Part IV

Development and underdevelopment
9. Indigeneity and incorporation
Indigenous peoples, globalization and autonomy in world-systems analysis

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Introduction

The study of indigenous peoples in all their diversity offers a unique lens into contemporary global processes and deeper insights into how people strive to retain some degree of local autonomy in the face of the onslaught of global, neoliberal capitalism. International area studies and anthropological histories differ markedly whether they are truly global or maintain focus on North American Indians, with more difference in how Native Nations view their own struggles, observed in a contrast of the late John Mohawk titling his books—Utopian Legacies (2000); and/or the late Vine Deloria Jr. titles—God Is Red (1994) and Red Earth, White Lies (1997). Today, indigenous survival and resistance continues against the forces of colonizing capitalism, found in the title of the book—Paradigm Wars, Indigenous People’s Resistance to Globalization (Mander and Tauli-Corpuz 2006).

Globally, indigenous peoples number over 350 million, and possibly many more depending on how one defines “indigenous,” comprising more than the population of the United States or the equivalent of the European Union. They include on the order of five thousand different cultures. Thus, indigenous peoples constitute about 4 percent of the world’s population, but more significantly, account for as much as 95 percent of the world’s cultural diversity (Coates 2004). While many writers and observers have thought Native Americans would disappear, such as Thomas Jefferson Morgan, the nineteenth-century Commissioner of Indian Affairs who claimed, “The great body of Indians will become merged in the indistinguishable mass of our population” (quoted in Iverson 1999: 16–17), Indian Nations are “still here” and one of the fastest growing segments of the population of the United States (Snipp 1992), as is true for indigenous peoples in much of the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, confrontations and conflicts between states and indigenous peoples are as old as states themselves (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). While states have been successful in displacing, absorbing, incorporating, assimilating, or destroying indigenous peoples over the last 5000 years, indigenous peoples have resisted and survived attempts at total annihilation (Thornton 1987), surviving despite dire predictions of their disappearance.

Some of the ways in which indigenous peoples have survived illustrate a need to use precise concepts when discussing indigenous survival, and to re-examine theoretical issues of indigenous...
peoples, their origins, and processes of globalization (Hall and Fenelon 2009). Many scholars use a common gloss for globalization: intense speeding up of communication, travel, culture, commerce, and interconnections across planet Earth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, primarily built around capitalist systems in rich countries that exploit market structures. For indigenous peoples, it is instructive to think of globalization as divided into three general categories of economic, political, and cultural patterns that are involved in a close and complex process of interaction. Distinctions between a world-economy and a global economy, and economic patterns of production and commodification associated with an “extensive and intensive enlargement” (Robinson 2004) help to identify the social relations of domination.

Within recent political patterns of globalization, no single event stands out more than the election of Evo Morales in 2005. As the first indigenous president of Bolivia to assume office, Morales’ victory exemplifies changing socio-political scenes in countries where indigenous movements have taken hold. It not only demonstrates the global importance of these successes, but adds to a pattern of resistance that opposes neoliberal hegemony and demonstrates the establishment of close ties with other Latin American leaders.

Globalization accompanies this expansion of the modern world-system. Andre Gunder-Frank (1966), Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), and others have identified much of this as emerging at the same time and in tandem with colonialism, and have identified what others have called under-development as a way of constructing and controlling world markets. Frank (1966) uses the term “the development of underdevelopment,” others (e.g., Wallerstein 2004) call this neo-imperialism by core states. This understanding is essential in any analysis of indigenous peoples for two reasons. First, American Indian Nations and indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere—especially North America—are subsumed in this process of “development” as conquest, coercive assimilation, and nation-building. Second, the surviving nations are further oppressed and marginalized through forms of internal colonialism. These populations are relatively small in core states, and relatively large although diffuse in Latin American states, typically less “developed” than the United States or Canada. Recent conflicts in Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, and especially Bolivia underscore these relationships of indigenous peoples, resistance, and larger globalization processes.

Definitions and timeframes

The category “indigenous peoples” is a gross simplification of thousands of distinct cultures (Champagne 2005). A UN definition of indigenous peoples by José Martínez Cobo (1986) is:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

Cobo further notes that several additional factors are relevant to this definition: a historical continuity … for an extended period reaching into the present … of the following factors: (1) Occupation of ancestral lands … (2) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands; (3) Culture in general … (4) Language; (5) Residence in certain parts of the country, or regions … (Cobo 1986).
Terms like “indigenous peoples,” “non-state societies,” or “first peoples” lump these highly diverse groups into overly broad categories emphasizing their important differences from states. First, these are not state-based organizations, since there were indigenous states in North and South America prior to European contact—Aztecs, Maya, Inka, and so on (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). Furthermore, some indigenous societies took on state-like qualities, including the Cahokia (Forbes 1998) and the Haudenosaunee peoples (Snow 1996). While differences in social organization are crucial, they are not assertions about claims to rights, or of international status. All these forms of social organization are non-capitalist, glossed as “pre-capitalist,” with unfortunate connotations that such organizations are precursors of capitalism. In this view they are seen as at best “primitive” forms of social organization, and at worst as outmoded. Instead, these societies are rooted in modes of organization, production, and accumulation that have little to do with capitalist accumulation of capital, and thus resist assimilation (Bodley 2003).

It is critical to recognize, as Eric Wolf argued (1982), that these peoples have histories separate and distinct from those of Europeans states, and, indeed, all states (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). Furthermore, indigenous peoples have been forced to deal with waves of European expansion and the increasing globalization of capitalism over the last 500 years. Many peoples have been incorporated into the capitalist world-system, but far from completely. Many have resisted incorporation heroically, and untold numbers have died doing so (Dunaway 2000). Culture and identity politics have become contested issues, with names of indigenous peoples particularly contested (Fenelon 2007). On one hand, to label chiefdoms “nations” confounds a profoundly modern form of social organization with older, very different forms of social organization. On the other hand, variations among “nations” are sufficiently distinct from the concept of state or “nation-state” (Deloria and Wilkins 1999).

It is useful to re-articulate basic terms. First is the state, which means a formal, bureaucratically organized form of government, first developed some 5000 years ago with the formation of Ur, in Mesopotamia. Second is nation, which means a body of people with a shared identity that recognize themselves as a more-or-less united group. Third is nation-state, which means a state characterized by a population with a shared identity. True nation-states are rare, and most are multiethnic, with the United States not particularly exceptional in diversity, and the notion of why people ever came to hold the nation-state as ideal is problematic (Hall 1998). Fourth is country, meaning the territory of a state. Fifth are entities such as tribes, chiefdoms, and bands. These are terms for various types of non-state organization that may be nations, but are not states. These terms are politicized and often used for political ends to deny treaty rights (Fenelon 2002).

These social structures have evolved over time, so that existing indigenous peoples are not “living fossils.” They have evolved, adapting to contexts when surrounded by one or more typically hostile states. One powerful insight from world-system theory is that the fundamental entity evolving is the system itself, and any component of it—state, nation, nation-state, or indigenous group—must be understood as system evolution, and not as a rigid sequence moving from “primitive” [bad] to “modern” [good]. Feedback within the world-system limits the possibilities for its components within a capitalist world-system that is continuing to change, and at times indigenous peoples have played integral parts in the system.

One important set of social formations during the rise of the modern world-system that is critical to understanding American Indians and later indigenous peoples are those of race and racism. The initial formation of “race” for indigenous Americans became salient after 1492, with the first usage by the Catholic Church and European nation-states interested in colonial expansion in the “New World.” Taino-Arawak peoples on Hispaniola are representative (Fenelon 2007), with a few taken back by Columbus to Spain, shown to monarchs to prove the existence of los Indios and then sold in the slave markets of Seville. These indigenous Natives were racially
identified. On Hispaniola there were almost complete genocides of Arawakan peoples by 1542; this, coupled with Cortez’s conquest of the Aztecs and subsequent reduction of all the indigenous peoples in Mexico to the lowered status of “Indian,” lead to permanent recognition by “race” stratification (Berkhofer 1978; Fenelon 2002). Racial hierarchies would continue to be utilized for three centuries by the Spanish, with Columbus starting the encomienda system, the French building race-based plantations throughout Haiti, and all leading to either genocidal destruction or racial subordination of Indians, who experienced loss of sovereignty and freedom. The “modern world” began with European expansion into the western hemisphere over indigenous Americans called Indios, or “Indians” that racially aggregated millions of diverse peoples under one race term (Mohawk 2000). This expansion unleashed socioeconomic changes globally, within the totality of global development and conquest with a centrality of exploitation and profiteering critical to these social formations.

Wallerstein (2004) has pointed to a strong reliance by global capitalism on the interstate system, and a multitude of connections to military-political networks. The United States has a most well-developed and codified relationship with indigenous peoples and Canada follows closely, having surpassed the United States by recognizing the oral tradition of their “First Nations” (Perry 1996). Most colonial systems conducted genocide but did not develop treaty-based legal systems. Central and South America incorporated Native peoples into systems of racial subordination, segregation and partial assimilation. States have used two concepts to justify this expansion: the Doctrine of Discovery and the Prince’s Rights to Conquest (Wilkins 2006), denying strong Native Nations predicated on treaties and various “non-intercourse” acts, intended to contain indigenous peoples within one state in the expanding world-system. In the United States, such relationships became known as “tribal sovereignty” for surviving indigenous peoples. This relationship evolved into complex “dual sovereignty” relationships (Fenelon 2002). Western hemisphere states assumed they could extinguish claims to tribal sovereignty at a later date (Champagne 2007). Generally, that did not happen. Similar patterns, albeit on autonomy, occurred with indigenous peoples around the world (Hall and Fenelon 2009).

Indigeneity, global stratification, resistance, and revitalization

Indigenous social systems of governance, community, local economy, and land tenure became arenas of conflict within individual states and sites of resistance to capitalist domination, along with imposition of private property and profit-driven value systems. Globalization, besides developing new consumptive patterns, attempts to privatize and corporatize all social systems. Examples of resistance include the remote areas of Chiapas, which gave rise to the Zapatistas; Aymara coca leaf growers in the Bolivian highlands collectivizing and organizing with unions; Inuit in Nunavut, Mohawk in Quebec, Navajo in southwestern United States, and Lakota in the northern plains states in the United States re-organizing under collectivities striving to maintain traditional life.

Globalization often produces “dependency” and “underdevelopment” in developing economies common in Latin America where corporate profits go to other countries, usually in core areas (Dello Buono and Lara 2007). For indigenous peoples, this means socioeconomic depression and continuing cultural repression. Indigenous resistance to global capitalism is worldwide, diverse, and interconnected, with some forms covert, in the form of weak weapons that allow co-existence. Other forms defy easy description. Events in Chiapas are sometimes seen as part of a regional, peasant (hence class), or a caudillo driven rebellion. They are rarely discussed as an indigenous Mayan rebellion (Ramirez and Munoz 2003). Movements in the United States, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), are often seen solely in terms of localized ethnic, urban, or
racial rebellions. In other cases, traditional culture and organization itself is a resource that facilitates resistance and survival (Champagne 2007). Indigenous resistance struggles are occurring all over the world: in Europe among the Saami, with Kurdish actions in the Middle East, others in West Asia, and the Miskito resistance in Nicaragua, long noted as indigenous movements (Harff and Gurr 2004). Many researchers are now developing catalogues of such movements, and Linda Smith’s (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies* lists resistance modalities.

The most fundamental challenge to capitalism, though, comes from communal ownership of resources, because it denies the over-arching dominance of private property rights. Contrary to what many early colonizers thought, indigenous people do understand individual ownership, except they have long recognized what environmental movements are forcing capitalists to accept: most resources are partially, if not wholly, “public goods” and are thereby sites of political, economic, or social contestation, including environmental alliances (Gedicks 2001).

Culture-building is another form of resistance. There are more than 33 tribal colleges in the United States. In some cases, language programs have aimed at reviving or reinvigorating a language, with Tribal colleges as a means of preserving and enhancing “traditional cultures.” Inroads have recently been made in universities around the world, although these institutions are purveyors of hegemonic ideologies and history (Champagne 2007). Resistance can also take the form of building localized institutions that conform to traditional cultural values, as the Diné (Navajo) have done, including tribal police culturally sensitive to Navajo traditions, “peacemaker courts” avoiding adversarial techniques of Anglo courts by pursuing Navajo concepts of harmony. New social forms arise as resistance, with the “junta del buen gobierno” justice of the Zapatistas, coca leaf growers in Bolivia with Evo Morales, or the autonomous yet Islamic justice of the Kurds.

Other forms of resistance are less institutionalized, with many analysts observing how women have adapted conventional alcohol abuse or spouse abuse programs to indigenous culture, such as the northern Cheyenne. Typically, indigenous feminists focus on issues of identity and cultural preservation. Rigobertu Menchu speaks of the oppression and resistance by Mayan women and families in Guatemala, as Gloria Ramirez (2003) does for Zapatista women.

Religion is another form of resistance (Champagne 2003), especially over lands considered sacred and necessary for religious ceremonies. This leads to conflicts over use of the land for sacred functions versus “productive” and/or “recreational” use. Native scholars see these intrusions into “traditional culture” as a last arena of conflict, where the holistic knowledge of indigenous peoples can be exploited by western markets that stress profits over people and land, and of knowledge itself. The revival of older traditions, such as the Sun Dance (Fenelon 1998: 114, 288–94), can be another form of religious resistance. These revivals hark back to revitalization movements: the Longhouse religion of the Iroquois, the Ghost Dance movement (Thornton 1987), and the Native American Church.

Many indigenous religions oppose privatization and support collective ownership of goods—land and livestock—that are typically privately owned commodities in the capitalist world-system. As Champagne (2007) suggests, many indigenous peoples see their roles primarily as stewards who are a part of nature, not as its controllers or owners. One dramatic example of resistance is the continuing effort of Lakota peoples to regain control of the Black Hills after court decisions determined that the region was taken from them illegally (Fenelon 1998). Capitalist US jurisprudence over settlement of this claim has been monetary. Lakota peoples have steadfastly refused commodified settlements and insisted on the return of the land that they consider sacred. This commitment is underscored by the poverty on the Pine Ridge (Lakota) reservation. Despite the temptation to take a cash settlement, the Lakota have continued to reject it, preferring instead to struggle for the return of their land.

All of these discussions for indigenous peoples in the United States revolve around issues of sovereignty with the US federal government (Deloria and Wilkins 1999). Indeed, sovereignty...
issues are often the basis of challenges to states around the world and cut to the heart of the interstate system built on the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Native leaders worry about how much they give up to win victories, accepting premises of the European civilization turf they have been fighting on. Thomas Biolsi argues that the law is “a fundamental constituting axis of modern social life—not just a political resource or an institution but a constituent of all social relations of domination” (Biolsi 1995: 543). Courts have been an institutional means of commodifying everything; especially land (Biolsi 1995). Still, indigenous peoples continue to use legal systems to resist incorporation and global capitalism, noting that important differences between indigenous struggles in the core, “first” world or the global north and those in “third world” or peripheral areas or the global south, exist, especially concerning the rule of law.

Indigenous people’s relationships in resistance to globalization and neo-liberal capitalism demonstrates struggles within four spheres, community as collectivity, economic redistribution, land tenure as collective responsibility, with consensual decision-making systems providing the conduit to the dominant society. These social practices, which are essentially non-capitalist, survive as alternatives to globalization, and are less destructive and less violent in each sphere of interaction—political, the economic, environmental, and community. As non-dominant options, they meet the criteria for alternatives to neoliberal capitalistic societies (Sklair 2002).

For instance, Lakota peoples had Eyapaha (traditional speakers), while Gond leaders had a “spokesperson” representing the elders, and a reconstituted Ghotul similar to the Sun Dance revitalizing the Lakota, all with a focus on community, kinship, stewardship of the environment, and group decision-making. Other examples include control over “patented” corn by the Mixtec and Zapotecs in Oaxaca, and Gond or Warli adevasi resisting bio-piracy in India. Struggles over forests management exemplify resistance by Gond Adevasi, Zapotec in Oaxaca, Mapuche resistance in Chile, coastal wet-lands of the Aquinnah Wampanoag, and the Foreshore Seabed fights by Māori citing the Waitangi treaty (Hall and Fenelon 2009: 27–30), as anti-commodification and de-colonization actions to preserve traditional life.

**Contemporary indigenous political and social movements**

In recent decades, indigenous movements have challenged globalizing capitalism (Champagne 2003), including those by INGOs and for indigenous organizations. The Zapatista movement (EZLN) centered in Chiapas has been dramatic, since the Zapatista ideology and practices contradict the logic of capitalism. They reject modernization’s “development” (Ross 1995). Mignolo (2002) argues that the Zapatista movement constitutes an alternative to greco-roman legacies of state making, seeking to maintain traditional life in the face of overwhelming forces to assimilate to capitalist systems, in opposition to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and FTAA (Free Trade in the Americas Agreement).

These movements arise from resistance and revitalization (Fenelon and Hall 2008), building on the arguments that globalization, especially capitalist forms, engenders resistance movements that are anti-systemic or are counter-hegemonic. Key factors are their levels of sovereignty, autonomy, or minority status, and revolve around legitimate rights to organize and live their lives in ways other than those permitted or favored by neoliberal capitalism (Robinson 2004; Sklair 2002), challenging forms of privatization, commodification, and conventional views of the fundamental relations between human beings and the environment. Nearly all seek to preserve some aspects of ancient ways of living while adapting to contemporary social conditions.

Examples of these movements include the Mohawk in Canada, a “First Nation” that experienced three hundred years of colonial domination and the exchange of gunfire with the military as late as 1990, with issues of transnational historical ethnicity. The Lakota (Sioux) represent about
200 years of conflicts, ranging from war and formal treaty-making with the United States over sovereignty and control of the land, to recent anti-hegemonic social movements from the 1960s until today. The Cherokee were removed under genocidal conditions, with all three forms of sovereignty—federal, tribal, state—remaining in contention over limiting Indian Country. The Puyallup started out as a treaty-tribe and made a stunning comeback in the twentieth century. The Pequot were thought to have been eliminated for 300 years and now receive federal recognition, having built up stunning economic success through Indian Gaming, based entirely on sovereignty. Wampanoag people went from once-great nations to winning a limited partial recognition through the court system, with nominal sovereignty. The Yaqui complete the US examples, straddling borders with Mexico, ultimately achieving recognition and growing substantially in the last two decades in terms of its territorial claim.

Mexico, historically an assimilative nation toward indigenous peoples, treated most of their “Indians” with discriminatory repression, existent today. Tarahumara peoples, with difficult relationships and an ejido system of land tenure, represent state control over bounded peoples. Those of Mayan descent in Chiapas exhibit both armed and socio-political resistance to US globalization, struggling for 500 years against transnational capitalism, hemispheric hegemony, and repression of peasant Indians, with revolutionary struggle linked to indigenous resistance. The Miskito in Nicaragua resisted a socialist revolutionary government that imposed tough conditions, boundaries, and forced removal (Harff and Gurr 2004). Yanomami people, in both Venezuela and Brazil, faced imposed state borders, were subject to genocidal internal colonialism in Brazil, and in Venezuela, faced limited protections but an invasive market economy with trading posts and timber companies. Quechuan people in Ecuador, and in Peru, maintain a sizable demographic presence and are involved in elections that are nearly always followed by military coups. Separatists movements in Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia attempted to make coalitions in similar fashion to dominant groups. Finally, Native Hawai’ians achieved limited sovereignty through political recognition.

Six levels of indigenous survival exist with respect to sovereignty, autonomy, and minority status, so that on the highest level, sovereignty is recognized or at least contested—offering opportunity during times of hegemonic decline, with caveats. The Mohawk, Lakota, Cherokee, Puyallup, Pequot, perhaps Yaqui, and Native Hawai’ian cases appear to be operating on all these levels. Autonomy struggles exist, with assets such as land or mineral rights, labor and trade determined by Latin American countries. The Mayan and the Miskito are examples of peoples with minority status who are dependent on dominant policies of the state, a common feature in the European expansion over the western hemisphere. The Yanomami and Quechuan exemplify such vulnerable positions.

Movements have related to the location in a declining hegemon in the last two centuries. By the time the United States realized that repression of sovereignty was not working, “popular” ideas of Indians emanated through publicity around the occupation of Alcatraz, the Trail of Broken Treaties, and the siege at Wounded Knee. Resistance activities of the late 1960s and early 1970s gained press coverage and support. The US government did mount serious efforts to suppress them, especially against AIM. A notorious example on Pine Ridge (Oglala) Lakota reservation in South Dakota became a veritable zone of “low intensity conflict,” with unsolved murders and incarceration of leaders.

Conclusions

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly voted to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples after three decades of struggle, acknowledging self-determination and autonomous relationships of indigenous peoples as separate communities with the right to
organize their own governance, relationship to the land, economic practices, and sense of identity and membership. Only four countries worked against it, voting no—the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Each of these countries has a treaty-basis with indigenous peoples, a strong and violent history of colonization by the English during the expansion out of Europe into the modern world-system, and is ensconced in hegemonic forces of globalization.

John Mohawk captured the essence of these struggles when observing, during that initial presentation to the United Nations in 1977, that the “Haudenosaunee position is derived from a philosophy which sees The People with historical roots which extend back tens of thousands of years … And they are speaking, in this instance, to a world which dates its existence from a little over 500 years ago, and perhaps, in many cases, much more recently than that” (Mohawk 2000).

These events are the “tip of the iceberg” of indigenous struggles around the world. Great progress and dures for indigenous peoples will probably accompany a rise and demise of hegemonic forces, with recognition and continuing suppression of indigenous peoples by individual states continuing to shape, but not determine, their futures. Movements and “international” meetings of indigenous peoples react to and use forces and processes of globalization and the growing global civil society to aid their efforts, maintaining a strong focus on the lands of their grandmothers, the communities formed by their grandfathers, and on economies that support all their people.

References


