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# New World Rivals: The Role of the Narragansetts in the Breakdown of Anglo-Native Relations During King Philip's War

Lauren Sagar  
*Providence College*

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**New World Rivals:  
The Role of the Narragansetts in the Breakdown of Anglo-Native Relations During King  
Philip's War**

**Lauren Sagar  
HIS 490 History Honors Thesis**

**Department of History  
Providence College  
Fall 2011**



I beseech you consider, how the name of the most holy and jealous God may be preserved between the clashings of these two... the glorious conversion of the Indians in New England and the unnecessary wars and cruel destructions of the Indians in New England.

-Roger Williams to the General Court of Massachusetts Bay, 1654

## CONTENTS

GLOSSARY .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KING PHILIP’S WAR.....	5
I. THE NARRAGANSETTS BEFORE KING PHILIP’S WAR	
History of the Narragansett Tribe .....	11
English-Narragansett Alliance During the Pequot War of 1634-1638 .....	14
Narragansett-Mohegan Conflict.....	18
II. NARRAGANSETT INVOLVEMENT IN KING PHILIP’S WAR	
Roots of King Philip’s War.....	24
The Question of Narragansett Alliance.....	28
III. THE AFTERMATH OF KING PHILIP’S WAR.....	45
CONCLUSION.....	51
APPENDICES .....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	57

## GLOSSARY

**Algonquian.** A group of Native American tribes closely related through a common language and spread throughout New England and into Canada.

**Mohegan.** A powerful Algonquian tribe with territory in western Connecticut in the seventeenth century. Notable sachems included Uncas, who closely allied himself with the English throughout King Philip's War.

**Narragansett.** A powerful Algonquian tribe whose territory included most of southern Rhode Island in the seventeenth century. The Narragansetts consisted of a network of tribes, including the Niantics, led by the powerful sachem, Ninigret. Other notable sachems included Miantonomo, Canonicus, and Canonchet.

**Nipmuc.** Eastern Algonquian tribe with territory in western Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The Nipmuc tribe allied themselves with Philip in King Philip's War.

**Pequot.** An Algonquian tribe of eastern Connecticut who were devastated by the English in the Pequot War, ending in 1638. The remnants of the tribe allied themselves with the English in King Philip's War.

**Wampanoag.** An Algonquian tribe residing in the southeastern coast of Massachusetts in the seventeenth century. Notable sachems included Massasoit and Metacom, alias Philip, the Indian leader of King Philip's War.

## INTRODUCTION

The day was cold with snow thick on the ground as the troops of the United Colonies marched from their headquarters to the edge of a sodden bog. Their guide had assured them that their adversaries would be here, in a fort the enemy was sure would be protected by the treacherous landscape surrounding it. The soldiers waited on the edge of the swamp, and as their demands were refused shots began to ring sharp through the air. The battle had begun and the colonial forces were ready with a plan. They laid siege to the fort, igniting wigwams with families inside while killing anyone could they find. The enemy soon succumbed to the sweeping forces of the English, fleeing quickly into the countryside, having no time to take clothing, food, or water in their haste. The number of the enemy left lying dead in the fort had been in the hundreds. It would never be known how many perished in the cold winter night without provisions or had been burned alive in their homes. The English celebrated their victory, thanking God for their success and celebrating the carnage they had left in their wake.

The day was December 19, 1675 and the massacred enemy was the Narragansett Indians of southeastern New England, whom the English believed were supporting the Wampanoag combatants in the ongoing conflict known as King Philip's War, an Indian revolt led by Metacom, the sachem of the Wampanoag tribe. The massacre became known as the Great Swamp Fight, and represented the culmination of tensions between the English and Narragansetts. English policy would not allow for Native Americans to openly defy the

authority of the colonies without consequences. In this case and throughout colonial history, the Indians paid for their defiance with death.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between the English and the Narragansetts that ultimately led to the Great Swamp Fight is worth understanding because it exemplifies the past and the future of English policy towards Native Americans that would later lead to their downfall within the United States. A relationship between the Narragansetts and the English grew with the advent of the Pequot War in the 1630s. The Narragansetts formed an alliance with the English to eliminate their Pequot enemies and win disputed territory. In this instance, the Narragansetts were successful but their relationship with the English would become strained after witnessing brutal English tactics used on the Pequots, a forewarning of the same tactics that would be unleashed on them in King Philip's War. The Narragansetts would also come to realize that English interests were exclusive to the good of the English, not beneficial to the Indian tribes of southern New England. Meanwhile, the Mohegan tribe of Connecticut remained a strong English ally during and after the Pequot War. The Narragansetts, however, became embroiled in conflict with the Connecticut tribe and their sachem, Uncas, in the 1640s. The English refused to mediate the conflict and their alliance with the Mohegans would become a major point of hesitation when the Narragansetts were considering joining the English in King Philip's War.<sup>2</sup>

The Narragansetts were beginning to see the English more as rivals than as potential allies when King Philip's War broke out in 1675 against Metacom, the sachem of the Wampanoag tribe. The English looked to the Narragansetts for support as they had done in the earlier Pequot War, but the Narragansetts were reluctant to join a new alliance with the colonists

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<sup>1</sup> Elisha R. Potter, *The Early History of Narragansett* (Providence: Marshall, Brown, and Co., 1835), 85-92.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Mandell, *King Philip's War: The Conflict Over New England* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 33-39.



after all they had witnessed over the past decades. This hesitation and acts of Narragansett support for Metacom, such as harboring fugitive Wampanoags, would become the catalyst for the Great Swamp Fight and eventual weakening of the Narragansetts, Wampanoags, and their allies.

Despite the violent relationship between the Narragansetts and the English, it is worth noting that there were success stories of Native American-colonial relationships. John Eliot was a devoted Puritan who emigrated to Boston in 1631. Soon after arriving, he began studying Native American languages and started preaching in them. He became determined to convert Native Americans to Christianity, establishing villages for Native American converts, who were called “Praying Indians.” Eliot was eventually able to set up fourteen such villages for the converts, though the anglicized Indians would later be swept up by King Philip’s War and their towns ultimately destroyed to make room for colonial settlers.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the fate of the “Praying Indians,” the mere establishment of fourteen villages for converted Indians illustrated that there had been an English inclination to try to live harmoniously with Native Americans. It showed that not all English colonists wanted to adopt a violent approach in dealing with Native Americans.<sup>4</sup> Though Eliot refused to live with Indians unless they were Christianized, his missionary-style approach showed that some English thought Indians and colonists could live together, but with the qualification that Indians become “anglicized.” This idea, however, was never able to come to fruition after King Philip’s War.

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<sup>3</sup> "John Eliot," *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th edition, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

<sup>4</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1991). White’s work describes accommodations and negotiations made by Indians and Europeans in the Great Lakes region, exemplifying that there were alternatives to the polarizing approach of the Indians and English colonists in New England.

The story of Narragansett interaction illustrated the beginnings of a tragic colonial relationship between the Native Americans and English colonists. The actions of the English left the Narragansetts with few choices except to become an enemy of the colonies. The historical alliance with the English was the ultimate cause of hesitation in renewing that same alliance in King Philip's War. They knew their allies well enough to know that they would be better off as enemies. The English, however, would not back down, continuing to pursue an agreement with the tribe and finally gaining one through deception. Still, the colonists seemed surprised that the Narragansetts refused to follow the terms of such an unwanted allegiance. The English would not allow such open disloyalty, attacking the Narragansetts and causing the tribe to finally give their full support to Metacom for the rest of the war before they were fully weakened by English forces. Studying the English relationship with the Narragansetts throughout King Philip's War is helpful in understanding English policy toward Native Americans and why many of the Indian tribes of New England eventually sided with the Wampanoags during King Philip's War. The aggressive English pursuit of an alliance with the Narragansetts drove the tribe to eventually side with Philip and the Wampanoags and symbolized the destructive relationship between the English and the Indians of North America.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KING PHILIP'S WAR

King Philip's War has been viewed through various lenses over time, from interpretations that insisted both the English and Native Americans were fighting for extermination of the other, to one of a civil war, to the formation of an American national identity stemming from the war. Some of the earliest works on King Philip's War are from the nineteenth century, which often focused on the degradation of the Indians in New England after King Philip's War. Elisha Potter wrote *The Early History of Narragansett* in 1835. Potter often portrayed the English poorly, citing their dishonesty when it came to dealing with Indians. Potter even mocked the English for being offended by Indian practices, writing, "the Indians it seems had rejoiced at the success of their friends ! How improper ! Probably if the Indians had their festival in the shape of a fast or a thanksgiving, their opponents would not have been offended."<sup>5</sup> The context of the time period is paramount in understanding the sentiment of Potter. Only five years earlier, President Andrew Jackson had instituted the Indian Removal Act, which began a series of forceful removals of Indian tribes located in the southern region of the United States from their homelands. Potter was writing during this time of forced removal and his personal opinion on the matter of Indian injustices came through his work.

A more modern and less biased interpretation was offered by David Leach, who wrote *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War* in 1958, breaking a period of silence on the subject that had held since the beginning of the century. Leach maintained that King Philip's War affected both the colonists and the eastern Algonquian tribes equally. Leach

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<sup>5</sup> Potter, 82-83.

wrote, “It was a crisis of staggering proportions, threatening to undo much of the careful work that had been accomplished [by the English]. No society can pass through such a crisis without experiencing deep and abiding changes. Similarly, the Indians were hurling themselves, for better or for worse, into a new stage of existence. They too would never be the same again.”<sup>6</sup> Leach argued that both New England and Algonquian society had been forever changed by the conflict, but he also, more interestingly, argued that both had tried to exterminate the other.<sup>7</sup> This interpretation is helpful in understanding the brutal tactics that were used by either side in King Philip’s War. It is also helpful since it demonstrates the tragic conclusion of the colonial relationship between the Indians and the English in southern New England, describing the extent to which both sides went to try to exterminate the other.

More than thirty years after Leach, Russell Bourne wrote *The Red King’s Rebellion: Racial Politics in New England 1675-1678*. The theories behind the war had evolved to consider it not as a war between two different peoples, but a civil war, implying that the English and Algonquian Indians had created a shared society in the years since the colonists’ first arrival. Bourne argued that a harmonious society had existed between the groups before a new group of settlers began arriving in the latter part of the seventeenth century and began excluding Native Americans from any meaningful participation in society.<sup>8</sup> This understanding delved deeper into the relationship between the English settlers of New England and their Indian counterparts. It showed a complex relationship had existed between the two groups that led to the creation of a

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip’s War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1958), viii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>8</sup> Russell Bourne, *The Red King’s Rebellion: Racial Politics in New England 1675-1678* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xii-39.

new, shared society. When this society was questioned by newly arriving colonists, the eastern Algonquians would not allow for their sovereignty to be taken away, igniting King Philip's War.

Less than a decade later, Jill Lepore wrote *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, in which she presented an entirely new and compelling interpretation of King Philip's War. She claimed that the war helped forge an American identity for the first time. She looked at narratives that were written in great volume and immediately after the war. These narratives allowed for the colonists' viewpoint to be remembered in history rather than the views of any Native Americans. Indians could be portrayed as barbaric and savage without any dispute since that was the only viewpoint present.<sup>9</sup> This idea was perpetuated throughout generations of Americans, with plays such as *Metamora*, romanticizing the death of Philip, allowing Indians to become American heroes since they now only existed in the past. Lepore analyzed the memory of King Philip's War to create a work that did not limit itself to the events of the actual war, but considered the way its legacy has affected Americans through the generations.

In the years after Lepore, there have been returns to some of the older interpretations. James Drake wrote *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* one year after Lepore but described an interpretation similar to that of Bourne. Drake believed that the war was not a clash of cultures or frontier conflict between Indians and whites, but a civil war "whose divisions cut across simple ethnic lines and tore apart a society composed of English colonizers and Native Americans alike."<sup>10</sup> Drake argued that Native Americans were as much a part of the

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<sup>9</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 46.

<sup>10</sup> James Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 260.

settler society as an English settler, just in a different capacity. The English wished to rule over the Indian tribes of New England rather than totally remove them from the area. Drake cited charters, which stated that the English wanted to convert Indians to Christianity, rather than eradicate them from the area, as well as Indian wishes for protection from the English, as evidence that the Indians and English had wished to coexist and were part of the same society.<sup>11</sup> Similar to Bourne, Drake's work showed the complexities of the society that existed before King Philip's War, intimating that the causes of the war were more complex than English genocidal ambitions.

Most recently, in 2007, Daniel Mandell wrote *King Philip's War: The Conflict Over New England*. Mandell looked back to one of the most traditional interpretations of King Philip's War to offer a basic overview of the war, helpful in gaining a preliminary understanding of the preceding conflicts and the events of the war. Mandell concluded by describing a complete loss of Indian independence in the region. He stated that Native American numbers in New England dropped from twenty-five percent to just ten percent of the entire regional population. Mandell further explained that, "While there remained in the area about 25 communities with territories (of various sizes) reserved for their use and residence, only the Narragansetts and Mohegans retained a substantive level of autonomy, retaining their sachems and councils without the direct oversight of guardians appointed by the provincial legislatures."<sup>12</sup> Though the Mohegans had allied with the English, they received little to no spoils for their support, only gaining new tribe members who had directly surrendered to them rather than the English. As Mandell made clear, though tribes like the Narragansetts and Mohegans were able to maintain some level of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 37, 108.

<sup>12</sup> Mandell, 117-118.

autonomy, even English allies gained nothing substantial after the war and the vast majority of Native Americans were left in a state of utter devastation. Daniel Mandell clearly illustrated the most popular interpretation of King Philip's War which began with cultural clashes culminating in the death of John Sassamon and continued on to bring about the almost complete eradication of Indian autonomy in New England.

The different interpretations concerning King Philip's War explain why this conflict was not simple. The interpretations offer a better understanding of the complex relationship between New England Indians and settlers and how they eventually reached a boiling point that spilled over into one of the bloodiest wars fought in American history. They also show a change in mindset over time. Directly after the aggressive Indian Removal Act, Potter published his work on the history of the Narragansetts and their involvement in King Philip's War. David Leach was writing in the late 1950s, a time when the civil rights movement was just beginning and there was not much attention being paid to the misfortune of Native Americans in the history of the United States. By the last decade of the twentieth century, the plight of the Indians of North America was taught to every elementary school student and early native history was no longer ignored. The interpretations of King Philip's War mirrored this, as the reasons behind the conflict became more intricate, taking into account many more viewpoints than just that of the English.

The argument being currently presented in this thesis fits into a category that has not been explored by many historians in the past, with few exceptions.<sup>13</sup> Focusing on the relationship between the Narragansetts and the English, this thesis looks to discover the reasons for the

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<sup>13</sup> Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects onto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Conquest for Authority in New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Pulsipher's book is an exception to the almost total silence concerning Narragansett involvement in King Philip's War and their strategic importance to the English. Pulsipher dedicates one chapter of her work to describing the English desire for a Narragansett alliance during King Philip's War.

violent culmination of the colonial relationship between the English and Indians of southern New England. By exploring the dynamics of the questionable alliance between the Narragansetts and the English, one can understand the pressure that the English put on their Indian allies, which left the Narragansetts with no other choice but to fully submit to the English or to fight.



## I. THE NARRAGANSETTS BEFORE KING PHILIP'S WAR

### History of the Narragansett Tribe

In the seventeenth century, the Narragansett tribe occupied a large area of the current state of Rhode Island, including the entirety of Washington County in the south and areas of Kent County.<sup>14</sup> They were part of a larger Algonquian Indian group, including the Wampanoags, Mohegans, Pequots, and Nipmucs. Narragansett myth and legend maintained that the tribe had always lived in this territory. Roger Williams stated that the Narragansetts believed “that they have sprung and growne up in that very place, like the very trees of the wilderness.”<sup>15</sup> This showed that the Narragansetts had been in the New England region for an extremely long time, where they grew and eventually created a wide sphere of influence over many of the neighboring tribes.

The Narragansett way of life revolved around the nearby waters of Narragansett Bay, making fish a staple of their diet. They lived in basic buildings or huts and wore simple clothing (at least from the English point of view). Their character, however, was not simple. They were often depicted by the English as strong, brave, and generous people. William Hubbard, a clergyman in New England who had extensive contact with Native Americans through missionary efforts, stated that the Narragansetts were “always more civil and courteous to the English than any of the other Indians.”<sup>16</sup> General Gookin of Massachusetts, a man who often

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix I for a map of Narragansett territory.

<sup>15</sup> Henry C. Dorr, “The Narragansetts,” in *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, ed. William E. Foster, (Providence: Kellogg Printing Company, 1885), 7:138.

<sup>16</sup> Potter, 8.

traveled into Indian settlements, supervised one of the first praying towns and composed two works about the Indians he constantly encountered, also praised the Narragansetts, stating, “they are an active, laborious and ingenious people, which is demonstrated in their labors they do for the English; of whom more are employed, especially in making stone fences and many other hard labors, than of any other Indian people or neighbors.”<sup>17</sup> Roger Williams also testified to the character of the Narragansetts, writing, “Drunkenness and gluttony generally they know not what sins they be; and although they have not so much to restrain them, (both in respect of knowledge of God and laws of men) as the English have, yet a man shall never hear of such crimes amongst them of robberies, murders, adulteries, &c.”<sup>18</sup> These writers offered a testament to the spirit of the Narragansetts. It was noteworthy that English writers would portray the Narragansetts favorably since the English harbored many suspicions toward the tribe even before they openly defied the English in King Philip’s War. The excerpts from Hubbard, Gookin, and Williams offered a generally positive description of the Narragansett people.

The Narragansetts were also versed in commerce before English arrival, supplying other Indian nations with pendants, bracelets, tobacco pipes, and pottery. When colonists arrived, they quickly began a trade with the English and other European powers in the area, making a profit by receiving furs in exchange for Narragansett goods.<sup>19</sup> The Narragansett tribe was hierarchically structured with two chief sachems and several subordinate ones. Though succession generally remained within a familial line, the heir was not always explicitly defined, as was the case in the primogeniture practices of England.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 8.

Lastly, the Narragansetts believed in a system of gods, Kautantowit being the principal one and also known as the South West god, because the southwest wind was the most desirable of all the wind patterns in New England. They believed that souls, called Cowwewonck, operated while the body slept and souls of common men and women would go to the South West upon death. The souls of great Narragansetts would go to Kautantowit's house with the promise of corporeal joys, while the souls of murderers, thieves, and liars were doomed to wander restlessly.<sup>20</sup> Narragansett beliefs and traditions would have been strange to the English, causing the colonists to believe themselves superior to not only the Narragansetts, but all Indian tribes. Though the English would have seen the advantages of friendship with the tribes of New England, their traditions and customs would undoubtedly have made the English question the complexities and sophistication of Indian society, being so different from European ideals, and led the English to seek submission from their native counterparts.

Upon first arrival, however, the English respected the Narragansetts due to their vast power. Neighboring Algonquian tribes included the Cowesits in the north and the Sawomet and Nipmucs in the northwest. Each paid tribute to the more powerful Narragansetts, widening their sphere of influence. In 1620, Narragansett power grew with the arrival of the English at Plymouth. At this time, disease ravaged the Indians of the area, weakening all the Algonquian tribes in the area. The Narragansetts, however, remained untouched by the epidemic, allowing them to extend their influence over their disease ravaged and crippled counterparts, including the Wampanoags, the eventual instigators of King Philip's War over fifty years later.<sup>21</sup> As more English settlers arrived to the southeastern shore of New England they started to recognize the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

Narragansetts as the most dominant tribe. The perception of Narragansett power drove the English to seek an alliance with the important tribe early on, whether the Narragansetts actually desired this alliance would not be considered by the English.

Though Narragansett strength lay partially in the tribe's numbers, since it had not been affected by disease, it was impossible to accurately number the tribe owing to their lifestyle of mixed subsistence farming, which caused them to move constantly. Estimates, however, reached as high as thirty thousand and the warrior force may have been as high as five thousand. Some even claimed that the Narragansetts were the largest of all Indian tribes between Boston and the Hudson River.<sup>22</sup> Whether these estimates were truly accurate was not as important as the recognition that the English settlers first gave to the Narragansetts because of their perceived strength. After their arrival, the earliest settlers soon realized that the Narragansetts were greater in number and force than they, making it essential to their survival that they adopt a friendly policy toward the tribe.<sup>23</sup> This policy would have suited the Narragansetts, allowing them to gain more power through English backing. It also would have compelled the Narragansetts to join the English in a war against the Pequot tribe of Connecticut; a tribe that the Narragansetts had been in constant dispute with over territorial claims in the past. With English backing, the Narragansetts would finally be able to gain the much-coveted territory of the Pequot Indians. For this purpose, an English alliance served Narragansett interests of expansion.

### **English-Narragansett Alliance During the Pequot War of 1634-1638**

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<sup>22</sup> Potter, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Dorr, 142.

Narragansett involvement in conflicts between Native Americans and the English did not begin with King Philip's War. The Narragansett tribe had a long tradition of interacting with English colonists, owing to the fact that they were one of the largest and most powerful tribes in southern New England. This interaction would play out in the Pequot War, which preceded King Philip's War by more than thirty years. Narragansetts became directly involved in the conflict after forging an alliance with the English. The war began when, the Pequot sachem, looking to make a truce with Narragansetts after a conflict over trading rights, approached Massachusetts Bay Colony and offered them a permanent trading post on the Connecticut River. In exchange, Massachusetts would help the Pequots broker peace with the Narragansetts. The desire of Massachusetts, however, could not be satisfied with a lone trading post. Massachusetts required the Pequot tribe to relinquish the title of the entire Connecticut River Valley as well as pay tribute to the colony.<sup>24</sup> This agreement became one of the major catalysts for the Pequot War and an example of one of the early instances of English involvement in Indian affairs. This involvement, however, culminated poorly for the Indian counterpart, as the Pequots would be totally eradicated from their homelands by the end of the war. The pattern of English involvement leading to the eventual demise of an Indian tribe began with the Pequots and would continue into King Philip's War.

Though the Narragansetts were hesitant about joining in an alliance with the English, they were eventually persuaded to sign a treaty with Massachusetts Bay Colony, mostly due to their rivalry with the Pequot tribe and desire for revenge after the Pequots tried to attack the Dutch-Narragansett trading alliance.<sup>25</sup> The treaty was signed on October 21, 1636 and contained

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<sup>24</sup> Mandell, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Potter, 23.

nine conditions: 1) a firm peace between the English and Narragansetts must exist; 2) there could be no peace with the Pequots without the other's consent; 3) Narragansetts were forbidden from harboring any Pequots during the war; 4) the Narragansetts must kill or deliver all murderers to the English; 5) any fugitive servants must be returned to the English; 6) the English will give the tribe notice whenever they decide to launch an attack against the Pequots; 7) a right of free trade will continually exist between the colonists and the Narragansetts; 8) The Narragansetts are prohibited from travelling near any English plantations; and 9) A continual posterity will exist between the Narragansett tribe and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.<sup>26</sup> The Narragansetts were considered one of the largest and most powerful tribes of southern New England, and the terms of the above treaty seem to suggest that the English wanted to check this power. The English were careful to include clauses stating that continual trade and posterity would always exist between the Narragansetts and the colonists, making sure that the colonies would benefit most from the Narragansetts' influence over many of the local Indian tribes. Furthermore, the English denied the Narragansetts any chance to negotiate with the Pequots where they could potentially set up their own territorial deals with the tribe. The treaty exemplified English ambitions to control the Indians of New England.

Seven months after the Narragansett-English treaty had been signed, on May 26, 1637 the English attacked the Pequot tribe at a fort on the Mystic River in Connecticut.<sup>27</sup> William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth Colony, described the attack: "Those [Pequots] that escaped the fire were slain by sword, some hewed to pieces, some run through with rapiers, &c. The number thus destroyed was about 400. At this time it was a fearful sight to see them thus frying

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<sup>26</sup> John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop 1630-1649*, eds. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge: Massachusetts, Harvard University Press), 191-192.

<sup>27</sup> Mandell, 26.

in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them; thus to enclose their enemies in their hands.”<sup>28</sup> The excerpt describes a scene filled with senseless violence on the part of the English.<sup>29</sup> The Pequot Indians were massacred without regret and many colonists thought this show of brutality a blessing from God, unable to see it for what it was – a massacre of men, women, and children. Witnesses of this attack included the Narragansett warriors who watched in horror as Pequots were brutally killed by the English. These barbaric tactics disgusted the Narragansetts and would make the tribe reconsider forming any close future alliances with colonists.<sup>30</sup>

Brutal tactics were not the only contributing factor to the feeling of Narragansett uncertainty concerning their alliance. At the conclusion of the war, the process of dividing the spoils began. Particularly heated conflicts arose between the sachem of the Mohegans, Uncas, and Miantonomo, the Narragansett sachem. Both tribes had fought for the colonies and both sachems thought they deserved more land and captives than the other. A treaty was eventually brokered by the English between the two tribes, which required all future complaints between the two to be presented to the English. It further stated that a tax must be paid for each captive Pequot they already held. It then stipulated that both the Narragansetts and Mohegans would receive an equal number of any remaining Pequots, as it was common practice for the victor of Indian wars to add the conquered Indians to their tribes. Lastly, the treaty claimed all Pequot

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<sup>28</sup> William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Charles Dean (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1856), 357.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix II for a depiction of the Mystic Massacre.

<sup>30</sup> Potter, 25.

territory solely for the English.<sup>31</sup> The treaty ignored the interests of the Narragansetts, who entered the war with the hopes of extending their lands into Pequot territory. The Narragansetts hoped the English would help them gain this goal but instead of dividing the land between their allies, the English claimed everything for themselves, a clear indication of their low respect for their “friends” and the fear that the English undoubtedly had concerning the amplification of Narragansett power.

The English believed that their history of alliance with the Narragansetts would allow for the same relationship in King Philip’s War. In 1675, at the outbreak of the conflict, John Winthrop, Jr., the colonial governor of Connecticut wrote, “the Nahigansetts have hitherto continued in amity w<sup>th</sup> the English, and were voluntarily very helpfull to them in those warrs w<sup>th</sup> the Pequots.”<sup>32</sup> The statement expressed no doubt that the Narragansetts would side with the English during this new conflict due their history in the Pequot War and the supposed “amity” that existed between the tribe and the English. The Narragansetts, however, saw things in a different light. The failure to receive any territory, coupled with the witnessing of the barbaric tactics used against the Pequots, caused the Narragansetts to second-guess their alliance with the English. These thoughts would play on the minds of the Narragansett tribe when, forty years later, the English approached them to create a new alliance during King Philip’s War.

### **Narragansett-Mohegan Conflict**

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<sup>31</sup> Mandell, 32.

<sup>32</sup> John Winthrop, Jr., to Major Savage and other officers of the army, July 12, 1675, *The Winthrop Papers*, Paul Campbell Research Notes, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, 173. The Paul Campbell Research Notes manuscript collection was compiled by Paul Campbell and Glenn LaFantasie when, in 1975, the Narragansett Indians filed a suit to regain lands in southern Rhode Island. The research notes contain over 9,000 documents that date as far back to 1524, as described by the Rhode Island Historical Society. (Paul Campbell Research Notes will be known as PCRN from this point forward.)



Only five years after the close of the Pequot War, two former English allies, the Narragansetts and Mohegans, came into conflict with one another. The void left by the Pequot tribe made the Mohegans and Narragansetts the two most influential tribes in the region, resulting in constant friction between them.<sup>33</sup> In July of 1643, the Mohegan sachem, Uncas, registered a complaint with Connecticut after he was attacked by a Wongunk war party, a smaller tribe that resided in the western area of the colony. Connecticut issued Uncas permission to exact revenge. Miantonomo, of the Narragansetts, had previously committed to protecting the Wongunk tribe and upon hearing the situation, he looked to Massachusetts to grant him permission to attack Uncas. With the authority of the Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay behind the Mohegans and Narragansetts, respectively, a Narragansett war party attacked Uncas and the Mohegans. Uncas, however, was able to defeat the war party and captured Miantonomo, eventually executing him after English authorities ruled for Miantonomo's death by Uncas.<sup>34</sup>

Writing in the 1670s, William Hubbard described the conflict between the Mohegans and Narragansetts. Hubbard's description begins in 1642, before the conflict reached its boiling point. Letters had arrived to Boston from Connecticut, warning that Indians were conspiring to cut off the English throughout the entire area. These letters were coming at a time when colonists already believed that Miantonomo was organizing all Indians throughout the country to start "a general conspiracy against the English."<sup>35</sup> Hubbard described the details that were known of the supposed Indian conspiracy:

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<sup>33</sup> Mandell, 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> William Hubbard, *A narrative of the Indian wars in New-England, from the first planting thereof in the year 1607, to the year 1677 : containing a relation of the occasion, rise and progress of the war with the Indians, in the Southern, Western, Eastern and Northern parts of said country* (Stockbridge, Massachusetts: Heman Willard, 1803), 53.

The time appointed to be for the assault, was said to be after harvest; the manner to be by several companies, entering into the chief men's houses, by way of trade, and then to kill them in their houses, and seize their arms and others should be at hand to prosecute the massacre: This was also confirmed by three Indians that were said to reveal it in the same manner, and at the same time, to Mr. Ludlow and to the Governor of New-Haven... Upon this, their advice from Connecticut was, that we should begin with them and enter upon a war presently... But the General Court of Massachusetts when called together, did not think those informations to be a sufficient ground whereon to begin a war... it was considered, that the reports of all Indians were found by experience to be very uncertain.<sup>36</sup>

The excerpt exemplifies the attitude that Indian reports were not to be believed by colonists for the sole reason that they came from an Indian. Massachusetts did not agree to Connecticut's suggestion of warfare against the Narragansetts because, despite the thirty eyewitness testimonies given by Indians, they did not think it was enough to prove the story. Also exemplified is the idea that the English already suspected the Narragansetts of planning a region-wide conspiracy against the English when Miantonomo was captured, which would affect their ruling on Miantonomo's execution. The pre-conceived notion that the Narragansetts may be starting a conspiracy combined with beliefs of the fallacy of Indian testimony would easily lead the court in Boston to reach the decision to allow Uncas to execute Miantonomo.

Hubbard related the English justification for the swift execution of Miantonomo, claiming that the execution would finally lead to peace: "his head was cut off by Uncas, it being justly feared, that there would never be any firm peace, either betwixt the English and the Narragansets, or betwixt the Narragansets and the Mohegins, while Miantonimo was left alive: However, the Narragansets have ever since that time bore an implacable malice against Uncas,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

and all the Mohegins, and for the sakes secretly against the English.”<sup>37</sup> The hope that peace would be the end result of Miantonomo’s execution derived from the English belief that Miantonomo was leading an Indian revolt against the English. The excerpt demonstrated how the English must have believed that Miantonomo was behind the alleged Indian conspiracy against the English. The English believed that Miantonomo was a powerful aggressor and that his death would stop any feelings of rebellion the Narragansetts were harboring because their leader would be eradicated. The colonists could not have been more wrong. Hubbard intimated that Miantonomo’s death produced a greater feeling of Narragansett enmity toward the Mohegans and Uncas, who would become one of the strongest English allies in King Philip’s War, and caused the Narragansetts to never fully trust the English again, which would ultimately affect their future alliance.

The Narragansett-Mohegan conflict succeeded in bringing the English and the Mohegans closer together. After Miantonomo’s execution, the English pledged to protect the Mohegans against any Narragansett attacks. The United Colonies proclaimed that, “Uncus being in confederation with us, and one that hath diligently observed his Covenants before mention for ought we know, and requiring advice from us upon serious consideration of the premisss, viz/ his [Miantonomo’s] treacherous and murtherous Disposition against Uncus etc. and how great A Disturber hee hath beene of the Comon peace of the whole colony...Hartford [shall] furnish Uncus with a competent strength of English to defend him against any present fury or assault of the Nanohigunsets or any other.”<sup>38</sup> The Commissioners of the United Colonies did not make any attempt to hide their feelings toward Miantonomo, calling him a disturber of peace for the entire

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>38</sup> Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, in New England*, vol. 9, in Mandell, 36-37.

New England region. With statements like these, it is not hard to understand why the Narragansetts would not commit to an alliance with the English in King Philip's War. The commitment of a force to defend the Mohegans against any Narragansett retaliation was yet another blow to the English-Narragansett relationship, as the colonists had plainly sided with Uncas and the Mohegans. The Narragansetts would not soon forget the support given to the Mohegans and the English defamation of Miantonomo.

The English, however, had a much shorter memory. From the start of King Philip's War, representatives of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut were sent to Narragansett country, looking to persuade the Narragansetts to ally with them. The Narragansetts, however, had not forgotten their conflict with the Mohegans of the 1640s and the English friendship with that same tribe. In June of 1675, Roger Williams wrote to the Governor of Connecticut, John Winthrop, discussing the Narragansett enmity with Uncas. The letter addressed whether Uncas had potentially stirred up Canonicus, the new Narragansett sachem, to attack the Showatucks, a small eastern Algonquian tribe. Williams wrote, "Canonicus utterly denies that Uncas ever solicited him to kill or molest those Showatuks...it is not credible that since Uncas killed his brother Miantonomo, he (Canonicus) should be solicited by Uncas in such a business, or that he should gratify Uncas desires, &c."<sup>39</sup> The statement offered explicit evidence that the Narragansetts would never be able to work with the Mohegans. Canonicus had intimated to Roger Williams that the killing of Miantonomo is still fresh in the minds of the Narragansetts and that Uncas could never have an influence over his tribe.

Canonicus was not the only Narragansett who refused to work with Uncas. Ninigret, sachem of the smaller Niantic tribe within the Narragansett nation, had originally claimed loyalty

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<sup>39</sup> Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., June 13, 1675, *Letters of Roger Williams*, in PCRN, 363-364.

to the English early in King Philip's War.<sup>40</sup> This loyalty, however, did not include fraternizing with the Mohegan sachem.<sup>41</sup> In a letter by Wait Winthrop to his father John Winthrop, Jr., Wait related Ninigret's sentiment that he would not meet with the English if any of Uncas' men accompany them to the meeting.<sup>42</sup> A tribe like the Niantics, which was closely related to the Narragansetts, showed how deeply the conflict with the Mohegans had entrenched itself into their society. The Niantics openly allied themselves with the English, yet they refused to cooperate with the Mohegans, an extremely important ally for the English in the war. Had the English taken note of these warning signs, they may have realized that Narragansett conflict with the Mohegans would not allow them to easily take the side of the English because of the deep-seated conflict that existed between the two tribes. Yet this would certainly not be the only reason for Narragansett hesitation.

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix III for an image of Ninigret.

<sup>41</sup> Mandell, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Wait Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., July 8, 1675, *Wyllys Papers*, in PCRN, 210.

## II. NARRAGANSETT INVOLVEMENT IN KING PHILIP'S WAR

### Roots of King Philip's War

The conflicts that precipitated King Philip's War began to take shape in 1660, after the death of the Wampanoag sachem, Massasoit. In 1621, Massasoit made a treaty with Plymouth colony, hoping that it would help prevent Narragansett expansion in the area, as the Narragansetts were a traditional enemy of the Wampanoags. When the colonists first arrived, Massasoit was not the only Native American to believe that the Europeans could offer them protection. Other Indian sachems in Massachusetts and Connecticut also created alliances with the English. The alliances, however, were seen differently in the eyes of the Indians versus those of the English. The Indians saw the English as similar to themselves, and their recent arrival meant a new entity could now be secured as a valuable trading partner and political ally, protecting them against their traditional Indian rivals. The English, however, saw their relationships with the Algonquian Indians as a means of establishing a lasting foothold in the area.<sup>43</sup> To the English, establishing themselves equated to owning as much land as they possibly could, resulting in land deals to be attached to many treaties that the English made with the Native Americans of New England. The main intention of the English was to secure as much land as possible through these treaties, a fact that the Wampanoag sachem, Metacom, did not overlook.

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<sup>43</sup> James Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 24.

After Massasoit's death, his eldest son, Wamsutta, alias Alexander, took over as Wampanoag sachem in 1660. Wamsutta disregarded the agreements his father had made with Plymouth and began selling lands to Rhode Island, worrying Plymouth so greatly that they summoned Wamsutta to the colony to discuss his actions. Mysteriously, however, Wamsutta died while traveling to Plymouth, leaving his younger brother, Metacom, to rule the tribe. Known to the English as Philip, Metacom was immediately summoned to Plymouth to quickly stem any of the same problems that Plymouth had with Wamsutta. Remembering his brother's mysterious death, Metacom quickly signed a treaty with Plymouth in 1662, stipulating that he would never sell land without receiving the consent of Plymouth. Metacom, however, most likely misunderstood the actual terms of the treaty as he had later written that the agreement with Plymouth only lasted for seven years, not indefinitely.<sup>44</sup> The misunderstanding showed that the English allowed Metacom to not fully understand the terms of the treaty, most likely because it would be easier to persuade him to sign a treaty if he believed it was more favorable to him. Additionally, if Metacom tried to fight these controversial stipulations, it would be of little consequence since the treaty was set down and already signed by the sachem. Through deception, the English were able to obtain land from the Native Americans in the region.

At the same time that Philip agreed to a treaty with Plymouth, Connecticut and Rhode Island extended their territories through the installment of new royal charters. Connecticut gained New Haven while Rhode Island incorporated Metacom's home village of Sowams on the Mount Hope peninsula into its colony.<sup>45</sup> Metacom's lands were being increasingly encroached upon by the English colonies, alarming Metacom and the Wampanoags. Furthermore, when the

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<sup>44</sup> Mandell, 46-48.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

English acquired the land they made sure it would be legally impossible for the Indians to ever claim the land again, evidenced by the language used in this quitclaim deed to land in Rehoboth signed by Metacom in June of 1668:

I Phillip Sachem eldest son heir and successor to the said Osamequin Sachem Do hereby for myself mine heirs assigns and successors remise release and forever quit all manner of right title claime or interest that I the said Phillip Sachem have, or by any colour or prtence whatsoever might or ought to have to the said tract of lands... unto... the select men of the town of Rehoboth; ffor and to the use of themselves and of all the other Townsmen of the said town... and to the use of all and every one of their heirs and assigns forever. And fforthermore I the said Phillip Sachem do hereby firmly bind my self mine heirs assigns and successors... from all former and other bargains, sales, titles and all other incumbrances whatsoever had, made, done, or suffered by me the said Phillip Sachem or the said Osamequin deceased my father deceased.<sup>46</sup>

In the deed, Philip stated multiple times that he, along with all future sachems of the Wampanoags, had given up any claim to the land. From the wording of the deed it looks as if the English hoped there could be no question that Philip and the Wampanoags no longer had any right to own or inhabit the land in question, specifically stating that all land rights had been transferred to the townsmen of Rehoboth and to their heirs forever. The amount of repetition and strong terms, such as “forever,” illustrated how the English were most concerned with these land transfers, rather than with any kind of alliance or friendship with Indians, demonstrating the desire for Indian submission to colonial rule. If a sachem or his tribe ever defied the agreement there would be ample evidence in its transcript to deny a tribe of any rights they may have had to the land in question.

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<sup>46</sup> “Quitclaim Deed,” June 1, 1668, Miscellaneous Manuscripts 9001-P, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.



As deeds similar to this one were becoming more frequent, Metacom was becoming infuriated by English disregard for Native land and their constant expansion into Wampanoag territory. In the winter of 1675, an Algonquian Christianized Indian and occasional advisor, John Sassamon, attempted to convert Metacom to Christianity. Instead he discovered that Metacom was planning war on the English. Sassamon immediately divulged this news to the governor of Plymouth, but Sassamon, being an Indian, albeit an anglicized one, signified that his testimony was untrustworthy and the governor dismissed his claims as falsehoods. However, when Sassamon was found dead in a frozen pond a few weeks later, Plymouth finally took Sassamon's accusations seriously and believed that Metacom had ordered his death in retaliation for Sassamon's betrayal. In June of 1675, the English tried and executed three of Philip's chief counselors for Sassamon's death, officially opening hostilities between the English and the Wampanoags.<sup>47</sup>

In a letter to John Easton, deputy governor of Rhode Island, Metacom listed his frustrations with the English and explained why he had decided to go to war. Easton, being a Quaker and harboring a desire for peace, recalled Metacom's grievances against Puritan injustices:

they [Metacom and his counselors] had a great fear to have ani of their indians should be Caled or forsed to be Christian indians... thay saied thay had bine the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing rong... another greavanc was if 20 of there onest indians testefied that a Englishman had dun them wrong, it was as nothing, and if but one of ther worst indians testefied against an indian or ther king when it plesed the English that was sufitian. a nother grivanc was when ther kings sold land the English wold say it was more than thay agred to and a writing must be prove against all them, and sum of ther kings had dun rong to sell so much he left his peopell none and sum being given to

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<sup>47</sup> Jill Lepore, *Encounters in the New World: A History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 149.

drunknes the English made them drunk and then cheted them in bargens.<sup>48</sup>

Though Easton's account may have been skewed due to his Quaker leanings, Metacom cited these grievances when he finally decided to engage in a full-scale war against the English. Metacom described how the English were extremely biased against the Indians even after his father, Massasoit, helped to protect the English and taught them how to grow corn. Metacom also complained that the English would not believe Indian testimonies, showing no regard to the number of testimonies that corroborate the story. Lastly, Metacom described how the English purposefully supplied Indians with alcohol so they would be drunk when making negotiations, making them more likely to agree to prejudicial terms. For these reasons and the execution of his three advisors, Metacom justified a war against the English and received the support of Algonquian tribes in the region, including the Awashonks and the Nipmucs.<sup>49</sup> The English would not be outdone in their alliances and turned their attention to friendly Indian tribes to aid them against Philip and his allies, especially the large and powerful Narragansett tribe.

### **The Question of Narragansett Alliance**

The English immediately began their search for Indian allies at the beginning of King Philip's War. The Pequot and the Mohegan tribe quickly allied themselves with the English. The Pequot tribe would have had little choice but an English alliance after the devastation they faced in the Pequot War. The Mohegans, however, took the side of the English in King Philip's

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<sup>48</sup> John Easton, *A Relacion of the Indyan Warre, 1675*, in *Original Narratives of Early American History: Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Ebenezer Pierce, *Pierce's Colonial Lists: Civil, Military, and Professional Lists of Plymouth and Rhode Island Colonies, Comprising Colonial, County and Town Officers, Clergymen, Physicians and Lawyers. With extracts from Colonial Laws Defining their Duties, 1621-1700* (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1881), 100-101.

War as a means of gaining the upper hand in their ongoing conflict with the Narragansetts.<sup>50</sup> While the Mohegans and Pequots quickly decided to join the English, the decision would not be so easy for many Algonquian tribes, including the Narragansetts.

The English desperately longed for a Narragansett alliance, as it would have been a huge blow for Philip and the Wampanoags. The Narragansetts could provide a safe haven for Wampanoag Indians and strength to the Wampanoag forces, as they were one of the most influential and largest tribes in southern New England. The English realized this advantage early on and began sending groups of officers and delegates into Narragansett country to persuade the sachems into an English alliance. Only a month after the start of the war, a letter to the governor of Connecticut from his son, Wait Winthrop, described English efforts to ally with the Narragansetts. Wait wrote:

to prevent the Narrogansets from Joyning w<sup>th</sup> Philip... we should take what force could conveniently be spared with som of the moheges and Pequots which seme redy to attend us, and goe to narroganset to speake with Nenegrift and the other narroganset Sachems... we haue intelligence that 30 or 40 of Philips men are come for releife to one of the narroganset Sachems who has sent to nenegrift for aduise whether he shall bind and deliver them to the English or let them goe, thay say that some of the looser sort of the remote narrogansets haue committed some insolences... and there are severall hauses which were deserted that are robbed.<sup>51</sup>

It was evident that the English were concerned that the Narragansetts were harboring and helping Philip's warriors and the Wampanoag people. Winthrop and other colonial leaders believed that sending a delegate to the Narragansetts earlier would ensure that they sided with them, and would stop Narragansett "insolence." Forming an alliance with the Narragansetts would seriously damage Philip's war effort because it would deprive Philip of a strong outside

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<sup>50</sup> Drake, 107.

<sup>51</sup> Wait Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., July 8, 1675, *Wylllys Papers*, in PCRN, 210-211.

supporters, allow the English to use Narragansett resources, including their lands, and stem any violence directed towards the English in Narragansett country.

Wait Winthrop's father, John, understood the importance of this alliance and discussed it in multiple letters to various correspondents. Winthrop stated, "To have an open breach w<sup>th</sup> Naraganset may be of worse cosequece then they are aware. Its best to keepe & promote peace w<sup>th</sup> them, though w<sup>th</sup> bearing some of their ill maners and conniving at some irregularities."<sup>52</sup> Winthrop advised against any violence with the Narragansetts despite some open hostility with the English and emphasized the utility of a peace with the tribe. This advice demonstrated the importance that was placed on a Narragansett alliance because Winthrop did not advocate any retaliation against recent burglaries or vandalisms of English homes. For the English, not to retaliate meant that they were extremely concerned about keeping in friendship with the Narragansetts and still believed they would eventually be able to bring the tribe into an alliance with them.

Winthrop went so far as to advise army officers to tread carefully around the Narragansetts and, despite some of their suspicious activities, to continue to treat them with respect and friendship. Winthrop even argued that it may have been in the colonies' interests to ignore the fact that Narragansetts were playing host to the Wampanoags. Winthrop wrote,

that they are the greatest body of all the heathen neere vs ; that it were very good & necessary to have that freindship continued... Nor doth it appeare of much consequence to be too strict in inquiry about psons fled to them frõ Philip, whether old men or soldiers, much lesse women & children... possibly there cãnot but be relations, & y<sup>t</sup> will make a difficulty, and afterward capitulations may be more vsefull & sutable then in this tyme of so great hurry.

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<sup>52</sup> John Winthrop, Jr., to Fitz-John Winthrop, July 12, 1675, *The Winthrop Papers*, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 8:5 (Boston: University Press, 1882), 172.

I believe there is difficulty ynough w<sup>th</sup> that one enemy, & why stir vp an other.”<sup>53</sup>

Winthrop argued that the English could deal with punishing the Narragansetts for harboring Wampanoags after the war since it would only be a waste of time and hamper their efforts to gain an alliance with the tribe. Their support was so central to the war effort that Winthrop allowed the Narragansetts these concessions, hoping that it would inevitably lead to English advantages in the war. For many colonists, however, the harboring of Wampanoags was a situation that could not be overlooked and caused much suspicion concerning the true loyalties of the Narragansetts. These suspicions would begin to mount in a few months time after the Narragansetts signed a peace treaty with the English yet did not stop harboring English enemies.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the dire need the English felt for a Narragansett alliance, the tribe maintained their neutrality throughout the early months of King Philip’s War. In June of 1675, Roger Williams wrote concerning a Narragansett alliance and relayed the convictions of Canonicus, a Narragansett sachem. Williams stated that Canonicus affirmed that his tribe “will be careful of the English and their cattle among them.”<sup>55</sup> Though Canonicus was not affirming an alliance with the English, he was aware that he should not completely deny any friendship with the colonists. As a means to keep peace and placate the English, Canonicus offered assurance that the Narragansetts would not interfere with English private property.

Canonicus went as far as offering sympathy for the English after his people had shown a disdain for the colonists during the war. Related by Roger Williams, Canonicus warned the

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<sup>53</sup> Winthrop to Major Savage, July 12, 1675, *The Winthrop Papers*, in PCRN, 173.

<sup>54</sup> Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Conquest for Authority in New England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2007), 120.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., June 13, 1675, *Letters of Roger Williams*, in PCRN, 363.

English to flee for their lives from Narragansett country: “his [Canonicus’s] heart affected and furrowed for the English, that he could not rule the youth and common people, nor persuade others, chief amongst them, except his brother Miantunnomu’s son, Nananautunu. He advised the English at Narragansett to stand upon their guard, to keep strict watch, and, if they could, to fortify one or more houses strongly, which if they could not do, then to fly... Canonicus advised the English, to take heed of remaining in lone out places, and of travelling in the common roads.”<sup>56</sup> Canonicus demonstrated his desire for peace when he warned the English of attacks that would be made by his own tribe. Canonicus’s warning and calls for peace also illustrated the major problem with any English attainment of an agreement with the Narragansetts. The tribe was divided, young versus old. The youth wanted war with the English, as Canonicus reported to Roger Williams, and an order from the sachem himself would not stop the younger Narragansetts from retaliating against the English in their own country. With this polarized Narragansett society, it is not surprising that the English were able to obtain a peace treaty with the tribe in July of 1675, but that the tribe’s actions in the months following the treaty were not consistent with the terms of the treaty.

In July, the English discovered that Philip had sent Wampanoag women and children to the Narragansett tribe, clear evidence of preparation for attacks on the English. In response, the Massachusetts infantry was sent to Narragansett country and on July 15, 1675, signed a peace treaty with the Narragansetts, though none of the chief sachems were present.<sup>57</sup> The treaty contained seven stipulations governing Narragansett behavior during the war: 1) the Narragansetts must deliver any subjects of Philip to the English; 2) they should employ hostility

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<sup>56</sup> Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., June 27, 1675, *Letters of Roger Williams*, in PCRN, 370.

<sup>57</sup> Pulsipher, 120.

against Philip; 3) deliver any goods stolen from the English back to them; 4) there can never be any hostility against the English; 5) the English have the power to take Narragansett hostages to ensure that the treaty and its stipulations are carried out fully; 6) the Narragansetts will receive a reward of coats for capturing Philip and bringing him to the English; 7) the Narragansetts will renew and confirm all past land grants and land conveyances to the English.<sup>58</sup> The English succeeded in signing a treaty with the Narragansetts, but with all chief sachems absent, the peace seemed somewhat tenuous. Though Canonchet, the nephew of Canonicus and son of the deceased Miantonomo, eventually traveled to Boston to sign the treaty in October of the same year, it was still a recipe for disaster due to the generational and familial conflicts that arose within the Narragansett tribe. After the treaty had become more official with the signature of a Narragansett sachem, the tribe still continued to harbor Wampanoags, much to the dismay of the English. The divide between the terms of the treaty and the actions of the Narragansett was a result of Canonicus's inability to rule the youth and the refusal of the youth to submit to the English. Furthermore, the Narragansetts refused to turn away friends or relatives if they were seeking refuge. Many Wampanoags were related to Narragansetts through intertribal marriages and the Narragansetts feared what would happen to their relatives if they were left in the hands of the English after a previous incident when the English had sold Wampanoags who had surrendered out of the country.<sup>59</sup> The English looked for total obedience from the Narragansetts, but for many members of the tribe the English terms were too harsh to ever allow them to submit to colonial authority.

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<sup>58</sup> Hubbard, 83-86.

<sup>59</sup> Pulsipher, 121-125.

The treaty also exemplified the English approach to Indian diplomacy. The conditions of the treaty plainly favored English interests with little regard for what the Narragansetts would procure from the agreement, similar to their earlier treaty during the Pequot War. The Narragansetts were required to maintain loyalty to the English, delivering captive Wampanoags and returning any stolen goods. In return for this loyalty, the English were allowed to take Narragansett hostages to ensure obedience and Narragansetts received the mere gift of coats for capturing the greatest enemy to the English colonists in New England at this time. It appears evident that the English looked down upon the Indians, believing they could establish unfair and one-sided treaties without Indian notice of such inequities; it did not go unnoticed by the Narragansetts as they continued to support Philip.

By November of 1675, the English had become wholly suspicious of the Narragansett tribe in aiding Philip and his allies. They cited Narragansett raids that had been occurring since June and had not ceased even after the treaty was signed in July. Roger Williams described one of these attacks in a letter to the governor of Connecticut:

a party of one hundred Narragansett Indians, armed, marched to Warwick, which, as it frightened Warwick, so did it also the inhabitants there... it occasioned the English here (and myself) to suspect that all the fine words from the Indian sachems to use were but words of policy, falsehood and treachery : especially since now the English testify, that for divers weeks (if not months) canoes passed to and again (day and night between Philip and the Narragansetts) and the Narragansett Indians have committed many robberies on the English houses. Also, it is thought that Philip durst not have proceeded so far, had he not been assured to have been seconded and assisted by the Mohegans and Narragansetts.<sup>60</sup>

The English had already become suspicious of the Narragansett tribe a full month before a treaty had been signed due to Narragansett raids into towns such as Warwick and various robberies

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<sup>60</sup> Williams to Winthrop, June 27, 1675, *Letters of Roger Williams*, 370-371.



occurring in English houses, all signs that Philip and the Narragansetts were regularly corresponding. The English were becoming so crazed with suspicion that they began suspecting the Mohegans, one of their strongest Indian allies, in also aiding Philip. Early in the war, some English had already cemented the idea in their minds that Indians could never be trusted. Narragansett duplicity supported this frame of mind. As the months wore on, the Narragansetts continued to aid the Wampanoags despite signing a peace treaty with the English. Philip's people continued to look to the Narragansetts as a safe haven throughout the war, while the tribe delayed in giving up any Wampanoags to the English regardless of the established treaty.<sup>61</sup>

In November of 1675, the Commissioners of the United Colonies drafted an order concerning the ongoing disobedience of the Narragansetts. The commissioners first aired their suspicions: "there is much suspicion and probabilities that Indians have been sent from the Nahigansetts to the assistance of Phillipians and the other uplanders now in open hostility with the English, and that those Nahigansetts have joined with the others in destroying many of the English, their houses and goods, at Sprigfeild, Northampton, Deerfield... and that have entertained wounded men from those our enemies, and keep constant correspondence with them."<sup>62</sup> The commissioners displayed their suspicions that the Narragansetts were violating the treaty signed earlier in the year and actively helping Philip in the war effort by citing Narragansett actions. These actions included the destruction of English property in many towns as well as caring for and harboring wounded Wampanoags. As the evidence was mounting against the Narragansetts, the commissioners of the United Colonies agreed to send a force into Narragansett country to enforce the treaty. They stated that the "Commissioners do agree and

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<sup>61</sup> Potter, 80.

<sup>62</sup> John Winthrop, Jr., "Order of the Commissioners of the United Colonies Relating to King Philip's War," November 2, 1675, *The Trumbull Papers: Early Miscellaneous Papers in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 9, ser. 5 (Boston: University Press, 1885), 99-100.

determine that forthwith meet persons be appointed empowered to repair to the Nahigansetts and demand the delivery of our enemies fled to them for relief and succor, and in case of refusal to be prosecuted as the abettors and friends of our enemies.”<sup>63</sup> At the official meeting of the United Colonies in Boston, the commissioners further agreed to raise a force to send with the delegation to Narragansett country, ordering that:

besides the number of soldiers formerly agreed upon to be raised, and to be in constant readiness for the use of the country, there shall be 1000 more raised and furnished with arms and provisions of all sorts, to be at one hour’s warning for the public service... in case they [the raised forces] be not prevented by the Narragansett Sachems’ actual performance of their covenants made with the commissioners, by delivering up those of our enemies that are in their custody, as also making reparations for all damages sustained by their neglect hitherto, together with security for their further fidelity, then to endeavor the compelling of them thereunto, by the best means they may or can, or to proceed against them as our enemies.<sup>64</sup>

In both orders, the United Colonies still hoped to keep a peace and alliance with the Narragansetts, advising troops sent into the Indian territory to wait for the Narragansetts to act first before engaging the Narragansetts in any sort of military attack. Only if the Narragansetts still refused to give up the Wampanoag captives that were in their care would the troops be ordered to attack the tribe. As the orders stated, the Narragansetts would be considered an English enemy if they continued to flout the treaty stipulations. The colonial soldiers sent to Narragansett country would treat them as no better.

The English, however, had already started to believe that the Narragansetts would turn into their enemies even before the expedition into their territory had begun. A commission was sent to Josiah Winslow, the governor of Plymouth Colony, from the United Colonies in

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “At a meeting of the Commissioners of the United Colonies, by adjournment, in Boston, Nov. 2, 1675,” *Hazard’s Collection of American State Papers*, vol. 2, in Potter, 80-81.

November of 1675, expressing a somewhat different sentiment from the official orders they issued in the same month. The commission instructed the commander of forces to march to Narragansett country and “vanquish and subdue the cruel, barbarous and treacherous enemy, whether Philip Sachem and his Wampanooucks, or the Narrigansets his undoubted allies, or any other their friends and abettors...endeavor as silently and suddenly to surprise the enemy as you can, and if possible draw or force them to engagement.”<sup>65</sup> The order took a much more violent and severe approach to Narragansett dissidence. Upholding the treaty was seen as secondary in this order and securing English interests in Narragansett country, along with punishing the traitorous Narragansetts, was the primary objective of the expedition. The private instructions sent to the commanders offered a better insight into how the English were actually feeling about their Narragansett alliance. They could no longer deal with Narragansett treachery and their suspicions had run so rampant that the English believed the Narragansetts had left them with no other option but to attack the tribe, declaring them an adversary. Suspicions had made the strategic importance of alliance with the Narragansetts become less and less important and eventually led the English to totally mistrust the tribe.

In 1675, Commissioners of the United Colonies made their grievances against the Narragansetts sound grave and somber. The commissioners’ goal was to make it appear as if there was no other viable option besides total engagement of the Narragansetts because they could not allow a tribe of such barbarous and traitorous individuals to openly defy them. Since the Narragansetts would not be subject to English authority, the colonists finally decided to openly attack the tribe. By December, the forces ordered up by the Commissioners of the United

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<sup>65</sup> “Instructions for J.W. Commander in Chief of the Forces raised or to be raised in the United Colonies, to be improved against the Enemy in your present Expedition,” November 1675, *Hutchinson Papers in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 1 (Boston: Freeman and Bolles, 1825), 67-68.

Colonies had reached Narragansett country under the command of Josiah Winslow, governor of Plymouth, making their headquarters in Wickford. William Hubbard recounted the events of the next few days in his narrative of King Philip's War, describing how the colonial forces began launching small attacks on Indians almost daily from their headquarters. One such attack took place on the fourteenth of December, when a company marched into Narragansett country and burned one hundred and fifty wigwams, killed seven Narragansetts and captured eight prisoners, all in time to return to Wickford by nightfall. Throughout the following days, the soldiers had constant interactions with Narragansett Indians. One Narragansett, called Stone-wall John, met with the commanders, claiming he had been sent from the sachems. The man boasted of Narragansett numbers and strength, warning the English not to begin a fight with the tribe. When the man left headquarters, he and his soldiers met with an English garrison, killing a sergeant and at least one more soldier. The killings were a warning for English soldiers not to penetrate too far into Narragansett country. On the sixteenth, Hubbard related that an Englishman's house in Pettaquamscutt had also been burned and destroyed, killing ten English men and five women and children.<sup>66</sup> Though these attacks were warnings to the English to leave Narragansett country, the attacks most likely stirred up feelings of revenge on the side of the English and desires to punish the Narragansetts for their deceitfulness.

On the seventeenth of December, reinforcements finally arrived from Connecticut, containing three hundred Englishmen and one hundred and fifty Mohegans. With the entire force finally assembled, it was decided that the entirety of the Massachusetts and Plymouth forces would march to Pettaquamscutt and upon first opportunity, engage the Narragansett enemy. By the nineteenth, after wading through the snow and the cold for a night, the colonial

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<sup>66</sup> Hubbard, 132-134.

forces reached the edge of a swamp, where their Indian guide assured them that they would find the Narragansetts. Narragansetts guarding the nearby fort immediately fired upon the troops, and fighting ensued.<sup>67</sup> The battle would be known as the Great Swamp Fight and would be a pivotal turning point for Narragansetts in King Philip's War.<sup>68</sup>

On the twenty-eighth of December, a letter was written by a member of the colonial forces and sent to London entitled *A Farther Brief and True Narration of the Great Swamp Fight*. The letter recounted the course of the important battle, describing the events of the nineteenth as follows:

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, although it was Sunday, our Men thought they could not serve God Better then to require Justice of the Indians for the Innocent Blood which had been so oft by those Truceent Savages shed ; and we were cheerfully ready... to forgo our own lives to be revenged of these Philistines, that had made Sport with our miseries; we marched through the Snow and came to a thick Swamp... wherein were encamped 3500 Indians. We first demanded to have Philip and his Adherents to be delivered Prisoners to us, according to Articles : And had no other Answer but shot ; then we fired about 500 Wigwams... and killed all that we met with of them, as well Squaws and Papposes, (i.e. Women and Children) as Sanups (i.e Men)... It did greatly rejoice our Men to see their Enemies, who had formerly skulked behind Shrubs and Trees, now to be engaged in a fair Field, where they had no defence but in their Arms or rather their Heels... We have slain of the Enemy about 500 Fighting Men, besides some that were burnt in their Wigwams, and Women and Children the number of which we took no account of ; also one of their Sachems is slain.<sup>69</sup>

The narrative shows a brutality towards the Narragansetts, which would finally allow for the Narragansetts to openly join the Wampanoags in fights against the English. The colonial forces

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

<sup>68</sup> See Appendix IV for an image of the Great Swamp Fight.

<sup>69</sup> *A Farther Brief and True Narration of the Great Swamp Fight in the Narragansett Country*, December 18, 1675 (Providence: Society of Colonial Wars, 1912), 9-10.

did not discriminate against their targets, killing Narragansett women and children, lighting Narragansett homes on fire, unaware and unsympathetic of who was inside. When the Narragansetts began to flee, the English mocked them, recounting that they enjoyed fighting the Narragansetts in a “fair field,” where their only strength was their ability to fight or, in this case, put their “heels” in flight. The English boasted about the number of Narragansetts they killed, citing how so many had perished that they took no account of the women and children or those that had been burnt alive in their homes. Throughout all this, the letter thanked God for being on their side and allowing them to massacre these Narragansetts.

Colonel Benjamin Church corroborates the story of the Great Swamp Fight in his narrative of King Philip’s War, though his tone is somewhat more somber. What may be most shocking is that Church reports that the burning of wigwams was not a spur of the moment decision. Church wrote, “the English people in the fort had begun to set fire to the wigwams and houses in the fort... They told him [Church] they had orders from the General to burn them.”<sup>70</sup> That these actions were premeditated makes them all the more malicious and terrible, showing a callous disregard for Native American life on the part of the English. At this point, the relationship between the Narragansetts and the English had entirely broken down. The pressure put on the Narragansetts to join in alliance with the English finally reached a boiling point. The Narragansetts refused to submit to the English, which would have been humiliating. Instead they would fight, the only choice they felt left to them after the massacre at the Great Swamp Fight.<sup>71</sup> Unable to accept that the Narragansetts would not come under their rule, the English undoubtedly felt that their only choice was to strike against the Narragansetts. Both sides would

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<sup>70</sup> Benjamin Church, *Diary of King Philip’s War 1675-1676*, ed. Alan and Mary Simpson (Chester, Connecticut: Pequot Press, 1975), 100.

<sup>71</sup> Pulsipher, 128.

have felt they were left with no other options, illustrating a complete breakdown in the colonial relationship between the Narragansetts and the colonists.

Church recounted the large death toll, stating, “Some of the enemy that were then in the fort have since informed us that nearly a third of the Indians belonging to all that Narragansett country were killed by the English and by the cold that night; that they fled out of their fort so hastily that they carried nothing with them; that if the English had kept in the fort, the Indians had certainly been necessitated either to surrender themselves to them or to have perished by hunger and the severity of the season.”<sup>72</sup> This evidence supported the idea that the English were no longer trying to gain Narragansett obedience. The fact that almost one-third of the entire Narragansett population, according to Church, was wiped out in one battle exemplified the brutality with which the English assaulted the fort. Furthermore, the English were well aware of the cold conditions, as they had experienced them in their march to get to the swamp. They knew that the Narragansetts would have nowhere to go after their wigwams were burnt and would be subjected to the brutality of a New England winter night. The decision to destroy wigwams was another way of ensuring that more Narragansetts would perish after the battle and that the tribe would be further weakened. If the Narragansetts would not ally themselves with the English, then they would be destroyed.

In the wake of the tremendous violence of the Great Swamp Fight, the Narragansett tribe still remained divided in its decision to ally with Philip, demonstrating the conflict of young versus old that still existed within tribe. On the eighth of January, Ninigret sent a messenger to the English maintaining his loyalty to them. He informed the English that two younger Narragansett sachems, Canonchet and Panoquin, were leading the war effort and would continue

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 101.

to fight rather than succumb to the English. Narragansett sachem, Canonicus, also sent word to the English that he desired more time to create a new treaty of peace with them. The English, however, felt they had enough of treaties with the Narragansetts and resolved to attack instead of sue for peace.<sup>73</sup> Despite this divide among the Narragansett sachems, the massacre at the Great Swamp Fight would be the turning point for the Narragansetts, as the overwhelming majority of the tribe openly joined Philip in his efforts against the English directly after the battle. Benjamin Church described this new alliance: “Philip... meets with all the remnants of the Narragansett and Nipmuck Indians, that were there gathered together [at Wetuset Hills]... and made their descent on Sudbury... where they met with and swallowed up valiant Captain Wadsworth and his company, and [wrought] many other doleful desolation in those parts.”<sup>74</sup> The Narragansetts had now officially allied themselves with Philip and consummated this alliance by besieging numerous English towns with ferocity.

In late January, colonial forces were pursuing their Indian enemies, including the Narragansetts, as they wreaked havoc among English towns and residences. The English eventually caught up with, killed, and captured around seventy Indians but were unable to continue their pursuit due to a need for provisions. The Indian force had, however, been chased toward Connecticut and, for the Narragansetts, out of their own country.<sup>75</sup> Owing to the winter season, the Narragansetts were now far from any food or supplies they desperately needed and

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<sup>73</sup> Hubbard, 147-148.

<sup>74</sup> Church, 105.

<sup>75</sup> Hubbard, 150.



would take any opportunity to gain necessary provisions, which meant laying siege to the first English town they came across.<sup>76</sup> Joining with Philip meant that attacking English villages was now part of the war tactics of the Narragansetts, and on February 10, 1676, the Narragansetts, in combination with the Nipmucs and the Wampanoags, raided Lancaster, Massachusetts.

In their raid of Lancaster, the Indians took a number of prisoners, including Mary Rowlandson, who would survive to be later ransomed off to the English and eventually write a narrative of her time in captivity with the three Algonquian tribes. Rowlandson described the brutality of the attack on the town as it began: “hearing the noise of some Guns, we looked out; several Houses were burning... There were five persons taken in one house, the Father, and the Mother and a sucking Child, they knockt on the head; the other two they took and carried away alive... Another there was who running along was shot and wounded and fell down; he begged of them his life, promising them Money (as they told me) but they would not harken to him but knockt him in head, and strip him naked, and split open his Bowels.”<sup>77</sup> Rowlandson and her neighbors expressed shock at the aggression and cruelty of the Algonquian tribes, but the same cruelty had been used on the families of the Narragansetts who had been burned alive in their homes or forced into the cold winter night to starve to death.<sup>78</sup> The brutality displayed by the Narragansetts in Lancaster, and in many other New England towns, exemplified the tragic breakdown of any relationship between the English and the Narragansetts. The colonial relationship, at this point, had been almost totally destroyed as both sides now wished to exterminate the other.

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<sup>76</sup> Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Together with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson and Related Documents*, ed. Neal Salisbury (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 63-64.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>78</sup> See Appendix V for a depiction of the raid on Lancaster.

The Narragansetts continued their attacks on the English in the months after the Great Swamp Fight. On the twenty-first of February, an Algonquian force took Medfield, burning and pillaging the town.<sup>79</sup> A month later, an Indian force surprised and assaulted a Plymouth company under the command of Captain Michael Pierce, which had been sent out to stem the tide of Indian attacks that were currently occurring in Massachusetts, and killed over forty Englishmen. Only two days later, on the twenty-eighth of March, the town of Rehoboth fell to yet another Indian attack.<sup>80</sup> After a formal recognition of Narragansett support, it seemed that Philip and his forces had strengthened, launching attack after attack on English towns and leaving devastation in their wake. The actions of the English at the Great Swamp Fight had lit a fire inside the Narragansett tribe, pushing the tribe into a much stronger alliance with Philip. The strong English desire for a Narragansett alliance early in the war had caused the English to become wholly suspicious of the tribe when they did not completely subscribe to the stipulations of the treaty made back in July of 1675. The English reaction to the disobedience would become the catalyst that allowed the Narragansetts to openly fight alongside Philip and his forces for the remainder of the war and savagely attack the towns they came across.

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<sup>79</sup> Hubbard, 153-154.

<sup>80</sup> Leach, 167-168.

### III. THE AFTERMATH OF KING PHILIP'S WAR

As the spring of 1676 wore on, the success of the Narragansetts and Philip's allies started to wane as the English changed their battle tactics. The English became better at coordination efforts between colonies and relied more on Christian Indians, whom greatly helped the English scouting effort. They also began targeting Indian food supplies and employing smaller hit-and-run tactics, rather than trying to engage Indians in an open field battle. To further compound these problems for the Algonquians, the threat of disease was growing, killing more Indian warriors than battle did. Additionally, the Narragansett sachem, Canonchet, was captured by Connecticut and Mohegan forces and executed in early May. Canonchet was a major war leader, not only for the Narragansetts, but also for the Wampanoags and Nipmucs who the Narragansetts had joined in rebellion against the English. Internal conflict also threatened to tear the Algonquian allies apart as some older Nipmuc sachems were becoming reluctant to pursue war any longer while the younger Metacom and Quinnapin, a Narragansett sachem, refused to enter into any form of negotiations with the English.<sup>81</sup>

During her captivity, Mary Rowlandson described how the spirit of the Indians was beginning to break due to these divisions. Even after they had just won a victory at the Massachusetts town of Sudbury, "they said they had killed two Captains, and almost an hundred men... yet they came home without that rejoycing and triumphant over their victory, which they were wont to shew at other times, but rather like Dogs (as they say) which have lost their ears. Yet I could not perceive that it was for their own loss of men: They said, they had not lost above

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<sup>81</sup> Mandell, 98-99.

five or six... When they went, they acted as if the Devil had told them that they should gain the victory: and now they acted, as if the Devil had told them they should have a fall... so it proved, for quickly they began to fall, and so held on that Summer, till they came to utter ruine.”<sup>82</sup> Even with a victory, the Algonquians were not able to stir up any morale. The Indians had become exhausted in their battles against the English, and with the combination of disease, starvation, and divisions, these internal conflicts had started to eat away at the resolve of the Indian alliance. As Rowlandson observed, it was clear that their end was near.

By the beginning of July, Major John Talcott from Connecticut attacked a large Narragansett village, killing thirty-four men and one hundred and thirty-seven women and children.<sup>83</sup> The event is described in 1676 by Nathaniel Saltonstall in his narrative of King Philip’s War: “Major Talkot slew and took Captive Four and Twenty of the Enemies in one Weeks Time, and also killed the Old Queen of Narraganset, and an arch Villain of their Party... famously known by the Name of Stonewall, or Stone-Layer John... [Stonewall] was of great Use to the Indians in building their Forts, etc.”<sup>84</sup> The Old Queen of Narragansett was Ninigret’s sister, Quaiapen, while Stonewall was the Indian who had taunted English forces at Wickford days before the Great Swamp Fight. Both deaths were a major blow to the Narragansetts combined with the hundreds of other Narragansetts that had been massacred. Over sixty more Narragansetts were slaughtered by Talcott the next day, leaving the Narragansetts totally

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<sup>82</sup> Rowlandson, 100-101.

<sup>83</sup> Mandell, 103.

<sup>84</sup> Nathaniel Saltonstall, *A New and Further Narrative of the State of New England*, in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, in Lincoln, ed., 96.

decimated and with no choice but to sign a peace treaty with Massachusetts Bay on the fifteenth of July.<sup>85</sup>

On August twelfth, Metacom was captured and killed by a force under the command of Benjamin Church, finally ending the rebellion that had begun over one year ago.<sup>86</sup> The Narragansett sachems had all been killed by the English after Quinnipian, the only remaining sachem, was executed by the English shortly after Metacom's death. The Narragansett tribe was left in ruins, finding sanctuary with Ninigret, sachem of the closely related Niantic tribe who had remained close with the Narragansetts throughout the war.<sup>87</sup> The English had almost totally eradicated the Algonquian Indians of southern New England in King Philip's War, including what had been one of the most powerful tribes in the area, the Narragansetts. Shortly after the end of the war, the English began selling off Narragansetts lands.

On August 23, 1676, the Council of War in Connecticut claimed tracts of Narragansett country, declaring: "Forasmuch as all those lands in the Narrogancett country doe lye and are circumscribed w<sup>th</sup>; in the known limitts of o<sup>r</sup> Charter, viz. from Narrogancett Bay on the east &c. as is therein graciously expressed by his Ma<sup>tie</sup> to be granted the Colony of Connecticutt, which have been and now are recouered out of the hands of the Indian enemies that had victorized over or caused the people totally to desert all those lands which they had possessed themselues of, formerly."<sup>88</sup> The Connecticut Council made it clear that they had no intentions of returning the lands the Narragansetts vacated during the war back to the tribe, claiming that the Narragansetts

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<sup>85</sup> Mandell, 103.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>87</sup> Potter, 98-99.

<sup>88</sup> "Journal of the Council of War - Aug. 23," in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, From 1665 to 1678; With the Journal of the Council of War, 1675 to 1678*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Co., 1852), 473.

had pushed the English off the land, not taking into account the fact that the Narragansetts had held the land long before the colonists arrived in the area. Connecticut, along with the colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, took advantage of the weakened state of the Narragansetts to finally claim the land that they had so long desired but were unable to attain while the Narragansetts still held some semblance of strength.

In October, the General Assembly of Rhode Island began dividing up the Narragansett lands by acreage, doling out parcels to preselected recipients. The Assembly stated that ten thousand acres would be divided among one hundred men and five thousand acres would be set aside for a township, while five hundred acres near the shore would be divided into house lots. Military commanders were also appointed to survey the entirety of Narragansett country to decide how best to continue their division of the area.<sup>89</sup> The English colonists had finally acquired what they had craved before King Philip's War had begun: land of the Algonquian tribes. Metacom had rebelled because he saw that the English were ceaselessly encroaching on his lands and realized if this was not stopped he and the other tribes of the region would lose everything. Unfortunately, the resulting war sped up the process of English land grabbing after Philip and his Narragansett allies were defeated and virtually stamped out of their homelands.

Though many of the rebellious Algonquian tribes had been killed during the war, there were some survivors, but English treatment of Indian captives would be no more benevolent than the treatment of their lands. Connecticut's Council of War described the treatment of one such captive in a statement to Lieutenant Thomas Holister:

Menowniet, one of o<sup>r</sup> Indian enemies taken near Farmington...giues an acco<sup>t</sup> of a parcell of armes that were by theemie hid neer Pacomptock... Councill have seen cause to nominate and appoynt L<sup>nt</sup> Tho: Holister to take under his conduct

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<sup>89</sup> Potter, 100-101.

about ten men with the sayd prisoner, and to march forthw<sup>th</sup> to the sayd place where the armes are s<sup>d</sup> to be hid ; and if yet they remayn, he is hereby ordered to seiz the s<sup>d</sup> armes and conuay them in safe custody to Hartford ; and in case the s<sup>d</sup> Indian Menowniett doe not carry it well or doe not made discouery, then s<sup>d</sup> L<sup>nt</sup> Holister is left at liberty to kill the s<sup>d</sup> Menowniett or to return him to prison agayn... and is hereby fully commissioned to kill and destroy all such of the enemie as shall come within his power.<sup>90</sup>

Connecticut essentially gave its military commanders power to kill, with no discretion, any enemy Algonquian prisoner who was put in his charge. There did not have to be any formal hearing to execute the prisoners or any permission granted to the officer in charge, exemplifying the conquering attitude of the English. The English had already decimated the Narragansetts, Wampanoags, and Nipmucs in the war, but the indiscriminate killing continued even after it was clear that the Indians would no longer be able to continue their fight to make sure the colonial conquest would be complete.

Perhaps more shocking is how the English treated their strongest Indian allies, the Mohegans, in the aftermath of the war. When the war was still in full swing, Uncas had been put in charge of taking surrenders. He would secure those Indians that had surrendered to an English commander so they would later be ready to stand trial in the General Court or Council of Connecticut.<sup>91</sup> It would be logical to assume that Uncas would be rewarded for holding and securing these captives of war, possibly being allowed to integrate them into his tribe, as was Indian practice at the time. That, however, would not be the case. In August, the Connecticut Council declared that Uncas would no longer be allowed to hold the hostages, stating: “Many or

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<sup>90</sup> “Journal of the Council of War – Aug. 23,” in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, ed. Trumbull, 473.

<sup>91</sup> “At a Meeting of the Councill, in Hartford, Feb. 16, 1676,” in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, ed. Trumbull, 488.

most of the remayneing captiues and the other Indians that have surrendered themselues to the English vpon this war, being w<sup>th</sup> Uncas, he was sent for, and (being discoursed w<sup>th</sup>all,) he was tould that the warr was the Englishe's, and the successe belongs to them; the Councill were therefor now mett to dispose of all the persons abouesayd, as may be best for the good of the country."<sup>92</sup> It may not be shocking that the English treated their enemies with little regard, but that they also treated their greatest ally with the same disrespect illustrates the deep-seated prejudices that were engrained in the colonial mind. The English could not reward the Mohegans for their service because the goal of the colonists was to gain submission from all Indians. Rewarding the Mohegans for their service would be placing the tribe on the same level of English subjects, a position which the English did not feel any Indian deserved.

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<sup>92</sup> "At a Meeting of the Councill in Hartford, August 22<sup>d</sup>, 1676," in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, ed. Trumbull, 472-473.



## CONCLUSION

The Narragansetts' history of interactions with the English unfolded in such a way that caused the tribe to question English motives. Beginning with their alliance during the Pequot War, the Narragansetts witnessed the brutality of the English when they indiscriminately killed Pequot men, women, and children at what would later be dubbed the Mystic Massacre. Additionally, the Narragansetts were cheated out of the spoils of war despite their full support of the English throughout. Their closeness with the English in the Pequot War would offer the Narragansetts ample evidence to begin mistrusting colonial promises.

As time went on, English support for the Narragansetts' ardent rival, the Mohegans, would cause them to question any English alliance during King Philip's War that would include working with the detestable Mohegan sachem, Uncas. Despite Narragansett misgivings, the English refused to back off, constantly sending delegates to the tribe and forcing a peace treaty on them in the early months of King Philip's War. When the Narragansetts refused to follow the stipulations of a treaty that would lessen their power, the English punished them for their disloyalty with the slaughter of the Great Swamp Fight, finally pushing the Narragansetts into an open alliance with Philip.

In joining Philip, the Narragansetts also used extremely violent tactics in their raids on colonial towns throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The tactics, however, should not be the focus. The desperation that the Narragansetts and other Algonquian tribes were brought to resulted from English actions and desire for supreme control. Violence became the only means of protest that Indians could use against the colonists. The English had been threatening the Algonquian way of life decades before King Philip's War broke out through attempts at unfair

territorial acquisitions. The Algonquians, including the Narragansetts, were faced with either watching their homelands slip away from them or fighting against the English with violence. Both the English and the Indians of southern New England resorted to brutal tactics to try to achieve their goals with many deaths on both sides. The potential for alliance and any relationship between the English and the Narragansetts had been completely destroyed. The colonial relationship had deteriorated and would continue to throughout the following centuries. The relationship did not change as more Europeans immigrated to America and Indians throughout the entire country were displaced. The history of the Narragansetts offers insight into how the misfortune of Indians throughout American began in the colonies of New England more than three centuries ago when there was a complete breakdown in relations between Native Americans and English colonists – a rift which would never be repaired.

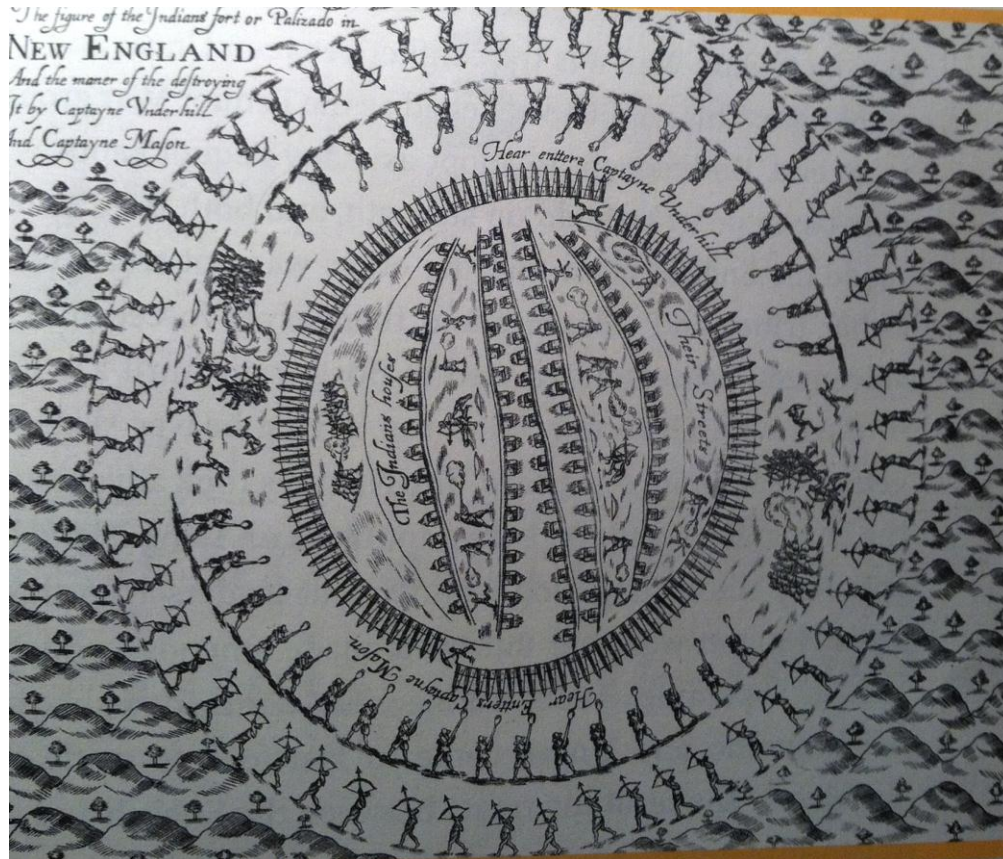
## APPENDICES

### Appendix I



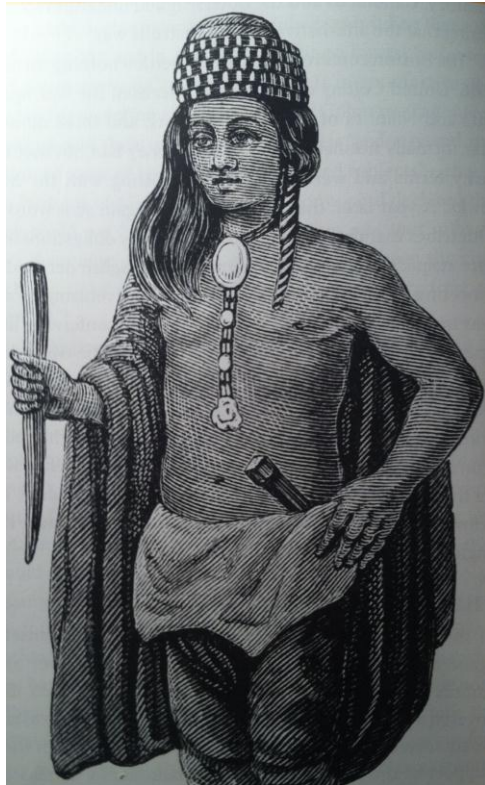
A map of southern New England in 1675, showing the territories of the Native American tribes of the region. From "Native Indian Tribes in New England in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century," "Dr. Benjamin Church," <http://drbenjaminchurchjr.blogspot.com/2011/10/natives-of-new-england-1675.html> (accessed December 9, 2011).

## Appendix II



A depiction of the Mystic Massacre, occurring on May 26, 1637, where Pequot Indians were brutally killed by English soldiers during the Pequot War. The inner circle represents Indian houses while the two outer circles depict soldiers from Connecticut. The last circle depicts Indian allies of the English, presumably the Narragansetts or Mohegans. From Daniel Mandell, *King Philip's War: The Conflict Over New England* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 40.

## Appendix III



One of the only known depictions of the Niantic sachem, Ninigret, an important sachem in the context of King Philip's War. From Daniel Mandell, *King Philip's War: The Conflict Over New England* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 40.



## Appendix IV



A depiction of the Great Swamp Fight on December 19, 1675, when forces of the United Colonies attacked a Narragansett fort, killing hundreds. From Daniel Mandell, *King Philip's War: The Conflict Over New England* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 83.

## Appendix V



An image from Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity amongst Narragansett Indians after their raid on Lancaster, in which a woman tries to fight off Native Americans armed with axes and rifles during the raid. From Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 187.

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