Hostile Transformation

During the early colonization of the American continent, rising European imperial powers encountered the peoples of indigenous cultures. In various documents dating between the years of 1600 and 1700, European settlers recorded their encounters with the various “Indian” nations; these documents have been compiled in the Early Encounters in North America Database, which provides available source material through the convenience of the internet. Based off of a portion of these valuable sources, the contemporary European conceptualization of the terms “hostile” and “hostility” can be defined and explored. According to select documents from the time period, the European concept of hostility transformed throughout the seventeenth century, from a notion only paired with the discussion of Indian atrocities to a broader term applied to all acts of opposition regardless of perpetrator, with the exception of the English.

In the early years of the seventeenth century, hostility, in the minds of European, especially English, authors only applied to the violence of Indian peoples conducted against the European crowns or their subjects. Throughout his writings on the English and Indian encounters during the primary years of interaction, Charles Wilson Hackett rarely uses the term “hostile” without immediately following his usage with the term “Indians” or perhaps the more specific “Apaches”\(^1\). Considering that the neighboring Indian nations produced the primary threat to his colonial settlement, it is quite possible that Hackett did not actively conceive of another application for the designation of “hostile” outside of the native forces he regularly encountered.

The incessant correlation between the concept of “hostile” and “Indians” suggests that Hackett

\(^1\) Hackett, Charles Wilson. *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya and Approaches Thereto, to 1773, vol. 2*
perceived the two terms as seemingly interchangeable. In the year 1601, the English subject Hackett reports that, the “Indians [are] restless and also hostile”\(^2\). As a result of the native hostility, Hackett calls upon the Crown to send military reinforcements that would double the defensive power of his existing forces against the Indian attacks. Interestingly, Hackett clarified his designation of “hostile” by excluding Indians who had converted to Christianity following the English arrival. In one of his entries, Hackett details that he met with both “hostile and Christian Indians”\(^3\). The separation of the native peoples into two groups, hostile and Christian, reveals an underlying association between barbarism and non-Christian religions. In the European perception, the Indians who did not convert, remained in a group separate from the Europeans, and were therefore opposed to the Crown. The concept that any group not encompassed or adopted by Europeans was consequently an opponent to their existence permeated contemporary thought throughout the entirety of the seventeenth century; however, the groups considered part of the opposition transitioned as time moved forward.

Immediately prior to the mid-century benchmark, European thought concerning hostility began to enter a transitory period where differing opinions entered into the realm of interactive experience. During this time, authors varied in their definitions and applications of the term “hostility”. In the year 1636, the English subject Samuel Penhallow perpetuated the perception that hostility remained solely between the English crown and Indian nations. Penhallow enumerates that the Indians:

\begin{quote}
Take captive many of his Majesty’s good subjects, to assault, rake, burn, and destroy vessels upon the seacoasts, and houses and mills upon the land; to wound some, and in a most barbarous and cruel manner to murder others…and in a way
\end{quote}

\(^2\) 895. Hackett, Charles Wilson. *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, vol. 2

\(^3\) 890. Hackett, Charles Wilson. *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, vol. 2
of open rebellion and hostility; to make an audacious and furious assault upon one of his Majesty’s forts when the King’s colors were flying\textsuperscript{4}

This colorful account of Indian cruelty against English holdings and subjects suggests that Penhallow, like Hackett before him, believes that hostility and violence in the New World is only visible when it is conducted at the hands of native peoples and directed towards the English.

However, Penhallow’s opinion is called into consideration by the works of the French author, Jean de Brébeuf. During the same year of Penhallow’s writing, 1636, Brébeuf records violent encounters that take place between Indian nations and do not directly involve a European power. Brébeuf records that the Indian nations regard the mistreatment of the dead as “an act of hostility, and the whole country espouses the quarrel”\textsuperscript{5}. This recognition of hostility existing between two different Indian nations exemplifies the shift in European thought, which occurred in the middle of the seventeenth century as authors representing different countries wrote about their perception of Indian activity and the interactions between settlers and natives. The new consideration of native-on-native violence perpetuated throughout the rest of the seventeenth century. The Frenchmen, Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix documented the tension between two native nations in the year 1696. He states that the “Hostility of the Miamis against the Ottawas…[resulted in the] Vengeance of the Ottawas on the Miamis”\textsuperscript{6}. This exemplifies the European perception of native violence and reveals its continued consideration as a layer in the application of the term “hostility”. After the incorporation of intra-native violence into the European conceptualization of hostility, the usage of the term becomes more ambiguous and encompasses different dynamic European relationships outside of the dealings between the English and the Indians.

\textsuperscript{4} 131. Penhallow, Samuel. \textit{The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians [1703-1726]}
\textsuperscript{5} 67. Brébeuf, Jean de. \textit{Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, vol. 10}
\textsuperscript{6} 36. Charlevoix, Pierre François Xavier de. \textit{History and General Description of New France, vol. 5}
Nearly forty years following the works of Penhallow and Brébeuf, in 1675, John Easton writes of the broadening definitions for hostility as the term begins to describe both intra-European and European-native interaction within the New World. In one of his entries, Easton writes, “the Time of Hostility with those that are our Enemies,” without directly stating who the term “Enemies” refers to in this context. As a result, the definition of “enemy” becomes ambiguous and the suggested distance from a circumstance of purely native threats opens opportunity for many possible opponents or enemies outside of the Indian nations. In example of the growing animosity between European powers with supposed stakes in American soil, Easton cites an English ordinance, which concedes to the French that “we will cease and forebear all acts of Hostility [performed by the French] towards the subjects of the Crown of England, and not offer the least hurt or violence to them.” Although this example denies any future grievances instituted by the English towards the French, it reveals that members of the two groups had previously, and presumably continuously, attacked or committed various atrocities unto one another. The opposition demonstrated between European settlers supports a transition in the conceptualization of hostility within a European framework. In the years following Brébeuf’s work, the definition experiences further transformation as the interactions sparked by the natives begin to change from their previous incarnations.

Seventy-nine years after the first mention of his writings, Charles Wilson Hackett continues to record the actions of the natives neighboring his settlement. During his work in 1680, however, Hackett slightly changes his perception of the “hostile Indians”. In his later entries, Hackett abandons the concept that Indian hostility is solely conducted against English holdings. He states that “the enemy with ‘much shamelessness and daring’ began to harass the

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7 422. Easton, John, fl. 1675. *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*  
8 426. Easton, John, fl. 1675. *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*
Spaniards, shouting and making hostile demonstrations, even shooting at them with harquebuses⁹. Although the native remains the “hostile” in this situation, the Indians are no longer focusing their violence towards the English. In this time period, the Spanish receive the brutal end of the native activity. The transition in Indian activity, which started as a solely native to English conception, first shifts into a version of native to European aggression and then reaches a final form as a source of native to native violence.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the European conception of hostility had undergone many transitions, culminating in an illumination of multi-faceted violence on American soil. The earliest sources from the time period suggest that the atrocities performed by the opponents to the English crown known as “hostilities” were only enacted by native populations towards English settlements or possessions. This belief transformed as settlers from different European nations contributed their perception to the remembrance of early encounters. Subsequently, the multiple viewpoints converged to reveal a broadened usage of the terms “hostile” and “hostility” by spotlighting the interactions between the native, English, French, and Spanish populations. These occurrences reveal a complex structure of violent encounters that required the implementation of military force and legal ordinances to seemingly quell continued altercations. The usage of “hostile” and “hostility” to suggest an opponent or opposition, the participants in the equation became varied as more players moved into power on American soil and acted against the established civilization of native nations.

⁹ Hackett, Charles Wilson. *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermin's Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682*, vol. 1