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Network Analysis Visualizations of the Abenakis in the Early 18th Century

Today, only three groups of the Abenaki: Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot have been federally recognized as having obtained “Indian” status in the federal government, but historically, there have been many Abenaki tribal groups living in the regions that are now New England and New Brunswick. Most of them intermingled with each other while European and non-Abenaki colonists settled there. However, in historical accounts and manuscripts in the early 18th century when outsiders from Europe and non-Abenaki areas observed and attempted to name these groups, the recognition of the identities and the understanding of the correct names for the Abenaki groups were misled and confounded. These outsiders deliberately or recklessly misprinted various Abenaki nomenclatures. Currently, Abenaki tribal identity can barely be clarified through these records by means of comparing place names, demography, lifestyles, as well as the geographic areas that are inhabited or used for trading relations. Using a digital humanities approach to evaluate the interrelations among these Abenaki groups, I analyzed a dozen graphs created with Gephi, an open software that can chart a sort of network to target the characteristic relationships between terms. The diagrams created can help to maintain and recover colonized Indigenous rights, memory, cultures, identity, and sovereignty, by virtually and visually decolonizing historical relationships between the Abenaki peoples.