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### Change and Continuity in the Colonial Period

D. Richter's "Facing East" and R. White's "Middle Ground" each provide a unique perspective of assessing change and continuity in the colonial period. Richter provides the perspective of Indian people instead of the commonly known one of looking west. White provides a portrayal of an alliance between Indians and Whites, known as the Middle Ground.

Beginning with Richter's view of "Facing East" you immediately see changes in the colonial period. The most drastic change was due to disease, and the affects upon Indian populations with the arrival of Europeans. Disease had a domino effect upon the Indian people which at least wiped out 90% of their populations. Not only did disease have an affect upon Indians but they had to adapt to new customs and ecological changes. Disease had an affect on people, cultural knowledge, and faith. It turned Indian people away from their medicine men to European Gods.

De Soto brought enormous changes with his arrival which brought about the political, economic, and ecological changes. The blows he brought were felt: he imprisoned slaves, took over harvests, brought down chief's divine power, and looted temples. Plus the arrival of domestic animals, especially pigs had major negative affects.

Yet through all these changes some things remained the same, like population movements, conquests, and political and cultural change that had been going on for centuries

(Richter, 39). Even with the arrival of Europeans these things continued to exist, and some chose alliances within the three major players: British, French, and Spanish. Also, the issues of conflict and distrust remained among Indians in their views of these colonizers.

Along with the arrival of these new people, Indians curiosity bloomed. So the task of making alliances became a priority for Indian people in order to gain these goods and the power they might possess. What started off as curiosity shifted into forming alliances, which again shifted to dependence on trade goods. However we are aware that at first Indians didn't use European trade good for their main purposes but to show connection/wealth until after larger colonies of settlers began to arrive. Indian men and women's everyday tasks became easier by using these new tools gained from Europeans. Brass was especially important because arrows tipped with brass were better than those with flint heads. Plus iron blades were lethal. In result, the balance of power was due to European settlements and goods. However, "ironically, to continue to live as Indians, Native People needed to trade with Europeans. Indians needed beaver pelts or ability to make wampum" (Richter, 51); so beaver pelts became economically important for Indians. Yet, overall the three great material forces in the transformation to reshape Indian country were economic, ecological, and disease.

Political changes were evident in the distribution of goods to chiefs at first and then anybody later on. The distribution of goods allowed for any common man to challenge the authority of the chief because status and authority went to those who had the most to give away, and through the distribution of goods anybody could now gain status and authority. Also, "the forces of economic change unleashed by European colonization interacted with Indian practices to produce a new world that neither colonists nor Indians could have previously have imagined" (Richter, 52).

What continued throughout the colonial period and usually after contact with all of the three major powers was that Indians had to constantly reinvent themselves to survive in this new world of theirs. Three prime examples are Virginia Algonquian “princess” Pocahontas, Mohawk Roman Catholic Kateri Tekakwitha who was a candidate for sainthood, and Wampanoag Metacom “King Philip”. All three show how they tried to incorporate Europeans into an Indian world on Indigenous terms. Each sought cooperation not conflict.

However, White’s metaphor of the “Middle Ground” is a new culture created as part Indian and part white. The middle ground was a time when power relations were even, and was a joint Indian-white creation. A shift in power relations became present—Indians became Europeanized, adapting European concepts and vice versa. Europeans began adapting to Indian ways through diplomacy, intermarriage, and warfare. Accommodation was present in this period. “Gift exchanges, through the conventions of reciprocity, created channels of mutual aid. Intermarriage created bonds of kinship and obligation (White, 15). “Intermarriage and adoption formed one path to peace and solidarity, but the calumet was part of a more overtly political and ceremonial way of achieving peace (White, 20); which shows the changes both groups faced and how they reshaped and incorporated new concepts and traditions.

The time of the French was the prime period of the middle ground because of cross-cultural exchange. The French were seen as mediators or fathers to these children of Ontantio which then created a common identity. To the French, Indians weren’t seen as a problem like the British seen them. The French needed allies because they didn’t send fleets of people so the main economic process was through the beaver fur trade. Also, “it was because Algonquians who were perfectly comfortable with their status and practices as Indians and Frenchmen, confident in the rightness of French ways, nonetheless had to deal with people who shared

neither their values nor their assumptions about the appropriate way of accomplishing tasks” (White, 50).

Political and economic changes were present with the middle ground because it was a “realm of constant invention” (White, 52). It was a part of everyday life and of formal diplomatic relations. One drastic political change the middle ground brought about was individual Indians were able to solve problems with Frenchmen without the gathering of councils and officials. The middle ground was forced into existence by the need to resolve problems.

Indian women, specifically among the Illinois had the greatest influence of Christianity. An example is in “Jesuit teaching among the Illinois in the 1690s stressed the cult of the Virgin Mary, and with it came a heavy emphasis on chastity and virginity” (White, 67). Conversion to Christianity allowed Indian women self-determination, and they became masters of their own bodies. This allowed Aramepinchieue to defy her parent’s wishes for her marriage to a Frenchman until she agreed on her own terms in order to fulfill the ideals of the middle ground and to form an alliance.

Another way the middle ground allowed for compensation was important with the issue of violence. The middle ground allowed for some compensation and the ability to agree upon one. The prime example is the case of Dulhut and the Menominee and the two sons of Achiganaga as the guilty parties for killing two Frenchmen. However in the end, he was content with the idea of a life for a life, and ignored his previous will of imposing French law with Indian custom. The middle ground rested greatly upon finding some satisfaction through improvising and working together to find compensation. “This ritual of the middle ground clearly drew

elements from both cultures but fully corresponded to neither” (White, 93). Ways were found to maintain the alliance even in circumstances surrounding a killing.

The French could imagine themselves as allies of diverse groups but the problem which arose was there were enemies, intertribal rivalries. The French were the mediators between his red children. However, the British had cheaper trade goods but when they started taking over forts through force, there were no good feelings with the Indians because they fought with the French. The French were fighting to keep the English out of the Ohio River Valley. Indians were fighting because of the mistrust of Europeans. Then a spiritual revitalization movement arose, a stirring of Indians great awakening which was seen through Neolin and Pontiac. This is part of the middle ground. Redefining native religion by doing away with European goods by not wearing European clothes but it has Christian elements.

Continuity is seen through the political and economic changes in the metaphor of the middle ground. It started with the French and continued until it ended up amongst the English. At first, the English were reluctant to enter into the middle ground. They weren't gift givers like the French or mediators but were like a stern father. Until the English found themselves in an interesting dynamic did they seek an alliance in an attempt to keep the American settlers behind the line so it would be easier to control them. However it ends with the Americans trying to re-create a middle ground since imposing their will only resulted in war. Until they began taking land, dictating policies until the removal started.

In the end we can see how in assessing history both change and continuity are present in the colonial period. The most changes occur within the political and economic aspects and continuity is seen the culture since there were a lot of things that remained the same.

Additionally, both metaphors are excellent ways of looking at change and continuity. What is evident are the changes faced by Indian people during the colonial period. Indians were able to retain some old views of cultural traditions while incorporating new elements of Christianity. Richter's metaphor of "Facing East" is a good example of introducing the native perspective into the history of the colonial period while White's metaphor of the "Middle Ground" shows how these clashes of cultures adapt to the idea of living amongst each other.