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Source Analysis

The Apache tribe is portrayed throughout history as a savage war-hungry people, who raided villages and tormented nearby groups. The fact is, the Apache raided for generations to protect their land from invasion. The Apache were actually have thought to wanted to stay peaceful, and were forced into the act of battle to remain a free people.[[1]](#footnote--1) Although their want for peace might have been true, most European accounts of the Apache have portrayed them as violent. This stereotype of Apache has also lasted the test of time. Violent acts from the Apache are discussed in a letter from Juan de Onate as early as 1599.

Juan de Onate was eventually appointed the governor of New Mexico, but before that, he wrote this letter to the Spanish viceroy.[[2]](#footnote-0) The letter was a description of his encounter with various peoples of the modern-day, southwest region of the United States. He mentions the Apache and describes them as a people who he has “compelled to render obedience to His Majesty.”[[3]](#footnote-1) He discusses the Apache as a violent, out of line group who killed his *maestro de campo.[[4]](#footnote-2)* Preceding the murder, Onate decided to burn down their entire civilization, as a form of punishment for their actions. This sort of delinquent description is not exactly the same as the Apache are described in *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls,* written by Royal B. Stratton.

Stratton was author who wrote a book, based on a true story, about the kidnapping of two young girls by the Apache. The story says, Apache murdered the Oatman family; however they left Lorenzo Oatman to die, and spared the two youngest girls Olive, 13, and Mary Ann, 8. They forced the girls into hard labor, physical abuse and ridicule by the Apache children. The girls were then traded to the Mohave tribe for various goods, and their contact with the Apache finally came to an end. The Apache are described as evil for their alleged actions to the Oatman family. This sort of brutal, careless force is the main idea of the entire story, and is somewhat similar to what Onate saw in the Apache tribe.[[5]](#footnote-3)

The violence is a big part of the stereotype surrounding the Apache tribe, and is shown by both of these sources. Each story is told from the perspective of the Europeans, which is something to take into account. But both stories focus on the “savage natives”, and violent acts they committed on the Europeans; however, the violence comes into the story in separate ways.

The violence in the letter from Onate seemed to be described as if the tribe could not take it any longer, and finally lashed out fatally and violently. This is not like the Royal B. Stratton story because, in the *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls,* the Apache viciously attacked an innocent family. Disobedience was not the cause for the violence, but instead a blood thirst for raiding and pillaging.

The Apache were not any more violent than any other group of people that was backed into a corner, but the connation of violence still follows the tribe when discussed in modern time. Europeans wrote both the sources discussed, so a bias more than likely presented itself. Thus in the eyes of the Europeans, the Apache were feared, violent people, and the idea has been accepted since the 16th century.

Works Cited

Calloway, Colin G. "Land Seizure and Removal to Reservations." In *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 350-352. Fourth ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Matin's, 2012.

Onate, Juan De. "Oñate, Letter from New Mexico." 1599.

Stratton, R. B. *Captivity of the Oatman Girls*. New York: Pub. for the Author, by Carlton & Porter, 1858.

1. Calloway (350) [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. Ruler of country, higher authority [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. Onate (23) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. Second in command, only to Onate [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. Stratton, Royal B. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)