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## **Editors' Introduction**

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# Editors' Introduction

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Indigenous peoples—those people who consider themselves, or are considered by others, to be Aboriginal, “First Nations,” native peoples, Fourth World peoples, or “original occupants” of specific places on the planet—have faced genocide, cultural destruction, and forced removal from their ancestral areas for thousands of years. Over the centuries, colonization—the expansion of populations into new areas and the exploitation of natural and human resources there—has led to significant declines in the populations of indigenous groups. As Patrick Brantlinger notes, “One of the main causes for these declines is not mysterious: violence, warfare, genocide.”<sup>1</sup>

In its headlong rush toward “progress,” “civilized” society has inexorably gobbled up land and resources for its own benefit, not caring a whit about crushing, destroying, or wiping out anything in its path—be it flora, fauna, or people (particularly indigenous peoples).<sup>2</sup> Instead of being stewards of the Earth, a large proportion of humanity has blithely and ignorantly become the destroyers of the Earth, seemingly with little or no thought of the ramifications, let alone the morality, of their actions.

An estimated 350,000,000 to 600,000,000 indigenous people live in the world today. A significant number of governments, however, do not recognize peoples within their borders as indigenous. In Asia, for example, only one country, the Philippines, has officially adopted the term “indigenous peoples,” has a law aimed specifically at protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, and has a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). India recognizes some 645 ethnic groups as “Scheduled Tribes,” many of whom see themselves as indigenous.<sup>3</sup> In Africa, most sub-Saharan countries, including Botswana and Zimbabwe, argue that all their citizens are indigenous.

Governments sometimes refuse to recognize groups within their borders as indigenous because they do not want those groups to be able to appeal to international agencies such as the United Nations or the International Court of Justice for assistance. Governments also have significant concerns about the possibility that indigenous groups might seek self-determination, and, in fact, genocides of indigenous peoples are often directed at groups that are challenging the state for greater recognition of their rights or that are seeking autonomy.<sup>4</sup>

In numerous cases, indigenous peoples have actively resisted incursions by other peoples as well as assimilation and cultural modification efforts by outside agencies. Their cultural distinctiveness and their desire to maintain their lands, resources, and distinctive identities, combined with their lack of power relative to state systems, resulted in indigenous peoples’ being prime targets of genocide.

It is apparent from history that those “in need” (actually, in want) of land, resources, and minerals will do whatever is necessary to obtain these goods, in spite of the social, economic, and environmental damage they may cause.<sup>5</sup> Because many indigenous peoples live in areas containing substantial wealth in resources, and because some of them have been pushed farther and farther into the hinterland, their mistreatment and decimation often go unchecked. Were it not for certain organizations whose express purpose is the protection of indigenous peoples, and the efforts of indigenous peoples themselves, there is little doubt that most of the smaller indigenous

groups still managing to eke out an existence would be in far worse situations than they are at present.

It is extremely difficult to get accurate statistics on indigenous peoples, especially if they reside in remote places, are mobile, or live in areas where there is conflict. Getting information on the deaths of indigenous peoples is even more difficult, in part because of the concerted efforts of perpetrators to destroy any evidence of their actions.

What to call the ill treatment of indigenous groups is a contentious issue, as is discussed in this special issue. Some analysts see the entire 500-year-long history of the expansion of European states into what are now called the Americas, Africa, and Asia—and, more recently, the Pacific and the Arctic—as a genocidal enterprise.<sup>6</sup> As Ronald Niezen points out, “Indigenous peoples, like some ethnic groups, derive much of their identity from histories of state-sponsored genocide, forced settlement, relocation, political marginalization, and various formal attempts at cultural destruction.”<sup>7</sup> Several researchers have labeled actions taken against indigenous peoples as genocides if they included destruction of a people’s culture or, as some analysts have termed it, “cultural genocide” or “ethnocide.”<sup>8</sup>

Arguments also continue over who is responsible for the destruction of indigenous groups. Governments of nation-states such as Paraguay, Indonesia, and the United States, for example, categorically deny that they intentionally destroyed indigenous peoples.

There has been considerable debate over whether the actions of the United States with respect to indigenous peoples constitute genocide. Brenden Rensink, in his article “The Sand Creek Phenomenon: The Complexity and Difficulty of Undertaking a Comparative Study of Genocide *vis-à-vis* the Northern American West,” addresses this issue, drawing on the example of the Sand Creek Massacre of Cheyennes and Arapahoes by the Colorado Militia in southeastern Colorado on 29 November 1864. The killings and mutilations of hundreds of American Indians, many of them women, children, and elderly people, sparked a firestorm of protest, investigations, and debate that continue to this day.<sup>9</sup> The varying interpretations of the facts of the case, and of its causes and consequences, raise important questions about the ways in which scholarship on the North American West and on genocides of indigenous peoples should be pursued and about the importance of documenting the various perspectives of the individuals and groups involved.

Genocides of indigenous peoples sometimes take place when groups of people are identified by the state as secessionists or terrorists. The Herero of German South West Africa, in what is now Namibia, were targeted by the German military, following their revolt against the colonial government in 1904, in the first genocide of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> The Bushmen, or San, of Namibia were subsequently targeted for destruction in the period 1912–1915, in part because they were seen as responsible for “banditry” and attacks on farms and groups of laborers returning from the mines, in a genocide that, as Robert Gordon notes in his article in this issue, has largely been ignored by scholars. Bushmen, like indigenous peoples in other parts of the world, were all too frequently labeled “vagrants” and treated harshly. One response to the labor shortage in South-West Africa was to round up Bushmen and put them to work on the farms or in the mines; if they resisted in any way, they were beaten, incarcerated, or even killed. As Gordon notes, in a number of instances farmers and soldiers who tortured or killed Bushmen were never arrested or tried for their actions.

In his article on Canada, Andrew Woolford reports that the impact of colonialism on indigenous peoples is often described as “cultural genocide,” a characterization he sees as problematic. He describes the heterogeneity and diversity of Canadian Aboriginal peoples, stressing the variability that existed in their experiences of colonialism. While many Aboriginals in Canada were exposed to processes of cultural assimilation, there were also those who died at the hands of settlers or as a result of disease and starvation. As Woolford points out, some Aboriginals characterize the treatment of Canadian indigenous peoples as genocide not only in the hope of harnessing the term’s symbolic power but because they genuinely believe that they and their ancestors experienced physical destruction.

Like indigenous peoples in other parts of the world, Aboriginal Canadians employed numerous strategies to resist cultural and physical domination. The reproduction of group identity among Canadian Aboriginals includes regaining land and resources, seeking restitution for mistreatment, and successfully obtaining an apology from the government of Canada for the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families and placing them in residential schools. Woolford concludes with a useful analysis of the limitations of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) in terms of the way it categorizes and draws boundaries around peoples, which has the potential to downplay Aboriginal notions of identity and space.

While missionaries, human-rights advocates, politicians, and historians have discussed and sometimes decried genocides of indigenous peoples for centuries, it was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that comparative analyses of genocides of indigenous peoples were attempted. Part of the reason for the expansion of interest in genocides of indigenous peoples was the massive increase in conflicts between states and indigenous peoples, characterized by Bernard Neitschmann as “the Third World War.”<sup>11</sup>

Conflicts between governments and indigenous peoples arose during the 1950s and 1960s, and continued into the 1970s, in many parts of the world, including Bangladesh, Brazil, Burma, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, and Vietnam.<sup>12</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, scholars and activists began paying greater attention to the struggles between Fourth World peoples and First, Second, and Third World states, because of what they saw as illegal actions of nation-states against indigenous peoples, indigenous groups’ passive and active resistance to top-down development, and concern about exploitation by transnational forces.<sup>13</sup>

It was in the late 1960s that the indigenous peoples’ rights movement began to take shape, in part as a response to the widespread mistreatment of indigenous groups. Several of the major indigenous peoples’ human-rights organizations were founded during this period, including the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (1968), Survival International (1969), and Cultural Survival (1972).<sup>14</sup> There was a proliferation of organizations formed by indigenous peoples themselves, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), founded by Indian activists in 1968, and various indigenous regional organizations such as those in Ecuador and Bolivia.<sup>15</sup> The objectives of these groups varied considerably, but one overarching goal was the protection and promotion of the human rights of indigenous peoples.

Social and political movements in the Third World picked up steam in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific in the latter part of the twentieth century. Governments opposed to these movements frequently took the position that the

activism was secessionist in nature, something that, in fact, was rarely the case. In Central and South America, as Jean Jackson and Kay Warren note,

During the past three decades, armed conflict, especially in Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia, has produced severe political repression, hundreds of thousands of indigenous deaths, and over a million indigenous refugees and internally displaced persons.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned above, there have been debates and disagreements among analysts, governments, indigenous peoples' support groups, and indigenous peoples themselves as to whether specific sets of events constitute genocide. Some of these debates have revolved around issues of intent. This was the case, for example, in the discussions surrounding the treatment of the Ache in Paraguay, who were reported to have been victims of genocide as a result of the actions of the Paraguayan state and various non-state actors, including settlers.<sup>17</sup>

In May 1992, a declaration was issued by representatives of indigenous peoples from around the world who attended the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Territory, Environment, and Development, held in Brazil prior to the Earth Summit (the World Conference on Sustainable Development of the United Nations) that took place in June 1992. The Kari-Oka Declaration and the Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter state specifically that “[w]e continue to maintain our rights as peoples despite centuries of deprivation, assimilation, and genocide.” The Earth Charter notes, “There exist many examples of genocides against indigenous peoples”; the text goes on to conclude that the UNCG must be changed to include a discussion of the genocide of indigenous peoples.<sup>18</sup> Questions were also raised about the impacts of transnational corporations on indigenous peoples.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, indigenous peoples in a number of countries—including Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—sought apologies and restitution from the governments of the states in which they resided.<sup>20</sup>

Katherine Ellinghaus, in her article “Biological Absorption and Genocide: A Comparison of Indigenous Assimilation Policies in the United States and Australia,” examines the issue of whether or not policies aimed at assimilating indigenous peoples constituted genocide, focusing specifically on the issue of biological absorption, the process by which indigenous identities theoretically would disappear through interracial sexual liaisons. This process, which underlay numerous aspects of Australia’s and the United States’ dealings with Aboriginals and Native Americans, respectively, was a controversial one. Ellinghaus points out that the pervasiveness of the process blurs the boundaries between genocide and ethnocide. Her article examines the contentious issue of the removals of Aboriginal and Native American children from their families and explores whether or not removals and other assimilationist policies are a form of genocide.

At one time, the ethnocide and genocide of indigenous peoples was simply considered part and parcel of colonization.<sup>21</sup> Today international laws and agreements outlaw such practices, but this has not brought to an end the decimation of indigenous peoples. In many ways, the almighty dollar (or euro, yen, pound, rand) is still valued above the lives of indigenous peoples.

The plight and fate of certain indigenous groups have been the focus of various human-rights organizations and genocide scholars over the years, but many more indigenous groups have not been assessed in terms of their human-rights situations. Thus, while many are somewhat familiar with the fate of the Ache of Paraguay and the Maya of Guatemala, and may know something about the Yanomami of the Amazon or the San of southern Africa, many, if not most, are unaware of even the names or locales

of the vast majority of indigenous groups scattered across the world today. Even this special issue on indigenous peoples largely mirrors this fact. That is, many of the articles in the issue focus on one or another of the better-known cases involving indigenous peoples: the Native Americans of the United States (Rensink, Ellinghaus), the San of southern Africa (Gordon), the Aboriginals of Australia (Ellinghaus), and the Aboriginal peoples or First Nations of Canada (Woolford). This was not our original plan as editors. In fact, we attempted to solicit articles on numerous indigenous peoples who are not, so to speak, in the limelight; but those scholars who submitted proposals chose to write on some of the better-known groups. Be that as it may, the articles assembled here tackle significant issues, and readers should find them highly informative and thought provoking.

Nevertheless, there is a clear message here for genocide scholars and others concerned with crimes against humanity and with genocide: greater attention must be paid to the plight of all indigenous groups around the globe, no matter how small, how little known, how hidden from view. If such attention is not paid to them, some, if not many, could disappear or be absorbed into the sizable populations of rural and urban poor who themselves have few rights. "Invisible" and "silent" genocide is just as much genocide as those cases that claim the attention of the mass media or the outrage of the masses across the globe (when, in fact, this happens at all). Part and parcel of being human-rights or genocide scholars, or so it seems to us, is to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. This view fits with the very title and focus of this journal, *Genocide Studies and Prevention*.

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## Notes

1. Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 2.
2. For excellent descriptions of these processes see Alan Thein Durning, *Guardians of the Earth: Indigenous Peoples and the Health of the Earth* (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1992); John H. Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 4th ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1999).
3. The 2001 India Census reports 84,326,240 people categorized as belonging to Scheduled Tribes, representing 8.2% of the Indian population. See G.S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes of India* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 1980); R.M. Mann, *Tribes of India: Ongoing Challenges* (New Delhi: MD Publications, 1996); J. Karade, *Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). P.K. Mohanty, *Encyclopedia of Scheduled Tribes in India* (Delhi: Sanjanya Books, 2006) gives the number 537, while yet another source states that there are 698 Scheduled Tribes in India: "Indian Scheduled Tribes," *IndiaNetZone* (January 2009), [http://www.indianet-zone.com/37/indian\\_scheduled\\_tribes.htm](http://www.indianet-zone.com/37/indian_scheduled_tribes.htm) (accessed 15 January 2009).
4. See Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict* (Washington, DC: US Institute for Peace Press, 1993); Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, DC: US Institute for Peace Press, 2000), 45–47.
5. It should not be assumed that indigenous peoples are incapable of resisting these practices. For assessments of indigenous' peoples responses see Franke Wilmer, *The Indigenous*

- Voice in World Politics: Since Time Immemorial* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993); Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001); Alison Brysk, *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, eds., *Indigenous Experience Today* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).
6. For an enlightening discussion of this complex issue see Elazar Barkan, "Genocides of Indigenous Peoples: Rhetoric of Human Rights," in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, 117–39 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
  7. Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5.
  8. Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 31, 41; Alison Palmer, "Ethnocide," in *Genocide in Our Time*, ed. M.N. Dobrowski and I. Walliman, 1–6 (Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian Press, 1992), 1; Robert K. Hitchcock and Tara M. Twedt, "Physical and Cultural Genocide of Various Indigenous Peoples," in *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, 413–58 (New York: Routledge, 2009); David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 1–7.
  9. Stan Hoig, *The Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); J.A. Green and Douglas D. Scott, *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archaeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).
  10. See Jon Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Karla Poewe, *The Namibian Herero: A History of Their Psychosocial Disintegration and Survival* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985); Alison Palmer, *Colonial Genocide* (Adelaide, Australia: Crawford House Publishers, 2000); I.V. Hull, "Military Culture and the Production of 'Final Solutions' in the Colonies: The Example of Wilhelminian Germany," in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, 141–62 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
  11. Bernard Neitschmann, "The Third World War," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 11, 3 (1987): 1–16.
  12. As reported by Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International, Human Rights Watch, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Survival International, and the Minority Rights Group. See, e.g., Center for World Indigenous Studies [CWIS], *International Tribunal on Genocide in Central America* (Kenmore, WA: CWIS, 1986); Amnesty International, *Human Rights Violations against Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* (New York: Amnesty International, 1992); Minority Rights Group International [MRGI], *World Directory of Minorities* (London: MRGI, 1997); Minority Rights Group [MRG], *State of the World's Minorities 2007* (London: MRG, 2007); Mark Levene, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts: A Case Study in the Political Economy of 'Creeping' Genocide," *Third World Quarterly* 20 (1999): 339–69. For an excellent discussion of a conflict involving indigenous and other peoples and state systems that was kept secret for many years—that in Laos between 1942 and 1975, the residual effects of which continue to this day—see Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942–1992* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
  13. For a discussion of the reactions of anthropologists to counterinsurgency operations carried out by the US government in Thailand in the 1960s see Eric Wakin, *Anthropology Goes to War: Professional Ethics and Counterinsurgency in Thailand* (Madison: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1992).
  14. Bodley, *Victims of Progress*, 170–96.
  15. Rex Weyler, *Blood of the Land: The U.S. Government and the Corporate War against the American Indian Movement*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992); Alison

- Brysk, *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); G. de la Pena, "Social and Cultural Policies toward Indigenous Peoples: Perspectives from Latin America," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 717–39.
16. Jean E. Jackson and Kay B. Warren, "Indigenous Movements in Latin America, 1992–2004: Controversies, Ironies, and New Directions," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 549–73 (see especially 552).
  17. Mark Munzel, *The Ache Indians: Genocide in Paraguay* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs [IWGIA], 1973); Mark Munzel, *The Ache: Genocide Continues in Paraguay* (Copenhagen: IWGIA, 1974); Richard Arens, ed., *Genocide in Paraguay* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976); see also Kim Hill and Ana Magdalena Hurtado, *Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1996), 168–69.
  18. *Kari-Oka Declaration and Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter*, World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Territory, Environment and Development, 25–30 May 1992.
  19. For a discussion of the impacts of multinational corporations on indigenous peoples see Al Gedicks, *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles against Multinational Corporations* (Boston: South End Press, 2001); Laura Westra, *Environmental Justice and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: International and Domestic Legal Perspectives* (London: Earthscan, 2008), 219–22.
  20. See Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).
  21. Distinctions are often drawn between genocide and ethnocide. For the purposes of this special issue, "genocide" refers to the physical destruction of a people, the removal of a group's children, or the depriving of a group of its ability to reproduce, while "ethnocide" refers to cultural genocide, or the destruction of a society's culture.