AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

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ReVisioning American History

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

As a student of history, having completed a master's degree and PhD in the discipline, I am grateful for all I learned from my professors and from the thousands of texts I studied. But I did not gain the perspective presented in this book from those professors or studies. This came from outside the academy.

My mother was part Indian, most likely Cherokee, born in Joplin, Missouri. Unenrolled and orphaned, having lost her mother to tuberculosis at age four and with an Irish father who was itinerant and alcoholic, she grew up neglected and often homeless along with a younger brother. Picked up by authorities on the streets of Harrah, Oklahoma, the town to which their father had relocated the family, she was placed in foster homes where she was abused, expected to be a servant, and would run away. When she was sixteen, she met and married my father, of Scots-Irish settler heritage, eighteen, and a high school dropout who worked as a cowboy on a sprawling cattle ranch in the Osage Nation. I was the last of their four children. As a sharecropper family in Canadian County, Oklahoma, we moved from one cabin to another. I grew up in the midst of rural Native communities in the former treaty territory of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations that had been allotted and opened to settlers in the late nineteenth century. Nearby was the federal Indian boarding school at Concho. Strict segregation ruled among the Black, white, and Indian towns, churches, and schools in Oklahoma, and I had little interchange with Native people. My mother was ashamed of being part Indian. She died of alcoholism.

In California during the 1960s, I was active in the civil rights, anti-apartheid, anti–Vietnam War, and women's liberation movements, and ultimately, the pan-Indian movement that some labeled

Red Power. I was recruited to work on Native issues in 1970 by the remarkable Tuscarora traditionalist organizer Mad Bear Anderson, who insisted that I must embrace my Native heritage, however fragile it might be. Although hesitant at first, following the Wounded Knee siege of 1973 I began to work—locally, around the country, and internationally—with the American Indian Movement and the International Indian Treaty Council. I also began serving as an expert witness in court cases, including that of the Wounded Knee defendants, bringing me into discussions with Lakota Sioux elders and activists. Based in San Francisco during that volatile and historic period, I completed my doctorate in history in 1974 and then took a position teaching in a new Native American studies program. My dissertation was on the history of land tenure in New Mexico, and during 1978–1981 I was visiting director of Native American studies at the University of New Mexico. There I worked collaboratively with the All Indian Pueblo Council, Mescalero Apache Nation, Navajo Nation, and the Dinébe'iiná Náhiiłna be Agha'diit'ahii (DNA) People's Legal Services, as well as with Native students, faculty, and communities, in developing a research institute and a seminar training program in economic development.

I have lived with this book for six years, starting over a dozen times before I settled on a narrative thread. Invited to write this ReVisioning American History series title, I was given parameters: it was to be intellectually rigorous but relatively brief and written accessibly so it would engage multiple audiences. I had grave misgivings after having agreed to this ambitious project. Although it was to be a history of the United States as experienced by the Indigenous inhabitants, how could I possibly do justice to that varied experience over a span of two centuries? How could I make it comprehensible to the general reader who would likely have little knowledge of Native American history on the one hand, but might consciously or unconsciously have a set narrative of US history on the other? Since I was convinced of the inherent importance of the project, I persisted, reading or rereading books and articles by North American Indigenous scholars, novelists, and poets, as well as unpublished dissertations, speeches, and testimonies, truly an extraordinary body of work.

I've come to realize that a new periodization of US history is needed that traces the Indigenous experience as opposed to the following standard division: Colonial, Revolutionary, Jacksonian, Civil War and Reconstruction, Industrial Revolution and Gilded Age, Overseas Imperialism, Progressivism, World War I, Depression, New Deal, World War II, Cold War, and Vietnam War, followed by contemporary decades. I altered this periodization to better reflect Indigenous experience but not as radically as needs to be done. This is an issue much discussed in current Native American scholarship.

I also wanted to set aside the rhetoric of race, not because race and racism are unimportant but to emphasize that Native peoples were colonized and deposed of their territories as distinct peoples—hundreds of nations—not as a racial or ethnic group. "Colonization," "dispossession," "settler colonialism," "genocide"—these are the terms that drill to the core of US history, to the very source of the country's existence.

The charge of genocide, once unacceptable by establishment academic and political classes when applied to the United States, has gained currency as evidence of it has mounted, but it is too often accompanied by an assumption of disappearance. So I realized it was crucial to make the reality and significance of Indigenous peoples' survival clear throughout the book. Indigenous survival as peoples is due to centuries of resistance and storytelling passed through the generations, and I sought to demonstrate that this survival is dynamic, not passive. Surviving genocide, by whatever means, *is* resistance: non-Indians must know this in order to more accurately understand the history of the United States.

My hope is that this book will be a springboard to dialogue about history, the present reality of Indigenous peoples' experience, and the meaning and future of the United States itself.

A note on terminology: I use "Indigenous," "Indian," and "Native" interchangeably in the text. Indigenous individuals and peoples in North America on the whole do not consider "Indian" a slur. Of course, all citizens of Native nations much prefer that their nations' names in their own language be used, such as Diné (Navajo), Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Tsalagi (Cherokee), and Anishinaabe (Ojibway,

Chippewa). I have used some of the correct names combined with more familiar usages, such as "Sioux" and "Navajo." Except in material that is quoted, I don't use the term "tribe." "Community," "people," and "nation" are used instead and interchangeably. I also refrain from using "America" and "American" when referring only to the United States and its citizens. Those blatantly imperialistic terms annoy people in the rest of the Western Hemisphere, who are, after all, also Americans. I use "United States" as a noun and "US" as an adjective to refer to the country and "US Americans" for its citizens.

THIS LAND

We are here to educate, not forgive.
We are here to enlighten, not accuse.

—Willie Johns, Brighton Seminole Reservation, Florida

Under the crust of that portion of Earth called the United States of America—"from California . . . to the Gulf Stream waters"—are interred the bones, villages, fields, and sacred objects of American Indians.[1] They cry out for their stories to be heard through their descendants who carry the memories of how the country was founded and how it came to be as it is today.

It should not have happened that the great civilizations of the Western Hemisphere, the very *evidence* of the Western Hemisphere, were wantonly destroyed, the gradual progress of humanity interrupted and set upon a path of greed and destruction.[2] Choices were made that forged that path toward destruction of life itself—the moment in which we now live and die as our planet shrivels, overheated. To learn and know this history is both a necessity and a responsibility to the ancestors and descendants of all parties.

What historian David Chang has written about the land that became Oklahoma applies to the whole United States: "Nation, race, and class converged in land."[3] Everything in US history is about the land—who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity ("real estate") broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market.

US policies and actions related to Indigenous peoples, though

often termed "racist" or "discriminatory," are rarely depicted as what they are: classic cases of imperialism and a particular form of colonialism—settler colonialism. As anthropologist Patrick Wolfe writes, "The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism. Land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life."[4]

The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism—the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft. Those who seek history with an upbeat ending, a history of redemption and reconciliation, may look around and observe that such a conclusion is not visible, not even in utopian dreams of a better society.

Writing US history from an Indigenous peoples' perspective requires rethinking the consensual national narrative. That narrative is wrong or deficient, not in its facts, dates, or details but rather in its essence. Inherent in the myth we've been taught is an embrace of settler colonialism and genocide. The myth persists, not for a lack of free speech or poverty of information but rather for an absence of motivation to ask questions that challenge the core of the scripted narrative of the origin story. How might acknowledging the reality of US history work to transform society? That is the central question this book pursues.

Teaching Native American studies, I always begin with a simple exercise. I ask students to quickly draw a rough outline of the United States at the time it gained independence from Britain. Invariably most draw the approximate present shape of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific—the continental territory not fully appropriated until a century after independence. What became independent in 1783 were the thirteen British colonies hugging the Atlantic shore. When called on this, students are embarrassed because they know better. I assure them that they are not alone. I call this a Rorschach test of unconscious "manifest destiny," embedded in the minds of nearly everyone in the United States and around the world. This test reflects the seeming inevitability of US extent and power, its destiny, with an implication that the continent had previously been *terra nullius,* a land without people.

Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" celebrates that the

land belongs to everyone, reflecting the unconscious manifest destiny we live with. But the extension of the United States from sea to shining sea was the intention and design of the country's founders. "Free" land was the magnet that attracted European settlers. Many were slave owners who desired limitless land for lucrative cash crops. After the war for independence but preceding the writing of the US Constitution, the Continental Congress produced the Northwest Ordinance. This was the first law of the incipient republic, revealing the motive for those desiring independence. It was the blueprint for gobbling up the British-protected Indian Territory ("Ohio Country") on the other side of the Appalachians and Alleghenies. Britain had made settlement there illegal with the Proclamation of 1763.

In 1801, President Jefferson aptly described the new settler-state's intentions for horizontal and vertical continental expansion, stating: "However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar form by similar laws." This vision of manifest destiny found form a few years later in the Monroe Doctrine, signaling the intention of annexing or dominating former Spanish colonial territories in the Americas and the Pacific, which would be put into practice during the rest of the century.

Origin narratives form the vital core of a people's unifying identity and of the values that guide them. In the United States, the founding and development of the Anglo-American settler-state involves a narrative about Puritan settlers who had a covenant with God to take the land. That part of the origin story is supported and reinforced by the Columbus myth and the "Doctrine of Discovery." According to a series of late-fifteenth-century papal bulls, European nations acquired title to the lands they "discovered" and the Indigenous inhabitants lost their natural right to that land after Europeans arrived and claimed it.[5] As law professor Robert A. Williams observes about the Doctrine of Discovery:

> Responding to the requirements of a paradoxical age of Renaissance and Inquisition, the West's first modern discourses

> of conquest articulated a vision of all humankind united under a rule of law discoverable solely by human reason. Unfortunately for the American Indian, the West's first tentative steps towards this noble vision of a Law of Nations contained a mandate for Europe's subjugation of all peoples whose radical divergence from European-derived norms of right conduct signified their need for conquest and remediation.[6]

The Columbus myth suggests that from US independence onward, colonial settlers saw themselves as part of a world system of colonization. "Columbia," the poetic, Latinate name used in reference to the United States from its founding throughout the nineteenth century, was based on the name of Christopher Columbus. The "Land of Columbus" was—and still is—represented by the image of a woman in sculptures and paintings, by institutions such as Columbia University, and by countless place names, including that of the national capital, the District of Columbia.[7] The 1798 hymn "Hail, Columbia" was the early national anthem and is now used whenever the vice president of the United States makes a public appearance, and Columbus Day is still a federal holiday despite Columbus never having set foot on the continent claimed by the United States.

Traditionally, historians of the United States hoping to have successful careers in academia and to author lucrative school textbooks became protectors of this origin myth. With the cultural upheavals in the academic world during the 1960s, engendered by the civil rights movement and student activism, historians came to call for objectivity and fairness in revising interpretations of US history. They warned against moralizing, urging instead a dispassionate and culturally relative approach. Historian Bernard Sheehan, in an influential essay, called for a "cultural conflict" understanding of Native–Euro-American relations in the early United States, writing that this approach "diffuses the locus of guilt."[8] In striving for "balance," however, historians spouted platitudes: "There were good and bad people on both sides." "American culture is an amalgamation of all its ethnic groups." "A frontier is a zone of interaction between cultures, not merely advancing European settlements."

Later, trendy postmodernist studies insisted on Indigenous "agency" under the guise of individual and collective empowerment, making the casualties of colonialism responsible for their own demise. Perhaps worst of all, some claimed (and still claim) that the colonizer and colonized experienced an "encounter" and engaged in "dialogue," thereby masking reality with justifications and rationalizations—in short, apologies for one-sided robbery and murder. In focusing on "cultural change" and "conflict between cultures," these studies avoid fundamental questions about the formation of the United States and its implications for the present and future. This approach to history allows one to safely put aside present responsibility for continued harm done by that past and the questions of reparations, restitution, and reordering society.[9]

Multiculturalism became the cutting edge of post-civil-rights-movement US history revisionism. For this scheme to work—and affirm US historical progress—Indigenous nations and communities had to be left out of the picture. As territorially and treaty-based peoples in North America, they did not fit the grid of multiculturalism but were included by transforming them into an inchoate oppressed racial group, while colonized Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans were dissolved into another such group, variously called "Hispanic" or "Latino." The multicultural approach emphasized the "contributions" of individuals from oppressed groups to the country's assumed greatness. Indigenous peoples were thus credited with corn, beans, buckskin, log cabins, parkas, maple syrup, canoes, hundreds of place names, Thanksgiving, and even the concepts of democracy and federalism. But this idea of the gift-giving Indian helping to establish and enrich the development of the United States is an insidious smoke screen meant to obscure the fact that the very existence of the country is a result of the looting of an entire continent and its resources. The fundamental unresolved issues of Indigenous lands, treaties, and sovereignty could not but scuttle the premises of multiculturalism.

With multiculturalism, manifest destiny won the day. As an example, in 1994, Prentice Hall (part of Pearson Education) published a new college-level US history textbook, authored by four members of a new generation of revisionist historians. These radical

social historians are all brilliant scholars with posts in prestigious universities. The book's title reflects the intent of its authors and publisher: *Out of Many: A History of the American People*. The origin story of a supposedly unitary nation, albeit now multicultural, remained intact. The original cover design featured a multicolored woven fabric—this image meant to stand in place of the discredited "melting pot." Inside, facing the title page, was a photograph of a Navajo woman, dressed formally in velvet and adorned with heavy sterling silver and turquoise jewelry. With a traditional Navajo dwelling, a hogan, in the background, the woman was shown kneeling in front of a traditional loom, weaving a nearly finished rug. The design? The Stars and Stripes! The authors, upon hearing my objection and explanation that Navajo weavers make their livings off commissioned work that includes the desired design, responded: "But it's a real photograph." To the authors' credit, in the second edition they replaced the cover photograph and removed the Navajo picture inside, although the narrative text remains unchanged.

Awareness of the settler-colonialist context of US history writing is essential if one is to avoid the laziness of the default position and the trap of a mythological unconscious belief in manifest destiny. The form of colonialism that the Indigenous peoples of North America have experienced was modern from the beginning: the expansion of European corporations, backed by government armies, into foreign areas, with subsequent expropriation of lands and resources. Settler colonialism is a genocidal policy. Native nations and communities, while struggling to maintain fundamental values and collectivity, have from the beginning resisted modern colonialism using both defensive and offensive techniques, including the modern forms of armed resistance of national liberation movements and what now is called terrorism. In every instance they have fought for survival as peoples. The objective of US colonialist authorities was to terminate their existence as peoples—not as random individuals. This is the very definition of modern genocide as contrasted with premodern instances of extreme violence that did not have the goal of extinction. The United States as a socioeconomic and political entity is a result of this centuries-long and ongoing colonial process.

Modern Indigenous nations and communities are societies formed by their resistance to colonialism, through which they have carried their practices and histories. It is breathtaking, but no miracle, that they have survived as peoples.

To say that the United States is a colonialist settler-state is not to make an accusation but rather to face historical reality, without which consideration not much in US history makes sense, unless Indigenous peoples are erased. But Indigenous nations, through resistance, have survived and bear witness to this history. In the era of worldwide decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century, the former colonial powers and their intellectual apologists mounted a counterforce, often called neocolonialism, from which multiculturalism and postmodernism emerged. Although much revisionist US history reflects neocolonialist strategy—an attempt to accommodate new realities in order to retain the dominance—neocolonialist methods signal victory for the colonized. Such approaches pry off a lid long kept tightly fastened. One result has been the presence of significant numbers of Indigenous scholars in US universities who are changing the terms of analysis. The main challenge for scholars in revising US history in the context of colonialism is not lack of information, nor is it one of methodology. Certainly difficulties with documentation are no more problematic than they are in any other area of research. Rather, the source of the problems has been the refusal or inability of US historians to comprehend the nature of their own history, US history. The fundamental problem is the absence of the colonial framework.

Through economic penetration of Indigenous societies, the European and Euro-American colonial powers created economic dependency and imbalance of trade, then incorporated the Indigenous nations into spheres of influence and controlled them indirectly or as protectorates, with indispensable use of Christian missionaries and alcohol. In the case of US settler colonialism, land was the primary commodity. With such obvious indicators of colonialism at work, why should so many interpretations of US political-economic development be convoluted and obscure, avoiding the obvious? To some extent, the twentieth-century emergence of the field of "US

West" or "Borderlands" history has been forced into an incomplete and flawed settler-colonialist framework. The father of that field of history, Frederick Jackson Turner, confessed as much in 1901: "Our colonial system did not start with the Spanish War [1898]; the U.S. had had a colonial history and policy from the beginning of the Republic; but they have been hidden under the phraseology of 'interstate migration' and 'territorial organization.'"[10]

Settler colonialism, as an institution or system, requires violence or the threat of violence to attain its goals. People do not hand over their land, resources, children, and futures without a fight, and that fight is met with violence. In employing the force necessary to accomplish its expansionist goals, a colonizing regime institutionalizes violence. The notion that settler-indigenous conflict is an inevitable product of cultural differences and misunderstandings, or that violence was committed equally by the colonized and the colonizer, blurs the nature of the historical processes. Euro-American colonialism, an aspect of the capitalist economic globalization, had from its beginnings a genocidal tendency.

The term "genocide" was coined following the Shoah, or Holocaust, and its prohibition was enshrined in the United Nations convention adopted in 1948: the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The convention is not retroactive but is applicable to US-Indigenous relations since 1988, when the US Senate ratified it. The terms of the genocide convention are also useful tools for historical analysis of the effects of colonialism in any era. In the convention, any one of five acts is considered genocide if "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group":

> killing members of the group;
> causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
> deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life
> calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole
> or in part;
> imposing measures intended to prevent births within the
> group;
> forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[11]

In the 1990s, the term "ethnic cleansing" became a useful descriptive term for genocide.

US history, as well as inherited Indigenous trauma, cannot be understood without dealing with the genocide that the United States committed against Indigenous peoples. From the colonial period through the founding of the United States and continuing in the twenty-first century, this has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools. The absence of even the slightest note of regret or tragedy in the annual celebration of the US independence betrays a deep disconnect in the consciousness of US Americans.

Settler colonialism is inherently genocidal in terms of the genocide convention. In the case of the British North American colonies and the United States, not only extermination and removal were practiced but also the disappearing of the prior existence of Indigenous peoples—and this continues to be perpetuated in local histories. Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) historian Jean O'Brien names this practice of writing Indians out of existence "firsting and lasting." All over the continent, local histories, monuments, and signage narrate the story of first settlement: the founder(s), the first school, first dwelling, first everything, as if there had never been occupants who thrived in those places before Euro-Americans. On the other hand, the national narrative tells of "last" Indians or last tribes, such as "the last of the Mohicans," "Ishi, the last Indian," and *End of the Trail*, as a famous sculpture by James Earle Fraser is titled.[12]

Documented policies of genocide on the part of US administrations can be identified in at least four distinct periods: the Jacksonian era of forced removal; the California gold rush in Northern California; the post–Civil War era of the so-called Indian wars in the Great Plains; and the 1950s termination period, all of which are discussed in the following chapters. Cases of genocide carried out as policy may be found in historical documents as well as in the oral histories of Indigenous communities. An example from 1873 is typical, with General William T. Sherman writing, "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their

extermination, men, women and children . . . during an assault, the soldiers can not pause to distinguish between male and female, or even discriminate as to age."[13] As Patrick Wolfe has noted, the peculiarity of settler colonialism is that the goal is elimination of Indigenous populations in order to make land available to settlers. That project is not limited to government policy, but rather involves all kinds of agencies, voluntary militias, and the settlers themselves acting on their own.[14]

In the wake of the US 1950s termination and relocation policies, a pan-Indigenous movement arose in tandem with the powerful African American civil rights movement and the broad-based social justice and antiwar movements of the 1960s. The Indigenous rights movement succeeded in reversing the US termination policy. However, repression, armed attacks, and legislative attempts to undo treaty rights began again in the late 1970s, giving rise to the international Indigenous movement, which greatly broadened the support for Indigenous sovereignty and territorial rights in the United States.

The early twenty-first century has seen increased exploitation of energy resources begetting new pressures on Indigenous lands. Exploitation by the largest corporations, often in collusion with politicians at local, state, and federal levels, and even within some Indigenous governments, could spell a final demise for Indigenous land bases and resources. Strengthening Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination to prevent that result will take general public outrage and demand, which in turn will require that the general population, those descended from settlers and immigrants, know their history and assume responsibility. Resistance to these powerful corporate forces continues to have profound implications for US socioeconomic and political development and the future.

There are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous communities and nations, comprising nearly three million people in the United States. These are the descendants of the fifteen million original inhabitants of the land, the majority of whom were farmers who lived in towns. The US establishment of a system of

Indian reservations stemmed from a long British colonial practice in the Americas. In the era of US treaty-making from independence to 1871, the concept of the reservation was one of the Indigenous nation reserving a narrowed land base from a much larger one in exchange for US government protection from settlers and the provision of social services. In the late nineteenth century, as Indigenous resistance was weakened, the concept of the reservation changed to one of land being carved out of the public domain of the United States as a benevolent gesture, a "gift" to the Indigenous peoples. Rhetoric changed so that reservations were said to have been "given" or "created" for Indians. With this shift, Indian reservations came to be seen as enclaves within state' boundaries. Despite the political and economic reality, the impression to many was that Indigenous people were taking a free ride on public domain.

Beyond the land bases within the limits of the 310 federally recognized reservations—among 554 Indigenous groups—Indigenous land, water, and resource rights extend to all federally acknowledged Indigenous communities within the borders of the United States. This is the case whether "within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state," and includes all allotments as well as rights-of-way running to and from them.[15] Not all the federally recognized Indigenous nations have land bases beyond government buildings, and the lands of some Native nations, including those of the Sioux in the Dakotas and Minnesota and the Ojibwes in Minnesota, have been parceled into multiple reservations, while some fifty Indigenous nations that had been removed to Oklahoma were entirely allotted—divided by the federal government into individual Native-owned parcels. Attorney Walter R. Echo-Hawk writes:

> In 1881, Indian landholdings in the United States had plummeted to 156 million acres. By 1934, only about 50 million acres remained (an area the size of Idaho and Washington) as a result of the General Allotment Act of 1887. During World War II, the government took 500,000 more acres for military use. Over one hundred tribes, bands, and Rancherias

> relinquished their lands under various acts of Congress during the termination era of the 1950s. By 1955, the indigenous land base had shrunk to just 2.3 percent of its original size.[16]

As a result of federal land sales, seizures, and allotments, most reservations are severely fragmented. Each parcel of tribal, trust, and privately held land is a separate enclave under multiple laws and jurisdictions. The Diné (Navajo) Nation has the largest contemporary contiguous land base among Native nations: nearly sixteen million acres, or nearly twenty-five thousand square miles, the size of West Virginia. Each of twelve other reservations is larger than Rhode Island, which comprises nearly eight hundred thousand acres, or twelve hundred square miles, and each of nine other reservations is larger than Delaware, which covers nearly a million and a half acres, or two thousand square miles. Other reservations have land bases of fewer than thirty-two thousand acres, or fifty square miles.[17] A number of independent nation-states with seats in the United Nations have less territory and smaller populations than some Indigenous nations of North America.

Following World War II, the United States was at war with much of the world, just as it was at war with the Indigenous peoples of North America in the nineteenth century. This was total war, demanding that the enemy surrender unconditionally or face annihilation. Perhaps it was inevitable that the earlier wars against Indigenous peoples, if not acknowledged and repudiated, ultimately would include the world. According to the origin narrative, the United States was born of rebellion against oppression—against empire—and thus is the product of the first anticolonial revolution for national liberation. The narrative flows from that fallacy: the broadening and deepening of democracy; the Civil War and the ensuing "second revolution," which ended slavery; the twentieth-century mission to save Europe from itself—twice; and the ultimately triumphant fight against the scourge of communism, with the United States inheriting the difficult and burdensome task of keeping order in the world. It's a narrative of progress. The 1960s social revolutions, ignited by the African American liberation movement, complicated the origin nar-

rative, but its structure and periodization have been left intact. After the 1960s, historians incorporated women, African Americans, and immigrants as contributors to the commonweal. Indeed, the revised narrative produced the "nation of immigrants" framework, which obscures the US practice of colonization, merging settler colonialism with immigration to metropolitan centers during and after the industrial revolution. Native peoples, to the extent that they were included at all, were renamed "First Americans" and thus themselves cast as distant immigrants.

The provincialism and national chauvinism of US history production make it difficult for effective revisions to gain authority. Scholars, both Indigenous and a few non-Indigenous, who attempt to rectify the distortions, are labeled advocates, and their findings are rejected for publication on that basis. Indigenous scholars look to research and thinking that has emerged in the rest of the European-colonized world. To understand the historical and current experiences of Indigenous peoples in the United States, these thinkers and writers draw upon and creatively apply the historical materialism of Marxism, the liberation theology of Latin America, Frantz Fanon's psychosocial analyses of the effects of colonialism on the colonizer and the colonized, and other approaches, including development theory and postmodern theory. While not abandoning insights gained from those sources, due to the "exceptional" nature of US colonialism among nineteenth-century colonial powers, Indigenous scholars and activists are engaged in exploring new approaches.

This book claims to be a history of the United States from an Indigenous peoples' perspective but there is no such thing as a collective Indigenous peoples' perspective, just as there is no monolithic Asian or European or African peoples' perspective. This is not a history of the vast civilizations and communities that thrived and survived between the Gulf of Mexico and Canada and between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific. Such histories have been written, and are being written by historians of Diné, Lakota, Mohawk, Tlingit, Muskogee, Anishinaabe, Lumbee, Inuit, Kiowa, Cherokee, Hopi, and other Indigenous communities and nations that have survived colonial genocide. This book attempts to tell the story of

the United States as a colonialist settler-state, one that, like colonialist European states, crushed and subjugated the original civilizations in the territories it now rules. Indigenous peoples, now in a colonial relationship with the United States, inhabited and thrived for millennia before they were displaced to fragmented reservations and economically decimated.

This is a history of the United States.

ONE

FOLLOW THE CORN

Carrying their flints and torches, Native Americans
were living in balance with Nature—
but they had their thumbs on the scale.

—Charles C. Mann, *1491*

Humanoids existed on Earth for around four million years as hunters and gatherers living in small communal groups that through their movements found and populated every continent. Some two hundred thousand years ago, human societies, having originated in Sub-Saharan Africa, began migrating in all directions, and their descendants eventually populated the globe. Around twelve thousand years ago, some of these people began staying put and developed agriculture—mainly women who domesticated wild plants and began cultivating others.

As a birthplace of agriculture and the towns and cities that followed, America is ancient, not a "new world." Domestication of plants took place around the globe in seven locales during approximately the same period, around 8500 BC. Three of the seven were in the Americas, all based on corn: the Valley of Mexico and Central America (Mesoamerica); the South-Central Andes in South America; and eastern North America. The other early agricultural centers were the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile River systems, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Yellow River of northern China, and the Yangtze River of southern China. During this time, many of the same human societies began domesticating animals. Only in the American continents was the parallel domestication of animals eschewed in favor of game management, a kind of animal husbandry different from

that developed in Africa and Asia. In these seven areas, agriculture-based "civilized" societies developed in symbiosis with hunting, fishing, and gathering peoples on their peripheries, gradually enveloping many of the latter into the realms of their civilizations, except for those in regions inhospitable to agriculture.

THE SACRED CORN FOOD

Indigenous American agriculture was based on corn. Traces of cultivated corn have been identified in central Mexico dating back ten thousand years. Twelve to fourteen centuries later, corn production had spread throughout the temperate and tropical Americas from the southern tip of South America to the subarctic of North America, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean on both continents. The wild grain from which corn was cultivated has never been identified with certainty, but the Indigenous peoples for whom corn was and is their sustenance believe it was a sacred gift from their gods. Since there is no evidence of corn on any other continent prior to its post-Columbus dispersal, its development is a unique invention of the original American agriculturalists. Unlike most grains, corn cannot grow wild and cannot exist without attentive human care.

Along with multiple varieties and colors of corn, Mesoamericans cultivated squash and beans, which were extended throughout the hemisphere, as were the many varieties and colors of potato cultivated by Andean farmers beginning more than seven thousand years ago. Corn, being a summer crop, can tolerate no more than twenty to thirty days without water and even less time in high temperatures. Many of the areas where corn was the staple were arid or semiarid, so its cultivation required the design and construction of complex irrigation systems—in place at least two thousand years before Europeans knew the Americas existed. The proliferation of agriculture and cultigens could not have occurred without centuries of cultural and commercial interchange among the peoples of North, Central, and South America, whose traders carried seeds as well as other goods and cultural practices.

The vast reach and capacity of Indigenous grain production im-

pressed colonialist Europeans. A traveler in French-occupied North America related in 1669 that six square miles of cornfields surrounded each Iroquois village. The governor of New France, following a military raid in the 1680s, reported that he had destroyed more than a million bushels (forty-two thousand tons) of corn belonging to four Iroquois villages.[1] Thanks to the nutritious triad of corn, beans, and squash—which provide a complete protein—the Americas were densely populated when the European monarchies began sponsoring colonization projects there.

The total population of the hemisphere was about one hundred million at the end of the fifteenth century, with about two-fifths in North America, including Mexico. Central Mexico alone supported some thirty million people. At the same time, the population of Europe as far east as the Ural Mountains was around fifty million. Experts have observed that such population densities in precolonial America were supportable because the peoples had created a relatively disease-free paradise.[2] There certainly were diseases and health problems, but the practice of herbal medicine and even surgery and dentistry, and most importantly both hygienic and ritual bathing, kept diseases at bay. Settler observers in all parts of the Americas marveled at the frequent bathing even in winter in cold climates. One commented that the Native people "go to the river and plunge in and wash themselves before they dress daily." Another wrote: "Men, women, and children, from early infancy, are in the habit of bathing." Ritual sweat baths were common to all Native North Americans, having originated in Mexico.[3] Above all, the majority of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas had healthy, mostly vegetarian diets based on the staple of corn and supplemented by wild fish, fowl, and four-legged animals. People lived long and well with abundant ceremonial and recreational periods.

UP FROM MEXICO

As on the two other major continental landmasses—Eurasia and Africa—civilization in the Americas emerged from certain population centers, with periods of vigorous growth and integration

interspersed with periods of decline and disintegration. At least a dozen such centers were functioning in the Americas when Europeans intervened. Although this is a history of the part of North America that is today the United States, it is important to follow the corn to its origins and briefly consider the peoples' history of the Valley of Mexico and Central America, often called Mesoamerica. Influences from the south powerfully shaped the Indigenous peoples to the north (in what is now the United States) and Mexicans continue to migrate as they have for millennia but now across the arbitrary border that was established in the US war against Mexico in 1846–48.

The first great cultivators of corn were the Mayans, initially centered in present-day northern Guatemala and the Mexican state of Tabasco. Extending to the Yucatán peninsula, the Mayans of the tenth century built city-states—Chichen-Itzá, Mayapán, Uxmal, and many others—as far south as Belize and Honduras. Mayan villages, farms, and cities extended from tropical forests to alpine areas to coastal and interior plains. During the five-century apex of Mayan civilization, a combined priesthood and nobility governed. There was also a distinct commercial class, and the cities were densely populated, not simply bureaucratic or religious centers. Ordinary Mayan villages in the far-flung region retained fundamental features of clan structures and communal social relations. They worked the nobles' fields, paid rent for use of land, and contributed labor and taxes to the building of roads, temples, nobles' houses, and other structures. It is not clear whether these relations were exploitative or cooperatively developed. However, the nobility drew servants from groups such as war prisoners, accused criminals, debtors, and even orphans. Although servile status was not hereditary, this was forced labor. Increasingly burdensome exploitation of labor and higher taxes and tribute produced dissension and uprisings, resulting in the collapse of the Mayan state, from which decentralized polities emerged.

Mayan culture astonishes all who study it, and it is often compared to Greek (Athenian) culture. At its core was the cultivation of corn; religion was constructed around this vital food. The Mayan people developed art, architecture, sculpture, and painting, em-

ploying a variety of materials, including gold and silver, which they mined and used for jewelry and sculpture, not for use as currency. Surrounded by rubber trees, they invented the rubber ball and court ball games similar to modern soccer. Their achievements in mathematics and astronomy are the most impressive. By 36 BC they had developed the concept of zero. They worked with numbers in the hundreds of millions and used extensive dating systems, making possible both their observations of the cosmos and their unique calendar that marked the passage of time into the future. Modern astronomers have marveled at the accuracy of Mayan charts of the movements of the moon and planets, which were used to predict eclipses and other events. Mayan culture and science, as well as governmental and economic practices, were influential throughout the region.

During the same period of Mayan development, the Olmec civilization reigned in the Valley of Mexico and built the grand metropolis of Teotihuacán. Beginning in AD 750, Toltec civilization dominated the region for four centuries, absorbing the Olmecs. Colossal buildings, sculptures, and markets made up the Toltec cities, which housed extensive libraries and universities. They created multiple cities, the largest being Tula. The Toltecs' written language was based on the Mayan form, as was the calendar they used in scientific research, particularly in astronomy and medicine. Another nation in the Valley of Mexico, the Culhua, built the city-state of Culhuacán on the southern shore of Lake Texcoco, as well as the city-state of Texcoco on the eastern shore of the lake. In the late fourteenth century, the Tepanec people rose in an expansionist drive and subjugated Culhuacán, Texcoco, and all their subject peoples in the Valley of Mexico. They proceeded to conquer Tenochtitlán, which was located on an island in the middle of the immense Lake Texcoco and had been built around 1325 by the Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs who had migrated from northern Mexico (today's Utah). The Aztecs had entered the valley in the twelfth century and been involved in toppling the Toltecs.[4]

In 1426, the Aztecs of Tenochtitlán formed an alliance with the Texcoco and Tlacopan peoples and overthrew Tepanec rule. The allies proceeded to wage war against neighboring peoples and eventually succeeded in gaining control over the Valley of Mexico. The

Aztecs emerged as dominant in the Triple Alliance and moved to bring all the peoples of Mexico under their tributary authority. These events paralleled ones in Europe and Asia during the same period, when Rome and other city-states were demolished and occupied by invading Germanic peoples, while the Mongols of the Eurasian steppe overran much of Russia and China. As in Europe and Asia, the invading peoples assimilated and reproduced civilization.

The economic basis for the powerful Aztec state was hydraulic agriculture, with corn as the central crop. Beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, cocoa, and many other food crops flourished and supported a dense population, much of it concentrated in large urban centers. The Aztecs also grew tobacco and cotton, the latter providing the fiber for all cloth and clothing. Weaving and metalwork flourished, providing useful commodities as well as works of art. Building techniques enabled construction of enormous stone dams and canals, as well as fortress-like castles made of brick or stone. There were elaborate markets in each city and a far-flung trade network that used routes established by the Toltecs.

Aztec merchants acquired turquoise from Pueblos who mined it in what is now the US Southwest to sell in central Mexico where it had become the most valued of all material possessions and was used as a means of exchange or a form of money.[5] Sixty-five thousand turquoise artifacts in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, are evidence of the importance of turquoise as a major precolonial commodity. Other items were also valuable marketable commodities in the area, salt being close to turquoise in value. Ceramic trade goods involved interconnected markets from Mexico City to Mesa Verde, Colorado. Shells from the Gulf of California, tropical bird feathers from the Gulf Coast area of Mexico, obsidian from Durango, Mexico, and flint from Texas were all found in the ruins of Casa Grande (Arizona), the commercial center of the northern frontier. Turquoise functioning as money was traded to acquire macaw and parrot feathers from tropical areas for religious rituals, seashells from coastal peoples, and hides and meat from the northern plains. The stone has been found in precolonial sites in Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska, where the Wichitas served as intermediaries, carrying turquoise and other goods farther east and north. Crees in the Lake

Superior region and communities in what is today Ontario, Canada, and in today's Wisconsin acquired turquoise through trade.[6]

Traders from Mexico were also transmitters of culture and features such as the Sun Dance religion in the Great Plains, and the cultivation of corn by the Algonquin, Cherokee, and Muskogee (Creek) peoples of the eastern half of North America were transmitted from Central America. The oral and written histories of the Aztecs, Cherokees, and Choctaws record these relations. Cherokee oral history tells of their ancestors' migrations from the south and through Mexico, as does Muskogee history.[7]

Although Aztecs were apparently flourishing culturally and economically, as well as being militarily and politically strong, their dominance was declining on the eve of Spanish intrusion. Being pressed for tribute through violent attacks, peasants rebelled and there were uprisings all over Mexico. Montezuma II, who came to power in 1503, might have succeeded in his attempt to reform the regime, but the Spanish overthrew him before he had the opportunity. The Mexican state was crushed and its cities leveled in Cortés's three-year genocidal war. Cortés's recruitment of resistant communities all over Mexico as allies aided in toppling the central regime. Cortés and his two hundred European mercenaries could never have overthrown the Mexican state without the Indigenous insurgency he co-opted. The resistant peoples who allied with Cortés to overthrow the oppressive Aztec regime could not yet have known the goals of the gold-obsessed Spanish colonizers or the European institutions that backed them.

THE NORTH

What is now the US Southwest once formed, with today's Mexican states of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua, the northern periphery of the Aztec regime in the Valley of Mexico. Mostly an alpine, arid, and semiarid region cut with rivers, it is a fragile land base with rainfall a scarce commodity and drought endemic. Yet, in the Sonora Desert of present-day southern Arizona, communities were practicing agriculture by 2100 BC and began digging irrigation canals as early as

1250 BC. The earliest evidence of corn in the area dates from 2000 BC, introduced by trade and migration between north and south. Farther north, people began cultivating corn, beans, squash, and cotton around 1500 BC. Their descendants, the Akimel O'odham people (Pimas), call their ancestors the Huhugam (meaning "those who have gone"), which English speakers have rendered as "Hohokam." The Hohokam people left behind ball courts similar to those of the Mayans, multistory buildings, and agricultural fields. Their most striking imprint on the land is one of the most extensive networks of irrigation canals in the world at that time. From AD 900 to 1450, the Hohokams built a canal system of more than eight hundred miles of trunk lines and hundreds more miles of branches serving local sites. The longest known canal extended twenty miles. The largest were seventy-five to eighty-five feet across and twenty feet deep, and many were leak-proof, lined with clay. One canal system carried enough water to irrigate an estimated ten thousand acres.[8] Hohokam farmers grew surplus crops for export and their community became a crossroads in a trade network reaching from Mexico to Utah and from the Pacific Coast to New Mexico and into the Great Plains. By the fourteenth century, Hohokams had dispersed, living in smaller communities.

The famed Anasazi people of Chaco Canyon on the Colorado Plateau—in the present-day Four Corners region of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah—thrived from AD 850 to 1250. Ancestors of the Pueblos of New Mexico, the Anasazi constructed more than four hundred miles of roads radiating out from Chaco. Averaging thirty feet wide, these roads followed straight courses, even through difficult terrain such as hills and rock formations. The highways connected some seventy-five communities. Around the thirteenth century, the Anasazi people abandoned the Chaco area and migrated, building nearly a hundred smaller agricultural city-states along the northern Rio Grande valley and its tributaries. Northernmost Taos Pueblo was an important trade center, handling buffalo products from the plains, tropical bird products, copper and shells from Mexico, and turquoise from New Mexican mines. Pueblo trade extended as far west as the Pacific Ocean, as far east as the Great Plains, and as far south as Central America.

Other major peoples in the region, the Navajos (Diné) and Apaches, are of Athabascan heritage, having migrated to the region from the subarctic several centuries before Columbus. The majority of the Diné people did not migrate and remain in the original homeland in Alaska and northwestern Canada. Originally a hunting and trading people, they interacted and intermarried with the Pueblos and became involved in conflicts between villages engendered by disputes over water usage, with Diné and Apache groups allied with one or another of the riverine city-states.[9]

The island peoples of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Basin were an integral part of the cultural, religious, and economic exchanges with the peoples from today's Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Water, far from presenting a barrier to trade and cultural relations, served as a means of connecting the region's peoples. Precolonial Caribbean cultures and cultural connections have been very little studied, since many of these peoples, the first victims of Columbus's colonizing missions, were annihilated, enslaved and deported, or later assimilated enslaved African populations with the advent of the Atlantic slave trade. The best known are the Caribs, Arawaks, Tainos, and the Chibchan-speaking peoples. Throughout the Caribbean islands and rim are also descendants of Maroons—mixed Indigenous and African communities—who successfully liberated themselves from slavery, such as the Garifuna people ("Black Caribs") along the coast of the western Caribbean.[10]

From the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and south to the Gulf of Mexico lay one of the most fertile agricultural belts in the world, crisscrossed with great rivers. Naturally watered, teeming with plant and animal life, temperate in climate, the region was home to multiple agricultural nations. In the twelfth century, the Mississippi Valley region was marked by one enormous city-state, Cahokia, and several large ones built of earthen, stepped pyramids, much like those in Mexico. Cahokia supported a population of tens of thousands, larger than that of London during the same period. Other architectural monuments were sculpted in the shape of gigantic birds, lizards, bears, alligators, and even a 1,330-foot-long

serpent. These feats of monumental construction testify to the levels of civic and social organization. Called "mound builders" by European settlers, the people of this civilization had dispersed before the European invasion, but their influence had spread throughout the eastern half of the North American continent through cultural influence and trade.[11] What European colonizers found in the southeastern region of the continent were nations of villages with economies based on agriculture and corn the mainstay. This was the territory of the nations of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw and the Muskogee Creek and Seminole, along with the Natchez Nation in the western part, the Mississippi Valley region.

To the north, a remarkable federal state structure, the Haudenosaunee confederacy—often referred to as the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy—was made up of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk Nations and, from early in the nineteenth century, the Tuscaroras. This system incorporated six widely dispersed and unique nations of thousands of agricultural villages and hunting grounds from the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic, and as far south as the Carolinas and inland to Pennsylvania. The Haudenosaunee peoples avoided centralized power by means of a clan-village system of democracy based on collective stewardship of the land. Corn, the staple crop, was stored in granaries and distributed equitably in this matrilineal society by the clan mothers, the oldest women from every extended family. Many other nations flourished in the Great Lakes region where now the US-Canada border cuts through their realms. Among them, the Anishinaabe Nation (called by others Ojibwe and Chippewa) was the largest.

The peoples of the prairies of central North America spanned an expanse of space from West Texas to the subarctic between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Several centers of development in that vast region of farming and bison-dependent peoples may be identified: in the prairies of Canada, the Crees; in the Dakotas, the Lakota and Dakota Sioux; and to their west and south, the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples. Farther south were the Ponca, Pawnee, Osage, Kiowa, and many other nations, with buffalo numbering sixty million. Territorial disputes inevitably occurred, and

diplomatic skills as well as trade were highly developed for conflict resolution.

In the Pacific Northwest, from present-day Alaska to San Francisco, and along the vast inland waterways to the mountain barriers, great seafaring and fishing peoples flourished, linked by culture, common ceremonies, and extensive trade. These were wealthy peoples living in a comparative paradise of natural resources, including the sacred salmon. They invented the potlatch, the ceremonial distribution or destruction of accumulated goods, creating a culture of reciprocity. They crafted gigantic wooden totems, masks, and lodges carved from giant sequoias and redwoods. Among these communities speaking many languages were the Tlingit people in Alaska and the salmon-fishing Salish, Makah, Hoopa, Pomo, Karok, and Yurok people.

The territory between the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains in the West, now called the Great Basin, was a harsh environment that supported small populations before European colonization, as it does today. Yet the Shoshone, Bannock, Paiute, and Ute peoples there managed the environment and built permanent villages.

GOVERNANCE

Each Indigenous nation or city-state or town comprised an independent, self-governing people that held supreme authority over internal affairs and dealt with other peoples on equal footing. Among the factors that integrated each nation, in addition to language, were shared belief systems and rituals and clans of extended families that spanned more than one town. The system of decision making was based on consensus, not majority rule. This form of decision making later baffled colonial agents who could not find Indigenous officials to bribe or manipulate. In terms of international diplomacy, each of the Indigenous peoples of western North America was a sovereign nation. First the Spanish, French, and British colonizers, and then the US colonizers, made treaties with these Indigenous governments.

Indigenous governance varied widely in form.[12] East of the Mississippi River, towns and federations of towns were governed by

family lineages. The male elder of the most powerful clan was the executive. His accession to that position and all his decisions were subject to the approval of a council of elders of the clans that were represented in the town. In this manner, the town had sovereign authority over its internal affairs. In each sovereign town burned a sacred fire symbolizing its relationship with the spirit beings. A town could join other towns under the leadership of a single leader. English colonists termed such groupings of towns "confederacies" or "federations." The Haudenosaunee people today retain a fully functioning government of this type. It was the Haudenosaunee constitution, called the Great Law of Peace, that inspired essential elements of the US Constitution.[13] Oren Lyons, who holds the title of Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan and is a member of the Onondaga Council of Chiefs, explains the essence of that constitution: "The first principle is peace. The second principle, equity, justice for the people. And third, the power of the good minds, of the collective powers to be of one mind: unity. And health. All of these were involved in the basic principles. And the process of discussion, putting aside warfare as a method of reaching decisions, and now using intellect."[14]

The Muskogees (Creeks), Seminoles, and other peoples in the Southeast had three branches of government: a civil administration, a military, and a branch that dealt with the sacred. The leaders of each branch were drawn from the elite, and other officials were drawn from prominent clans. Over the centuries preceding European colonialism, ancient traditions of diplomacy had developed among the Indigenous nations. Societies in the eastern part of the continent had an elaborate ceremonial structure for diplomatic meetings among representatives of disparate governments. In the federations of sovereign towns, the leading town's fire represented the entire group, and each member town sent a representative or two to the federation's council. Thus everyone in the federation was represented in the government's decision making. Agreements reached in such meetings were considered sacred pledges that the representatives made not only to one another but also to the powerful spirit looking on. The nations tended to hold firm to such treaties out of respect for the sacred power that was party to the agreements. Relations with the spirit world were thus a major factor in government.[15]

The roles of women varied among the societies of eastern North America. Among the Muskogees and other southern nations, women hardly participated in governmental affairs. Haudenosaunee and Cherokee women, on the other hand, held more political authority. Among the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras, certain female lineages controlled the choice of male representatives for their clans in their governing councils. Men were the representatives, but the women who chose them had the right to speak in the council, and when the chosen representative was too young or inexperienced to be effective, one of the women might participate in council on his behalf. Haudenosaunee clan mothers held the power to recall unsatisfactory representatives. Charles C. Mann, author of *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*, calls it "a feminist dream."[16]

According to the value system that drove consensus building and decision making in these societies, the community's interest overrode individual interests. After every member of a council had had his or her say, any member who still considered a decision incorrect might nevertheless agree to abide by it for the sake of the community's cohesion. In the rare cases in which consensus could not be reached, the segment of the community represented by dissenters might withdraw from the community and move away to found a new community. This was similar to the practice of the nearly one hundred autonomous towns of northern New Mexico.

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

By the time of European invasions, Indigenous peoples had occupied and shaped every part of the Americas, established extensive trade networks and roads, and were sustaining their populations by adapting to specific natural environments, but they also adapted nature to suit human ends. Mann relates how Indigenous peoples used fire to shape and tame the precolonial North American landscape. In the Northeast, Indigenous farmers always carried flints. One English observer in 1637 noted that they used the flints "to set fire of the country in all places where they come."[17] They also used torches for

night hunting and rings of flame to encircle animals to kill. Rather than domesticating animals for hides and meat, Indigenous communities created havens to attract elk, deer, bear, and other game. They burned the undergrowth in forests so that the young grasses and other ground cover that sprouted the following spring would entice greater numbers of herbivores and the predators that fed on them, which would sustain the people who ate them both. Mann describes these forests in *1491*: "Rather than the thick, unbroken, monumental snarl of trees imagined by Thoreau, the great eastern forest was an ecological kaleidoscope of garden plots, blackberry rambles, pine barrens, and spacious groves of chestnut, hickory, and oak." Inland a few miles from the shore of present-day Rhode Island, an early European explorer marveled at the trees that were spaced so that the forest "could be penetrated even by a large army." English mercenary John Smith wrote that he had ridden a galloping horse through the Virginia forest. In Ohio, the first English squatters on Indigenous lands in the mid-eighteenth century encountered forested areas that resembled English parks, as they could drive carriages through the trees.

Bison herds roamed the East from New York to Georgia (it's no accident that a settler city in western New York was named Buffalo). The American bison was indigenous to the northern and southern plains of North America, not the East, yet Native peoples imported them east along a path of fire, as they transformed forest into fallows for the bison to survive upon far from their original habitat. Historian William Cronon has written that when the Haudenosaunee hunted buffalo, they were "harvesting a foodstuff which they had consciously been instrumental in creating." As for the "Great American Desert," as Anglo-Americans called the Great Plains, the occupants transformed that too into game farms. Using fire, they extended the giant grasslands and maintained them. When Lewis and Clark began their trek up the Missouri River in 1804, ethnologist Dale Lott has observed, they beheld "not a wilderness but a vast pasture managed by and for Native Americans." Native Americans created the world's largest gardens and grazing lands—and thrived.[18]

Native peoples left an indelible imprint on the land with systems

of roads that tied nations and communities together across the entire landmass of the Americas. Scholar David Wade Chambers writes:

> The first thing to note about early Native American trails and roads is that they were not just paths in the woods following along animal tracks used mainly for hunting. Neither can they be characterized simply as the routes that nomadic peoples followed during seasonal migrations. Rather they constituted an extensive system of roadways that spanned the Americas, making possible short, medium and long distance travel. That is to say, the Pre-Columbian Americas were laced together with a complex system of roads and paths which became the roadways adopted by the early settlers and indeed were ultimately transformed into major highways.[19]

Roads were developed along rivers, and many Indigenous roads in North America tracked the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado Rivers, the Rio Grande, and other major streams. Roads also followed seacoasts. A major road ran along the Pacific coast from northern Alaska (where travelers could continue by boat to Siberia) south to an urban area in western Mexico. A branch of that road ran through the Sonora Desert and up onto the Colorado Plateau, serving ancient towns and later communities such as those of the Hopis and Pueblos on the northern Rio Grande.

From the Pueblo communities, roads eastward carried travelers onto the semiarid plains along tributaries of the Pecos River and up to the communities in what is now eastern New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle, and West Texas. There were also roads from the northern Rio Grande to the southern plains of western Oklahoma by way of the Canadian and Cimarron Rivers. The roads along those rivers and their tributaries led to a system of roads that followed rivers from the Southeast. They also connected with ones that turned southwestward toward the Valley of Mexico.

The eastern roads connected Muskogee (Creek) towns in present-day Georgia and Alabama. From the Muskogee towns, a major route led north through Cherokee lands, the Cumberland Gap, and the Shenandoah Valley region to the confluence of the Ohio and

Scioto Rivers. From that northeastern part of the continent, a traveler could reach the West Coast by following roads along the Ohio River to the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Missouri, and along the Missouri westward to its headwaters. From there, a road crossed the Rocky Mountains through South Pass in present-day Wyoming and led to the Columbia River. The Columbia River road led to the large population center at the river's mouth on the Pacific Ocean and connected with the Pacific Coast road.

CORN

North America in 1492 was not a virgin wilderness but a network of Indigenous nations, peoples of the corn. The link between peoples of the North and the South can be seen in the diffusion of corn from Mesoamerica. Both Muskogees and Cherokees, whose original homelands in North America are located in the Southeast, trace their lineage to migration from or through Mexico. Cherokee historian Emmet Starr wrote:

> The Cherokees most probably preceded by several hundred years the Muskogees in their exodus from Mexico and swung in a wider circle, crossing the Mississippi River many miles north of the mouth of the Missouri River as indicated by the mounds. . . . The Muskogees were probably driven out of Mexico by the Aztecs, Toltecs or some other of the northwestern tribal invasions of the ninth or preceding centuries. This is evidenced by the customs and devices that were long retained by the Creeks.[20]

Another Cherokee writer, Robert Conley, tells about the oral tradition that claims Cherokee origins in South America and subsequent migration through Mexico. Later, with US military invasions and relocations of the Muskogee and Cherokee peoples, many groups split off and sought refuge in Mexico, as did others under pressure, such as the Kickapoos.[21]

Although practiced traditionally throughout the Indigenous ag-

ricultural areas of North America, the Green Corn Dance remains strongest among the Muskogee people. The elements of the ritual dance are similar to those of the Valley of Mexico. Although the dance takes various forms among different communities, the core of it is the same, a commemoration of the gift of corn by an ancestral corn woman. The peoples of the corn retain great affinities under the crust of colonialism.

This brief overview of precolonial North America suggests the magnitude of what was lost to all humanity and counteracts the settler-colonial myth of the wandering Neolithic hunter. These were civilizations based on advanced agriculture and featuring polities. It is essential to understand the migrations and Indigenous peoples' relationships prior to invasion, North and South, and how colonialism cut them off, but, as we will see, the relationships are being reestablished.

TWO

CULTURE OF CONQUEST

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of prior accumulation.

—Karl Marx, from "Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist," *Capital*

HOW IT BEGAN

The late anthropologist Edward H. Spicer wrote that the initial Europeans who participated in colonization of the Americas were heirs to rich and ancient cultures, social relations, and customs in their lands of origin, whether Spain, France, Holland, or England. In the passage to the Americas and encountering the Indigenous inhabitants, they largely abandoned the webs of European social relations. What each actually participated in was a culture of conquest—violence, expropriation, destruction, and dehumanization.[1]

Spicer's observation is true, but the culture of conquest didn't start with Europeans crossing the Atlantic. European institutions and the worldview of conquest and colonialism had formed several centuries before that. From the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, Europeans conducted the Crusades to conquer North Africa and the Middle East, leading to unprecedented wealth in the hands of a few. This profit-based religion was the deadly element that European merchants and settlers brought to the Americas. In addi-

tion to seeking personal wealth, colonizers expressed a Christian zeal that justified colonialism. Along with that came the militaristic tradition that had also developed in western Europe during the Crusades (literally, "carrying of the cross"). Although the popes, beginning with Urban II, called for most of the ventures, the crusading armies were mercenary outfits that promised the soldiers the right to sack and loot Muslim towns and cities, feats that would gain them wealth and prestige back home. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, the papacy began directing such mercenaries to crush domestic "enemies" in their midst, as well—pagans and commoners in general, especially women (as ostensible witches) and heretics. In this way, knights and noblemen could seize land and force the commoners living on it into servitude. Historian Peter Linebaugh notes that whereas the anti-Muslim Crusades were attempts to control the lucrative Muslim trade routes to the Far East, the domestic crusades against heretics and commoners were carried out to terrorize poor people and at the same time to enlist them in the lucrative and adventurous yet holy venture: "Crusading was thus a murderous device to resolve a contradiction by bringing baron and commoner together in the cauldron of religious war."[2]

The first population forcibly organized under the profit motive—whose labor was exploited well before overseas exploitation was possible—was the European peasantry. Once forced off their land, they had nothing to eat and nothing to sell but their labor. In addition, entire nations, such as Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Bohemia, the Basque Country, and Catalonia, were colonized and forced under the rule of various monarchies. The Moorish Nation and the Sephardic Jewish minority were conquered and physically deported by the Castilian/Aragon monarchy from the Iberian Peninsula—a long-term project culminating in group expulsions beginning in 1492, the year Columbus sailed to America.

The institutions of colonialism and methods for relocation, deportation, and expropriation of land had already been practiced, if not perfected, by the end of the fifteenth century.[3] The rise of the modern state in western Europe was based on the accumulation of wealth by means of exploiting human labor and displacing millions of subsistence producers from their lands. The armies that did this

work benefited from technological innovations that allowed the development of more effective weapons of death and destruction. When these states expanded overseas to obtain even more resources, land, and labor, they were not starting anew. The peoples of the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, and the Andes were the first overseas victims. West and South Africa, North America, and the rest of South America followed. Then came all of Africa, the Pacific, and Asia.

The sea voyages of European explorers and merchants in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were not the first of their kind. These voyagers borrowed the techniques for long-distance sea travel from the Arab world. Before the Arabs ventured into the Indian Ocean, Inuits (Eskimos) plied the Arctic Circle in their kayaks for centuries and made contacts with many peoples, as did Norse, South Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Peruvian, and Melanesian and Polynesian fishing peoples of the Pacific. Egyptian and Greek knowledge of the seas most likely extended beyond the Mediterranean, into the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Western European seagoing merchants and the monarchies that backed them would differ only in that they had developed the bases for colonial domination and exploitation of labor in those colonies that led to the capture and enslavement of millions of Africans to transport to their American colonies.

LAND AS PRIVATE PROPERTY

Along with the cargo of European ships, especially of the later British colonizing ventures, came the emerging concept of land as private property. Esther Kingston-Mann, a specialist in Russian land tenure history, has reconstructed the elevation of land as private property to "sacred status" in sixteenth-century England.[4] The English used the term "enclosure" to denote the privatization of the commons. During this time, peasants, who constituted a large majority of the population, were evicted from their ancient common lands. For centuries the commons had been their pasture for milk cows and for running sheep and their source for water, wood for fuel and construction, and edible and medicinal wild plants. Without these resources they could not have survived as farmers, and

they did not survive as farmers after they lost access to the commons. Not only were the commons privatized during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were also transformed into grazing lands for commercial sheep production, wool being the main domestic and export commodity, creating wealth for a few and impoverishment for the many. Denied access to the former commons, rural subsistence farmers and even their children had no choice but to work in the new woolen textile factories under miserable conditions—that is, when they could find such work for unemployment was high. Employed or not, this displaced population was available to serve as settlers in the North American British colonies, many of them as indentured servants, with the promise of land. After serving their terms of indenture, they were free to squat on Indigenous land and become farmers again. In this way, surplus labor created not only low labor costs and great profits for the woolens manufacturers but also a supply of settlers for the colonies, which was an "escape valve" in the home country, where impoverishment could lead to uprisings of the exploited. The sacred status of property in the forms of land taken from Indigenous farmers and of Africans as chattel was seeded into the drive for Anglo-American independence from Britain and the founding of the United States.

Privatization of land was accompanied by an ideological drive to paint the commoners who resisted as violent, stupid, and lazy. The English Parliament, under the guise of fighting backwardness, criminalized former rights to the commons. Accompanying and facilitating the privatization of the commons was the suppression of women, as feminist theorist Silvia Federici has argued, by conjuring witchcraft. Those accused of witchcraft were poor peasant women, often widows, while the accusers tended to be wealthier, either their landlords or employers, individuals who controlled local institutions or had ties to the national government. Neighbors were encouraged to accuse one another.[5] Witchcraft was considered mainly a female crime, especially at the peak of the witch hunts between 1550 and 1650, when more than 80 percent of those who were charged with witchcraft, tried, convicted, and executed were women. In England, those accused of witchcraft were mostly elderly women, often beggars, sometimes the wives of living laborers but usually widows.

Actions and local occurrences said to indicate witchcraft included nonpayment of rent, demand for public assistance, giving the "evil-eye," local die-offs of horses or other stock, and mysterious deaths of children. Also among the telltale actions were practices related to midwifery and any kind of contraception. The service that women provided among the poor as healers was one of a number of vestiges from pre-Christian, matrilineal institutions that once predominated in Europe. It is no surprise that those who had held on to and perpetuated these communal practices were those most resistant to the enclosure of the commons, the economic base of the peasantry, as well as women's autonomy.[6]

The traumatized souls thrown off the land, as well as their descendants, became the land-hungry settlers enticed to cross a vast ocean with the promise of land and attaining the status of gentry. English settlers brought witch hunting with them to Jamestown, Virginia, and to Salem, Massachusetts. In language reminiscent of that used to condemn witches, they quickly identified the Indigenous populations as inherently children of Satan and "servants of the devil" who deserved to be killed.[7] Later the Salem authorities would justify witch trials by claiming that the English settlers were inhabiting land controlled by the devil.

WHITE SUPREMACY AND CLASS

Also part of the Christian colonizers' outlook was a belief in white supremacy. As an 1878 US Protestant evangelical hymn suggests—"Are your garments spotless? / Are they white as snow? / Are they washed in the blood of the lamb?"—whiteness as an ideology involves much more than skin color, although skin color has been and continues to be a key component of racism in the United States. White supremacy can be traced to the colonizing ventures of the Christian Crusades in Muslim-controlled territories and to the Protestant colonization of Ireland. As dress rehearsals for the colonization of the Americas, these projects form the two strands that merge in the geopolitical and sociocultural makeup of US society.

The Crusades in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal today)

and expulsion of Jews and Muslims were part of a process that created the core ideology for modern colonialism—white supremacy—and its justification for genocide. The Crusades gave birth to the papal law of *limpieza de sangre*—cleanliness of blood—for which the Inquisition was established by the Church to investigate and determine. Before this time the concept of biological race based on "blood" is not known to have existed as law or taboo in Christian Europe or anywhere else in the world.[8] As scapegoating and suspicion of Conversos (Jews who had converted to Christianity) and Moriscos (Muslims who had converted to Christianity) intensified over several centuries in Christian-controlled Spain, the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* was popularized. It had the effect of granting psychological and increasingly legal privileges to "Old Christians," both rich and poor, thus obscuring the class differences between the landed aristocracy and land-poor peasants and shepherds. Whatever their economic station, the "Old Christian" Spanish were enabled to identify with the nobility. As one Spanish historian puts it, "The common people looked upwards, wishing and hoping to climb, and let themselves be seduced by chivalric ideals: honour, dignity, glory, and the noble life."[9] Lope de Vega, a sixteenth-century contemporary of Cervantes, wrote: "Soy un hombre, / aunque de villana casta, / limpio de sangre y jamas / de hebrea o mora manchada" (I am a man, although of lowly status, yet clean of blood and with no mixture of Jewish or Moorish blood).

This cross-class mind-set can be found as well in the stance of descendants of the old settlers of British colonization in North America. This then is the first instance of class leveling based on imagined racial sameness—the origin of white supremacy, the essential ideology of colonial projects in America and Africa. As Elie Wiesel famously observed, the road to Auschwitz was paved in the earliest days of Christendom. Historian David Stannard, in *American Holocaust*, adds the caveat that the same road led straight through the heart of America.[10] The ideology of white supremacy was paramount in neutralizing the class antagonisms of the landless against the landed and distributing confiscated lands and properties of Moors and Jews in Iberia, of the Irish in Ulster, and of Native American and African peoples.

Great Britain, emerging as an overseas colonial power a century after Spain did, absorbed aspects of the Spanish racial caste system into its colonialist rationalizations, particularly regarding African slavery, but it did so within the context of Protestantism, which imagined a chosen people founding and raising a New Jerusalem. The English did not just adapt the habits and experiences of Spanish colonization; they had their own prior experience, which actually constituted overseas imperialism. During the early seventeenth century the English conquered Ireland and declared a half-million acres of land in the north open to settlement. The settlers who served early settler colonialism came mostly from western Scotland. England had previously conquered Wales and Scotland, but it had never before attempted to remove so large an Indigenous population and plant settlers in their place as in Ireland. The ancient Irish social system was systematically attacked, traditional songs and music forbidden, whole clans exterminated, and the remainder brutalized. A "wild Irish" reservation was even attempted. The "plantation" of Ulster was as much a culmination of, as it was a departure from, centuries of intermittent warfare in Ireland. In the sixteenth century, the official in charge of the Irish province of Munster, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, ordered that

> the heddes of all those (of what sort soever thei were) which were killed in the daie, should be cutte off from their bodies and brought to the place where he [Gilbert] incamped at night, and should there bee laied on the ground by eche side of the waie ledying into his owne tente so that none could come into his tente for any cause but commonly he muste passe through a lane of heddes which he used ad terrorem. . . . [It brought] greate terrour to the people when thei sawe the heddes of their dedde fathers, brothers, children, kindsfolke, and friends.[11]

The English government paid bounties for the Irish heads. Later only the scalp or ears were required. A century later in North America, Indian heads and scalps were brought in for bounty in the same manner. Although the Irish were as "white" as the English, trans-

forming them into alien others to be exterminated previewed what came to be perceived as racialist when applied to Indigenous peoples of North America and to Africans.

At that conjuncture, both in the Christian Crusades against Muslims and England's invasion of Ireland, the transition from religious wars to the genocidal mode of colonialism is apparent. The Irish under British colonial rule, well into the twentieth century, continued to be regarded as biologically inferior. During the mid-nineteenth century, influenced by social Darwinism, some English scientists peddled the theory that the Irish (and all people of color) had descended from apes, while the English were descendants of "man," who had been created by God "in his own image." Thus the English were "angels" and the Irish (and other colonized peoples) were a lower species, which today US "Christian Identity" white supremacists call "mud people," inferior products of the process of evolution.[12] The same Sir Humphrey Gilbert who had been in charge of the colonization of Ulster planted the first English colonial settlement in North America in Newfoundland in the summer of 1583. In the lead-up to the formation of the United States, Protestantism uniquely refined white supremacy as part of a politico-religious ideology.

TERMINAL NARRATIVES

According to the current consensus among historians, the wholesale transfer of land from Indigenous to Euro-American hands that occurred in the Americas after 1492 is due less to European invasion, warfare, and material acquisitiveness than to the bacteria that the invaders unwittingly brought with them. Historian Colin Calloway is among the proponents of this theory, and he writes that "epidemic diseases would have caused massive depopulation in the Americas whether brought by European invaders or brought home by Native American traders."[13] Such an absolutist assertion renders any other fate for the Indigenous peoples improbable. Professor Calloway is a careful and widely respected historian of Indigenous North

America, but his conclusion articulates a default assumption. The thinking behind the assumption is both ahistorical and illogical in that Europe itself lost a third to one-half of its population to infectious disease during medieval pandemics. The principal reason the consensus view is wrong and ahistorical is that it erases the effects of settler colonialism with its antecedents in the Spanish "Reconquest" and the English conquest of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. By the time Spain, Portugal, and Britain arrived to colonize the Americas, their methods of eradicating peoples or forcing them into dependency and servitude were ingrained, streamlined, and effective. If disease could have done the job, it is not clear why the European colonizers in America found it necessary to carry out unrelenting wars against Indigenous communities in order to gain every inch of land they took from them—nearly three hundred years of colonial warfare, followed by continued wars waged by the independent republics of the hemisphere.

Whatever disagreement may exist about the size of precolonial Indigenous populations, no one doubts that a rapid demographic decline occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its timing from region to region depending on when conquest and colonization began. Nearly all the population areas of the Americas were reduced by 90 percent following the onset of colonizing projects, decreasing the targeted Indigenous populations of the Americas from one hundred million to ten million. Commonly referred to as the most extreme demographic disaster—framed as natural—in human history, it was rarely called genocide until the rise of Indigenous movements in the mid-twentieth century forged questions.

US scholar Benjamin Keen acknowledges that historians "accept uncritically a fatalistic 'epidemic plus lack of acquired immunity' explanation for the shrinkage of Indian populations, without sufficient attention to the socioeconomic factors . . . which predisposed the natives to succumb to even slight infections."[14] Other scholars agree. Geographer William M. Denevan, while not ignoring the existence of widespread epidemic diseases, has emphasized the role of warfare, which reinforced the lethal impact of disease. There were military engagements directly between European and Indigenous nations, but many more saw European powers pitting one Indigenous na-

tion against another or factions within nations, with European allies aiding one or both sides, as was the case in the colonization of the peoples of Ireland, Africa, and Asia. Other killers cited by Denevan are overwork in mines, frequent outright butchery, malnutrition and starvation resulting from the breakdown of Indigenous trade networks, subsistence food production and loss of land, loss of will to live or reproduce (and thus suicide, abortion, and infanticide), and deportation and enslavement.[15] Anthropologist Henry Dobyns has pointed to the interruption of Indigenous peoples' trade networks. When colonizing powers seized Indigenous trade routes, the ensuing acute shortages, including food products, weakened populations and forced them into dependency on the colonizers, with European manufactured goods replacing Indigenous ones. Dobyns has estimated that all Indigenous groups suffered serious food shortages one year in four. In these circumstances, the introduction and promotion of alcohol proved addictive and deadly, adding to the breakdown of social order and responsibility.[16] These realities render the myth of "lack of immunity," including to alcohol, pernicious.

Historian Woodrow Wilson Borah focused on the broader arena of European colonization, which also brought depopulation in the Pacific Islands, Australia, western Central America, and West Africa.[17] Sherburne Cook—associated with Borah in the revisionist Berkeley School, as it was called—studied the attempted destruction of the California Indians. Cook estimated 2,245 deaths among peoples in Northern California—the Wintu, Maidu, Miwak, Omo, Wappo, and Yokuts Nations—in late-eighteenth-century armed conflicts with the Spanish, while some 5,000 died from disease and another 4,000 were relocated to missions. Among the same people in the second half of the nineteenth century, US armed forces killed 4,000, and disease killed another 6,000. Between 1852 and 1867, US citizens kidnapped 4,000 Indian children from these groups in California. Disruption of Indigenous social structures under these conditions and dire economic necessity forced many of the women into prostitution in goldfield camps, further wrecking what vestiges of family life remained in these matriarchal societies.[18]

Proponents of the default position emphasize attrition by disease despite other causes equally deadly, if not more so. In doing so they

refuse to accept that the colonization of America was genocidal by plan, not simply the tragic fate of populations lacking immunity to disease. In the case of the Jewish Holocaust, no one denies that more Jews died of starvation, overwork, and disease under Nazi incarceration than died in gas ovens, yet the acts of creating and maintaining the conditions that led to those deaths clearly constitute genocide.

Anthropologist Michael V. Wilcox asks, "What if archaeologists were asked to explain the continued presence of descendant communities five hundred years after Columbus instead of their disappearance or marginality?" Cox calls for the active dismantling of what he terms "terminal narratives"—"accounts of Indian histories which explain the absence, cultural death, or disappearance of Indigenous peoples."[19]

GOLD FEVER

Searching for gold, Columbus reached many of the islands of the Caribbean and mapped them. Soon, a dozen other soldier-merchants mapped the Atlantic coast from the northern Maritimes to the tip of South America. From the Iberian Peninsula came merchants, mercenaries, criminals, and peasants. They seized the land and property of Indigenous populations and declared the territories to be extensions of the Spanish and Portuguese states. These acts were confirmed by the monarchies and endorsed by the papal authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 divided the "New World" between Spain and Portugal with a line drawn from Greenland south through what is now Brazil. Called the Doctrine of Discovery, it claimed that possession of the entire world west of that line would be open to Spanish conquest and all east of it to Portuguese conquest.

The story is well known. In 1492, Columbus sailed with three ships on his first voyage at the behest of Ferdinand, King of Aragon, and Isabella, Queen of Castille. The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469 had led to the merger of their kingdoms into what would become the core of the Spanish state. Columbus planted a colony of forty of his men on "Española" (now the Dominican Re-

public and Haiti) and returned to Spain with Indigenous slaves and gold. In 1493, Columbus returned to the Caribbean with seventeen ships, more than a thousand men, and supplies. He found that the men he had left on the first trip had subsequently been killed by the Indigenous inhabitants. After planting another settlement, Columbus returned to Spain with four hundred Arawak slaves. With seven ships, Columbus returned to the Caribbean in 1498, reaching what is now Venezuela, and he made a fourth and final voyage in 1502, this time touching the Caribbean coast of Central America. In 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and charted the Pacific coast of the Americas. Juan Ponce de León claimed the Florida peninsula for Spain in 1513. In 1521, following a three-year bloodbath and overthrow of the Aztec state, Hernando Cortés proclaimed Mexico as New Spain. Parallel with the crushing of Mexican resistance were Ferdinand Magellan's explorations and charting of the Atlantic coast of the South American continent, followed by Spanish wars against the Inca Nation of the Andes. In both Mexico and Peru, the conquistadors confiscated elaborate artwork and statuary made of gold and silver to be melted down for use as money. During the same period, the Portuguese laid waste to what is today Brazil and began a thriving slave trade that would funnel millions of enslaved Africans to South America, beginning the lucrative Atlantic slave trade.

The consequences of this amassing of fortunes were first felt in the catastrophe experienced by small farmers in Europe and England. The peasants became impoverished, dependent workers crowded into city slums. For the first time in human history, the majority of Europeans depended for their livelihood on a small wealthy minority, a phenomenon that capitalist-based colonialism would spread worldwide. The symbol of this new development, indeed its currency, was gold. Gold fever drove colonizing ventures, organized at first in pursuit of the metal in its raw form. Later the pursuit of gold became more sophisticated, with planters and merchants establishing whatever conditions were necessary to hoard as much gold as possible. Thus was born an ideology: the belief in the inherent value of gold despite its relative uselessness in reality. Investors, monarchies, and parliamentarians devised methods to control the

processes of wealth accumulation and the power that came with it, but the ideology behind gold fever mobilized settlers to cross the Atlantic to an unknown fate. Subjugating entire societies and civilizations, enslaving whole countries, and slaughtering people village by village did not seem too high a price to pay, nor did it appear inhumane. The systems of colonization were modern and rational, but its ideological basis was madness.