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Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500–1800



Wayne E. Lee

Abstract

Discussions of the escalation in the intensity and lethality of European–Native American warfare lack a systematic catalog of Indian restraints on war, in contrast to the extensive literature on European warfare. This article surveys eastern Native American societies at war from roughly 1500 to 1800 for limits on destructive potential and intent. Although Indian societies were willing to seek to destroy an enemy, including indiscriminate killing, patterns of restraint inherent to their social authority, cultural values, and methods of warfare tended to limit escalation and the overall level of violence. The dissonance of patterns of restraint in Indian and European warfare contributed to Euro-Indian escalation.

WAR was fundamental to Native American culture in the eastern woodlands of North America.¹ Young men could gain status and authority through demonstrated courage and aptitude in war. Groups

1. The debts incurred in the writing of this article are numerous, but I would particularly like to thank Jeremy Black for pushing me into thinking about this project and for the encouragement and advice of Ian Steele, Fred Anderson, Karen Kupperman, Elizabeth Fenn, Michael Galaty, Christina Snyder, and Stephen Carney. The

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could gain or protect territory at the expense of others, incorporate prisoners into their population as kin or as labor, and even impose tribute on other peoples. Above all, the killing of a member of one group mandated revenge on the perpetrator's people. Blood demanded blood. The rewards and requirements of war were so thoroughly entwined in Indian societies that irrespective of the arrival of the Europeans, a nearly endemic state of war existed throughout much of the eastern seaboard and beyond. Equally thoroughly entwined within Indian societies, however, were structural and cultural limitations on the scale and devastation of warfare.

Modern work on European and Indian conflict almost always assumes that the experience of contact escalated the intensity and violence of Native American warfare; the only disagreement has been on the exact mechanisms of that escalation. Older explanations have emphasized economic pressures: the availability of valuable European goods led Indians to war for more wide-ranging and absolute goals, including conquest and/or economic domination. With more demanding goals came more frightful violence. Others have suggested that Indian warfare escalated from a kind of technological, material, and, especially, demographic shock. The disease and death brought by Europeans demanded the restoration of balance; the only available cultural solution was war and the incorporation of prisoners. Unfortunately, according to this argument, a different kind of balance had also been upset by the arrival of European technology: the military balance of offense versus defense had slipped in the face of iron and gunpowder. War had become more lethal through European technology, eroding war's utility in restoring demographic health through the adoption of prisoners. Most recently, some historians have argued that warfare escalated in intensity and violence because of a clash of new and old world military cultures. The two sides violated each other's expectations or norms of war, and were thus led to discard their own usual limitations. Unfortunately, an essential foundation has been missing from this debate. What exactly were the restraints on war in Native American societies? Only after answering this question can we hope to proceed to a better understanding of how European contact may have broken them down. Could, in fact, either combatant's structures of restraint hold up in the face of an enemy with an entirely different system?

The subject of the level of violence in precontact Native American warfare is contentious, so let me be clear. Native American restraints on

anonymous readers for the *Journal* provided important suggestions for improvement. As always, I am grateful to Peter Wood for grounding me in Native American studies, and to Rhonda Lee for her patient and high-quality assistance, none of which is to absolve myself from sole responsibility for any errors herein.

warfare were no more perfect than European restraints. Indians had not balanced war into harmony with their other cultural values and thus scaled down warfare into some kind of ritualized, nonlethal nonentity. Given the opportunity and the right motive, Indians were prepared to wage intensely lethal violence on another people. Much of the time, however, structural restraints built into Native American social organization combined with their own values about war and interpretations of its meaning to restrain its scale and intensity. Contact with Europeans dramatically affected the nature of their social organization as well as their beliefs about the meaning of war. Not all of those changes happened at once. Nor can any one moment or incident be identified as the one when restraints were cast off. Native Americans continued to try to regulate war, and they tried to preserve the traditional nature of their social organization, all while trying to adjust to the opportunities presented and damage caused by the presence of Europeans.

There are some important caveats to this study. One is that the nature of the sources severely limits our ability to comprehend the probable changes in Native American ways of war at the very outset of contact. Sixteenth-century sources are sparse and interpretively debated, while the earliest seventeenth-century descriptions of Indian war are more voluminous but may reflect a society that had already markedly changed.² The second caveat is about the nature of the generalizations used here. There was, of course, no such thing as "Native American society." There were variations and differences from Maine to Florida, or even from one valley to the next. But with some caution we can generalize about Native American society in the eastern woodlands because those societies shared many characteristics, especially in war. Societies regularly at war with each other tend to converge, although never absolutely, in their techniques and values of war, partly from military necessity and partly from mutual self-interest.³ This study is necessarily

2. The argument for rapid and largely unseen change as a result of European contact is now well rehearsed, but its implications for military behavior are still not clearly understood or agreed upon. See Keith F. Otterbein, "A History of Research on Warfare in Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 101 (2000): 794–805, and the follow-up commentaries in the same journal by Neil Whitehead, 102 (2000): 834–37; Leslie E. Sponsel, 102 (2000): 837–41; Otterbein again, 102 (2000): 841–44; R. K. Dentan, 104 (2002): 278–80; R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, eds., *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Societies* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1992); R. Brian Ferguson, "Violence and War in Prehistory," in *Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past*, ed. Debra L. Martin and David W. Frayer (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1997), 339–42.

3. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997), 132–43.

synthetic, and faces the task of trying to explain traditional restraints on warfare within a context of constant flux aggravated by European contact. Furthermore, the analysis here is primarily structural and cultural, rather than about how specific political configurations may have restrained or unleashed war. Nevertheless, focusing on the periods of contact and of competitive imperial colonialism (roughly 1500 to 1800) lends a certain coherence.⁴ In short, the basic generalizations herein about eastern Native North American styles of war are safe, although by no means universal.⁵

Before examining the structures of restraint themselves, it will be useful to provide four specific examples of Native Americans at war to serve as foundations for the more diverse evidence that will follow. While some of these examples are well known, others are obscure incidents chosen simply for their clear descriptions of activities typical to Native American warfare.

The Powhatans and the 1622 "Massacre"

English settlers arrived in the Chesapeake area of Virginia in 1607, and within a few weeks had built themselves a town and a fort at Jamestown. Almost immediately they became embroiled in conflict with the local paramount chief, Powhatan, largely because of the colonists' persistent inability to feed themselves. Apparently, Powhatan only recently had gained control over the whole region and over the multiplicity of peoples within it. His "empire" was unusual for its size and the extent of his personal control, although it had some parallels with the earlier paramount chiefdoms of the Mississippian cultures to the south and west. Some have even suggested that Powhatan was motivated to this level of conquest as a defensive measure against an expectation of further European arrivals. The natives of the

4. Essentially this is another caveat. During much of the competitive imperial colonial period, many Native American peoples limited the impact of war by manipulating their position at the crux of competing European empires, playing one side against the other to limit their own exposure. Although in part such a diplomatic role was made possible because of Native political structures discussed herein, the specific nature of the imperial standoff is not considered. Daniel K. Richter, "Native Peoples of North America and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 357–60.

5. The reader should assume from this point on that all references to Native Americans refer to peoples living in the eastern woodlands between 1500 and 1800 unless otherwise specified. Specifically excluded, therefore, are the peoples of the great plains, arctic and subarctic, the Pacific northwest, and the desert southwest. Warfare patterns in these places were very different.

region, and perhaps even Powhatan himself, had had some unpleasant experiences with earlier abortive English and Spanish settlement.⁶

At any rate, Powhatan quickly perceived the English both as interlopers within his sphere of influence and as potentially useful allies. He therefore sought to bring the tiny, struggling Jamestown community within his orbit. From his point of view that process involved creating both familial and political ties, the first through marriage and adoption, the second through rituals of submission by the English. The English were unclear about the meaning of these activities, and frankly thought that they were leading Powhatan through rituals of submission to themselves. In a classic scene of partially understood meanings, the English brought a crown to Powhatan in 1608 with which they hoped to mark him as a vassal of James I. Powhatan repeatedly ignored their signals for him to kneel and accept the crown. Finally one of the English pressed hard on his shoulders, Powhatan "a little stooped," and Christopher Newport put the crown on his head.⁷

Partly through this lack of understanding, and partly through the settlers' single-minded pursuit of quick riches, the two peoples remained in periodic conflict until the diplomatic marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas in 1614. Frederic Gleach has interpreted these early years of conflict as a continuous effort by Powhatan to use war to bring the colonists' behavior into line with his perception of their subordinate status. He had no desire to exterminate, only to control.⁸ Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas fell into English hands in 1613 as a hostage, leading to peace negotiations. Within a year Pocahontas and Rolfe were married and peace achieved. Peace through marriage was a diplomatic technique understood in both societies, and that connection maintained an uneasy peace until 1622.

The breakdown of the peace has been handed down to history as the "Massacre" of 1622, but the Powhatan attack in that year needs to be considered within their vision of war. Several things had happened since 1614. Pocahontas had died in 1617 while visiting England. The numbers and extent of the English settlement had expanded dramatically from what Powhatan might have guessed in 1614, and Powhatan himself had "resigned" in 1617. With Powhatan's abdication the chiefdom reverted to

6. Frederic W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 88–105; J. Frederick Fausz, "Patterns of Anglo-Indian Aggression and Accommodation along the Mid-Atlantic Coast, 1584–1634," in *Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, A.D. 1000–1800*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 235–36.

7. *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, ed. Philip L. Barbour, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 1:237.

8. Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 130.

the dual leadership of a “peace chief” and a “war chief.”⁹ This division of authority was common to many Native peoples, and Powhatan’s possession of both roles may have been a further mark of his unusual status. The new war chief, Opechancanough, was more suspicious of the expanding English than Powhatan had been. After trying and failing to persuade the English to help him in one of his own wars to the west, Opechancanough changed his name, often a signal of coming war, and prepared to administer what he thought would be a decisive “lesson” in the proper subordination of the English to his control. They would strike at the English, punish them for their transgressions, and await the stabilizing of the relationship in the proper roles.¹⁰

The attack came on 22 March 1622. The Powhatans went about their business normally at the beginning of the day. By this time many of them had regular personal or economic contacts within the English settlements, and at the prescribed moment, all around the English colony, the Indians, already intermingled with the populace, picked up various agricultural tools (having come in unarmed) or appeared from the surrounding woods and set upon the English. They killed all those who came within reach that day, probably more than 350 people, completely wiping out some settlements. Tellingly, however, there was no follow-up. Having administered their lesson, the Powhatans went home. They surely expected retaliation, even as they would from another Native society, but they would not be caught unawares, and probably expected to be able to prevent any kind of equivalent damage to themselves. They prepared for a war of raid and counterraid, but presumed that their initial successful attack would give them the advantage in the long run.

The Powhatans’ targeting of the outlying settlements for the main brunt of the attack may provide the “text” of the lesson—that the English should remain within their proper area. Furthermore, the overall damage to the settlements was limited by warnings of the impending attack given by Indians living among the English, particularly the warnings provided to Jamestown by a Christianized Pamunkey Indian named Chanco (or Chauco) and another unnamed Indian living with the English.¹¹ As we will see, the exchange of residents between communities

9. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 142; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 102.

10. Gleach calls the attack a “coup” in an effort to emphasize the limited goals of this style of warfare. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 148–58. This is not a reference to the “counting coup” practices of Plains Indians. For other narratives of the 1622 attack and the subsequent war, see Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1975), 98–101; William L. Shea, *The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 25–50.

11. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 49–53; Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 196.

often served to limit the possibility of surprise and its consequent high level of fatalities.

The English, however, did not respond to the lesson in the expected manner. They prepared to fight war according to their own model of continuous campaigning: not raiding, but taking, destroying, and hopefully exterminating—largely in the hope of establishing their control over more land. In this the colonists succeeded to a horrifying degree, usually failing to catch very many Indians, but deliberately and thoroughly destroying their towns and crops. Indian efforts to negotiate a peace were repeatedly rebuffed until the war crept to a close in 1632.

Huron-Iroquois War of 1648–49

The second example is perhaps the most famous and most interpretively debated of all the intra-Indian wars. It has also been called one of the most decisive. The scholarly debate centers on the motivation for the Iroquois confederacy's successful attack on the Hurons in 1648 and 1649.¹² Some scholars have argued for essentially material causes: the Iroquois sought to dominate the fur trade with the Europeans; therefore, they attacked and drove out their most serious competitor. Others have at least partially accepted this explanation, but only in the context of European influence, arguing that such materialist-motivated warfare did not exist prior to contact. The most recent interpretations of the war suggest that there was no (or very little) material motivation, and that in fact the Huron and Iroquois were engaged in traditional warfare based on an old enmity and a desire to gain captives for adoption, although their warfare had become more decisive and destructive due to European technology.

The permanent arrival of the French in the St. Lawrence region in the early seventeenth century eventually brought them into contact with the powerful Huron confederacy on the far northeastern extremity of Lake Huron. For the Huron this contact meant the arrival of missionaries and new material goods, purchasable through the sale of beaver and other furs. The Hurons quickly became significant trading partners with the French; however, the restrictive French trading system limited their ability to trade for firearms. In 1614 the Dutch established a trading post at Fort Orange (now Albany) on the Hudson River, where they cultivated

12. For recent reviews of the development of this debate, see José Antônio Brandão, *Your Fyre Shall Burn No More: Iroquois Policy Toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5–18; Thomas S. Abler, "Iroquois Policy and Iroquois Culture: Two Histories and an Anthropological Ethnohistory," *Ethnohistory* 47 (2000): 483–91; William A. Starna and José Antônio Brandão, "From the Mohawk-Mahican War to the Beaver Wars: Questioning the Pattern," *Ethnohistory* 51 (2004): 725–50.

a similar trading relationship with the Iroquois confederacy, ancient enemies of the Huron. The Dutch proved more willing to trade guns and powder, and eventually the Iroquois, for whatever reason, determined to take advantage of their edge.¹³

In 1648 the Iroquois began a series of major offensives into the Huron home territories. They had been attacking outlying Huron villages for a number of years, but beginning in 1648, and especially in the attack of 1649, the conflict became a much more concerted affair.¹⁴ The Iroquois cut off and destroyed two frontier towns in the summer of 1648. Then in the summer of 1649 a thousand Iroquois warriors "well furnished with weapons,—and mostly with firearms . . . arrived by night" without warning outside the Huron town of St. Ignace (Taenhatentaron). After a winter-long approach march of hundreds of miles, the Iroquois warriors crept up to the weakest point in the town's palisade wall (a fifteen-foot-high stockade and ditch), breached it, and entered the town before the Hurons became aware of their presence. All but 3 men among the 400 Hurons in the village were captured or killed.

Those three warned the next village, St. Louis, some three miles away, and many of its inhabitants immediately fled, leaving only about eighty defenders. The Iroquois force shortly arrived and assaulted the palisade around St. Louis. After two or three attempts they cut their way through the stockade, overwhelmed the defenders, and burned the town to the ground (while preserving the palisade wall for their own uses). That night other towns of the Huron confederacy, alerted, rushed to the French Jesuit post at Ste. Marie, and the next morning lay in wait to ambush the approaching Iroquois and defend the French fort.

The second day of battle proceeded in a see-saw fashion as each side in turn gained an advantage, but fundamentally the Iroquois had lost the advantage of surprise. They made an attempt on Ste. Marie, took heavy casualties, and chose to return home. Facing a long march, and presumably worried about the arrival of more Huron reinforcements, they burned St. Ignace, killed many but not all of their captives, and headed south. In typical fashion, the Hurons of yet another town dispatched a

13. For the Iroquois' success in obtaining guns and their impact, see Keith F. Otterbein, "Why the Iroquois Won: An Analysis of Iroquois Military Tactics," *Ethnohistory* 11 (1964): 58; Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 352 (hereafter *HNAI*, 15); Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: a History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), 2:627–33.

14. This account follows Keith F. Otterbein, "Huron vs. Iroquois: A Case Study in Inter-Tribal Warfare," *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979): 141–52, who is basically summarizing the French Jesuit account found in Reuben Gold Thwaites and Edna Kenton, eds., *Jesuit Relations* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1925), 34:123–37 (hereafter *JR*).

pursuit force, but it failed to catch up. Although the Iroquois had suffered more casualties than they had hoped for, they had successfully destroyed two towns (in addition to the two of the previous summer), and had killed perhaps as many as 700 Hurons.

There is much in this narrative that is “typical,” but there is a scale and level of destructiveness that stands out. The use of surprise to attack a fortified village was a standard raiding technique, but the size of this raiding force meant that once they were inside the walls, they were able to succeed in killing and capturing to a startling degree. Emboldened, and unusually, the Iroquois immediately attacked a second village. It was only after that success that the normal rallying of reinforcements from other nearby villages occurred. The raid completed, the raiders departed, pursued by the defenders. Although it was a “normal” raid on a larger-than-usual scale, in combination with successes of previous years and continued raiding, it was decisive in forcing the Huron to disperse. They no longer felt safe in their home territories; the separate clans headed in separate directions, putting themselves under the protection of other groups.

The Creek-Cherokee War, 1715–53

A similar long-standing enmity between large Native groups resulted in a continuous if episodic war in the mountains of the southeast between 1715 and 1753. The outbreak of this particular war is both well documented and illustrative of the role of codes of war and diplomacy, as well as of the more usual alternative to conquest: endemic raid and counterraid. Although the Creeks of Georgia and Alabama and the Cherokees at the junction of Tennessee and North and South Carolina had had a long history of occasional violent conflict, this particular conflict (and our knowledge of its origins) resulted from the diplomatic needs of the English.¹⁵ In 1715 the Yamassee Indians of Piedmont South Carolina had risen against their former English allies, and in the process

15. The main source for the outbreak of this war is George Chicken, “Journal of the March of the Carolinians into the Cherokee Mountains, in the Yemassee Indian War, 1715–16,” *Yearbook of the City of Charleston*, 1894, 315–54. See also Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians Through the Revolutionary Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24–25; John Phillip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet: Law, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Cherokee Nation During the Early Years of European Contact* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 61–73; John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 175; Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670–1732* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1929), 162–86.

had persuaded a host of other peoples to join them, including the powerful Creek confederacy. The hard-pressed South Carolinians also sought Indian allies, winning the Tuscaroras to their side, but they particularly aspired to gain the Cherokees' assistance. To help convince them, Colonel Maurice Moore marched a small expedition into the Cherokee towns to force serious diplomatic negotiations. Although hospitably received, the English quickly found themselves confined to a relatively passive role as witnesses to internal Cherokee debate and factionalism over how to respond to the English request.

The Cherokees, like most other Native societies, were not a unified political body. Each town grouping, or even each town, had its own say in whether they would be willing to help the English. The "Lower" towns were initially reluctant to help against the Creeks (too close and therefore too threatening), or the Yamassees (too closely related), but they would help against some of the other small piedmont tribes. Meanwhile, representatives from the Cherokee "Overhill" towns were pushing for war with the Creeks, and in fact some had already been to Charlestown to promise their support to the South Carolinians.

While the English emissaries were touring the towns trying to rally support, the Cherokees requested that the Creeks send an embassy for talks. A Creek delegation duly arrived in the Lower towns, but while in the town of Tugaloo an anti-Creek faction within the Cherokees unexpectedly killed them. Our principal English witness, George Chicken, did not see the murder, but word of the incident spread like wildfire. The Cherokees realized that this violation of the sacred status of a diplomatic embassy, not to mention the deaths of several prominent personages, would bring swift Creek retaliation, and they prepared to meet it. Their short-term defensive strategy is as revealing about Indian warfare as is the fact that this decisive violation of the codes of diplomacy led to forty years of endemic warfare.

Expecting an attack from a large nearby Creek encampment, the Cherokees immediately put themselves and the English in a defensive posture, clustering close to the village the night of the killing, and the next day marching about three miles south of town "to waylay the pathe."¹⁶ They waited in ambush all that day for the approach of any Creeks, took some prisoners, and then, fearing their intentions discovered, they abandoned their position and returned to the village for the night. The following day, realizing that the killing of the embassy was still undiscovered, the Cherokees, with their English allies, advanced still further south hoping to catch the main Creek force by surprise. They continued advancing in stages, each time getting closer to the Creek

16. Chicken, "Journal of the March (1715)," 345.

encampment, but by the time they arrived, the Creeks had abandoned it. Failing in their attempt at surprise, the whole Cherokee-English force returned to Tugaloo.

The Creeks eventually did find out about the murders and sought blood revenge, and the war began in earnest. Over the next ten years the Cherokees appear to have fortified a number of their more vulnerable towns, but in forty years of on-and-off warfare they could not always be alert, and several of those towns were surprised and destroyed (much like the Hurons at St. Ignace).¹⁷ Many of the southernmost Cherokees abandoned the region entirely, joining with villages in the interior of their homeland. It is important to note, however, that the Creeks did not proceed to occupy the abandoned territory. Theirs was a war of prestige and revenge, not conquest. As the war dragged on, the South Carolinians pressed for peace out of a desire to trade with both sides. Finally, after a Cherokee victory at the battle of Taliwa and a highly successful series of Creek raids in 1752, both sides agreed to allow the British to mediate a peace.¹⁸

A "Typical" Raid

The last example is simpler, but deliberately more detailed, and is presented here as an effort to move beyond simple verbs like "attack," "raid," or "besiege" to see the inner workings of an Indian war party of average size. In 1725, power dynamics and Indian alliances having shifted from the Yamassee-Creek alliance just described, the English asked the Creeks to help them against the Yamassees. The Creeks agreed, and sent out a war party, but were disappointed to find the Yamassees alert and inside their fortifications. The Creeks then went:

to a Fort in a Town Where we thought the Yamases were, and we fired at the Said Fort, Which alarmed ten Men that was Place[d] To Discover us which we [had] past [passed] when they were asleep. Our fireing awakd them and they Ran round us and gave Notice to the Yamasees Who was Removed from this town Nigher the Sea and had there Build a new fort which we found and Attacked but with litle Success [though] it happen'd the Huspaw Kings Family was not all got in the fort and we took three of them and fired Several Shott at the Huspaw king and are in hopes have killed him. There Came

17. Wayne E. Lee "Fortify, Fight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation," *Journal of Military History* 68 (2004): 753–57.

18. For Taliwa, see Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 93; for the Creek attacks of 1752 and the subsequent peace, see David Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier, 1740–1762* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 35–37.

out a party of the Yamases who fought us and we took the Capt. We waited three days about there Fort, Expecting to get an opportunity to take some More but to no purpose. We then Came away and the Yamases pursued us.

Turning on their pursuers, the Creeks drove the Yamassees into a pond and were about to press them further when they were distracted by the arrival of a Spanish force. When the Creeks resumed their march home, the Yamassees pursued and attacked again, and it was in this "Battle in which they did us [the Creeks] the most Damnable." All told, the Creeks killed eight Yamassees, and brought home those scalps, nine prisoners, and some plunder. The Creeks lost five killed and six wounded.¹⁹

The pattern here replicates on a smaller scale much of what happened between the Huron and the Iroquois, but without the Iroquois' overwhelming initial success. A raiding party attempted surprise, but was foiled by fortifications and the belated alertness of a defending ambush group. The Creeks attacked individuals they could find outside the fort, and then offered battle to the defenders. The Yamassees, perhaps to maintain prestige (see the discussion of "battle" below) accepted the offer but lost their "captain" in the ensuing fight. The Creeks then lurked around the fort hoping to snipe at the occasional exposed person, and after three days headed for home. The Yamassees immediately pursued, hoping to take advantage of a party spread out on the march. A series of running battles damaged the Creeks and sped them on their way home.

Each of these examples highlights several issues central to a discussion of the restraints, and the lack thereof, in Native American warfare. Note in particular the role of blood revenge, the political divisiveness within peoples, the importance of resident visitors from other peoples, the reliance on the raid with possibly dramatic results if surprise was achieved, the willingness to besiege towns, the importance of prisoners and prestige, and finally the tendency to engage in endemic, although not *continuous* warfare.

Restraints

War, no matter how well regulated, is by its nature destructive. Consequently, the first issue facing any culture in its efforts to restrain war is to set limits on its frequency and duration. The phrase "setting limits" implies conscious choice, and in moments of actual diplomacy there

19. Tobias Fitch, "Captain Fitch's Journal to the Creeks, 1725," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York: Macmillan Co., 1916), 202-5.

could certainly be deliberate recognition of the problem of “too much war.” In general, however, what concerns us here is how Native American social organization and cultural visions of war drew boundaries around its frequency and duration. Once war is under way, the remaining problem is to find ways to regulate its destructiveness, primarily to one’s own side but, for various reasons, also more generally. The remainder of this essay uses the preceding examples of war and additional evidence to examine these two questions. The organization is roughly step by step within the framework of an imaginary war. We will begin with the causes of war, and discuss how Native Americans provided some alternatives to war. We will then turn to ritual preparation, warrior mobilization, and the style of war itself.

There were three basic functions of war in Indian society. The broadest, and most slippery to interpret, was the use of war to administer political “lessons” in proper relationships between groups (as argued for the Powhatans in 1622). Although the existence of political war is generally acknowledged, it is less clear to what extremes Native Americans would press war in a political cause. For example, could such political adjustments through warfare include outright conquest? The other two functions for war, both broadly “cultural,” are more clearly understood. A great deal of Native American conflict was filtered through the demand for blood revenge coupled with the expectation of achieving personal status through war. The mandate that relatives take blood revenge for the killing of one of their own was arguably the single greatest factor in patterning violent relationships both within a people and between peoples. Furthermore, young men in virtually all Native American societies looked to success in war not only to assert adulthood, but also to increase their status within the group. Warriors returned home bearing enemy scalps or prisoners as their individual possessions, and although sometimes such prizes were redistributed upon arrival in the village for the benefit of all, for that moment, possessing trophies redounded solely to their own credit as men.²⁰ These three motives or functions for war did not exist in isolation from each other. Even if war arose from material or political causes, it was frequently enacted through the blood feud. To put it another way, the recruitment of individuals for a succession of raids that might have political or material consequences still relied on blood feud and status rhetoric to motivate young warriors.²¹ Of course, the problem with these latter two motives for war is their potential end-

20. Among many peoples, a fourth motive functioned in parallel with the political, blood feud, and status motives, and that was the acquisition of prisoners for adoption. This is discussed more fully below.

21. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 44.

lessness. There were always new young men in need of proving themselves, and each act of revenge typically begets a fresh desire for revenge from the other side. In fact, however, although extraordinarily awkward to contain, the seemingly endless loop of the blood feud had both structure and restraint.

The basic principle of blood debt was simple. The killing of any person, accidental or otherwise, placed an obligation on the dead person's kin to exact revenge on the people of the killer. It is crucial to note the two open-ended facets of this belief. The timing and intent of the original killing were irrelevant. An accidental killing, a deliberate murder (as a European would define that term), or death in battle all equally mandated vengeance. The other open-ended component was the lack of specificity in who should be on the receiving end of the revenge. Any member of the killer's people would do—in the case of an intragroup killing, the killer's "people" meant himself and his relatives. If the killer were from outside one's own people (the tribe), then any member of his people would suffice.

Naturally two different systems developed to cope with this mandate: one for intrapeople killing and one for interpeople killing. If the blood debt was within a people, the general expectation was that the relatives of the killer would either withdraw their support from that individual, acknowledging that revenge against him was justified, or they would offer to pay a blood gift to the family of the dead person.²² The situation became more complicated when the killer came from outside the group. First, the possibility of a blood gift sufficing to calm relatives was reduced dramatically, although not completely. Diplomatic overtures could avoid the outbreak of war, but success depended on the willingness of the clan council and the dead person's relatives to accept it.²³ Second,

22. A sophisticated and detailed discussion of the blood feud is Reid, *Law of Blood*. Among many others, see Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 230–32, 239–40; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 80; Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 279–80.

23. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 242, based on James Adair, *History of the American Indians*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (1930; repr., New York: Argonaut Press, 1966), 407. See also Cadwallader Colden's description of the possibility of such interpeople resolution of blood feud between the Adirondacks and the Iroquois. Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada* (London: n.p., 1747), 22. For other examples of intergroup attempts to assuage a blood feud before it got started, see Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 106; Fitch, "Captain Fitch's Journal," 203; Reid, *Law of Blood*, 171–72; James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 116–21; Colin G. Cal-

there could be no expectation that the killer's relatives would stand aside, and in fact, the individual identity of the killer ceased to matter. Furthermore, in interpeople blood revenge, there was no expectation that the other side would simply accept the second, revenge killing as evening the debt. The suggestion could be made that one killing had balanced another, but convincing the other side to accept it proved difficult. The Cherokees of the town of Keowee, for example, threatened the Catawbans that a failure to accept a recent killing as squaring the balance would lead to escalation:

As the Catawbans were coming home . . . finding one of our Women there, they kill'd her in Revenge, . . . that was the Reason why We in Return kill'd one of their Women in this Place. This is only the Talk of this Town, and if the Catawbans continue to take Revenge, we will not only go against them Ourselves, but draw the whole People of our Nation against them: but if they are satisfied we are also, for as they began first, and laid our People in heaps, we have kill'd two of them, and laid them on our own; and now we are satisfied, if they will be so; but if they are not, we will soon go against them, as we think nothing of them, and as it was intirely their own Fault.²⁴

This difficulty of "balancing blood" arose from the nature of a war party. A war party mobilized to avenge a blood debt, even a small one, was unlikely to be able to contain its damage to one person—even if it wanted to.

This is where the blood debt system overlapped with the use of war for personal status to produce endemic states of conflict. A war party ostensibly mobilized for revenge, but comprised of individuals hoping for status, especially young men, had no desire to limit the attacks to one person. Once in contact with an enemy group, individual desire for success in war quickly led to the taking of as many scalps and/or prisoners as could reasonably be accomplished—because in those prizes lay status.

There followed an obvious response. Any deaths inflicted by the first war party created a need in the targeted group for their own retaliatory strike. This cycle was the weak link within Native American restraints on war. The cultural mandate for revenge proved extremely difficult to overcome. Historian John Reid summarized the problem: "A [Cherokee] warrior who had recently lost a brother in a Creek raid might tell a Creek

loway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600–1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 165, 189–90; Wendell S. Hadlock, "War among the Northeastern Woodland Indians," *American Anthropologist*, new ser., 49 (1947): 213–14.

24. Talk of Tistoe and The Wolf of Keowee to Governor Lyttelton, March 5, 1759, William Lyttelton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

peace delegation that he would bury the bloody hatchet after he had taken one Creek scalp. If he succeeded, it would be for the brother of his Creek victim to decide if the war would continue. Peace negotiations therefore were largely promises to forgive and forget.”²⁵ In some cases the original source of enmity between two groups might be lost in the depths of time, but endemic raiding back and forth continued nonetheless, as each new killing reinvigorated the blood debt.

There were, however, certain restraints within the need for revenge. The scale of the avenging party, and thus its destructive potential, was limited by the mobilization process. Decisions for war were reached by consensus, and Native American leaders lacked the capacity to coerce participation.²⁶ As indicated in the remarks on the Cherokee-Catawba conflict quoted above, it was unusual to mobilize warriors from outside the family or from members of other towns. Unless the dead person was a prominent figure, it was unlikely that his or her death would stimulate a multitown mobilization. An influential leader with a significant following could possibly expand the pool of recruits, but he could do so only as long as his reputation held out.

While a lack of coercive political structure limited the scale of war, another fundamental limitation was the Native ideology of revenge. The revenge motive did not carry with it the motivation to pursue the wholesale destruction of the enemy people—a few scalps and prisoners would suffice. This “tit-for-tat” understanding of war was unfocused in its targeting since any victim would do, but it was limited in its scale. This limited notion of revenge differed dramatically from the European ideology of revenge in war. The Europeans also had notions of retaliation, but they were much more thoroughly lethal. The European ideology of revenge presumed that an original violation of norms, however “small,” authorized a no-holds-barred retaliation.²⁷ It was just this kind of ideology that the Virginia colonists unveiled in their response to the 1622 attack. Materially they may have been seeking land, but ideologically they justified their efforts at wholesale destruction by citing the “treacherosness” of the Indians. Edward Waterhouse summed up the Virginians’ explanations, writing, “Our hands, which before were tied with

25. Reid, *Better Kind of Hatchet*, 9.

26. Richter, “Native Peoples of North America,” 349–50; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 42–44. Ferguson argues that this lack of coercive structures was the most fundamental limitation on prestate warfare. Ferguson, “Violence and War in Prehistory,” 336.

27. For one example of this ideology at work, see John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yandel, unabridged ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 252.

gentelnesse and faire usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Savages, not untying the Knot, but cutting it: So that we . . . may now by right of Warre, and law of Nations, invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us.”²⁸ In this light the blood revenge system seems much less destructive.

When we turn from the blood feud as a cause of war to the question of political and economic causes, we enter one of the most contentious issues in the study of Native American warfare. There are well-rehearsed arguments that Indian societies did not pursue conquest, or economic/territorial gain in their waging of war, or that if they did so, it was only because of European-induced changes—particularly the introduction of new trade items. There is strong evidence to the contrary, however, particularly in the chiefdoms of the late prehistoric Mississippian southeast who appear to have demanded tribute from submitted peoples.²⁹ There is also Powhatan’s apparent conqueror status in the Chesapeake at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Even without certainty regarding the Indians’ ultimate motives, however, they do appear to have distinguished between “grand” and “little” war.³⁰ On occasion, sufficient motivation existed—whatever it might be—for large parties of warriors, perhaps 600 to 1,000, to attack their enemies “in the name of the tribe,” rather than as part of a limited blood feud, apparently in the hope of inflicting damage well beyond the norms of the “little” war, the tit-for-tat war, practiced in the blood feud.³¹ Expeditions such as these were at least intended to force a reformation in relationships between groups, if

28. Edward Waterhouse, *A Declaration of the State of the Colony in Virginia* (London: n.p., 1622; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 22–23.

29. Lawrence H. Keeley, *War Before Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116; David H. Dye, “Warfare in the Sixteenth-Century Southeast: The de Soto Expedition in the Interior,” in *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 2, *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 211–22; David H. Dye, “Warfare in the Protohistoric Southeast, 1500–1700,” in *Between Contacts and Colonies: Archaeological Perspectives on the Protohistoric Southeast*, ed. Cameron B. Wesson and Mark A. Rees (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 131–32; Karl T. Steinen, “Ambushes, Raids, and Palisades: Mississippian Warfare in the Interior Southeast,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 11 (1992): 132–39; David G. Anderson, “Fluctuations between Simple and Complex Chiefdoms: Cycling in the Late Prehistoric Southeast,” in *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, ed. John F. Scarry (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 245–46.

30. HNAI, 15:315; Leroy V. Eid, “‘National War’ among Indians of Northeastern North America,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 16 (1985): 125–54. For Mississippian conquest warfare, see note 54.

31. Quote is from Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 2:101.

not to conquer territory or impose tribute. They attested to the power and vitality of the attackers, and sought to arm-twist their enemy into modifying their behavior in some way. In that sense they *were* “political” wars, but with limited goals. As Neal Salisbury described the motivations of the Narragansetts of New England: “to the Narragansett warfare was a contest in which one sought to intimidate and scatter one’s enemies through a combination of physical and supernatural weapons. The result might be a favorable shift in the balance of power but certainly not the elimination of any existing communal entities.”³² This interpretation has been applied to many of the larger attacks on the European settlements, but also applies to significant inter-Indian wars. The Iroquois attack on the Huron in 1648–49 described above was one example of the “grand” war on a large scale and so, in its own way, was the Powhatan attack of 1622.

Native American societies did not necessarily recognize a strict duality between little and grand war. The little war of the blood feud could escalate, through frustration, into larger attacks otherwise lacking the political or economic intent of “grand” war.³³ Conversely, a people could launch a long series of small-scale “little” war style raids, but with a larger political purpose in mind: attempting in effect to achieve “conquest by harassment.”³⁴ It was even possible to resolve disputes through single combat between champions, truly a “little” war but with larger political import.³⁵

Nor did Native Americans draw a stark line between war and peace (perhaps in part due to the endemic nature of blood revenge needs). Peace did not exist as a formally declared state so much as it was achieved through the mollification of hostile feelings.³⁶ Since within their cultural system it was nearly impossible to completely erase hostile feelings within every individual, the possibility of attack always existed. Declarations of war did occur, such as sending the red stick, or flying the red flag of war, but there also existed a level of conflict between peace

32. Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 229. For other discussions of “political” goals for Native American warfare, see Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 51–54; Thomas C. Parramore, “The Tuscarora Ascendancy,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 59 (1982): 322–23.

33. Thus the Keowee Cherokees’ threat to draw in other towns as quoted above.

34. See note 29.

35. For example, the Montagnais and the Iroquois once agreed to “spare the blood of our followers” and submit to the judgment of a wrestling contest. JR, 1:269–70.

36. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 257; Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 40. See also below in the section on making peace.

and outright war during which significant levels of violence could be in play, perhaps intended to carry a political message, or perhaps intended to allow young men to let off steam without a full commitment to war.³⁷ Essentially, there was another point on the spectrum between the poles of peace and war, which for lack of a better phrase, I call the “not quite war” level of conflict.³⁸ The “not quite war” is politically motivated as an effort to effect relations between groups, but employs only the small-scale methods of “little” war. It may perhaps even be deliberately disavowable as little war (a personal grudge only) if peace is determined to be a better alternative. Furthermore, the “not quite war” functioned very well within the imperial context, helped along by the autonomy of individual towns within the larger groups, easing the process by which Indian headmen could “capitalize on [their] decentralized, kin-based politics to cultivate connections with rival colonies and so avoid dependence on a single European power.”³⁹

As an example of such behavior, consider Tom Hatley’s analysis of a Creek attack on the English trader John Sharp’s home near the Cherokee town of Nayowee in 1724. The Creeks approached his house, fired several volleys, wounded Sharp in the leg, and then plundered his house. All of this was done within sight of the Cherokee town, whose residents declined to interfere. Hatley interprets Sharp’s survival as proof that the Creeks were merely making a point, “a symbolic statement about the strength of Creek men to the onlooking Cherokee villagers.”⁴⁰ They could just as well have been making a point to the English and the traders, but at any rate Sharp was neither killed nor captured, nor were the Creeks then “at war” with the English.

The Cherokees engaged in a similar round of “not quite war” with the English in 1758. Nominally allied with the British during the French and Indian War, some of their warriors returning home from Pennsylvania

37. For examples of the red stick or red flag, see Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 243; Adair, *History*, 408. Similarly, there is the famous story of the Narragansett chief Canonicus sending a clear warning of impending war to the Plymouth colonists in the form of a rattlesnake’s skin wrapped around a bundle of arrows. Governor Bradford’s response of returning the skin stuffed with powder and shot impressed Canonicus enough to make him back off from his challenge. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647* (New York: Random House, 1981), 106; Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675*, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 79–80.

38. For a modern parallel, consider the United States’s bombing of Libya in 1986, or the cruise missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998.

39. Richter, “Native Peoples of North America,” 357.

40. Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 44–45. The original document is available as: John Sharp to Governor Nicholson, 12 November 1724, in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1574–1739*, CD-ROM, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman, John C. Appleby, and Mandy Banton (London: Routledge, 2000), Item 429v, 34:280.

were attacked and killed by Virginia militia in a dispute over stolen horses. As a matter of course, the relatives and townsmen of the men sought blood revenge, and were aided by anti-British factions within the Cherokees who hoped to join with the French. Small groups of warriors began to raid the white frontier in Virginia and North Carolina, and in fact continued to raid the frontier throughout the summer and fall of 1759. Strikingly, at the same time all remained peaceful around the British forts in the Cherokee towns. Trade and relations there continued, if with greater worry and tension. There was no sense of the two peoples being "at war," even while some Cherokees were undeniably wreaking havoc elsewhere. When diplomatically confronted, the Cherokee leadership downplayed the violence, describing it as young men out of control. The conflict thus was both simple blood debt and political at the same time, all while the Cherokees tried to avoid a broadening of the conflict.⁴¹

Once "at war," whether at the "grand," "little," or even the "not quite war" level, a number of factors built into Native American society tended to limit the extent of the conflict's lethality and overall destructiveness—for both the attacker and the defender. These structures were not absolute, and they may or may not have originated as deliberate efforts to restrain war, but there is little doubt that they served that function in practice.

To begin with, Native American war demanded a certain level of ritual preparedness and sacred purity. Meeting those needs had an impact not only on the frequency and relentlessness of war, but also on individual behavior within war, specifically with regard to rape. Although much of Native American warfare was at least nominally motivated by the desire for revenge, ostensibly one of the more "bloody-minded" and unlimited approaches to war, it still occurred within a cultural framework that carried certain spiritual expectations. Those expectations reined in the potentially unrestrained attitudes arising from revenge-based warfare. Prior to the departure of any war party the community, the leadership, and the warriors partook in a series of ritual activities designed to insure the success of their endeavor. Southeastern Indians retired to the war chief's winter house, remaining there for three days and nights, fasting and drinking potions, intended both to purify them and protect them from danger.⁴² John Gyles, captured by the Abenaki in 1689, described a feast in preparation for war that both served ritual purposes and identified those willing to volunteer.⁴³ Mary Rowlandson, cap-

41. Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee," 761–62.

42. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 243–44; Adair, *History*, 167–78.

43. John Gyles, "Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc.," in *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 120.

tive among the Wampanoags, witnessed a ritual dance prior to the departure of a war party that seemed in its details to embody the classic pre-hunt dance in which the warriors enacted the events of a successful raid.⁴⁴ The preparatory rituals of the Miamis lasted for a full five days and nights, and attendance was mandatory.⁴⁵

Common to many of these prewar rituals was the expectation that proper access to spiritual power would provide protection in war.⁴⁶ Such a belief attested to the Native American outlook that the spiritual and material world were in fact coterminous. Spiritual power was immanent in the world and could be tapped by ritual skill.⁴⁷ Such a powerful belief in the importance of ritual to the successful outcome of war meant that an offensive could easily be derailed by bad omens, whether natural or deliberately manufactured. The sensitivity of a small-scale society to casualties enhanced this probability. If the spirits seemed unwilling to support the people's attack, the people could not afford to ignore them and risk defeat. Little Carpenter, a Cherokee leader in 1758, explained that their expedition to aid the British war effort could not leave because the "Conjurers" had produced omens of a "Distemper" which would afflict them after the first two months of the expedition.⁴⁸ A raid by the Indian people living on the Gaspé Peninsula in 1661 saw half of its participants depart when one of their number "just now recalled" the command of a dying relative (and therefore spiritually significant) not to participate in the raid.⁴⁹

44. Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, ed. Neil Salisbury (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 100.

45. *HNAI*, 15:685–86. Examples can expand almost infinitely. For the Iroquois, see *HNAI*, 15:315–16.

46. Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 22; J. Frederick Fausz, "Fighting 'Fire' with Firearms: The Anglo-Powhatan Arms Race in Early Virginia," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3 (1979): 41–42; Corkran, *Cherokee Frontier*, 155.

47. Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1–22, contains an extensive discussion of the relationship of the spiritual, the material, and war.

48. George Turner to Governor Lyttelton, 2 July 1758, in *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754–62*, ed. William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia: Colonial Records of South Carolina, Series 2, 1970), 2:471 (hereafter *DRIA*). Colin Calloway records a similar instance of the Creeks delaying a war party until the completion of the Green Corn ceremony. *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 62.

49. *JR*, 47:227. War parties also carried medicine bundles or other sacred objects whose loss could send the warriors home. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 244, 247; Adair, *History*, 409; Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 53; *HNAI*, 15:685, 695–96.

Sacred restrictions included a prohibition on sexual intercourse, which extended to prohibit the rape of enemy women. Although as we will see, women were targets in other ways—for capture, adoption, and possible marriage—there appears to have been no equivalent in Native American societies to the European soldiers' propensity to indulge in rape as a requisite of war.⁵⁰ This is, in fact, an arena in which we can identify a Native American expectation of war that almost certainly came into conflict with the Europeans. There is not much direct evidence on the subject, but there was certainly one example of English soldiers raping Cherokee women that contributed to starting a war.⁵¹

Finally, acknowledging the fundamental spiritual harm caused by the taking of life, some societies expected returning warriors to undergo a period of purification prior to their full reentry into society. Anthropologist Charles Hudson described the general process for the southeastern Indians as a process much like that before setting out: three days of fasting under the guidance of the war chief, accompanied each night by the women singing songs outside the war chief's home.⁵² The Shawnees practiced a similar postraid purification through isolation and fasting.⁵³ This need for purification after a raid created a basic limitation on the frequency of war, since it at least nominally prevented those warriors from simply resupplying and returning to the attack.

Where the needs of the spirit world provided a kind of halting, awkward, and unpredictable restriction on warfare, the more immediate and loudly voiced expectations of the people on their leadership created a different and more abiding set of limitations. The coercive power of Native American leaders was extremely limited, and it was thus difficult to raise large armies or to maintain one's leadership position after a defeat. Authority within a people usually derived from the consensus of the elders channeled through a peace and a war chief. We will return to

50. James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 32 (1975): 67; Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness*, 107n82; Thomas S. Abler, "Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Conflicting Values in War," *Anthropologica* 34 (1992): 13; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 9–10; Armstrong Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare, 1675–1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 28, 81; Cave, *Pequot War*, 20; Elizabeth Hanson, "God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty," in *Puritans and Indians*, 242 (see also the editors' comments in *ibid.*, 14); Adair, *History*, 171–72.

51. Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 107; Adair, *History*, 260–61. Richard White reports another instance of Indians taking revenge for the rape of women in the 1760s. White, *The Middle Ground*, 345.

52. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 252. See also Starkey, *European and Native American*, 28.

53. *HNAI*, 15:628. See also the Miamis' postraid ritual, which although not as directly confining, deprived the warriors of their personal sacred bundles for several days, presumably preventing them from returning to war immediately. *HNAI*, 15:685.

the exact nature of their relationship later, but for the moment it is sufficient to observe that this division of power and authority restrained the usually more aggressive tendencies of the war chief. Furthermore, the group's religious figure or shaman himself wielded a separate authority through his more extensive contact with the spirit world.⁵⁴ In military terms, this divided structure of leadership dependent on the consensus of the group imposed two significant limitations. The first was the inability to coerce warriors to go to war—the mobilization problem. We have seen how grieving relatives could persuade others, usually young men in search of status, to join them in a blood feud. To raise troops for more “political” warfare required an almost identical, and therefore equally fragile process. As hinted in the preceding discussion of ritual preparation, warrior mobilization and purification were an intertwined process. James Adair, a trader and traveler in the eighteenth-century southeast, described the process of mobilization:

In the first commencement of a war, a party of the injured tribe turns out first, to revenge the innocent crying blood of their own bone and flesh, as they term it. When the leader begins to beat up for volunteers, he goes three times round his dark winter-house, contrary to the course of the sun, sounding the war whoop, singing the war song, and beating the drum. Then he speaks to the listening crowd with very rapid language, short pauses, and an awful commanding voice. . . . Persuad[ing] his kindred warriors and others, who are not afraid of the enemies bullets and arrows, to come and join him with manly cheerful hearts. . . . By his eloquence, but chiefly by their own greedy thirst of revenge, and intense love of martial glory . . . a number soon join him in his winter house [and commence the three-day fast].⁵⁵

The emphasis here is on volunteers, motivated by desire for revenge and status, and presumably supported in their hopes by the reputation of the

54. Native American societies that had combined, or partially combined, this tripartite power structure into one person were typically more militant and aggressive. Frederic Gleach has made this argument for Powhatan's power in Virginia: that for reasons unknown, Powhatan had successfully combined civil, military, and religious authority in his person, and thus was able to embark on building a paramount chiefdom. Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 31. Similarly, the more centralized and urbanized Mississippian societies of the late prehistoric southeast were ruled by “priest-kings,” who combined civil, military, and sacred functions, and waged aggressive conquest warfare in competition with each other and with surrounding less-centralized peoples. Charles M. Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando De Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 17; David H. Dye, “The Art of War in the Sixteenth-Century Central Mississippi Valley,” in *Perspectives on the Southeast: Linguistics, Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Patricia B. Kwachka (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 54–56; Dye, “Warfare in the Sixteenth-Century Southeast,” 213–14.

55. Adair, *History*, 167–68.

war leader. A similar process of ritual volunteering occurred among the northern Iroquoian and Algonkian peoples as well.⁵⁶ One should immediately note that these recruitment processes by their very nature were confined to one town at a time. Efforts to raise warrior volunteers from other towns required extensive negotiations, travel, and even gift-giving to convince other towns to join in.⁵⁷ Despite a generalized martial enthusiasm among the young men, such mobilization techniques among an already demographically limited society further restrained the size of war parties on most occasions. In turn, a smaller war party could inflict only limited damage.

Furthermore, the fragile authority of the war chief tended to limit the risks he could take while on campaign. High levels of casualties were ill-afforded, and generally defined a war party as unsuccessful. The Iroquois believed that "a victory bought with blood is no victory."⁵⁸ The blame in such a case fell squarely on the war leader, usually on an assumption of his lack of ritual purity. Adair noted that "they reckon the leader's impurity to be the chief occasion of bad success; and if he lose several of his warriors by the enemy . . . he is degraded by taking from him his drum, war-whistle, and martial titles, and debasing him to his boy's name."⁵⁹ The Illinois apparently systematized the process: two failures simply ended a war leader's career.⁶⁰ Serious disasters put the war leader's very life in jeopardy. After the English destruction of the Pequot village of Mystic in 1637, the Pequots very nearly killed their leader Sassacus.⁶¹ Such punishments, combined with the minimal standards for success (a few scalps or prisoners would do), encouraged the war leader to avoid risk, thus limiting the likely destructive potential of any given raid.

In practice, to "avoid risk" meant pursuing a limited repertoire of tactical techniques. A casualty-averse war party's best option was sur-

56. Colden, *History*, 6–7; Gyles, "Memoirs," 120; JR, 47:221–31; Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains*, 275–76.

57. See, for example, Richter, *Ordeal*, 34–35; Cave, *Pequot War*, 3; Trigger, *Children*, 69; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21; Hadlock, "War," 211.

58. Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (London, 1761), 1:360, cited in Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755–1763* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 204. See also the Iroquois mobilization process described in José António Brandão, ed., *Nation Iroquoise: A Seventeenth-Century Ethnography of the Iroquois* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 67, 73, 75.

59. Adair, *History*, 416.

60. HNAI, 15:676. See also Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 34; Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains*, 270.

61. Cave, *Pequot War*, 157.

prise. If they achieved surprise, either by ambushing a smaller party, or by attacking a sleeping village, then the relative casualty count for the defender could be quite high. There was no lack of willingness to kill large numbers of the enemy.⁶² As the Cherokees once explained to George Chicken, “it was not plunder they wanted from them but to go to war with them [the Creeks] and cut them off[!],” that is, to kill them.⁶³ To successfully kill very many, however, depended on surprise, and surprise was difficult to achieve. An alert enemy, or one informed by “resident aliens” as discussed below, would be prepared, leaving the attacking war party with the options of returning home, offering open battle, or if the defenders remained behind a palisade, of laying siege. Each of these choices involves some interpretive controversy, so we need to consider each in some detail, and their relation to each other.

Over the last two decades the usual argument about Native American tactical techniques has been that they were relatively innocuous and bloodless prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Some have argued more specifically that Native Americans preferred to engage in linear pitched battles fought in a ritualistic manner, and with a great deal of mutual firing and dodging of missile weapons, and not many casualties.⁶⁴ The corollary to this interpretation was that the arrival of European technology and more lethal metal arrowheads, rapidly followed by clumsy but lethal guns, led Indians to abandon the pitched battle, and revert to the old alternative (never entirely abandoned) of ambush. This line of thinking has occasionally been taken to extremes, arguing that the Europeans introduced the Indians to torture and scalping, and even to the deliberate killing of enemies in battle.⁶⁵ One of the most frequently cited works on Native warfare, after describing the loss of fifty Mohawks in a 1669 battle, asserts the unknowable: “such heavy losses in a single action were unheard of before the arrival of the white man and his weapons.”⁶⁶

62. Some anthropologists and ethnohistorians would disagree with this statement, arguing that the casualty counts documented in the historic era (such as the 1649 Iroquois attack) resulted from European influence. See below.

63. Chicken, “Journal of the March (1715),” 342.

64. Richter, *Ordeal*, 35; Bruce G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth, Tex.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990), 54; Adam J. Hirsch, “The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *Journal of American History* 74 (1988): 1191; Fausz, “Fighting Fire,” 34; Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1991), 29–31.

65. Nathaniel Knowles, “The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,” *American Philosophical Society Proceedings* 82 (1940): 151–225; Daniel Barr, “‘This Land is Ours’: The Western Lenape Struggle for Autonomy, 1754–64,” paper presented to the Organization of American Historians Conference, Washington, D.C., April 2002.

66. Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 65.

Recent anthropological work has offered a more complex, and more convincing, understanding of this style of war.⁶⁷ Their basic argument is that both highly lethal and highly ritualized warfare could coexist, with one superseding the other depending on circumstance.

As an example of this more nuanced understanding, let us follow a hypothetical war party of some size, and therefore with more options, say 400 to 600 warriors, and review their tactical choices. Hoping to avoid friendly casualties, but still wanting to exact revenge, gain prestige, and perhaps administer a political lesson, they seek out opportunities to surprise, ambush, and kill groups of the enemy. The initial target for such a large group would probably be an entire enemy village. If that enemy village remained unaware of their approach, then, like the Iroquois in 1649, the attackers could sneak in before dawn and inflict considerable casualties. A large-scale massacre is attested archaeologically in fourteenth-century South Dakota, and a site in Illinois from the same era also suggests a significant level of probable war-related killing.⁶⁸ The Narragansetts' advice to the English in 1637 was clear and stark: "The assault would be in the night when they [the Pequots] are commonly more secure and at home, by which advantage the English, being armed, may enter the houses and do what execution they please."⁶⁹ More commonly, however, the threatened village would be aware of their approach, would send for help, and would try to ambush the approaching warriors—much as the Cherokees in our earlier example sought to "waylay the pathes"—or gather behind a palisade wall.

If the defenders felt confident enough in their numbers and preparedness, they could offer open battle, lining up their warriors to oppose the approaching enemy. Such battles were documented on several occasions by early European explorers. Samuel Champlain participated in one against the Iroquois in 1609.⁷⁰ The Powhatans enacted a

67. Otterbein, "A History," 800; William Tulio Divale, *Warfare in Primitive Societies: A Bibliography* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1973), xxi–xxii; Thomas B. Abler, "European Technology and the Art of War in Iroquoia," in *Cultures in Conflict: Current Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Diana Tkaczuk and Brian C. Vivian (Calgary: University of Calgary Archaeology Association, 1989), 278–79. Lawrence Keeley's emphasis on the *per capita* lethality of primitive warfare in general is an important stimulus to this argument, in his *War before Civilization*.

68. George R. Milner, "Warfare in Prehistoric and Early Historic Eastern North America," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 7 (1999): 126–27; Patricia M. Lambert, "The Archaeology of War: A North American Perspective," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 10 (2002): 227–29; Maria Ostendorf Smith, "Osteological Indications of Warfare in the Archaic Period of the Western Tennessee Valley," in Martin and Frayer, *Troubled Times*, 241–66.

69. *Winthrop Papers*, 3:413–14, cited in Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 29.

70. Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 175–76.

mock battle for the benefit of the early Virginia colonists.⁷¹ And Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues passed on a drawing and a description of a Florida tribe drawn up for battle in a deep, massed formation.⁷² Even later witnesses in New England continued to describe Indians as occasionally lining up for battle. Roger Williams described their “pitcht field” battles as seldom killing twenty men, since “they fight with leaping and dancing, that seldome an Arrow hits, and when a man is wounded, unlesse he that shot followes upon the wounded they soon retire and save the wounded.”⁷³ The Yamassees in the “typical raid” example outlined earlier also adopted this option when attacked in their fort by the Creeks. These open battles, as Williams indicated, proceeded without much result. Very few casualties, and possibly even the first letting of blood, sufficed to end the battle and each side would return home.⁷⁴ Rather than view this as the main object of the expedition, however, it is probably more accurate to consider these kinds of battles as moments in which the expedition *has already failed*, having lost the benefit of surprise. The battle served only to uphold their collective prestige. It was, in short, a face-saving measure, if perhaps also a kind of test of strength.

If the defender chose instead to remain behind walls, the attacker had three basic choices: assault the walls, blockade the defenders, or go home. The first option was relatively rare, particularly during the pre-contact era, because of the technological balance between offense and defense. There was no easy way to overcome the defenders without absorbing significant casualties. Fire was one option to speed the assault, and was certainly resorted to on occasion, even prior to the arrival of Europeans.⁷⁵ In general, however, attackers seemed to prefer the blockade, supplemented by sniping at the walls from the cover of the woods, and trying to cut off any individuals straying outside the fort. The besiegers could keep this up for as long as significant reinforcements from other villages of the defenders’ people did not arrive. The blockade avoided casualties while offering the possibility of taking isolated prisoners or scalps and gaining the associated air of victory and prestige.

71. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 43–44, reprints the colonists’ descriptions of the battle, but Gleach does not believe it represented their normal way of fighting.

72. Paul Hulton, ed., *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne De Morgues: A Huguenot Artist in France, Florida and England* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1977), 1:144, and plate 105.

73. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 188–89.

74. Richter, *Ordeal*, 35.

75. Craig S. Keener, “An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Iroquois Assault Tactics Used against Fortified Settlements of the Northeast in the Seventeenth Century,” *Ethnohistory* 46 (1999): 777–807; Hulton, *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne*, 1:149 and plate 123. Compare: Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 14; Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, xxv.

In short, the technological and tactical balance of the offense and the defense, both in siege warfare and in open battle, meant that warfare prior to the arrival of Europeans would usually be a relatively mild affair. Successful surprise, however, overcame that limitation, and could immediately produce huge *per capita* casualty ratios.⁷⁶ The European arrival did not introduce the concept of lethality in warfare; what it did do was to introduce new technologies that upset the parity of offense and defense, making the open battle more lethal and a successful siege and assault possible. The better-equipped Iroquois, therefore, could use metal axes to cut through the palisade walls of the Hurons, even after surprise had failed (as they did at St. Louis). In the face of the inability to either dodge bullets or heal bullet wounds, the ritual battle, probably never the true centerpiece of Native American warfare, rapidly disappeared.⁷⁷ It still happened, of course, that large war parties could encounter each other while far from their villages with neither side having the benefit of surprise. In that eventuality, battle might follow, but not the linear open battle described by the early sources. Instead individual warriors "took to the trees," firing from cover and endeavoring to outflank their enemy with a "half-moon" formation, negating the enemy's use of a single tree as cover.⁷⁸ Roger Williams's dictionary of the Narragansett language contains only a few phrases with tactical implications, but they give a good impression of the most important issues in Native American warfare: "They fly from us / Let us pursue"; "They lie in the way"; "They fortifie"; "An house fired"; "An Halfe Moone in war"; and probably most important of all, "Keep Watch."⁷⁹

All of these tactical issues and their possible lethality relate to a larger and even more controversial topic, the question of a Native American "total war." Again, the usual understanding of Native American warfare prior to European contact is that warriors did not seek the indiscriminate destruction of the old, the women, and the children, nor did they usually burn villages or crops in the European tradition of lay-

76. See note 68 above.

77. This does not mean that "ritualism" disappeared, just the ritual battle. Fausz, "Fighting Fire"; Starkey, *European and Native American*, 24–25; Richter, *Ordeal*, 54; Otterbein, "Why the Iroquois Won," 59–60. Note that these sources argue for the shift in tactics due to firearms. My argument, with significant influence from Otterbein and Divale, is for a broader shift from a duality of war styles (ritual battle and deadly ambush) to a stricter reliance on the ambush based on the shifting balance of offense vs. defense (see note 67).

78. Leroy V. Eid, "'A Kind of Running Fight': Indian Battlefield Tactics in the late Eighteenth Century," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 71 (1988): 147–71; DRIA, 2:467, 468; Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 43.

79. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 184–86. As an indication of its importance, there is a single word for the half-moon formation: "Onoettug."

ing waste the countryside. Francis Jennings and Patrick Malone have even argued that Indians were taken aback by the European destruction of villages and crops.⁸⁰ In one instance some Pequots literally queried the English about their style of war, asking “if we did use to kill women and children?” The English reply that they “should see thereafter” may have been a bit of a shock.⁸¹ Later in the conflict, the Narragansetts, although allied with the English against the Pequots, sent a message through Roger Williams expressing their desire that the killing of women and children be avoided.⁸² And, most famously, when the English and the Narragansetts utterly destroyed the Pequot village at Mystic, killing hundreds of all ages and sexes, the Narragansetts “came to us, and rejoiced at our victories, . . . but cried Mach it, mach it; that is, it is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slays too many men.”⁸³

Contrary to this oft-quoted passage expressing Native American horror at an all-too-thorough European way of war, there is substantial evidence that they were themselves well prepared to carry out fairly indiscriminate destruction. Fire by definition was an indiscriminate weapon, and we find early Huron and Iroquois fortifications designed with fire prevention in mind, while Le Moyne provided a very early engraving of Indians firing an enemy village.⁸⁴ There is no denying the occasional killing of women and children during the historic era, although as we will see, many of them could be adopted instead of killed. As early as 1540 the Spanish reported both sexes and children being scalped in the southeast, and the same Pequots who queried whether the English killed women and children, upon hearing the Englishmen’s vague answer, immediately replied that they would go to Connecticut to “kill men, women, and children, and we will take away the horses, cows, and hogs.”⁸⁵ The subject remains contentious, however. The basic counter-

80. Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1975), 152–53; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 103–4.

81. Lion Gardiner, “Leift Lion Gardiner his relation of the Pequot Warres,” in *History of the Pequot War*, ed. Charles Orr (Cleveland: Helman-Taylor Co., 1897), 132.

82. Paul A. Robinson, “Lost Opportunities: Miantonomi and the English in Seventeenth-Century Narragansett Country,” in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632–1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 22–23.

83. John Underhill, *News From America* (London: n.p., 1638; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 42–43.

84. See above, note 75, especially Keener, “Ethnohistorical Analysis,” 783, 785.

85. D. Owsley and H. Berryman, “Ethnographic and Archaeological Evidence of Scalping in the Southeastern United States,” *Tennessee Archaeologist* 31 (1975): 41–60; Gardiner, “Relation,” 132. There is also strong archaeological evidence for prehistoric killing of women. Richard G. Wilkinson, “Violence against Women: Raiding and Abduction in Prehistoric Michigan,” in Martin and Frayer, *Troubled Times*,

argument is that this level of violence arose only in reaction to European methods of war. There is much to be said for that argument, but it may be that more is explained by understanding such killings within the context of a style of war that so highly valued prisoners.

One way to interpret the Narragansetts' "mach it, mach it" complaint about their English ally's destruction of the Pequots at Mystic is that such destructiveness denied them the opportunity to take prisoners for prestige or adoption. It is in the Native American attitude toward prisoners that one paradoxically finds both the most and least restraint in the overall violence of their warfare. Prisoners served three and sometimes four overlapping purposes. Bringing prisoners back to the home village certified the overall success of the mission, and warriors gained individual glory by pointing to particular prisoners as "theirs." Scalps were also a mark of success and prestige, but were considered a poor second best to a live prisoner. The preference for prisoners over scalps arose from prisoners' other three functions. A prisoner, particularly an adult male, became the target for the captors' rage and grief at their other losses. Elaborate and extended rituals of torture unto death existed in many of the Eastern Woodland cultures. Scholars continue to struggle to understand their exact meaning, but it is clear that at the center of the process was a tremendous outpouring of violent grief—an outpouring in which the whole town—men, women, and children—participated. Native prisoners were well aware of what awaited them, and sought to remain impassive in the face of excruciatingly inventive torture. Not crying out certified their personal bravery, and some captor tribes sought to partake of that bravery through a ritual cannibalism in which they imbibed the courage and spirit of their prisoner.⁸⁶

The third role of the prisoner was that of the adoptee. Adoption of prisoners may have been less universal than torture, but some incorporation into the captor group, either as kin or as a kind of servant, remained extremely common. For the Iroquois people in particular, the taking of prisoners in war was designed both to assuage grief and to restock their own population. In this "mourning war" complex Iroquois families adopted prisoners to replace dead kinspeople, while torturing those not selected in a venting of their grief. Daniel Richter and José

21–44. The extent of such killing is debated, but it certainly occurred. See Brian Ferguson's summary essay, "Violence and War in Prehistory" in the same volume, pp. 321–55.

86. Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 169–78; Richter, *Ordeal*, 35–36; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 254–55. Hudson also indicates that intertwined with torture as an expression of grief was a spiritual component, that is, torture also served a ritual purpose. Cf. Trigger, *Children*, 1:73–74. For a survey of the different torture rituals, see Knowles, "The Torture of Captives."

Brandão have both rooted most if not all of the Iroquois wars, particularly of the seventeenth century, in the ultimately vain pursuit of sufficient prisoners to replace their losses in war and from disease.⁸⁷ Prisoner adoption was by no means exclusive to the Iroquois; the process is simply most clearly understood for them. Among other trends it is well known that the demographic disaster of disease and war over the centuries of contact forced many peoples to reconfigure themselves through assimilation of other peoples; included in that process was prisoner adoption or incorporation.⁸⁸

The final role of the prisoner was as a source of ransom. Native Americans quickly became aware of the lengths to which European families would go to retrieve prisoners, and the imperial wars between France and England formalized the process of redemption through ransom. James Axtell has argued that the whole prisoner-taking complex of Indian warfare shifted in response to this economic possibility.⁸⁹ Prisoners could still bring honor, but now they brought material reward as well—but only if returned. Adoption or incorporation never disappeared, but was substantially replaced by ransom (until the departure of the French) through the opposite imperial power's good offices.

This over-determined desire for prisoners limited the total level of destructiveness of Indian war.⁹⁰ In battle it was difficult to seize a prisoner at all, and if one succeeded, one was unlikely to return to the fray to take another, leaving the first prisoner either unguarded or subject to competitive confiscation by one of his fellow warriors.⁹¹ While some of

87. Brandão, *Your Fyre*, passim, 130–31; Richter, “War and Culture.”

88. See, for example, Helen C. Rountree, “The Powhatans and Other Woodland Indians as Travelers,” in *Powhatan Foreign Relations, 1500–1722*, ed. Helen C. Rountree (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 50; Starkey, *European and Native American*, 29–30; James Merrell, *The Indians' New World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 30–31; Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 142–51. A critical essay for understanding the use of prisoners as labor is Christina Snyder, “Conquered Enemies, Adopted Kin, and Owned People: The Creek Indians and Their Captives,” *Journal of Southern History* (forthcoming).

89. Axtell, “White Indians,” 59–61.

90. For a good discussion of the various uses of prisoners, see Ian K. Steele, “Surrendering Rites: Prisoners on Colonial North American Frontiers,” in *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson*, ed. Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors, Clyve Jones, and Philip Lawson (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: Boydell Press, 1998), 138–42. Richter argues that the whole nature of Iroquois warfare (reliance on surprise, avoidance of assaulting forts, ritualized battles) was determined by this desire to take prisoners. Richter, *Ordeal*, 37–38.

91. Increase Mather, “Quentin Stockwell's Relation of his Captivity and Redemption,” in Vaughan and Clark, *Puritans among the Indians*, 81; Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the “Massacre”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121.

the prisoners would be tortured to death, others would survive as adoptees (or ransomees), limiting the total lethality of the conflict. Furthermore, the most likely adoptees were women and children, and so the goal of prisoner adoption, if not a generalized revulsion against total war, tended to limit the killing of the defenseless. Finally, and most speculatively, the extremity of torture practiced on individual prisoners may have played a role in limiting the need for further warfare. Since much warfare was originally motivated by a desire for revenge, the lengthy and elaborate rituals of torture practiced on a few individuals supposedly "responsible" for the original death may have forestalled or obviated the need for killing greater numbers of the enemy group.⁹²

The logic of taking prisoners and its apparent limitations on overall violence had a flip side, however, and that was the side usually emphasized by Europeans. The targeting of women and children as preferential prisoners for adoption violated European norms of war that nominally preferred to exempt women and children from the theater of conflict at all. Furthermore, the torture of prisoners, particularly the communal public torture of prisoners, also violated European norms.⁹³ In John Lawson's otherwise sympathetic description of southern Native American life in 1709, he called it the one thing "they are seemingly guilty of an error in."⁹⁴ Finally, the long and difficult return marches after a successful raid, often under pursuit, meant that the captors ruthlessly weeded out the unfit or incapable: in their minds this was a mercy killing to be preferred to slow starvation.⁹⁵ The logic of war for prisoners, however, extended beyond this simple calculation of fitness. While in theory a successful surprise of an enemy village could result in hundreds of prisoners, as after the Iroquois capture of St. Ignace in 1649, logistically there was almost no way to guard that many prisoners for the long trip home. Fearing pursuit, and not wanting to release their enemies, the Iroquois on that occasion summarily killed many of their prisoners.⁹⁶

Native Americans explicitly expressed this thought process when arguing with their European allies against the European practice of exchanging or paroling prisoners. In their worldview, to return prisoners

92. Richter, *Ordeal*, 40.

93. James Axtell, "The Scholastic Philosophy of the Wilderness," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 138–50; Wayne E. Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers in Revolutionary North Carolina: The Culture of Violence in Riot and War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 119–29.

94. John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London: n.p., 1709; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 207.

95. John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 24, 29, 33, 38–39.

96. *JR*, 34:135–37.

to the enemy made no sense. They would lose the chance to both grieve and exult, and their enemies would live to fight them again. The Creeks and Cherokees, assisting in an English attack on St. Augustine, witnessed such a prisoner exchange and accused the English of conducting a sham fight.⁹⁷ More famously, the French-allied Indians complained about the negotiated surrender of Ft. William Henry in 1757, refused to abide by the terms of the surrender, and attacked the retreating British troops. Even in this incident, however, one can also see the restraining effects of war for prisoners. The successful acquisition of prisoners and plunder usually meant the end of an expedition, so that once the Indian allies of the French in 1757 had in fact acquired some prisoners and plunder, they promptly abandoned the French offensive.⁹⁸

The end of an offensive, however, did not mean the end of hostilities, and the resumption of peaceful relations required complex diplomacy. The full range of diplomatic activity and techniques lies beyond the scope of this essay, but there are some structures and practices designed to facilitate the process of peacemaking that are worth elaborating here. First, Native Americans typically extended protections over enemy embassies to facilitate the beginning of negotiations. We have already seen how the Cherokees' violation of this code in 1715 brought lasting enmity with the Creeks.⁹⁹ This fundamental need to allow for the safe passage of negotiators was almost the *sine qua non* of limiting warfare among Europeans, and its role was perhaps even more important in an environment of endemic, revenge-based warfare.

The attack on the Creek embassy notwithstanding, the more normal protections for diplomatic parties can be seen in the peace negotiations between the Iroquois and the French and their allies in 1644 and 1645. The French-allied Indians released an Iroquois prisoner to return to his people to carry a message about the possibility of peace. Alternatively, a third party could be invoked to serve as an intermediary for this initial and most dangerous establishment of contact.¹⁰⁰ In this case, the Iro-

97. Adair, *History*, 427.

98. Steele, *Betrayals*, 113, 131, 184.

99. Chicken, "Journal of the March (1715)," 345–46. Roger Williams's dictionary is again helpful in imagining this process, including such phrases as "let us parley" or "let us cease Armes." Williams, *Key into the Language*, 189. See also *JR*, 70:195.

100. A third party would not be implicated in the ongoing cycle of blood revenge, and therefore could approach the warring sides in greater safety. The English often saw themselves as filling this third party role, but usually for their own economic reasons, since they preferred to trade with all comers. See, for example, the Pequots' appeal to the English in 1634. Cave, *Pequot War*, 69–70. Similarly, the Indians sought to use Rhode Island as an intermediary between themselves and the other New England colonies at the outset of King Philip's War. John Easton, "A Relacion of the Indyan Warre," in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675–1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: Charles Scribner, 1913), 8–9.

quois sent back three negotiators and also released a French prisoner as their own gesture of good faith. The three negotiators were then hosted as eminent guests and treated with more than kindness.¹⁰¹ Similarly suggestive of the process through which Native peoples sought to end war was the Pequots' approach to Lion Gardiner's fort on the Connecticut River in 1637, "calling to us to speak with them." Gardiner and a translator went out to negotiate, and the Pequots asked if they had "fought enough." Although no peace was forthcoming at this attempt, both sides obeyed the dictates of the negotiating truce.¹⁰²

Of course, the approach of one side asking for peace did not mean that the other had to accept it, but the divide between civil and military authority within a people helped the process of choosing peace. Civil chiefs, especially in those peoples where the civil chief's authority passed through hereditary succession, did not have their personal prestige or power vested in successful war.¹⁰³ Where the war chiefs, supported by eager young men, might prefer to continue to pursue opportunities for victory, or to overcome recent reverses, those pressures did not apply to the civil chiefs in the same way. The Creeks went so far as to force their White, or peace, chiefs to take an oath that they must always be devoted to the White path of peace and that they must never shed human blood.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the ruling council tended to be made up of older men, respected for their wisdom, and already possessed of war honors.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, over the course of the colonial era, the power of the war chiefs tended to rise. European traders and diplomats almost invariably conducted negotiations with war chiefs, or younger members of the council who served as spokesmen for the real power behind the curtain.¹⁰⁶ As conductors of those negotiations, they both received the diplo-

101. JR, 27:246–73. See Richter, *Ordeal*, 41, and Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 257, for more details on the peacemaking process.

102. Quotes from Gardiner, "Relation," 131–32. For another example of the protection of embassies, see Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness*, 102–3, especially where the Wampanoag leadership expressed regret that some "Matchit" (bad) Indian had stolen provisions from the English embassy.

103. HNAI, 15:314–15; Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 34–35; Aron, *How the West*, 34.

104. Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 223–24.

105. "The Examination of James Quannapaquait," in Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness*, 124–25; Laftau, *Customs*, 2:101–3; Calloway, *Western Abenakis*, 172; Saunt, *A New Order*, 23–25.

106. HNAI, 15:192, 314–15. One European observer, for example, exactly reversed the real power relationship among the Cherokees: "Every Town has a Head Warrior, who is in great Esteem among them, and whose Authority seems to be greater than their Kings, because their King is looked upon as little else than a Civil Magistrate, except it so happens that he is at the same Time a Head Warrior." Sir Alexander Cuming, "Journal of Sir Alexander Cuming (1730)," in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540–1800*, ed. Samuel Cole Williams (Johnson City, Tenn.: Watauga Press, 1928), 122.

matic gifts presented by the Europeans, and were assumed to be the real authority of the group. European bestowal of titles like “emperor” or “king” did not make it so, but over time this process weakened the influence of the civil and/or religious authority.¹⁰⁷ One can speculate that this decline made it more difficult to move from a state of war to one of peace as dealing with Europeans grew increasingly important.

In a similar way, Europeans affected the role of women within Native societies and their ability to restrain warfare. The political power of women varied widely among Native Americans, but some of the most prominent peoples, including the Iroquois, the Shawnees, and the Cherokees, allotted a substantial political role to women. In many instances their desire for vengeance, to grieve, or to replace their lost kin, could start a war, but in other instances they could prove a driving force to end one.¹⁰⁸ In some ways women could shift more easily from war to peace, since they, like peace chiefs, did not derive their social status or authority from success in war. European failure to understand women’s roles, and their preference for dealing with war chiefs in general, helped to undermine the potentially (although not universally) ameliorative role of women.¹⁰⁹ As did European technology, so did European diplomacy upset certain balances within Native societies that had helped to contain the capacity for endemic warfare. Claudio Saunt’s comment about the Creeks is more generally applicable: “Though Europeans observed only inconstancy and disorder, Creeks saw a healthy tension between female and male, old and young, and peace and war.”¹¹⁰

If making peace was difficult, and required a minimal level of trust, keeping the peace was perhaps even harder. Peace was more a temporary lack of hostile feelings than a permanent, preferred state of being. According to John Reid, it simply meant less looking over one’s

107. Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law From Clan to Court* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 47–48; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 222; HNAI, 15:192, 315; Wallace, *Death and Rebirth*, 40; James Axtell, “Making Do,” in *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 139; Fred Gearing, *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century* (American Anthropological Association, Memoir 93, 1962); Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 111. See also the theoretical discussion of this issue in Ferguson, “Violence and War in Prehistory,” 336.

108. For pushing men to war: Wallace, *Death and Rebirth*, 101; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 60, 224. For pushing an end to war: Saunt, *New Order of Things*, 25; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 187.

109. The role of Europeans in diminishing women’s influence within Native societies forms a substantial literature. See Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*; Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 191.

110. Saunt, *New Order of Things*, 25.

shoulder.¹¹¹ The elders of the council realized that they could not fully control the desires of their young men to seek glory—and perhaps continued revenge—and thus in their creation of a peace they also had to seek ways to make such adventuring both less likely, and less likely to be successful. One component of the solution was a varying combination of hostages and resident aliens, the latter often created by marriage between peoples. Even to use the word “hostage” is to imply a forced residence among an enemy people that does not always fit. Powhatan, for example, deliberately took in and developed personal attachments to several young Virginia colonists.¹¹² To the English they were captives or runaways who naturally needed to be restored to their own people. To Powhatan the exchange of people was supposed to be both more lasting and a carrier of information between the two peoples. Powhatan regretted the flight of the English boy Thomas Savage, saying that he was “my child, by the donative of Captain Newport, in lieu of one of my subjects Namontacke, who I purposely sent to King James his land, to see him and his country, and to returne me the true report thereof.”¹¹³ Englishmen living with the Powhatans served both as hostages at risk in the event of an English attack, but also as sources of information warning Powhatan of such an attack (and thus lessening the likelihood of a highly fatal surprise).¹¹⁴ The Europeans and the Powhatans were closer to the same understanding of the diplomatic role of marriage, but differed on the details. Both sides clearly saw Pocahontas’s marriage to John Rolfe as a marriage of peace, and the English even sought another of Powhatan’s daughters for that purpose. Powhatan refused in frustration, pointing out that he only had so many daughters, and that he dealt with many nations.¹¹⁵

111. Reid, *Better Kind of Hatchet*, 10; Richter, *Ordeal*, 40, 44–45.

112. Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 197–99.

113. Ralph Hamor, *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia* (1615) (London: n.p., 1615; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 38.

114. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World*, 152–54; Rountree, “The Powhatans and Other Woodland Indians,” 50.

115. Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 198–99. For a discussion of diplomatic marriages in another context, see Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 234. Indians in general relied heavily on real or fictive kin relationships to establish and maintain peace. Many Europeans never fully grasped the role of fictive kinship in maintaining peaceful relationships. The complexities of real and fictive kinship in peacemaking lie beyond this essay, but see: Stephen Brumwell, *White Devil: A True Story of War, Savagery, and Vengeance in Colonial America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2005), 193–94; Jon Parmenter, “After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676–1760,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 3d Ser., 64, no. 1 (2007): 39–82; Fintan O’Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), passim, 2005–6.

Marriage, adoption/incorporation, or hostages were not the only ways that visitors were introduced into the villages. It was common practice for members from many nations to live in, or lengthily visit, another people for trading or political reasons. At the simplest level, the presence of visiting Creeks in a Cherokee town, for example, made it less likely that the Creeks would try to attack another Cherokee town for fear of the fate of the visiting Creeks.¹¹⁶ More systemically, resident aliens or long-term visitors maintained interests in both camps. They frequently served as conduits of information between the groups, both formally and informally.¹¹⁷ Themselves fearing the total destruction of either group in which they now had a vested interest, they warned of impending attacks, preventing the horrifying casualty rates of a successful surprise, if not derailing an attack completely.¹¹⁸ Resident aliens could also step into the role of peace negotiator. Lacking the taint of blood revenge, they were a safe choice to send to the enemy to open negotiations. Chanco (or Chauco), who warned Jamestown in 1622, apparently also later served as an emissary from the Powhatans proposing peace, bringing with him a released prisoner.¹¹⁹ James Quannapaquait and Job Kattanani, both Christian Nipmucs, expected to fulfill this role from their position as resident aliens among the English during King Philip's War. They offered to go to King Philip to "suggest something [sic] in order to the enemies submission to the English & making peace if they found the enemy in a temper fit for it."¹²⁰ This "resident alien" system is in fact the system into

116. Reid, *Better Kind of Hatchet*, 9–10; Cave, *Pequot War*, 157 (for the Pequots' killing of English-allied Mohegans living among them after the disaster at Mystic).

117. Ian K. Steele, "Surrendering Rites," 138; Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 94; Richter, *Ordeal*, 111; Reid, *Better Kind of Hatchet*, 111; Trigger, *Huron*, 53; Cave, *Pequot War*, 66–67; Wayne E. Clark and Helen C. Rountree, "The Powhatans and the Maryland Mainland," in Rountree, *Powhatan Foreign Relations*, 132. R. Demere to Gov. Lyttelton, 23 July 1757; *idem*, 26 June 1757; White Outerbridge to Gov. Lyttelton, 8 March 1757, all in William Lyttelton Papers. Reid points out, however, that such resident aliens could also be loose cannons, acting on their own needs and thus creating trouble for the community in which they lived. Reid, *Law of Blood*, 163–72.

118. The Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf saw this warning function as the main intent of sending and receiving visitors to and from the village. *JR*, 10:229. See also the warnings passed along by one of Robert Rogers's Indian scouts to the target of Rogers's impending attack. Calloway, *Western Abenakis*, 178. There is a similar example in *ibid.*, p. 212. Karim Tiro has argued in a similar vein for the warnings passed back and forth between the divided members of the Iroquois Confederacy during the American Revolution. Karim M. Tiro, "A 'Civil' War? Rethinking Iroquois Participation in the American Revolution," *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4 (2000): 148–65, and personal communication. For a recent full treatment of Iroquois avoidance of conflict with kin on opposite sides of the imperial conflict, see Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars."

119. Gleach, *Powhatan's World*, 49–53; Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 196.

120. "The Examination of James Quannapaquait," in Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness*, 120.

which the Europeans at first fit relatively naturally. Traders and later forts and garrisons were desirable not only for their role as conduits for material goods, but also for their certification of good feelings between the two peoples.¹²¹

Escalation

The structures of keeping the peace naturally merged with those that helped to prevent or limit the frequency of war. Thus we have come full circle.¹²² But it is important to note that restraint was not necessarily the dominant characteristic of Native American war. Peace chiefs (male or female) might play a role in limiting the resort to war, or help bring a war to a halt, but the more persistent and durable drive was blood revenge reinforced by the desire for personal status. That was the true circle of Indian war, where one act led to retaliation, and that retaliation demanded yet another response, and so on. Breaking the cycle of vengeance proved extremely difficult in a society ill-suited to top-down coercion. Nevertheless, if war was endemic, it was also usually conducted on a small scale, and usually without the more destructive goal of outright elimination of an enemy people. Where European warfare of the era was persistent, thorough, and when believed necessary, all-consuming, Native American warfare was usually episodic and personal, with easily satisfied goals, although it was no less fatal than its European counterpart.

One question repeatedly raised in this essay is whether the Indians began to shed their own restraints in response to the Europeans' way of war. Recently scholars have argued that a "collision of military cultures" occurred in which each people acted in ways that violated the other's

121. Lee, "Fortify, Fight, or Flee," 757. The Europeans viewed such "go-betweens" much differently. For an extended treatment of the initial successes and ultimate failures of intermediaries between Europeans and Indians, see Merrell, *Into the American Woods*. Note, however, that I am treating "resident alien" as a much more specific category than Merrell's "go-betweens."

122. There are two other significant peacekeeping structures worth mentioning, but space forbids detailed treatment. The first was the Iroquois Confederacy, an elaborate governmental device designed to keep the peace between its five (later six) members (Mohawk, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, and later Tuscarora). It seems to have originated to quell blood feuds among those groups that at the time were deemed out of control. It was not necessarily designed to conduct diplomacy with outside groups, but to preserve peace internal to the Confederacy. Richter, *Ordeal*, 30–49; Wallace, *Death and Rebirth*, 44–47. The other was the ball game known to posterity as lacrosse. There is some suggestion that intertribal lacrosse matches, known as the "little brother of war," may have served as an outlet for young men's aggression, although it did not seem to deal with revenge issues or serve as a substitute for "grand" or national war. Thomas Vennum, *American Indian Lacrosse: Little Brother of War* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

expectations of war, leading to an overall escalation in violence. We have seen probable examples such as the Indian attitude toward rape, and the European response to the capture of women and the communal torture of prisoners. Such violations of norms naturally led to angry retaliation, and war spiraled out of control.¹²³ A more structural explanation suggests that the introduction of European diseases, technology, and materialist systems of exchange wrenched Native American warfare out of its comfortable, restrained path into something more terrifying and destructive.¹²⁴ Daniel Richter, for example, suggests that high levels of fatality from disease overwhelmed the capacity of the mourning war complex to produce the “calm minds” necessary for peace. More and more captives were needed to replace people lost to disease, dramatically escalating the frequency of war.¹²⁵ There is much in both of these arguments, but the real story is probably even more complex.

123. Peter Way, “The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War,” in *Empire and Others: British Encounters With Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850*, ed. Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 123–48; Hirsch, “Collision of Military Cultures”; Gregory T. Knouff, “Soldiers and Violence on the Pennsylvania Frontier,” in *Beyond Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Hinterland in the American Revolution*, ed. John B. Frantz and William Pencak (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 171–93; Lee, *Crowds and Soldiers*, 117–29. A variant of this argument postulates that Europeans arrived in North America during the horribly violent era of the Religious Wars, and that they brought that form of unrestrained warfare with them. In the face of an “uncivilized” enemy, the colonists preserved that way of war despite changes in Europe itself. John Ferling, *A Wilderness of Miseries: War and Warriors in Early America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 29–54; John Morgan Dederer, *War in America to 1775: Before Yankee Doodle* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 127, 129–36; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 102; Ronald Dale Karr, “Why Should You Be So Furious?: The Violence of the Pequot War,” *Journal of American History* 85 (1998): 876–909.

124. The idea that European technology increased lethality is a commonplace in histories of Native American warfare (for example: Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 65; Donald E. Worcester and Thomas E. Schilz, “The Spread of Firearms among the Indians on the Anglo-French Frontiers,” *American Indian Quarterly* 8 (1984): 103; Calloway, *Western Abenakis*, 56, 61, 88). The role of a desire for European trade goods in producing an increased frequency of war for control of trade routes or trade items (notably fur) is more complex. See note 12 and George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940); Richter, *Ordeal*, 55–74. For a general theory of European-induced escalation, see Ferguson and Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone*; Ferguson, “Violence and War in Prehistory,” 339–42. Alan Galloway, moreover, has convincingly demonstrated the increased frequency of Indian warfare as a result of their participation in the European slave trade; a participation which also dramatically altered the function and scale of prisoner-taking. *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002).

125. Richter, *Ordeal*, 58, 60.

Escalation in contact-era warfare was not just the result of simple anger at the violation of codes and expectations, nor can it be entirely attributed to the Native experience of dramatic demographic and economic change. There were also fundamental disconnects between the systems of restraint embedded in each side's culture of war. Conventions designed to limit the destruction of war fell flat without the participation or at least the understanding of the enemy. For example, Europeans understood hostages and diplomatic marriages, but they did not understand the cautionary or peacekeeping function of resident aliens.¹²⁶ In one dramatic instance, when an English emissary to Powhatan demanded the return of William Parker, who had been living with the Powhatans for some time, Powhatan complained, "you have one of my daughters [Pocahontas] with you, and I am therewith well content, but you can no sooner see or know of any English mans being with me, but you must have him away, or else break peace and friendship."¹²⁷ The English furthermore never learned to trust or truly value the presence of Christianized Indians living among themselves as sources of information and warnings of attacks, famously ignoring John Sassamon's warning of King Philip's impending plans for war.¹²⁸ Fundamentally, the English rapidly learned to use allied Indians as aids in war, but only rarely as aids to peace. The English refused to live with Indians, instead separating them into their own towns or reservations. The "Praying Indians" of Massachusetts, for example, already segregated into their own towns, were rounded up and confined on an island in Boston harbor during King Philip's War.¹²⁹ In numerous Euro-Indian conflicts, militias repeatedly massacred peaceful, converted Indian groups, apparently unable or unwilling to distinguish between friendly and enemy peoples.¹³⁰

126. James Drake argues that there was even a basic misunderstanding of the meaning of "hostage" during King Philip's War. James David Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 115-16.

127. Hamor, *A True Discourse*, 44.

128. Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 21.

129. Drake, *King Philip's War*, 87; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 156-58. For a moving story of how two Praying Indians struggled to prove their loyalty in the face of persistent doubt, see "The Examination and Relation of James Quannapaquait," in Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness*, 118-28.

130. Two famous examples in Pennsylvania were the Paxton Boys massacre in 1763 and Gnadenhutten in 1782: Benjamin Franklin, "Narrative of the Late Massacres," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), 11:42-69; White, *The Middle Ground*, 389-91. For other similar incidents, see Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "Massacre at Hurtleberry Hill: Christian Indians and English Authority in Metacom's War," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 53 (1996): 459-86; Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 65-87; Aron, *How the West*, 49.

Other failures to synchronize systems of restraint have been noted in this essay. European systems of prisoner exchange and parole clashed with Native American ideas of the ways in which prisoners could be used. There is no question of “better” or “worse” here. The European system preserved prisoners’ lives, but within the context of a much more lethal style of war. The Native system killed fewer outright, but then regarded prisoners as a prize of war—some to incorporate congenially into the captor’s society and others to be tortured and killed, but on a very limited scale.¹³¹ Ian Steele has pointed out that by the mid-eighteenth century, British imperial negotiators had begun insisting on the return of all prisoners as a condition of peace.¹³² Such a demand usually proved impossible for Indian leaders to enforce and only prolonged conflicts. When the demand was met, it broke up nascent resident alien linkages between the two societies that might have helped defuse future wars. In another example of incongruence, European revenge could be unlimited in scale and target, but the desire for revenge was not triggered by simple death in open battle. Those killings were recognized as legitimate, but not so for Native Americans, for whom any death warranted blood revenge. In contrast, Indians could put aside revenge needs once the proper rituals of peace had been concluded; Euro-American colonists frequently proved incapable of doing the same.¹³³ On the more diplomatic front, European centralized governments expected similar coercive capabilities from Native Americans. Their repeated efforts to foster such centralization ended up strengthening war leaders, undermining one of the most fundamental of Native American structures of restraint: the peace chief.

As a general rule, the success of systems of restraint depends upon a minimal level of congruence between both sides’ understanding of those systems.¹³⁴ Over time in North America, Europeans and Indians learned about each other, and moved to a certain level of understanding. Diplomacy became possible; intermarriage took place; wars ended. But in a deeper sense, neither side ever fully came to terms with the other culture’s overall vision of war, and thus never succeeded in meshing their systems of restraint. Failing that, war became more extreme and more destructive.

131. See Steele, “Surrendering Rites,” 152–54, for a rare example of all sides’ expectations of prisoner treatment being met, although the details of that success clearly delineate the fragility of the process.

132. *Ibid.*, 155–56.

133. See note 130 and White, *The Middle Ground*, 345.

134. Karr argues in a similar vein about the failure to establish “reciprocity” in “Why Should You Be So Furious,” *passim*, especially 888.

