Genocide, Race, Capitalism:
Synopsis of Formation within the Modern World-system

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Abstract

This article reviews and synpsizes race-based slavery and genocide extant across the Americas for a half millennia of colonial capitalist development, and identifies four major phases; conquest, colonization, capitalism, and hegemonic global capitalism. Examples of genocide are presented for each phase, and differences between Catholic driven Latin America conquest and Protestant driven Anglo American genocidal domination are delineated and put into the longue durée *of the modern world-system.*

Keywords: Racism, Race, Genocide, Capitalism

The analysis put forth here informs an otherwise confusing or confounding description of how capitalist political-economic forces have changed the modern world, and how racial constructions are misunderstood and misrepresented without a global context.

Supremacist ideologies central to the tripartite systems of racism in the twentieth century—the Jim Crow South, the Nazis of Germany, and South African Apartheid—(Frederickson 2002) were borne in the Spanish Catholic conquest of the Caribbean, the reconstructed motherland of Hispaniola, and initial conquests of the western European war nations, within the genocide that took place in Ayiti (Haiti), (Dupuy 2014). These ideologies were reproduced and adapted to specific geo-political situations by every racist regime and produced the "civilized" superordinate dominant population, and conversely the "savage" subordinated inferiorized population (Williams 2012).

Political regimes and empires adapted and employed outright forms of genocide to construct three domination systems—conquest, colonialism, and capitalism. Genocide was a central feature (Kuper 1985) in each of these systems that created the modern world system over the same half-millennium of its development (Wallerstein 1999). Slave labor, race, genocide, and systemic racism contribute toward European enrichment during non-tributary conquest phases, followed by genocidal land-takings directly connected to developing colonialism, or Quijano's "coloniality."

Genocide accompanied every phase of world capitalism, including twentieth century forms that arose in Europe. Theory needs to account for the macro-construction of racism in the *longue durée* that by colonizers and states as perpetrators of genocidal conquest (Fenelon 2016). The political economy of the historic formation of racist systems is essential to understanding the social construction of race in a "New World" colonized by Old European countries (Bonilla-Silva 2015:73-87) and spanning mercantile, industrial and neoliberal eras of capitalism. Williams (2012) notes the "savage anxiety" of colonizing countries, in which conquering civilizations discounted indigenous peoples as "tribes" and denied genocide through constructs that have inferiorized the peoples conquered as needing the civilizing influence of Christians. These rationalizations were extended toward African-descent people. The market slave systems of the transatlantic "exchange" of labor and land profits that were established are the underpinnings of capitalism. Race and genocide are therefore state formulaic, applied to Native Nations in wars of extermination, and deployed in the destruction of Indian tribal sovereignty (Deloria and Wilkins 1999).

The best way to illustrate these large systems is to identify the genocide that took place through their geo-spatial and temporal development—Spanish Catholic conquest in the Caribbean for over a hundred years, English Protestant conquest in the Americas for one hundred and fifty years, United States capitalist expansion over North America for a hundred and fifty years, and

western powers' economic penetration of global markets for another hundred years (Robinson 2005).

Examples of Genocide and Racism over 500 Years of the Modern World-System

Race-based slavery and genocide extant across the Americas for a half millennia of colonial capitalist development involved four major phases; conquest, colonization, capitalism, and hegemonic global capitalism.

Conquest Phase Genocides in the Caribbean: Holocaust, Early Non-Formulaic Racist Systems, Wealth Extraction

Columbus's 1493 second voyage to Hayiti launched a Holocaust of Hispaniola—enslavement and massive killings of Native peoples morphing into flat-out genocide with the death of 3 to 5 million people (depopulation rates from 94% to 99%). Columbus introduced Spanish-Catholic supremacist ideologies through invading armies of settlers and soldiers that fueled five hundred years of racist expansion and domination. The 1493 Papal Bulls designated indigenous peoples as uncivilized "pagans" and "savages" (Newcomb 2008), while the Doctrine of Discovery underwritten by Prince's Rights to Conquest established a racial identification of Native peoples as *Indios* (Indians) regardless of the size or complexity of their societies. These supremacist ideologies became the basis of grouping peoples racially as outside "civilization" and "savages" in a "New World."

Tenochtitlan was the capital of the Aztec empire, situated in the central valley of Mexico, with trade routes throughout the Americas, and complexity equal to the world's most advanced urban areas. Cortez landed on the Yucatan, advanced inland, made alliances and sowed fear, slaughtering thousands of Native peoples pre-emptive to entering the Aztec capital and forcing Mochtezuma to submit. Cortez executed the emperor and looted the treasury while his troops raped Native women. The devastation unleashed by a smallpox plague that spread throughout the capital allowed Cortez to reconstruct an alliance with enemy states of the Aztecs and then to re-invade the city in a long, bloody siege. The Spanish achieved control of the capital. They razed Aztecan buildings to the ground and built Mexico City over the ruins. New Spain conquered surrounding territories, searching out gold and silver mines. The conquerors put down resistance, including two hundred years of suppressing Mayans and Puebloan peoples.

The encomienda system over land and labor forced Catholics to struggle with rationalization. The mission system spread Christian ideologies, such as those espoused in the famous debates at Valladolid, in Spain, that claimed Indians only acquired souls and human rights if they were converted. The mission system thus created the Mission California Indians that were

wiped of their national origins, native language, socio-economic systems and religious understandings. Analysts see the virtual erasure of the California indigenous groups as a prime example of genocidal (Costo and Costo 1987) and racial culturicide (Fenelon and Trafzer 2014) through a form of settler colonialism (Veracini 2010) based on non-state trade and corporate structures for dominance. When armed colonial conquerers penetrated the Americas they all engaged in genocidal warfare. The English established beachheads at Jamestown and Plymouth and from there launched wars of genocide.

Colonization-Phase Genocides in Anglo-America:
Racist Trading Houses, Recreating Colonial England

We need to identify the different types of settler colonialism, noting English versus Spanish or French modes, each involving the imposition of state religions. The Spanish Catholic system led to missions. The English Protestant led to the genocidal elimination of Native Nations. Catholic systems thus appeared to be more fluid while Protestant systems involved doctrines of Christian pre-destination that hardened into more essentialist racist constructions in the rationalization of genocide through profiteering from the slave trade, the plantation systems, and the destruction of indigenous sovereignty. The Protestant Reformation revered profiteering and separated financing for trading companies from the state. The conquering states established legal formulas for corporations to freely conduct slave-trading and set up plantation systems that resulted in genocide. When California became a state, the government launched "extermination" campaigns that legalized the seizure of land and the whole scale murder of Indians by settler-militias (Fenelon and Trafzer 2014). Protestant rationales of God-given Manifest Destiny (combining Catholic Discovery, Protestant pre-destination and state supported militias) pushed the Mission system to genocide, eliminating California Indians at greater than 95% depopulation. The English established trading companies in North America and conducted wars to maximize profits, including the enslavement of Africans as a corporate rather than a state activity. The rise of European capitalism was predicated on vast wealth transfers that supported large banking systems of finance and insurance for shipping and industrial goods trade in an Atlantic triangular trade system that relied on slave labor systems in the Americas.

Capitalism Phase Genocides in the United States: Racist Citizenship Systems,
Extinguishing Land Claim

The United States laid the groundwork for the legal destruction of Indians by excluding them from citizenship. Examples of genocide include Washington's destruction of central Onondaga (peace) fire-keepers of the Haudenosaunee confederacy (five nations) and the forced removal of the Cherokee nation and the "five civilized tribes" in the southeastern United States The Haudenosaunee confederacy (Iroquois) managed to stay intact after the "French and Indian War." During the U. S. Revolutionary War the Mohawk were pulled into the English orbit, with the Onondaga maintaining neutrality. But General-President Washington viewed the Indian confederacy as a threat, sending an army under General Sullivan to destroy it.

Less than twenty five years later, former general, U.S. President Andrew Jackson used similar tactics against the Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee to produce land wealth for his allies in the government and a common enemy on which to focus the nation's hatred. Jackson engineered Indian Removal legislation through Congress to forcefully "remove" the Cherokee and other Indian nations to a newly created Indian Country west of the Mississippi. Analysts view the resulting death rates of 30 to nearly 50 percent as genocide. Thus, citizenship or its denial, race or its social construction, and the state or its social institutions have been instrumental in creating subordinated peoples, identified through racial categories, coercively grouped, and often destroyed on a genocidal scale.

Related 19th century examples include the Louisiana Purchase, blatant genocide already mentioned in California, multiple genocidal events against various Indian nations, such as the Mankato hangings in 1862, the militia massacre at Sand Creek in 1864, and the perfect coda of Wounded Knee in 1890. These represented "freedom" for pioneers of settler-colonialists, death and destruction for Indian nations and peoples excluded from citizenship, and a new state built on genocide, none more potent than California, (Fenelon and Trafzer 2014).

Global Capitalism Phase Genocides: "Neo-Liberal" Empires, Othering, Extinguishing Indigeneity

Independence movements in the colonies, to which growing corporate global capital now subject the previous colonial conditions of economic dependence and market controls, accompanied the decline and fall from hegemonic status by a vast colonial empire of the English. The same hegemonic forces that grew out of European expansion and genocide throughout the Americas and the world now turned to political-economic systems of control over the once subordinated colonies. This involved creating small elites in urban centers inevitably linked to global markets through trading and market systems centered in the previously hegemonic Euro-American systems.

Smaller systems copied these relations from the West. Military-industrial development and expanding capitalism followed the Meiji "restoration" in Japan, which employed genocidal tactics similar to those of the West in the destruction of Nanjing and labor exploitation of conquered populations in the so-called East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Holocaust in northern Europe, perpetrated by the German Nazi regime against Jewish people as a "race"—the most intensive and planned genocide the world has ever seen—epitomizes how high civilization and advanced industrial capitalism undertakes genocide (Fein 1979). After World War II the West reconstituted itself as champion of citizenship and freedom. It denied the many genocidal episodes against Native peoples and indigenous nations and institutionalized new forms of racist enslavement (Kuper 1985).

Wars are violent outgrowths of a forever expanding system of capitalism. It is in these wars that we see that where "neoliberalism" claims to work for democratic and free market systems as a cover for the consolidation of transnational corporate capitalist relations through international structures imposed by the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. The wars in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzogavinia, for instance, proceeded through "ethnic cleansing." More recent genocides, such as the attempt to extinguish indigeneity in Guatemala through the pretext of "development" supported by transnational banks and corporate mining-agricultural interests, and Israel occupation against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza remind us of the earlier "settler civilization versus violent Others" constructs that shaped the capitalist world-system.

Concluding Observations on Genocide and Racism over 500 Years of Developing Capitalism

Genocide and ideological racist constructions were central features in a 500-year development of capitalism through its varied phases. The history of systemic racism and legal genocide through which the western system was built call into question the entire ideological structure of contemporary neoliberalism. What we know with certainty is the two largest systems of ideologically and demographically destructive societies known to mankind – Nazi Germany as the most intensive in the Holocaust, western colonialism as the most extensive in the genocides of America Indians – have developed and maintained race, racism and genocide as state policy in the service of building world empire and global domination. The creation of race and establishment of varied patterns of racism were global and genocidal from the onset. We need to expand analyses so as to account for the macro-construction of race and systemic racism, often genocidal, within the *longue durée* of the modern world-system.

About the Author

James Fenelon is professor of sociology and director of the Center for Indigenous Peoples Studies at California State University.

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