charles Orr [Cleveland, 1897], p. 84).

⁴Barbara Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War," *American Historical Review* 99 (October 1994): 1137-66.

War (1618–48). In 1638, the same year his account of Fort Mystic appeared, Vincent published *Lamentations of Germany*. So far “beyond all precedent of former ages” had Germany regressed in prosecuting its war that Vincent felt compelled to devote his entire work to detailing its horrors—complete with graphic illustrations of torture, rape, and famine—so that civilized peoples might fully understand the consequences of violating the rules of war. To Vincent, those rules had been admirably observed in the Pequot conflict. Unlike the combatants in Germany, who killed all of their captives, Christian or not, the Puritans allowed most of their prisoners to live. Vincent also justified the offensive by highlighting its utilitarian benefits. New England Puritans were “assured of their peace by killing the Barbarians. . . . For having once terrified them, by severe execution of just revenge, they shall never heare of more harme from them.” Not only had the war proven effective against the Pequots, but it had also sent a message to the Mohawks, a group Vincent considered “cruell bloodie Caniballs.”⁵

Although Vincent’s pejorative descriptions of Indians would today brand him a racist, he was actually quite cognizant of their humanity as of “the same constitution, & the sons of Adam, and that we had the same Maker, the same matter, the same mould. Only Art and Grace have given us that perfection, which yet they want, but may perhaps be as capable thereof as we.”⁶ Rather, it was precisely because they could be viewed as equals, in a sense—equals simply in need of correction and “civilization”—that the Indians could be held to the rules of war.

Under conventions of international law well known and understood by Englishmen, especially professional soldiers like

⁵Philip Vincent, *The Lamentations of Germany* (London, 1638), pp. 22, 16, and [Philip Vincent], *A True Relation of the Late Battell Fought in New England, between the English and the Pequot Salvages* (London, 1638), pp. 20, 16. I follow the authority of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which states that the two works “bear traces of being by the same author” (London 1899 edition, s.v. Vincent, Philip).

⁶Vincent, *True Relation*, p. 5. Vincent’s views accord with those Alden T. Vaughan attributes to the English as a whole during this period in “From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian,” *American Historical Review* 87 (October 1982): 917–53.

Puritan military leader John Mason, the Puritans felt fully justified in their actions against the Pequots, for a town or fort refusing to surrender required little, if any, protection.⁷ In the words of historian Maurice Keen, "In a city taken by storm almost any license was condoned by the law. Only churches and churchmen were technically secure, but even they were not often spared. Women could be raped, and men killed out of hand."⁸ Thus, setting fire to a village and granting quarter to many of the captives, as the Puritans did, was well within the bounds of law and supported by English conceptions of religion and morality, even had the opponents been Christian.

Instead of dismissing the Indians as racially or culturally inferior, Puritans debated the extent to which the "laws of nations" applied to them.⁹ Forty years after the Pequot conflict, William Hubbard wrote in his history of King Philip's War that the 1637 attack on the Pequot was justified because they had acted "contrary to the Laws of Nature and Nations."¹⁰ Such language differs from that used during King Philip's War, which refers to the hostilities as a rebellion or insurrection.¹¹ In 1637 the Puritans considered the Pequot outside their polity. Before the conflict, English patents and charters never granted Puritans formal title to Indian lands; not until they understood themselves as having conquered a sovereign nation in a just war did the Puritans believe they had earned that right.

⁷Notions of right and wrong in war permeated throughout English culture: see Barbara Donagan, "Haleon Days and the Literature of War: England's Military Education before 1642," *Past and Present* 147 (May 1995): 65-100; and Theodor Meron, *Henry's Wars and Shakespeare's Laws: Perspectives on the Law of War in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁸M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1965), p. 121; and Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason," p. 1144.

⁹Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), pp. 184-85.

¹⁰William Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England, Being a Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (1677), reprinted in *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, ed. Samuel Drake, 2 vols. (1865; reissued in facsimile, Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1990), 2:32.

¹¹For just one example of Philip as a traitor or rebel, see William Harris, *A Rhode Islander Reports on King Philip's War: The Second William Harris Letter of August, 1676*, ed. Douglas E. Leach (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1963), p. 20.

King Philip's War differed from the Pequot War because by 1675 the Puritans no longer understood the Indians within New England to be sovereign nations. Since a declared representative of most, if not all, Indian groups had by that date sworn loyalty—at least formally—to a colony, the Puritans saw groups of Indians not as foreign nations but as inhabitants and subjects of colonial polities. Thus the widely recognized rules of war governing conduct between sovereign nations no longer applied; rather, now considered separatist or revolutionary forces, Indian groups could be subjected to civil laws.¹² According to regulations applicable in such cases, separatists who killed colonial soldiers or civilians were guilty of treason and/or murder; they now lacked the criminal immunity enjoyed by a soldier in a foreign war. The penalty for both treason and murder was death, and for treason, death by quartering and beheading.¹³ Massachusetts law prescribed that

If any man CONSPIRE and ATTEMPT any INVASION, INSURRECTION or publick REBELLION against our Common-wealth; or shall endeavour to surprize any Town or Towns, Fort or Forts therein; or shall Treacherously and perfideously attempt the Alteration and Subversion of our frame Polity or Government fundamentally, he shall be put to death.¹⁴

¹²Throughout the essay I use the terms "colonials" or "colonialists" to refer to the groups—both Puritan and Indian—that fought to put down the rebellion, and I refer to the Indians allied with Philip as "political separatists," "separatists," or "revolutionaries." I am departing from the tradition of simply labeling the opposing forces as the "English" (or "Puritans") and the "Indians" because the false dichotomy it imposes perpetuates a Puritan, anglocentric view of an "Indian war" or a "war against the Indians" and neglects certain important facts, e.g., that on a per capita basis, more Indian than Puritan soldiers fought to put down the rebellion. I have also avoided adjectives such as "anglophile" to describe those Indians, because the term suggests that they were fighting to advance English interests more so than their own. By calling groups such as the Mohegan "colonialists," I do not intend to imply that they favored English expansionism and extraction of raw materials from the "periphery" to the "core" along the lines implied by a world systems model. Instead, these groups simply saw enough political advantages in siding with the colonies that they opted to continue their formal submission to them.

¹³Edward Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England. Concerning High Treason, and other Pleas of the Crown, and Criminal Causes*, 5th ed. (London, 1671), p. 211.

¹⁴*The General Laws and Liberties of the Massachusetts Colony* (Cambridge, 1672), p. 15.

Yet the colonialists did not uniformly seek the most severe punishment for all separatists. As Barbara Donagan has demonstrated, even in the English Civil War of the 1640s, combatants on both sides refrained from holding their opponents liable for civil offenses and usually afforded them the treatment reserved for prisoners of war under the jurisdiction of military rule. It was only in the later years of the English Civil War, once the outcome could be reasonably predicted, that the dominant force began to exert a kind of victor's justice on its enemy by holding some of the most prominent combatants liable for treason.¹⁵

Conduct during King Philip's War followed a similar pattern. New English forces tended to exact stricter punishments as time progressed and the confidence of victory grew stronger.¹⁶ Harsher penalties were also tied to the duration of the conflict, which was quickly emptying New England coffers. Selling surrendered Indians as slaves, a practice the Puritans felt they could justify through Scripture and international law, provided much needed revenue. As the war came to a close and the number of surrendered and captured Indians increased, executions and enslavement were also more noticeable. Separating out and weighing these three burdens of causation is probably impossible, given the difficulty of determining exactly how combatants behaved in the field; nevertheless, it does seem clear that a stricter application of legal penalties corresponded with a strong profit incentive and a large population of uprooted Indians who had to be dealt with in some reasonable fashion.

Separatist Indians fell into one of several categories: separatist leaders, or "Grand Contrivers," such as prominent sachems, whom the Puritans executed; more ordinary separatists who killed colonials in an "unsoldierly fashion" and faced trial for murder and, if convicted, execution; separatists who

¹⁵Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason," pp. 1141, 1155-56.

¹⁶See Harold E. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 22, and Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 224, both of whom recognize this increased harshness over time.

surrendered or were captured, sold into slavery, or held as indentured servants; and a small number of nominal separatists who, having demonstrated a lack of conviction toward their cause and volunteering to assist the colonials militarily, received immunity on their lands not previously confiscated by colonial soldiers. In practice, the categories were not rigid, but they do help us understand colonialist efforts to differentiate among separatist Indians and to assess their degree of guilt. Examples will illustrate the point.

On 12 March 1676, a party of separatist Indians attacked the garrison of William Clark, several miles south of Plymouth, and killed eleven people. Puritans considered the strike an act of senseless cruelty toward defenseless noncombatants. Four months later, colonial forces presented to the Plymouth General Court a group of surrendered Indians, among whom were three men accused of instigating the attack on Clark's garrison and committing the "bloody murder of Mistris Sarah Clarke." Their confessions and the accusation of an "Indian squa" prompted the Court to condemn the three to death, the rationale being that

forasmuch as the councell had before this engaged to seuerall Indians, desirous to come in and tender themselues to mercye, that they should find fauor in soe doeing, it was fully made knowne to such Indians as were then pSENT that the said engagement was to be vnderstood with exception against such as by murder as abouesaid had soe acted, and not against such as killed his enimie in the feild in a souldier like way.¹⁷

These Indians, not operating within the bounds of military conduct as traditionally defined, were thus held accountable in a civil court for having committed a crime against humanity. Having demonstrated no restraint and no mercy, they deserved none. The immunities reserved for prisoners of war did not apply to these three, who were scrupulously distinguished from the others who had surrendered.

Just nine days earlier, the Plymouth Court had demonstrated

¹⁷Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, 12 vols. (Boston, 1855-61), 5:205.

its mercy toward a group of Saconets (in eastern Plymouth), under the (female) sachem Awashunkes. Although they had admitted fleeing from the English and acknowledged that they may have burned some English houses at the outbreak of the war, they also claimed that they "had not bin actiue in fighting with the English." With the Plymouth Court demanding evidence of their loyalty, the men in the band offered to fight alongside English colonialists as long as the English allowed the women and children to live securely on their lands at Saconet.¹⁸ Benjamin Church, who had a long history of contact with Awashunkes, vouched that the Saconets were not resolute in their attachment to Philip and the separatists, and it is likely that his intercession tempered the actions of the Plymouth Court.¹⁹

While mercy could be accorded lackluster separatists, most leaders were fully prosecuted. During a chase, an Indian fighting with Church shot and killed Philip. "Thus did Divine Vengeance retaliate upon this notorious Traitor, that had against his League and Covenant risen up against the Government of Plimouth, to raise up against him one of his own People, or one that was in League with him, as he was with the English," Hubbard editorialized.²⁰ Not content that Philip was simply dead, Church exacted the full measure of English law when he had the traitorous corpse beheaded and quartered. In a final act of vengeance that went beyond law, Church ordered that "forasmuch as [Philip] had caused many an Englishman's body to lie unburied and rot above ground, that not one of his bones should be buried."²¹

¹⁸*Plymouth Records*, 5:201-3, quotation p. 202.

¹⁹Benjamin Church, *Diary of King Philip's War, 1675-76* (Chester, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1975), pp. 70-72, 115-17. See also Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England*, 1:271. For more on Awashunkes and her loyalties, see Ann Marie Plane, "Putting a Face on Colonization: Factionalism and Gender Politics in the Life History of Awashunkes, the 'Squaw Sachem' of Saconet," in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1636-1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp. 140-65. The Puritans may have allowed Awashunkes to live because she was a woman, but it is impossible to know, for she is the only example of a leading, female, separatist sachem captured alive.

²⁰Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England*, 1:272.

²¹Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, p. 156.

The separatist Indian leader Annawon was among those captured by Church's colonialist forces. With specific orders in his commission restricting his treatment of captives, Church relayed to them verbatim that he could "treaty and composition to receive to mercy, if [he] see reason (provided they be not Murderous Rogues, or such as have been principal Actors in those Villanies)." He was generous with his mercy insofar as he was able. He informed the captives that "their lives should all be spared, excepting Captain Annawon's and it was not in his power to promise him his life, but he must carry him to his masters at Plymouth, and he would entreat them for his life."²² The leaders at Plymouth were not moved; Annawon was beheaded.

The magistrates of Massachusetts held that colony's captives to even harsher standards. When called to decide the fate of some captured Indian separatists in September 1676, the Court decided that "such of them as shall appeare to have imbrued their hands in English blood should suffer death here, and not be transported into forreigne parts."²³ Such a judgment followed the dictates of a civil rather than a military jurisdiction, as captives increasingly faced charges of murder and treason rather than receiving the immunities accorded a soldier who killed during wartime. The record is silent about Massachusetts' shift in policy, but we can theorize that colonialists had a sense of certain victory in September that, Philip now dead, they had lacked in July. With the death of Philip, whose symbolic importance was perhaps as significant as his strategic skills, Puritan settlers undoubtedly felt they had less to fear by treating the captives harshly. A kind of vengeance that was not permissible in a military setting could find its place in a civil one.

Rhode Island, which had remained neutral in the war, was inundated with Indian refugees who had fled the United Colonies in search of leniency. As in the other colonies, the Rhode Island

²²Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, pp. 128, 169.

²³Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols. (Boston, 1853-54), 5:115.

Court attempted to determine an Indian's degree of guilt before deciding his fate. In general, the Court forced refugee Indians into a period of indentured servitude, limited by a vote of 7 August 1676 to a term not to exceed nine years, except for those "notorious persons duly detected or guilty, this act shall not excuse such." Indians found guilty of joining the separatists were ultimately disappointed in their expectations of laxer treatment, however, for they faced punishments similar to those their fellows suffered in other colonies. At Newport, a court convicted and executed four Indians on 23 August 1676.²⁴

The records of the town of Providence reveal much more information about Rhode Island's efforts to differentiate among Indians. Upon apprehending the Indian Chuff in August 1676, the English of Providence "cried out for Justice against him threatening themselves to kill him if the Authorities did not." Then "the Councell of War gave sentence & he was shot to Death, to the great satisfaction of the Towne universally." Officially, the council passed the sentence of death because, as the town records note, Chuff had supposedly "bene a Ring leader all the War to most of th[e] Mischiefs to our Howses & Cattell, & what English he could."²⁵ Such an episode smacks of vigilante justice, and there may be a kernel of truth to that characterization, yet other events of the very same week tend to complicate an easy analysis.

Four days after Providence inhabitants called for Chuff's death, a town committee "Voted that all the Indians above 12 years of age now in Towne or that shall come in shall not be suffured in but sent out of the Towne untill the Towne take further order." The next day the same committee decided that "Kewashinit & his wife & 3 children & the old man Manawant Titus his Fath[er] in Law & the old Crooked Woman & the old Woman Peter the Smiths mother shall stay in the Towne about Sheapards well."²⁶ The obscurities of the records

²⁴John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation, in New England*, 10 vols. (Providence, 1856-65), 2:549, 586.

²⁵Horatio Rogers, George M. Carpenter, Edward Field, eds., *The Early Records of the Town of Providence*, vol. 8 (Providence, 1895), p. 13.

²⁶*Providence Records*, pp. 13-14.

are significant: they offer only fleeting glimpses of the Indians who placed themselves at the mercy of the English at the close of the war; even fewer of the relationship between Indians and English before or during the war; and no clear explanation of what the English thought individual Indians did during the war. Despite all of these shortcomings, the English impulse to reserve particular fates for different shades of guilt rather than holding all Indians liable for murder or treason is striking. Clearly the English felt a moral obligation to avoid a wholesale slaughter or enslavement of Indian peoples.

The colonialists living within Connecticut, including the Pequot and Mohegan, had fewer separatist and refugee Indians to deal with than did the other colonies, yet their actions reveal similar patterns of categorization. "Respecting the Indians which have or shall before January next surrender themselves to mercy of this Government," the Connecticut General Court ordered on 23 October 1676:

1. That such of them as cannot be proved murderers shall have their lives and shall not be sould out of the Country for slaves.
2. They shall be well used in service with the English where the Councill shall dispose of them.
3. After tenn yeares service, all growne persons (viz. when sixteen yeares old) shall, upon certificate from their masters of their good service in their tenn yeares service, after service have their liberty to become sojourners or to dwell in our respective townes to worke for themselves, they observing the English fashion and lawes, which shall be as well observed to them as from them.²⁷

Among those separatist Indians who surrendered to English officials at Connecticut, the colony distributed many to the colonialist Indians who helped put down the rebellion, most often Uncas and the Mohegan. Those captured or surrendered Indians who had, from the colonialists' perspective, fought directly against them, faced execution at the hands of the English or their Indian allies.²⁸ Yet not all Indians who chose to ally them-

²⁷J. Hammond Trumbull and Charles J. Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 vols. (Hartford, 1852), 2:297-98.

²⁸*Connecticut Records*, 2:474-75, 479-80.

selves with the separatists faced the death penalty, for many less actively hostile Indians surrendered under offers of amnesty and received it in the form of indentured servitude.



All of the Puritan colonies in King Philip's War decided the fates of separatists by first trying to measure their degree of guilt and then doling out punishment according to the dictates of law and morality. To a large extent the norms governing conduct in war stemmed from Puritan perceptions of the laws of nature, including religion, internationally recognized professional conventions for soldiers, and army regulations. When English men—a significant number of whom had had experience in English military establishments and/or had served in the English Civil War—and women transplanted to New England, they brought these conventions with them.²⁹

Of course, laws and morality are rarely, if ever, immutable principles, and prevailing conditions are seldom disregarded. The Puritans, no one will be surprised to learn, had practical concerns that influenced their interpretation of events and the character of their justice. Because morality and utility differed across time and space in the conduct and aftermath of King Philip's War, the degree to which the colonialists followed formally prescribed codes varied from case to case. Yet this variation followed patterns.

Social position was one of many determinants influencing conduct. Military leaders with formal training and government officials tended to show restraint in their punishment of separatists and to attempt to differentiate among them according to degrees of guilt. English colonialists of the "lower sort," on the other hand—Puritan volunteers, civilians, and those English combatants without formal military training—tended to execute Indians simply for who they were. They despised all Indi-

²⁹For the connections between those who fought in the English Civil War and the membership of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston, see Louise A. Breen, "Religious Radicalism in the Puritan Officer Corps: Heterodoxy, the Artillery Company, and Cultural Integration in Seventeenth-Century Boston," *New England Quarterly* 68 (March 1995): 3, 19, and *passim*.

ans, separatist or not, and spent little time trying to differentiate among them. Magistrates and military officials disapproved of such unreflective behavior, but civilians anxious for revenge applauded it.

Two colonialist military leaders with different backgrounds, Daniel Gookin and Samuel Moseley, illustrate these opposing attitudes. Gookin, who had a military background in England and, after settling in Massachusetts, was voted captain of the Cambridge military company in 1648, immediately championed the use of Christian Indians in colonialist forces.³⁰ Horrified with how some English had treated New England's Christian Indians during the war, Gookin issued *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England* (1677). He portrayed the praying Indians as loyal subjects and victims of Puritan prejudice. After separatists burned Lancaster in February 1677, Gookin castigated those who rushed to implicate some praying Indians in the attack: "Some men were so violent that they would have had these Indians put to death by martial law, and not tried by a jury, though they were subjects under the English protection, and not in hostility with us." He declared that he could not "join with the multitude, that would cast them [praying Indians] all into the same lump with the profane and brutish heathen, who are as great enemies to our Christian Indians as they are to the English." By "multitude," Gookin referred not to colonial magistrates, who "generally were very slow to distrust those poor Christians," but to the "common people," the "disorderly rout in Boston," and "women."³¹

In addition to the "common people," Gookin held one military leader particularly in contempt for his cruelty toward Indians—Samuel Moseley. Unique among English colonialist military leaders, Moseley, in the words of George Madison Bodge, "held no military office, and not even his success and popular-

³⁰*Dictionary of National Biography*, London 1890 edition, pp. 152–54, s.v., Gookin, Daniel. For more on Gookin, see Frederick William Gookin's filiopietistic *Daniel Gookin, 1612–1687: Assistant and Major General of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, His Life and Letters and Some Account of His Ancestry* (Chicago: privately printed, 1912).

³¹Daniel Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England, in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677* (1677; reprinted, New York: Arno Press, 1972), pp. 459, 462, 472, 449, 466, 503.

ity, and close family relation to Gov. Leverett, could prevail to break the strict rule of official succession in the colonial militia." That the militia was a closed society may have had less to do with Moseley's inability to gain a formal position, however, than his predilection to act beyond his orders. A Jamaican privateer, Moseley led a company of volunteers who, for the most part, had not been enrolled in town militias because they were former pirates, servants, and apprentices.³² The Massachusetts General Court, and even Moseley himself, recognized that his volunteers often disregarded rules of proper conduct and were responsible for some of the war's most notable atrocities.³³ On 30 August 1675, Moseley's forces marched toward a village of nonseparatist Indians near what is now Concord, New Hampshire. Finding it abandoned, they burned the village, even though instructed not to. A week later, Massachusetts officials ordered Lieutenant Thomas Henchman to send a contingent of colonialist Indians to offer reparations.³⁴ In the next month, Moseley found himself apologizing to Governor Leverett for encouraging other questionable executions in the field. He wrote

I confes, yt I have written some things to that purpose as Concerning the hangeing of those Indians of Malbery, I desire to be Excuse of my tongue or pen has out run my witt being in a passion and seeing what mischief had beene done by the Indians which I have beene eye witness to, would make a wiser person than I am, willing to have revenge of aney of them, but notwithstanding what I have written there as to that purpose it is fare from my heart to Doe, for I am willing to undertake any commands Imposed upon me to serve the country.³⁵

³²George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, 3d ed. (Boston, 1906), pp. 62–63. Examining Boston tax lists for 1674, Bodge found that a large number of Moseley's soldiers were apprentices or servants. Hubbard labeled Moseley's soldiers "privateers" (*The Present State of New-England*, 1:70).

³³Perhaps the most striking example of Moseley's war crimes can be found in a letter he wrote on 16 October 1675. After describing the interrogation of a captured Indian woman near Hatfield, Massachusetts, Moseley adds: "This aforesaid Indian was ordered to be torn to peeces by Doggs and she was soe dealt with all" (Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, p. 69). I have not been able to find any kind of reaction to this comment from Massachusetts officials.

³⁴Cookin, *Doings and Sufferings*, p. 462, and Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, p. 67.

³⁵Quoted by Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, p. 68.

Moseley's atrocities not only infuriated friends of the praying Indians, like Gookin; they also created problems for colonial officials who had to make amends for his actions.

The correspondence of John Pynchon also speaks to the common hysteria for revenge that could frustrate a pragmatic approach to avoiding skirmishes with the separatists. Pynchon, like Gookin, emphasized the need to court potential Indian allies. Yet in the town of Springfield, of which Pynchon was the most powerful citizen, large numbers of English distrusted the very Indians Pynchon most valued.³⁶ Championing the rights of a Northampton Indian accused on weak evidence of joining the separatists, Pynchon wrote Connecticut Governor John Winthrop, Jr., of his dismay that his point of view was universally disdained.

Sir, people cry out that he is not dispatched; I wonder at such a spirit in people for our most faithful Indians tell me they cannot think but that he was coming in from his hunting wigwam to the English out of dislike of the enemy, he having a father, mother, wife, and children at Northampton. . . . I am said to be overfavorable.³⁷

Apparently many of Springfield's English inhabitants were prepared to disregard the protections afforded a prisoner of war and even the due process reserved for a civilian traitor. The discrepancy between their point of view and Pynchon's demonstrates that social position affected one's willingness to impose customary restraints on violence.

Whatever their personal regard for particular Indians or groups of Indians, both Gookin and Pynchon offered utilitarian arguments for restraining violence in an era of war. They were not alone. Utilitarian concerns emerged again and again, whether explicitly or implicitly, as a rationale for regulating behavior.

³⁶An issue needing further investigation is the extent to which ordinary English persons felt insulted because Indians worked at the same jobs as they did or held a disproportionate share of land. Daniel Gookin noted that a large number of Indians, especially Christian ones, worked for the English (*Doings and Sufferings*, pp. 434-35).

³⁷John Pynchon to John Winthrop, Jr., 19 August 1675, *Letters of John Pynchon, 1654-1700*, vol. 1 of *The Pynchon Papers*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1982), p. 146.

For the first half of the war, colonial forces suffered repeated setbacks. Because they feared defeat or future capture, colonialists treated their captives in such a manner as to discourage reprisals and encourage leniency should they themselves fall into the hands of their enemy. Checks on abuse also created conditions favorable for surrender, which in turn helped forestall the war's prolongation or escalation. Captain Benjamin Church of Plymouth articulated the principle when he reflected upon the sale of 160 separatist Indians in the fall of 1675. They had surrendered with the promise of life and liberty, Church complained, and "had their [the captors'] promises to the Indians been kept, and the Indians fairly treated, 'tis probable that most, if not all the Indians in those parts, had soon followed the example of those that had now surrendered themselves, which would have been a good step towards finishing the war."³⁸ A more pragmatic approach was to grant Indian separatists the status of legitimate prisoners of war.

Curtailing violence would also help limit the geographical scope of the war, Puritans believed. Several contemporary accounts attributed the spread of the conflict to the improper deeds of certain English settlers. The most vocal of those critics was the Ipswich minister William Hubbard, who explained in his *The Present State of New England* (1677) that Indians near Chelmsford, on the Merrimack River, "had been provoked by the rash, unadvised, cruel Act of some of the English." Later in the same work, he noted that the wife of Squando, a separatist Indian leader, "was abused by a rude and indiscreet Act of some English Seamen" which resulted in her child drowning. The incident spurred Squando to "ever since set himself to do all the Mischief he can to the English in those Parts."³⁹ Such outbreaks of excessive, random violence were thankfully rare, Hubbard acknowledged; elsewhere colonialist forces generally proceeded according to legitimate rules of war.

³⁸Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, p. 92.

³⁹Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England*, 1:220, 2:135. Hubbard was just one of many Puritans who blamed the war to the east on English provocations. For another, see Increase Mather, *The History of King Philip's War* (1677; reprinted, Bowie, Md.: Heritage, 1900), p. 141.

Separatists, too, the colonialists thought, had tried to limit atrocities, and so opponents had a sense of sharing mutually reinforcing codes of conduct. Atrocities, or at least alleged atrocities, in the Irish Rebellion of 1641 and in the Thirty Years War provided a background against which Puritans judged Indian actions as relatively benign. Like any group engaged in war, the Puritans constructed a demonized enemy "other." Yet this "other" did not exist simply as a binary opposite of the self; rather, the Puritans recognized degrees of otherness. And separatist Indian conduct came much closer to Puritan norms than did that of Irish rebels in 1641.

Thirty-four years before King Philip's War, English presses had spewed forth graphic descriptions of atrocities Irish Catholics had allegedly committed against English Protestants. Acting much like the Germans in Philip Vincent's *Lamentations of Germany*, the Irish had supposedly subjected combatants and noncombatants alike to horrifying tortures, the most despicable of which, according to the pamphleteers, was the raping of women. Undoubtedly, the English press exaggerated, even fabricated, a large number of the atrocities it reported; nonetheless, the English perception that the Irish routinely raped Protestant women—that they were thus routinely committing war crimes—was very real. Many English responded by calling for sharp reprisals.⁴⁰ In 1644, Parliament passed an ordinance condemning to death Irish rebels who had been captured in England.⁴¹ Thereafter it ceased differentiating shades of guilt

⁴⁰Keith J. Lindley, "The Impact of the 1641 Rebellion upon England and Wales, 1641–45," *Irish Historical Studies* 18 (September 1972): 144–46. Lindley provides quantitative data on the proportion of references to Ireland in Thomason's collection of tracts. For a sampling of the tracts highlighting atrocities in general and rapes in particular, see August, *A Treacherous Plot of a Confederacie in Ireland* . . . (London, 1641); anon., *The Happiest News from Ireland that Ever Came to England since the First Rebellion* . . . (London, 1641); anon., *The Last News from Ireland Being a Relation of the Hostile and bloody proceedings of the Rebellious Papists there, at this present* . . . (London, 1641); anon., *Late and Lamentable News from Ireland, Wherein are truly related, the Rebellious, and cruell proceedings of the Papists there* . . . (London, 1641); anon., *The Rebels of Irelands Wicked Conspiracie* . . . (London, 1641); anon., *Worse and Worse News from Ireland* . . . (London, 1641); and Witcome, *The Rebels Turkish Tyranny* . . . (London, 1641).

⁴¹Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason," p. 1148, and Lindley, "The Impact of the 1641 Rebellion," p. 175.

among those all now considered savage or inhumane. Throughout King Philip's War, the Puritans would never reach that point with the Indians.

Even though Puritan writers frequently described the separatists as "barbarous" or "savage," many also acknowledged that the Indians generally accorded respect to their captives. As William Hubbard noted in 1677, "The Indians how barbarous soever in their own Nature, yet civilly intreated their Prisoners." After the raid on Lancaster, Massachusetts, for example, Hubbard asserted that the Indians did not "offer any uncivil Carriage to any of the Females, nor ever attempted the Chastity of any of them."⁴² Witnessing such behavior forced Puritans to reexamine their stereotypes of savage, lustful Indians to determine more precise motives for those atrocities separatists did commit.

Indian behaviors that may strike modern students of King Philip's War as horrific were often mutually practiced or are otherwise understandable within context. Bodies of dead colonials and their livestock were sometimes stripped, "mutilated," and their heads placed on poles.⁴³ Mounting heads in such a fashion was not unique among the Indians; indeed, it was a familiar sight in seventeenth-century European conflicts, including the English Civil War, and both sides followed the practice in King Philip's War.⁴⁴ Mutilation, of course, was an obvious re-

⁴²Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England*, 2:175, 1:167. Hubbard made note of the respect that Indians accorded their captives throughout his history of the war. For more examples, see 1:207; 2:204. Mary Rowlandson also portrayed her treatment at the hands of Indians as decent ("The Sovereignty and Goodness of God," in *Puritans Among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981]). The issue of Indian treatment of war captives has received much attention. Highlighting Indian benevolence is James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 168-206. Arriving at different conclusions when looking specifically at the Iroquois is Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 40 (October 1983): 529-59. It is inconclusive whether or not the southern New England Algonquians adopted their captives as did the Iroquois. Nor is there any solid evidence that these Algonquians tortured their captives before killing them.

⁴³Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 51 (October 1994): 601-24.

⁴⁴Personal communication with Barbara Donagan, 28 July 1995.

sult of tomahawk warfare, and stripping bodies was common on seventeenth-century European battlefields as well. By 1675 English clothing had long been the Indians' most sought after English trade good. Before the war, coats and cloth were the goods most frequently extended in ceremonies recognizing the establishment of political alliances, and during the war, the English paid their Indian compatriots with coats and cloth.⁴⁵ English women held captive by the separatists spent a good deal of their time knitting clothing at their captors' insistence, and clothing was also the ransom often demanded for a hostage's release.⁴⁶ Given the English view that taking plunder was a victor's right in combat, stripping bodies for their clothing must have been considered a legitimate activity, however distasteful it must have been to the Puritans.⁴⁷

Familiarity, intimate ties, and kinship formed another set of motives for behavioral restraint in King Philip's War. Whereas the counterforce in the Irish Rebellion was a standing expeditionary force from a relatively distant mother country, colonialist New Englanders had to fight enemies they knew, sometimes well. Separatist leaders calling out to English captains across the battlefield would refer to them as "old neighbors," and combatants could often list the names of those they had killed.⁴⁸ Indians, of course, were most likely to be familiar with their opponents. The Reverend John Russel related how some of the colonialist Indians in the Connecticut River Valley, "When they were out with our Army, they shewed much unwillingness to fight, alledging they must not fight against their Mothers and Cousins."⁴⁹ Familiarity also affected the treatment of captives.

⁴⁵Gookin, *An Historical Account*, pp. 499–500; *Connecticut Records*, 2:280, 369, 379.

⁴⁶See Rowlandson, "Goodness of God," pp. 47, 48, 53, 61, 67. She also describes mistaking a party of separatist Indians for Englishmen "for they were dressed in English apparel, with hats, white neckcloths, and sashes about thier waists, and ribbons upon their shoulders" (p. 59).

⁴⁷For a discussion of beliefs surrounding plunder, see Keen, *Laws of War*, chap. 9, "Gains of War and their Division."

⁴⁸See, e.g., the sachem John Monoco calling out to Captain Parker in Hubbard, *The Present State of New-England*, 1:199; *Connecticut Records*, p. 486. Church's acquaintance with Indians on the separatist side gave him an advantage in persuading them to surrender and often fight on the colonialist side in exchange for lenient treatment (Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, pp. 135, 168).

⁴⁹Russel quoted by Mather, *History of King Philip's War*, p. 75.

In one case, some separatists who had surrendered to the English were placed among the Narragansett, whom they claimed as their kin. Petitioning the Massachusetts Court in June 1676 for leniency for their kin, whom they had captured, a group of praying Indians who had fought on the colonialist side advanced the utilitarian argument that such treatment might induce other Indians to surrender.⁵⁰

Kinship ties among Indians also raised English suspicions. To assess the loyalty of their Indian allies, the English often forced them to be the punishers. Benjamin Church ordered one of his Indian soldiers to kill a captured kinsman with a hatchet blow to the head.⁵¹ Increase Mather had an even more clever rationale for commissioning Indian executioners when he wrote that upon the capture of the separatist sachem Canonchet,

the English caused the Pequods and Monhegins, and Ninnegrets Indians to joyn together in shooting Quanonchet, and cutting off his head, which was sent to Hartford. And herein the English dealt wisely, for by this meanes, those three Indian Nations are to become abominable to the other Indians, and it is now their interest to be faithfull to the English, since their own Countrymen will never forgive them, on account of their taking and killing the Sachem mentioned.⁵²

That Indians were often willing to carry out the sentence attested to their loyalty and the sincerity of their submission to English rule.



Although the level of violence in King Philip's War was not out of balance with what the English had experienced in European wars, the frequency with which captives were enslaved was unusual. Just as a contemporary perspective allows us to evaluate violence within its cultural context, instances of slavery must also be viewed within their particular place and time. In

⁵⁰*Connecticut Records*, p. 486; petition reprinted by Gookin, in *Doings and Sufferings*, pp. 527-28.

⁵¹Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, p. 91.

⁵²Mather, *History of King Philip's War*, p. 134.

the unique historical situation of 1675 and 1676, many colonialists saw the enslavement of separatist Indians as an opportunity both to dispense mercy and to reap a profit.

Given their belief that separatists were rebels and traitors, colonialists maintained their right to execute prisoners. Yet many separatists whom the colonialists might have so treated under law did not face the executioner. In part, the majority of those surrendered or captured Indians not considered ringleaders were "spared" because, although they were taken to be subjects of the colonies, the English felt that they occupied a rung lower than themselves in a natural hierarchy.⁵³ Thus Puritans often approached Indians paternalistically.

The official symbol of the Massachusetts Bay Colony depicted an Indian entreating the English to "Come over and help us." John Eliot, who took that plaintive request seriously, responded joyfully to Daniel Gookin's favorable *Historical Account of the Christian Indians in New England*: "As Natural fathers, so foster fathers, are well pleased to hear well of their children." Eliot, who thought of the New England Indians to whom he ministered as the "foster children" of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, exemplified the beneficent aspect of a paternalism that also had its darker side.⁵⁴

Nothing makes the Puritans' perception of Indians' inferiority more apparent than the mass selling of separatist Indians into slavery.⁵⁵ Although it was considered acceptable for Christian victors to enslave Christian captives, in practice it was pri-

⁵³For the Puritan belief in the Great Chain of Being, see Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 6, 120. John Winthrop reflected this belief in a natural hierarchy in his famous speech "A Modell of Christian Charity," delivered aboard the *Arbella*: "God Almighty in his most holy and wise Providence hath soe disposed of the condicon of mankind, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others mean and in subjection" (*Winthrop Papers*, 5 vols. [Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-47], 2:289).

⁵⁴John Eliot to Daniel Gookin, in Gookin's *An Historical Account*, p. 431.

⁵⁵Quantifying the number of Indian indentured servants and slaves sold during or immediately after the war is nearly impossible. For an attempt to do so for Rhode Island in the eighteenth century, see John A. Sainsbury, "Indian Labor in Early Rhode Island," *New England Quarterly* 48 (September 1975): 378-93.

marily non-Christians who suffered this fate over the long term, for in Christian-to-Christian situations, the offer of an exchange of prisoners for ransom was taken as an obligation.⁵⁶

Perhaps the English would not have resorted to enslaving separatist Indians had another, commonly administered form of punishment, banishment, been logistically possible in this case. New England Puritans had a long history of banishing those individuals they considered threats to their communities. Massachusetts sent religious heretics Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson out of the colony to protect its religious homogeneity. Indians, too, posed a threat to the towns, yet because they already lived outside the bounds of English villages, they quite simply could not be banished.⁵⁷ Slavery, a more rigidly enforced type of banishment, therefore more closely approximated the punitive action taken against errant English men and women in the colonies.

Forcing Indians into slavery or servitude also helped satisfy the dilemma of what to "do" with them. The war produced hundreds of Indian refugees, who lived as vagabonds within or on the edges of New England towns. Historian Stephen Innes, echoing Max Weber and others, has described the Puritans of New England as having a "culture of discipline." This translated into a "war on idleness" which mandated that everyone fulfill their calling through labor.⁵⁸ Servitude or slavery, depending upon the level of implication in the rebellion, satisfied the Puritan desire to eliminate idleness forthwith. Accordingly, the treatment of Indians reflects as much the Puritans' disgust with idleness as their loathing of rebellious Indians.

Slavery and servitude had the additional advantages of helping to ameliorate a labor shortage in the New England colonies at the same time as it enhanced means for paying for the war.

⁵⁶For a discussion of the rules of war as they apply to the obligations and rights of captors and captives, see Keen, *Rules of War*, chap. 10, "The Law of Ransom."

⁵⁷See, e.g., *Plymouth Records*. On 22 July 1677, the Plymouth Court decided that certain Indian males above the age of fourteen at the time of their capture could not live within the colony on the grounds that "the permission of Indian men that are captives to settle and abide within this collonie may prove prejudicial to our comon peace and safety" (5:210).

⁵⁸Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth*, pp. 107-60, esp. 126ff.

Colonialist soldiers, both Indian and English, kept captives as payment for their services. Plymouth Colony allowed Benjamin Church's English forces to have "half the prisoners and arms" they took; his Indian force was granted only "the loose plunder."⁵⁹ Connecticut treated its Indian troops more generously than did Plymouth. The colonialist Indian leader Ninigret received two separatist Indian children for his loyalty, and Uncas kept a number of his captives, including some of Philip's relatives.⁶⁰ The colonies, struggling to pay for the war, found in the separatist captives a human goldmine.⁶¹ Financial incentives, combined with the formal rules of war, the subordinate status of Indians in New England society, the difficulties inherent in banishing Indians, the culture of discipline, and the shortage of labor all justified, in the Puritan mind, their sale into servitude or slavery. Slavery, in this particular historical context, seemed to many colonialists an especially benevolent, and rewarding, alternative to execution.

Contextualizing Puritan actions in King Philip's War against the background of contemporaneous conflicts involving English Puritans reveals that their conduct in many respects paralleled that to be expected in a civil war more than in a conflict between sovereign powers or even a war between a civilized society and a savage other. This is not to say that the New England Puritans fought King Philip's War as a civil war "among brothers." They considered themselves more advanced in the natural hierarchy than their Indian opponents, and thus, keeping within the metaphors of kinship, they fought the war more as if it were a conflict between father and child. On the other hand, for the Indians on both sides of the conflict, it often was, in a literal as well as a figurative sense, a war among brothers.

For the Puritans, paternalism carried responsibilities of the

⁵⁹Church, *Diary of King Philip's War*, pp. 130, 176. In Massachusetts, Samuel Moseley's troops received the profits from the sale of captives, perhaps providing an incentive for his zealotry. See *Massachusetts Records*, 5:72.

⁶⁰*Connecticut Records*, 2:385, 474-75, 487.

⁶¹See Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, chap. 6, "Men Matériel, and Money," and Michael J. Puglisi, *Puritans Besieged: The Legacies of King Philip's War in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), chap. 4, "The High Cost of War."

very gravest sort. In November 1646 the Massachusetts General Court had decreed that

If a man have a stubborne or rebellious sonne of sufficyent yeeres of vnderstanding, viz., 16, weh will not obey ye voyce of his father or ye voyce of his mother, & yt when they have chastned him will not harken vnto them, then shall his father & mother, being his naturall parents, lay hold on him, & bring him to ye majestrates assembled in Courte, & testify to them by sufficyent evidence yt this their sonne is stubborne & rebellious, & will not obey their voyce & chasticement, but lives in sundry notorious crimes, such a sonne shall be put to death.⁶²

When Indian separatists challenged colonial rule in 1675, the English colonialists faced a wayward child. Although they never intended to exact the ultimate punishment for disobedience on all rebellious Indians, in effect the Puritans' restraint, limited and fragile at best, did little to prevent the collapse of New England's Indian population. In the end, the cultural gestalt of the colonialists allowed them to carry out effectively genocidal policies while steadfastly believing to the end that they stood upon the moral high ground.

⁶²*Massachusetts Records*, 3:101. See also *Connecticut Records*, 1:78, 515. Edmund Morgan has noted that the courts usually would not implement the death penalty but instead took the child away from the parents (*The Puritan Family: Essays on Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* [Boston: Trustees of the Boston Public Library, 1944], p. 38).

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