

## **Literary and Historical Notes of Pennsylvania Colony: A Model of Multicultural Society**

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### **Abstract**

American society is multicultural due to many ethnicities, cultures, religions, and denominations besides applying democratic principles as the cornerstone of its social-political system. It does not happen spontaneously, though. American multicultural society is a result of a long historical trace since its colonial era. One of the colonies assumed to have contributed to the presence of the early American multicultural society is the Pennsylvania colony. In this regard, this paper then intends to propose some strategies William Penn conducted as the proprietor in founding the Pennsylvania colony for such multicultural fact. This paper uses Nash Smith's interdisciplinary approach through which two perspectives are coming up, i.e., historical and literary ones. This study found that William Penn conducted three strategies, namely: (1) promoting an equal relation through friendship, (2) providing a clause of toleration in the First Frame of Government serving as a constitution of the colony, and (3) acknowledging each ethnic group's life and liberty. The first was conducted to persuade the ethnic groups, particularly the Indians, to willingly live peacefully with the white people, as depicted in a poem, Treaty of Penn. The second was designed to provide a legal basis that guaranteed all people to live with mutual trust. The last functions are an applicative form of the second and real proof of William Penn's commitment issued in his letter written in London before founding the Pennsylvania colony. These strategies appeared due to the influence of William Penn's conviction in Quakerism that generally taught

him to look all human beings equal regardless of any differences such as race, sex, nation, religion, language, and others.

**Keywords:** Multi-Culture, Society, Quakers, Strategy, Pennsylvania, Colony, Interdisciplinary

## **INTRODUCTION**

Multicultural is a word that modifies a condition or fact of plurality in a society due to having several distinct cultures, different ethnic groups, several religions, and/or many denominations. This word has got its popularity since the mid of twentieth century as a substituting word for 'plural' that appeared before. In this regard, once a society shows a multicultural fact, it has actually applied and acknowledged concepts of diversity, equality, and or democracy as cornerstones of its existence because the indispensable requisite to attain such society is through the adoption of human rights principles. In this regard, each entity of the society may have the same right, duty, and opportunity in any form to exist, grow up, and contribute to the sustainability of multicultural fact (Suparlan, 2004). This concept is obviously applicable to the real condition of the United States ever since it has existed as a nation-state as what is truly seen then through its national motto, *e pluribus unum*.

Discussing the United States as a nation or big "institutionalized" society with its everlasting multicultural fact, this initially happened or was triggered by the appearance of this country as a New World for all people over the world, the Europeans in particular, to be visited and dwelled as what was pioneered by the Puritans in the first settlement era in 1620s. Besides, it was also encouraged by a sort of down-to-earth official policies undergone by several colonies in colonial era so that many different groups of people were allowed to freely come, migrate, and settle as part of entities within territory of those colonies. One of the colonies which clearly underwent this mode of policy was, undoubtedly, Pennsylvania colony.

This colony was exactly founded in 1681 after the Penns, especially William Penn's father, Admiral Penn, got a charter from King Charles II. This king had debt before and he paid it with that charter stating that Admiral Penn was given an authority to own a territory as a proprietor of it in America and its name was taken from this proprietor, 'Pennsylvania'. Penn refers to name of Admiral Penn and -sylvania refers to the condition of the area having much forest (Boorstin, 1958: 44). This territory was then inherited to his son, William Penn, who was a Quaker. William Penn took in charge with or became a real proprietor for that territory. Quaker is another name of 'Society of Friends', one of Christian denominations founded by George Fox in England in 1647 and got its development then in the United States (Fox, 1904: 32; Bacon, 1969: 11). Becoming a Quaker, in fact, influenced William Penn to found a system of government in this colony. Quakerism concretely teaches that all human beings are equal regardless of natural differences such as ethnic, nation, race, sex, color of skin, etc. This concept is taken from its core doctrine of the Inner Light saying that each person has the same potency to have a contact with the God – the Inner Light -- in his or her heart. So, along with this, all men especially the Quakers should spread away a universal grace to all people (Roslewicz, 1999).

In regard of this belief, William Penn then applied his conviction to found the colony's system known as 'Holy Experiment' (Boorstin, 1958: 69). This term signifies an ideal concept of government in that area which was fully built based on the Quakerism doctrines. This concept was an extension of Penn's dream to have a peaceful, democratic, and multicultural society in that colony. This mode of ideal concept was also really conducted by the Puritans when founding Massachusetts colony. They founded the first colony with a concept known as 'A City Upon Hill' by which the Puritans were fully inspired to found the Massachusetts' system based on Christian doctrines.

Therefore, this study intends to dig out further some concrete strategies done by William Penn in the sense of his Holy Experiment when founding Pennsylvania; what did William Penn exactly think and do to apply his dream? To what extent the Quakerism doctrines did influence William Penn's concept? In this sense, in order to find a more reliable analysis this study uses some personal writings of William Penn as primary data besides being supported by the historical and literary ones.

## **THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY**

Frankly speaking this study tries to apply an interdisciplinary theory as a main approach in its discussion. This theory practically leads a writer to have several perspectives from some disciplines. This concept is in line with Henry Nash Smith's interdisciplinary theory saying as follows:

The best thing we can do, in my opinion, is to conceive American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry. This implied a sustained effort of the student of literature to take account of sociological, historical, and anthropological data and methods, and of the sociologist or the historian to take account of the data and methods of scholarship in the fields of the arts (Kwiat and Turpie, 1980: 14). So, those perspectives that may appear in this study are at least historical and literary perspectives. Again, these perspectives are intertwined one another in showing any fact related to the problem formulation previously mentioned to be broken down in the analysis of this study.

## **WILLIAM PENN'S STRATEGIES TO FOUND PENNSYLVANIA**

An effective strategy was definitely needed by any European to be taken into account when intending to dwell the New World in the early times. Why so? It is because that era was still in the sense of wilderness era where there was no a definite rule of law encompassing the social system, besides the concept of Spenser's Survival of the Fittest was still clearly applied in almost all parts of the New World. If one was stronger, he or she could live and control the land. The stronger he was, the more dominant he would be. This fact was clearly shown by the two opposite powers in that era, the Indians as the native of the land and the Europeans as the colonials. The Europeans used their physical and intelligent powers to conquer the Indian and annex and occupy their lands. So, the physical conflicts or wars were undeniably occurred between both sides.

Unlike most of the Europeans, William Penn who had to be in charge with the big territory in the New World thought to find out other strategy in order to avoid any physical conflict especially with the Indians and could run his governmental system and process in peace. In this case, there are at least three ways that can be seen as Penn's strategies to found his colony; namely: (1) by promoting an equal relation through friendship, (2) by providing a clause of toleration in the First Frame of Government serving as a constitution of the colony, and (3) by acknowledging each ethnic group's life and liberty.

### **The Equality through Friendship**

This concept was firstly expressed by William Penn through his letter when he was still in England. It was written on 18th of 8th Month, 1681 dealing with William Penn's personal invitation to the Indians, Delaware Indians, or also called with Leni Lenape Indians, to live in the territory of Pennsylvania as friend and or neighbor. In here, becoming friend logically needs a prerequisite fact; that is, each side has to see other side in equality, not in subordinated or oppressed situation. Besides, the along with the sense of equality, it may also grow up a sense of mutual respect and mutual understanding towards the differences had by one another. Concretely, there is no a patron-client relation but a sense of informality and intimacy between both sides appear. Such an ideal concept is clearly seen through the expressions of his letter from line 1 to line 8, as quoted below:

My Friends, There is one great God and power that hath made the world and all things therein, to whom you and I, and all people owe their being and well being, and to whom you and I one day give an account for all that we don in the world...Now this great God hath been pleased to make me concerned in your parts of the world, and the king of the country where I live hath given me a great province, but I desire to enjoy it with your love and consent, that we may always live together as neighbors and friends, else what would the great God say to us, who hath made us not to devour and destroy one another.  
(<http://theology.ed.edu/people/document/william penn.pdf>).

Through the quotation above, this letter implies a personal commitment of William Penn to the Indians; a commitment to make a relation as a friend or neighbor. This commitment, in this case, is clearly shown through the lines of the letter as quoted: "I desire to enjoy it with your love and consent, that we may always live together as neighbors and friends...". The relation between both sides would be conducted in the sense of friendship in which there was a spirit of friendliness, mutual respect, and mutual trust of their position and life, so it was not allowed to harm and destroy one another. Of course, this could happen, as Penn said, if the relation was done based on Love and Consent illumined by the power of God.

When they really had relation physically, the commitment was simply undergone especially shown by William Penn as the proprietor of Pennsylvania colony. The spirit of friendship brought Penn to come to the Indians' sites to re-confirm his above-mentioned commitment expressed through the letter. William Penn made a treaty with

the Indians known as the Shackamaxon Treaty which was held at a village of Shackamaxon in 1682. The fact of how both sides' physical contact was is vividly depicted by Elizabeth Chandler though her poem entitled The Treaty of Penn. In this poem, both William Penn and Indian Chief did an intensive dialogue just for the sake of obtaining an agreement related to the formerly mentioned commitment.

At the first stanza, Indian Chief starts his dialogue by asking Penn, as a representative of the white men in general, whether Penn has the same attitude and character with the former white men, who once also stated a commitment to have a good friendship and brotherhood, but in the end they broke the commitment and did massive murders to the Indians.

I have seen the white chieftains, but proudly they stood;  
Though they call'd us their brethren, they thirst for our blood:  
With the peace-belt of wampum they stretch'd forth one one,  
With the other they wielded the death-doing brand.  
On their lip was calumet – war on their brow;  
But thine scowls not with hatred – a chieftain art thou? --  
([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/poetical\\_works\\_chandler](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/poetical_works_chandler)).

Second stanza is the answer of the Chief's question at the first one. Penn's answer is very firm that he is much different from the former white people and he, together with his people, will not repeat what the former ones did to the Indians. Penn is not hypocrite who in one side offers a friendship, but on the other side he murders the Indians, as reflected in the line: "they call'd us their brethren, they thirst for our blood". Again, in this case, Penn confirms his own commitment that he builds his government based on the Love which implicates to the presence of friendship in the social life, no intention of dominating the other side. To make it clearer, here is the following quotation of the second stanza, showing Penn's answer:

My friends, whom I govern with fatherly hand;  
We worship the spirit who rules from above,  
Our watchword is peace, and our motto is love,  
We fight not, we war not, for life or for land  
And the weapons of death never darken our hand.  
Will we, for our friends and our brethren receive;  
But we will not deprive you, by force or by fraud,  
Of the land that yourselves and your fathers have trod.  
([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/poetical\\_works\\_chandler](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/poetical_works_chandler)).

As depicted in the poem too, William Penn shows how his commitment was not only treat them as a friend but also promised them to not deprive their own lives. William Penn in this case did not want to annex and occupy inhumanly the lands belonged to the Indians. Interestingly, something needs to be noted here in relation to the writing of the poem by its poet, Elizabeth Chandler, is that this poem actually serves as an expression of the poet's admiration to the figure of William Penn, either as a European man or as a Quaker. Why so? This happens because, as Elizabeth Chandler sensed, the contact was conducted due to the spirit of humanism, egalitarianism, and universalism embedded in William Penn's way of thinking through which he had started the establishment of Pennsylvania with a soft strategy in sense of recognizing the presence of Indians' lives.

### **The Formulation of Toleration Clause**

The next strategy done by William Penn was the formulation of a constitution for Pennsylvania colony. The constitution was called *the First Frame of Government* which was written by William Penn himself in 1682. It was officially applied on April 25, 1682. The constitution mainly functions to be "the supreme law" of the colony where any policy and rules of the game would be fully based on that constitution.

One of the explicit clauses that was regulated and explicitly mentioned in the constitution is the rule for toleration. Toleration or tolerance is "quality of tolerating opinions, beliefs, customs, behavior, etc. different from one's own" (Hornby, 1974: 909). William Penn formulated about the toleration clause as it is seen the following quotation of *the First Frame of Government*:

To all Persons,...I, the said William Penn, have declared, granted, and confirmed, and by these presents, for me, my heirs and assigns, do declare,

grant, and confirm unto all the freemen, planters and adventures of, in and to the said province, these liberties, franchises, and properties, to be held, enjoyed and kept by the freemen, planters, and inhabitants of the said province of Pennsylvania for ever...

(<http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/organic/168-fgp.htm>).

It is clearly seen from this quotation that William Penn declared and granted the opportunities for all people (the freemen, planters, and adventurers) to come and live in the territory of Pennsylvania colony as part of the colonies' entities. In this case, William Penn also gave them a kind of liberties to conduct their own lives as free as they wished to have as seen in the line: "these liberties, franchises, and properties, to be held, enjoyed and kept by the freemen, planters, and inhabitants of the said province of Pennsylvania for ever".

Besides, this concept was not merely seen in the First Frame of Government but it was also shown by William Penn in his letter he once wrote in London, England. The statement which was mentioned in the letter as seen in line 11-14 and in line with the concept of the quotation above is as follows:

I am very sensible of the unkindness and injustice that hath been too much exercised toward you by the people of these parts of the world, who sought themselves, and to make great advantage by you, rather than examples of justice and goodness unto you, which I hear hath been matter of trouble to you, and caused great grudgings and animosities...

(<http://theology.ed.edu/people/document/william penn.pdf>).

The two quotations really signify of how William Penn, as an official leader of the colony known as a pious man to his conviction, wished to be a just person or in neutral position to all people as well as their cultures in there including the Indian and the Blacks' lives. He did not want show his favoritism to certain group of people or he did not wish to act a 'more favorable' policy to one group of people and acted a 'less favorable' policy to other group of people. In fact he really enforced the strength of social justice or the toleration clause to all people in his colony. Concretely, all ethnic groups, religions and denominations could live in the territory and being guaranteed by the constitution. Along with this fact, William Penn really showed hi vision to explicate the pluralistic and multicultural society in that colony. There was sense of equality and or non-discrimination within it. This fact is then quite wrapped up with an explicit statement referring to the toleration clause as written in the constitution, *the First Frame of Government*, as follows:

XXXV. That all persons living in this province. shall, in no ways, be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion, or practice, in matters of faith and worship, nor shall they be compelled, at any time, to frequent or maintain any religious worship, place or ministry whatever.

XXXVI. That, according to the good example of the primitive Christians, and the case of the creation, every first day of the week, called the Lord's day, people shall abstain from their common daily labor, that they may the better dispose themselves to worship God according to their understandings."

(<http://theology.ed.edu/people/document/william penn.pdf>)

Hence, due to this policy, the first thing seen as an empirical impact of this concept was the number of immigrants to come in the area increased significantly. The multicultural fact was really happened in the territory where there were the Indians, the Black people, English, Irish, and Germans, Catholics, Jews, and an assortment of Protestants sects including Dunkers, Guguenots, Lutherans, Mennonites, Moravians, Pietists, and Schwenkfelders existing in that territory. They all lived peacefully and equally. Or, the principles of human rights were the basic foundation of their lives.

In this regard, William Penn had enforced the presence of toleration clause in the sense of human rights principles as the compass of social and political systems in the place. The clause was in the sense of "sumum ius suma iuria" (Suwandi, 2009: 46). Indeed, the government of Pennsylvania could in this case apply a sort of justice and thus facilitate the democratic reconstruction and peace process. Finally, due to the policies conducted by William Penn, Hamm (2003: 33) commented that it was the first time that white people in the colonies had organized to defend the Indians or the Native Americans' rights.

## The Respect of Life and Liberty

The rights to life and liberty are the two forms of unalienable rights had by all human beings. These two rights, besides the pursuit of happiness, explicitly formulated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence (1776) as quoted below:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...(Hollinger and Capper, 2001: 134).

It is clearly seen that far from the formulation of the human rights as a basic notion for the establishment of the United States as a nation-state, this concept was really conducted in Pennsylvania colony. The concept functioned to strengthen and guarantee the existence of multicultural society in the territory. In this case, William Penn can be said as a pioneer to have contributed to the presence of human rights application in the United States; admitted or not, this is the real fact. The respect of life and liberty is actually the empirical form or continuance of the concept formulated explicitly in the constitution, the First Frame of Government (1682) as mentioned before i.e. "I, the said William Penn, have declared, granted, and confirmed, and by these presents, for me, my heirs and assigns, do declare, grant, and confirm unto all the freemen, planters and adventures of, in and to the said province, these liberties, franchises, and properties, to be held, enjoyed and kept by the freemen, planters, and inhabitants of the said province of Pennsylvania for ever" (<http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/organic/168-fgp.htm>).

On account of this formulation, the first thing to do as an expression of William Penn's respect to the life and liberty after starting to do his job as a definitive leader for Pennsylvania colony was approaching the Indians whether or not they sold their lands to William Penn. Unlike the other groups of white people, he did not annex and do a kind of physical conflict with the Indians, though had a right to do such thing since he was assigned by the King's charter to have the land. Why William Penn did so? It is because he was a real pacifist, by which he avoid a kind of war but spread a non-violent virtue to all people including to the Indians in the colony. Besides, William Penn had a vision based on the human rights principles, as mentioned before. In here, William Penn positioned the Indians as subject, not as an object, so there was a sense of equality between both sides. Therefore, in the spirit of soft strategy, this method was really effective namely: the Indians were willing to sell their lands and being avoided from the physical conflict, although at last he was the winner of this course. To make it clearer, William Penn's success to buy the Indians' lands is depicted through the picture below:



Source: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/penn/pnbib.html>

The pacifist effort conducted by the proprietor the Pennsylvania upon the buying of the Indians' lands was also a manifestation of his previous commitment he once formulated in his first letter, written London, 18<sup>th</sup> of 8<sup>th</sup> Month, 1681. Through that letter, William Penn expressed his wish to live with the Indians as friend as well as a neighbor where there was a kind of mutual respect, mutual trust and informality or intimacy built in during the physical contact the territory. He said: "I desire to enjoy it with your love and consent, that we may always live together as neighbors and friends, else what would the great God say to us, who hath made us not to devour and destroy one another"(http://theology.ed.edu/people/document/william penn.pdf).

The next strategy as a form of the respect upon life and liberty was that William Penn gave a freedom to all people or the inhabitants in holding their lives and liberties, particularly in freedom of embracing their religions and traditions. As mentioned before, there was not only the Quakerism living in that place, but there were also the faith and practice of other religions or denominations as held by Mennonites, Anabaptism, Moravians, Brethren heir even the original faith of the Blacks and the Indians, who were mostly assumed by white people to be heathens. Upon this fact, Howard Yoder commented this, in sense of the Holy Experiment application as follows:

The popular understanding by Americans, including legal and political historians, concerning rootage of religious liberty in the 1789 Bill of Rights, undervalues the extent to which the pioneering of William Penn followed up by a century's experience of the middle colonies was indispensable to make that commitment possible

(http://theology.nd.edu/people/document/william penn.pdf).

According to him, the differences between the lives of the people living in the territory does not become real matter for him. The difference was a part of the life and his job was to guarantee the existence of such condition. In this case, he was really aware that one of the aims to build the institutional state is to guarantee the presence of human people liberties or civil rights (Rossum, 2001: 68; Cass, 2001: xii). William Penn showed this point through his intermingling with the Indian in which they made a kind of agreement before, as he said as follows:

We have agreed, that in all Differences between us, six of each side shall end the matter: Don't abuse them, but let them have Justice, and you win them... (Pearce, 1965: 478).

Furthermore, William Penn also recognized or acknowledged the variety or diversity of lives in that colony, particularly the acknowledgement of the Indians' lives. This form of his recognition is clearly seen in his other letter written in 1683 entitling Letter from William Penn to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders. What he really said concerning this item is as follows:

Their diet is maze, or Indian corn, divers ways prepared: sometimes roasted in the ashes, sometimes beaten and boyled with water, which they call homine; they also make cakes, not unpleasant to eat: they have likewise several sorts of beans and pease that are good nourishment...(Pearce,1965: 473).

From that short quotation, William Penn presented his own experience as a result of his intermingling with the Indians. in this sense, he actually recognized the modes of the Indians' lives or tradition. What he really did as a leader was that he just got along with them without any intention to banish the traditions which were much different from his.

One thing to be noted related to the William Penn's ability to get along with the Indians, despite the differences between them is that he could render a sense of friendship with love and kind heartedness to them. This sense is of course able to be seen through his conduct and attitudes, including his words, to them during the intermingling. This fact is vividly mentioned his second letter, as quoted below:

When the Purchase was agreed, great Promises past between us of Kindness and good Neighborhood, and that the Indians and English must live in Love, as long as the Sun gave light. Which done, another made a Speech to the Indians, in the Name of all the Sachamakers or kings, first to tell them what was done; next, to charge and command them. To Love the Christians, and particularly live in Peace with me...(Pearce, 1965: 477).

Finally, along with these all attitudes and policies as parts of his whole strategies in founding Pennsylvania colony so that it existed in peace, William Penn can be called as one of the great heroes of the human rights and a pioneer of the spirit and view of multiculturalism in the United States. This notion in fact follows a statement mentioned by Jim Powell through his paper entitled "William Penn, America's First Great Champion for Liberty and Peace", as it is seen in the first paragraph. The statement is quoted below:

William Penn was the first great hero of American society. During the late seventeenth century, when Protestants persecuted Catholics, Catholics persecuted Protestants, and both persecuted Quakers and Jews, Penn established an American sanctuary which protected freedom of conscience. Almost everywhere else, colonists stole land from the Indians, but Penn traveled unarmed among the Indians and negotiated peaceful purchases. He insisted that women deserved equal rights with men. He gave Pennsylvania a written constitution which limited the power of government, provided a humane penal code, and guaranteed many fundamental liberties (<http://www.quaker.org/wmpenn.htm>)

## CONCLUSION

William Penn was a Quaker who was born in England but got his own popularity in the United States. Quakerism was greatly influenced him to be a popular figure in the New World since, in this case, he really practiced his own conviction to the Quakerism when founding and presiding Pennsylvania colony. One of the great values to be practical in his strategy in founding the colony that was taken from the Quakerism is the concept of universalism. Along with this concept, he then looked the existence of the Indians and other groups of people as potential parts for his colony to get its progress not as parts of the obstacles. Besides, still in the influence of his conviction, he then formulated several down-to-earth strategies to smoothly found the colony as those were depicted through his own actions and his own conceptions, namely: (1) by promoting an equal relation through friendship, (2) by providing a clause of toleration in the *First Frame of Government* serving as a constitution of the colony, and (3) by acknowledging each ethnic group's life and liberty. Therefore, William Penn finally appeared to be a great hero in terms of creating multicultural society in Pennsylvania as an initial step or model for the next multicultural form of the United States besides pioneering to present the principles of human rights in there. In this sense, Pennsylvania had emerged as an initial melting pot of the United States. This is a sort of his contribution to the American society, admitted or not.

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