

Essay on centeredness and colonialism

Parts of the World, Europe



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Individual Project

The experience of indigenous tribes must have been very bad when the European colonialists started entering their regions. Although the Native Americans had no weaponry to match that of the Europeans they were attacked when the colonialists felt it was necessary to take their land. On the other hand there were colonists that did not want to take over and take everything. Scott L. Malcomson (2000) the author of *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* writes that many encounters on a face-to-face level did not involve any violence. Some of the European colonists accepted the American Indians and the two groups became integrated; the habits and routines that worked the best were taken from one group and used by the other.

Roanoke was an early example of an English colonial a colony that was established there of “ a free society of Africans, Indians and Europeans” (Malcomson, 2000, p. 28). The intent of the Roanoke colony to be a workplace to provide England with products was a bad start to what could have been a good experience. Unfortunately the majority of the English (like John Smith) decided to use the Spanish conquering type of colonialism. Their efforts were helped by the devastation to the indigenous tribes from viruses like smallpox. Despite the good intentions of some colonists the impact of colonization on indigenous tribes left them with small populations (if any) and broken spirits.

The loss of centeredness of the Native American tribes must have been caused by the brutality and the lack of human compassion from the European colonialists who had the goal of building empires and getting rich.

The situation in what is now California is typical of the European colonial takeover of the Americas. In 1851 the Gov. of California, Peter Burnett did not use gentle language to describe the goal of his administration. He made a speech to the California legislature arguing that the war on the Indian tribes “ must continue to be waged between the races until the Indian becomes extinct" (Ibid. 144). (Trask, 2004) That means that the use of genocide was socially acceptable enough to be talked about in an open session of the legislature. Trask (2004) lists the name of seventeen tribal nations that were living in “ an area of 250 miles by 200 miles . . . from the Northern California border down to the Golden Gate Bridge in the west and Yosemite National Park in the east” and she notes that there were many others.

Native American tribes had a different attitude to nature that was the opposite of the European colonial powers and their colonists. The natives of the Americas lived in cooperation with nature but the Christians believed that nature was theirs to subdue and use for whatever purpose they wanted. Both the Spanish Catholic religion and the English Protestant religion believed this. When Europeans first arrived in the Americas the tribes had a “ life of light, easily sustainable agriculture, controlled hunting, fishing, foraging, and honorable warfare” which was the opposite of the “ English alternative of intense, sedentary farming and the production of agricultural exports for the London market” ((Malcomson, 2000, p. 27).

On the Great Plains the same unfortunate experience was repeated. The tribes of the Eastern Santee Sioux were located between the Missouri River and the Mississippi River. They were continually being forced to move from

three directions, the east, the north and the south. Other native tribes and white colonialists were the problem for the Santees remaining on their traditional living and hunting grounds during the decade from 1830 to 1837. The US government purchased all the Santee land east of the Mississippi River in 1837. (Krakoff, 2012) This was a devastating blow to the centeredness that had once existed in the large tribe that was organized into smaller groups. Although there were smaller groups within the Santee tribe they all had the shared beliefs and values of the umbrella tribe, the Eastern Santee Sioux. Not only were citizens in the tribe connected to the other members of the tribe they had also been connected to nature. Krakoff (2012) discusses the “ Sisseton” council fire of the Santees. It was organized after the tribe had relocated in Minnesota and the eastern part of North and South Dakota. The continuity of the tribe leadership had been destroyed. The example of this was the Sisseton council fire because it was the fourth council fire that had been formed “ eroding the idea of a monolithic Sioux identity, each band was considered to have its own character” (Krakoff, 2012).

Archeologists studying tribes in the Americas have shown that although each smaller tribe was organized as part of the large group structure they each had their own personal cultures. In book review Trunzo (2012) gave the example the large variety of goods that were traded between the tribes and with the white Europeans. Each tribe must have been open to an individual’s creativity because finds by archeologists show that household objects and other goods that would have been traded have individual designs instead of everyone using the exact same decorations. Trunzo (2012) also makes the

point that each tribe had distinctly different ways for dealing with white Europeans and they each had different experiences. But in the end that processes of colonialism elicit similar responses regardless of era or location." (Trunzo, 2012)

Trask (2004) is a Native American in Hawaii who explains how she feels “. . . and so it is for people of color on this continent. We are nonwhite in a white universe. We are different, and therefore inferior, categorically. And we are marked by captivity: economic, political, and cultural captivity." This surely must have been the way the original tribal nations felt under the threat and finally under the thumb of colonialism.

References

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Individual Project

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What are some of the philosophies that influenced Latin America? In what way did they impact the cultures of Latin America?

Latin America is an amazing mixture of traditional customs and values imposed on the Americas by the white European colonialists from many countries such as Portugal, Spain, France and England. The people brought from Africa as slaves have had an inseparable influence on philosophies especially in the Caribbean Islands and northern parts of the South American continent. The original religions and lifestyles of the indigenous population were altered by the conquistadors and other colonialists. Living as slave and perhaps subjects in an empire the indigenous tribes were not allowed to practice their own religions and traditions. The philosophies of the Catholic and Protestant Christian religions were integrated with the belief systems of the people. In order to be safe from punishment the people disguised their own religions under the trappings of the Christian rituals that were brought to their regions.

France dominated the Caribbean Islands like Haiti until a revolution brought independence (for a short while) to the Haitians. This an example to me of the strong desire for people to rule themselves instead of wanting to live under the rule of an empire. The islands were the central location for kidnapped peoples to be brought to be sold into slavery. What resulted was a mix of unique religious rituals like in voodoo and great music like reggae and jazz.

What contributions to society did folk and elite caudillos bring to Latin American society?

The elite caudillos were educated under colonial rule and ended up in

positions of bureaucracy. The indigenous people looked up to them because the caudillos could help them solve problems they were having with the law of colonial rule. (Greenleaf & Stone, 1990, p. 72) There was a transition between colonial leadership and the independence of regions and countries where the elite caudillos could really have power. The caudillos both folk acted as the go-between between the people and the government. It was usual for the business people to become leaders in the new governments of independence. The elite caudillos tried to disrupt the national government when that happened like in the late 1800s in Nicaragua and El Salvador. (Greenleaf & Stone, 1990, p. 173) The honorable caudillos like Juan Vargas in Guatemala had charisma and were very persuasive. They could help the people organize for their rights. Vargas displayed courage without the machismo that caudillos were often prone to exhibit. A caudillo could act as an intermediary with the government for the people, a leader in rebellions for independence and courageous role models (on the positive side). (Greenleaf & Stone, 1990, p. 72)

What impact did the encroachment of Europeans have upon the New World? The encroachment of Europeans upon the New World ruined the natural custom of living in cooperation with nature. The indigenous people did not have a change to assimilate the antibodies needed to fight off the diseases, viruses, and smallpox the Europeans brought with them. The New World (new to the Europeans) caused the people living there problems to the point that the populations were devastated also by malnutrition, abuse and imprisonment. The concept of the tribal way of government (which was mostly democratic) was dissolved under colonialism. The people lost their

connection with the larger community of the tribe and their families due to the encroachment of their land and way of life. The self concept of people was reduced by the abuse and keeping a strong self-identity in these circumstances must have been very difficult.

References

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