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Pequot War

Reflections on conflicts skew depending on the presenter of the story. The article, *The First Thanksgiving* by Dr. Kodo Lightfoot, takes a subjective view on the encounter between Native Americans and Early Europeans who emigrated to the Americas. In contrast, from the article, *History of the Pequot Indians* by The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut, narratives of interactions with Native Americans and Europeans, appear to have a neutral stance on the conflicts between the two groups. Both articles authenticate the story that innocent women and children of the Pequot tribe were massacred in the Pequot War by men under the command of John Endicott. The significance and differences between the two articles will be explored.

The author, Dr. Kodo Lightfoot writes that Native Americans welcomed the European immigrants with open arms and embrace. Such as, “in New England coastal explorers and traders were greeted by the Indians with warm friendship until some of the sea captains began to seize the Indian People” (Lightfoot). In addition, the Native Americans of the Pequot tribe were portrayed as generous with the land that was inhabited. An Indian named Samoset, “arranged for the Pilgrims to meet with the grand sachem (the leader) of the Wampanoag Indians. In this meeting the Indians let it be known that they were willing to share their homelands with the white immigrants” (Lightfoot). The attitude of the settlers towards the Native Americans is depicted as one with “disrespect.” “The whites believed that because they were superior to the Indians that it was right to take more of the Indians land, with or without the Indians approval” (Lightfoot). Therefore, if a person were to only view the story from these narratives, it could be construed as a description of “an evil invader” encountering a “group of peaceful pacifists.”

In comparison, the article from The Society of Colonial Wars offers a neutral version of the events between the two groups. The Pequot tribe was not as “peaceful” or “antiwar” as portrayed by Dr. Lightfoot. For example, “as a result of constant intertribal warfare over an extended period, the central political power of the Pequot was an exception among the eastern Algonquin tribes who usually lived in peace with each other and therefore had little need of tribal organization beyond a few villages under a common sachem” (Sultzman). Another example of the capability of aggression by the Pequot reaction to the discovery of Dutch traders on the lower Connecticut River.

By 1622 the fur trade on the lower Connecticut River had grown enough that the Dutch established a permanent trading post near Hartford. Their intention was to trade with all of the tribes in the region but, the Pequot had other ambitions and were determined to dominate the Connecticut trade. They first attacked the Narragansett, not so much to seize a disputed hunting territory in southwest Rhode Island, but to keep these powerful rivals away from the new Dutch post. The next step was for the Pequot to use a combination of intimidation and war to tighten their grip on the region’s trade by subjugating the neighboring Nipmuc and Mattabesic (Sultzman).

The Pequot were not against using violence in pursuit of wampum, which was currency

in the Native American culture. “The problem was the Pequot did not have nearly enough wampum to pay for everything they wanted, especially firearms. They solved this by crossing Long Island Sound in their canoes and conquering the Meotac” (Sultzman). Therefore, the abovementioned accounts provide a view that the Pequot could use aggression and violence to accomplish goals.

Significance

The two articles display the significance of learning history from different perspectives. History told by the winners and losers involved in reflected events, leads to narrow interpretations of the past. In addition, the information that Dr. Lightfoot left out, creates a one-sided view of the conflict between the Pequot and Puritans. Mutually, the articles confirm the massacre of women and children in The Pequot War (1637). While not an argument for the justification of killing of innocents, the lack of background about the events that led up to the incidents of The Pequot War, borders misinformation instead of an unbiased recollection of events. In combination, this affects the image of both groups. It is difficult to prevent history from repeating itself if the history learned is not balanced.

# Works Cited

Lightfoot, Kodo. "The First Thanksgiving." (1980).

Sultzman, Lee. "History of The Pequot Indians." 2020. *The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut.* 2020. <http://www.colonialwarsct.org/1637\_pequot\_history.htm>.