

Collisions of Cultures and Identities

Settlers and Indigenous Peoples

Edited by Patricia Grimshaw and Russell McGregor

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Introduction: Intercultural Encounters in Colonial Histories

Patricia Grimshaw

The subject of “collisions of cultures and identities: settlers and indigenous peoples” is crucial for the history of colonialism in the early modern and modern periods of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia. Meta-narratives of the rise of empires, the international conflicts that the rush for colonies entailed, and the details of the expansion of colonisers on foreign soil continue to occupy the central place in this history. Numerous historians analyse the extraordinary expansion of European hegemony from the seventeenth century, as European states acquired wealth through invasion of the “new world” and benefited from enlargements of their political power at others’ expense. Much recent work has focused on the violence, including murder, rape and terrorism, involved in colonial powers’ acquisition of the resources and lands of countries they invaded, such as the Spanish and Portuguese invasion of Central and South America and the south-west of North America, and the imperial expansion of the French, Belgians and Dutch in many parts of Africa, Asia and the Pacific rim. Further work records the expanding political hegemonies of the Chinese and Japanese over neighbouring countries at various periods, instrumental in initiating new economic and political arrangements that have impacted on the livelihoods and rights of indigenous inhabitants. The British Empire has perhaps attracted the widest coverage. This is not surprising given that the earliest British colonies included those in North America that became the United States of America, and that by the early twentieth century the British ruled, albeit uneasily, one-quarter of the world’s peoples. The recent five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire* offers a comprehensive coverage of this scholarship.¹

The subject of the collision of cultures and identities at the present time, like the broader field of imperial history, is generating a formidable literature. A growing number of scholars are engaging with the experiences of post-frontier situations, considering the encounters of colonisers and colonised as part of the stories of current nation states but also, insightfully, within comparative or transnational perspectives.² While able to encompass just a few of the core interests of the field, the historians in this collection nevertheless demonstrate the diversity that typifies research in this field. The various national origins and interests of the writers in themselves indicate the transnational character of historical cross-cultural scholarship.

The historical and historiographical contexts within which these historians’ work has taken shape are multiple. The settings for the chapters are colonies after the raw encounters that accompanied initial occupation, and their focus, the complex interactions of settlers and indigenous peoples. By and large Christian Europeans did not set out to commit genocide. European armies and the pioneering settlers who followed in their wake killed as many indigenous people as they needed to pursue their main quest: to obtain wealth from foreign sites. Historians currently distinguish differences in types of colonies. Of these the proportions of Europeans to indigenous peoples, and the longevity of the colonisers’ political dominance, were crucial factors in the long-term prospects of indigenes for controlling their environments and hence their life chances. Most common were colonies of exploitation or extraction, in which a small European elite of administrators, officials, merchants,

professionals and, some would say, missionaries kept large local populations under varying degrees of political and economic control. These colonies turned into postcolonial nations where the former indigenous people came to dominate politically. Settler colonies emerged when Europeans wanted the land itself, not simply its products. The land had special appeal because it was suitable for European pastoralism, farming and agriculture, necessitating gross displacement in the short or longer term of indigenes. With or without forced labour, utilising the land could offer colonists a reasonably prosperous life and the land's products could attract favourable prices on an open market. Settlers of European origin, having displaced indigenous peoples and been party to the drastic reduction of their numbers in many cases, founded new white societies which they promoted energetically as such on the international stage.

The indigenous peoples who survived the initial onslaught of colonial occupation negotiated ways of living with settlers, albeit on unequal terms. Historians in recent years have been considering the complex interactions of settlers and indigenous peoples in innovative and exciting ways. Mostly the colonists were Europeans. But imperialising Asian nations could also colonise others' lands and assume dominant political power over other non-European peoples. The destinies of these original occupants thus mirrored those of indigenous peoples in white settler colonies. The European colonisers could assert the whiteness of their colony/country, even in cases where they had imported forced or indentured labourers of colour to work in plantation enterprises or mines. These settlers urgently needed to seek international legitimacy for themselves through the construction of identities different from their motherland, establishing themselves as the true inhabitants of the new sites, and normalising the presence of first peoples and workers of colour to make them irrelevant to national postures.³

A recent historian of the British Empire justifies British imperialism on the basis that the survivors of invasions and their descendants thereby won the inestimable advantages of British language, law and institutions.⁴ This is a sentiment that also gave heart for many years to historians of ex-settler colonies who could not entirely ignore the devastation Europeans wrought on indigenes or their continuing social disadvantages. It reinforced their own frameworks for examining their colonial pasts in an optimistic mode, bound to enhance local white confidence and self-satisfaction in their new societies. For generations these chroniclers normalised colonial usurpation and ignored or marginalised unwelcome aspects of their country's past. The descendants of colonisers had no incentive to take as a core narrative the pioneers' morally compromised contribution to the prosperity and privileges — including civil liberties and democracy — they enjoyed. This problem was intensified by an absence of comparative perspectives on colonialism: these histories were often empirically driven within such internal debates as discrete national frameworks afforded.

The chapters reveal the influence on the writing of colonial history that has emerged from the interface of political transformations and new critical theory. The history of colonialism has responded pragmatically to insights derived from political struggles over wider issues of race, such as the movement for civil rights for people of colour in the United States. Indigenous peoples have begun to network internationally, assisted by their access to the Internet, and their appeals for redress through international bodies including the United Nations have brought significant gains in establishing their cases. In settler societies indigenous activists have rejected as yet another form of colonialism non-indigenous historians' claim to authority over the interpretation of national pasts. Indigenous historians' interventions in revising accepted narratives have emphasised the power of the colonisers to establish representations of race, normalising their own whiteness and asserting people of colour as deviant. This mechanism served to legitimate their usurpation.⁵

Edward Said's *Orientalism* and later work inspired an important revision of colonialism that was pursued in innovative ways, especially by a number of Indian scholars.⁶ Challenges to settlers' comfort and satisfaction over accepted national and imperial histories have gathered momentum, many of them grounded in postcolonial theory. Influenced by both postcolonialism and feminism, a further group of scholars have emphasised the gendered character of imperial and colonial enterprises.⁷ Making women as well as men the focus of their narratives has opened up important insights into colonialism as a whole, although at the present time the influence of feminist research is only slowly permeating mainstream histories. These scholars have pointed to the contributions of European women in colonial enterprises, sometimes to reinforce men's work, sometimes to pursue separate paths defined as feminine. At the same time they indicate how questions of colonialism and gender in turn informed the politics of the metropole.⁸ These scholars have in addition sought understanding of the gender-specific aspects of the impact of colonialism on indigenous men and women, including indigenes' capacities to resist domination. The reliance of western historians on customary literary sources has delayed extensive consideration of this area, but anthropologists and historians who undertake fieldwork are, together with indigenous historians, producing illuminating work. The scholarship emerging from gender studies has the capacity to influence considerably the history of missions, previously a conservative enclave in the discipline. We might say that recently writing on missions has diverged. The dominant stream is the work of those scholars, often men, who trace the institutional histories of European mission bodies and the growth of new churches in foreign fields. Other work, predominantly by women, deploys a gendered analysis to question interchanges of mission men and women with their protégés over sexuality, marriage, family, childrearing and women's domestic and non-domestic activities.⁹ This promises fruitful fresh insights in an important arena of colonialism.

Hence the subject of collision of cultures and identities has generated scholarship with a sharper critical perspective derived from an emerging international rather than only national scrutiny. The works of revisionist historians such as those represented in this collection have on occasions provoked wounded retaliation from those who perceive such narratives as slights on national honour. Convinced that the new histories discredit their country's honourable past, some historians, often working outside of academia, have written counternarratives that minimise or even deny the centrality and severity of the problems faced by indigenous peoples in the past, that continue to undermine their life chances in the present.¹⁰ Their interventions have brought to the fore historical debates that are often left buried in academic journals, and led to a more frank assessment of the legacies of the original imperial invasions. Some of the revisionist work has come from scholars whose primary training has been in other disciplines, particularly law, criminology, anthropology and gender studies. Such writers are making important contributions on matters once regarded as the province of historians. They point to the value of interdisciplinary collaboration where the project at hand is colonialism.¹¹

The United States historian of the American West, Richard White, adds much to this introduction by his commentary on the historical field of culture contact. He delivered the comment at the CISH conference in Sydney from which the collection emerged. He discerned similarities in the key questions that arise in many of the chapters, some of which will establish the future directions of research on encounters of colonists and indigenous peoples.

The chapters in this collection are diverse in substance, methodology, and theoretical framework, but they are similar in their fascination with the cultural and intellectual history of colonialism. At one end of the spectrum are the close-grained analyses of the meaning of everyday encounters. While always aware of the power imbalance that colonialism entailed, the scholars of these studies recover the agency of indigenous peoples. Invasion survivors and their heirs were more than simple victims: they could resist, evade and modify the apparently awesome rule of the colonial state. At the other end of the spectrum, writers have tracked the propensity of settlers to construct discourses of race that denigrated so-called “primitive” peoples as responsible for their own fate. Inevitably colonists needed to construct concomitant new identities for the “natives” they supplanted that legitimated their original theft and murder. Colonisers found particularly useful narratives of race that denigrated non-European peoples, first formulated to replace the convenient marker of slavery that had justified keeping non-white peoples in oppression. An effective device for denying the birth of the nation state in injustice was the simple forgetting and omission of colonial invasion and its consequences. These historians also take seriously the agency of indigenous peoples who rejected colonisers’ definitions of their identities, though obviously unable to insulate themselves from the dominant group’s representation at a wider level of law and social policy. It is timely to consider a series of studies that reflect these significant issues and innovative methodologies.

The substantial chapters start with a chapter that looks at colonial states and policy issues across a wide extent of time and place. John Wunder’s “Indigenous Homelands and Contested Treaties: Comparisons of Aborigines, Saamis, Native Americans, First Nations, and Euro-Nation State Diplomatic Negotiations since 1300” examines in comparative context a topic at the core of settler and indigenous conflicts: treaties between colonisers and indigenes. First, Wunder shows the pertinence of European experiences of Saami people whose extensive lands were eventually incorporated into the states of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. He examines the Peace of Noteborg of 1323, an agreement in which the Saami people were not even participants but which became a crucial moment in the efforts of European powers to subdue Saami claims to land and sovereignty. Europeans had experience, then, in the politics of land rights issues even within their own domains. Wunder then examines three nineteenth-century examples of treaty-making in British settler societies: agreements made in the 1830s in the colonies of south-eastern Australia; the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 that was followed by the US government’s decision to end treaty-making in the American West; and the signing of treaties in the prairie provinces of Canada, in particular Treaty Number 4 between the Dominion of Canada and Prairie Cree bands. The Australian agreements, Wunder argues, though largely discounted at the time, stand with credibility alongside these other treaties. The North American agreements, Wunder demonstrates, were critical for establishing the parameters of relationships between settlers and indigenous peoples in both countries, though never a guarantee of positive outcomes. Rather, he displays the contingent nature of governments’ decisions to honour the treaties, whose meanings were almost always unstable or the abrogation of which involved outright deceit. The chapter shows, nevertheless, that over time the existence of treaties legitimately recorded has enabled indigenous peoples to make bids for the return of land, and to seek compensation.

In the next chapter, “The Struggle for Civilised Marriages”, the Swedish historian Gunlög Fur considers settler and indigenous contact mission sites in early modern northern Sweden and colonial North America. She takes up the particular task of recovering women’s lives through an examination of Swedish Lutheran missionaries to Saami people, and German Moravian missionaries to Delaware Iroquois people. For both groups of colonisers a key

component in their civilising mission was control of indigenous marriage practices, and they strove to impose upon these peoples their own model of patriarchal hierarchy, patrilineal descent, and domesticity. For missionaries and Saami and Iroquois peoples alike religious beliefs were intimately connected with marriage, and both religion and marital practices were intimately linked with their systems of law. In northern Sweden both religious and worldly authorities vigorously chastised unacceptable sexual behaviour and promoted the virtues of monogamous marriage. Moravians, unusually, countenanced the continuation of many Iroquois social systems as consistent with conversion: customary hierarchical systems, for example, and hunting rather than agriculture. Yet even they would not countenance deviation from the missionaries' own gender code. At the same time the indigenous peoples continued to exercise a measure of agency in their interactions with colonists that helped structure their relationships over the following centuries.

The following two chapters consider one of the terrible consequences of European colonisation: the rapid depopulation of indigenous populations. David Cahill's "Estimating Elites: The Inca Nobility of Peru under Colonial Rule" examines Spanish colonialism in Peru in the early modern period. Cahill demonstrates how close attention to original sources can modify widely accepted meta-narratives of colonialism. He examines the place of the surviving Inca nobility within the hierarchy of the Spanish colonial state in the eighteenth century. While the Spanish conquest of the Incan empire saw the Incan nobility decisively crushed in terms of outright power, this now anachronistic nobility nevertheless survived invasion with their noble status intact. After the conquest the extremely hierarchical colonial authorities allowed certain benefits to continue to accrue to Inca nobles, including tribute exemptions and legal privileges. The survival of the Inca elite, however, demanded considerable flexibility. An official consensus eventually emerged as to the identity of "true" Inca nobles, who pooled their vestigial authority and prestige in the corporation of the "Twenty-four Electors of the *Alférez Real* of the Incas". Cahill seeks to discover the new structures and size of the re-created Incan nobility in the late colonial period through a concentration on their interface with the powerful Creole nobility in the city Cuzco. While the sources are understandably fragmentary, a complex picture emerges of this social group and their new place in a colonial body politic.

Blanca Tovias considers colonial policies that affected an indigenous group on the northern side of the Canadian border with the United States. Her chapter, "Colonialism and Demographic Catastrophes in the Americas: Blackfoot Tribes of the Northwest", considers the colonial strategies of the Canadian Dominion government in relation to the Blackfoot people, that contributed to the group's continued depopulation. Under the terms of Treaty Number Seven of 1877, the government allocated reserves to the Blackfoot and undertook to provide them with rations and the wherewithal to become farmers. They were subject to the provisions of the Indian Act. The government ensured that statistics were kept, relying on a variety of measures for evidence: the number of people receiving annuities, or an estimate of the household size indicated by the number of tepees. All estimates were unreliable but however calculated, numbers always showed a clear decline as introduced diseases aligned with the absence of western medical assistance, the abuse of alcohol, changes to their lifestyle including a sedentary existence, took their toll. The decline in population was not reversed until the 1920s.

The next series of chapters consider strategies of colonisers to control colonised populations and of indigenous peoples to sustain cultures under the introduced laws of successive colonial administrations. In "Collision, Collusion and Muted Resistance: Contrasting Early and Later Encounters with Empire Forestry in the Gold Coast, 1883–1957", D. Andrew Wardell complicates the narrative of collisions of cultures and identities with his

study of the two British colonies that became modern Ghana. Both colonies were ruled directly by representatives of the British government in alliance with local African political rulers. Wardell reveals two instances in which local opposition forestalled attempts by British colonial authorities to protect areas of forest. The first crisis arose in the Gold Coast Colony when the British Colonial Office became alarmed at the escalating deforestation that placed in jeopardy the trade in cocoa and mahogany timber on which many indigenous people as well as traders relied upon for livelihoods. The British, in conjunction with Traditional Councils, moved to appropriate customary lands but met resistance from an unusual alliance of humanitarians, customary chiefs, indigenous middle-class people and European merchants who feared the legislation would restrict timber concessions and farmers' rights to collect forest produce. It was not until thirty years later with the successful promulgation of the Forests Ordinance Act in 1927 that the British conservation policy was implemented. In the second collision in the Protectorate of the Northern Territories efforts at forest conservation were aimed principally at protecting the upper reaches of the Volta River, whose water was vital for development. In this case it was poorer indigenous people in North Mamprusi who resisted conservation in opposition to the efforts of both the Forestry Department and powerful local elites. They were anxious to retain the use of savannah woodland resources and keep their rights of access to customary lands traditional lands. In this case conservation would be delayed until after decolonisation.

In "Collision and Reintegration in a Missionary Landscape: The View from the Khasi Hills, India", Andrew Brown-May considers the work of Welsh Calvinist missionaries on a station in north-eastern India. He deals with intriguing questions about historians' relationships to the colonial past. How do we approach histories of culture collision from manifold identities, as spokesperson, apologist, inheritor, critic, historian, local, outsider? How do we approach historical actors when they are our own flesh and blood, not necessarily as inheritors of their beliefs or apologists for their actions, but at least as bearers of their histories? What do we want to believe? What do others want us to believe? Brown-May is descended from the mission's founder, Thomas Jones, who arrived in the Khasi Hills in 1841. His great-grandfather, Thomas Cattell-Jones, a medical officer on tea estates in the north-west, was Thomas's son, born at Cherrapunji in 1850. It makes him cautious of his informants, whether alive or long dead, anxious about how far the observer should be removed from the observed. The categories of insider/outsider might be easily unsettled by time, distance, separation, familiarity, "being there" on the ground or in the imagination. His personalised position as missionary descendant is typical, mundane, and unexceptional in a land of immigrants, but informs disparate histories of colonies and colonised; the history of a small mission station in north-eastern India is also a part-history of Wales and of Australia. In observing the rivalries and complicities of institutional relationships in situ and over time, he seeks to disrupt some of the essential categories of British, Christian, missionary, merchant, and between imperialist and colonised: British versus Indian, Bengali versus Khasi.

In the next chapters three historians of the Pacific area show the influences of postcolonial theorists. Penelope Edmonds, in "Dual Mandate, Double Work: Land, Labour and the Transformation of Native Subjectivity in Papua, 1908–1940", considers Papua, which Britain first annexed in 1884 and handed over to be administered by the Australian government in 1906. In the period that Edmonds addresses, Papua was, as she says, the colony of a colony. Her purpose is to bring together two narratives that are often treated separately: the efforts of first the British government and then the Australian government — specifically the administration of Hubert Murray — to ensure that Papuans retained ownership of cultivated land; and stated intentions to bring "civilisation" and western styles of living to indigenous Papuans. In the absence of arrangements with chiefs bound to organise

a cheap plentiful labour force, Edmonds demonstrates a link between teaching on prudent labour, and meeting this need through instruction and enforcement. Papuans often resisted the new economic burdens placed upon them, for these destabilised and transformed traditional ways of life.

Julie Evans, in “‘How White She Was’: Race, Gender and Global Capital in the Life and Times of Beatrice Grimshaw”, brings recent theorisation of gender, race and global imperialism to bear on the experiences of a woman who wrote prolifically about the Pacific. After working as a journalist in Dublin and London, Grimshaw travelled the Pacific as a publicist for government and commercial interests. She lived for twenty-seven years in Papua (during the time of Hubert Murray’s administration), retired to Australia and died there in 1953. Evans demonstrates how deeply grounded were race and gender in the production of the social inequalities upon which the empire depended. She traces the intersections between certain popular discourses of difference, both reflected and produced in Grimshaw’s texts, and the project of establishing a globalised market economy, evident in Britain’s “civilising mission” throughout the Pacific in the early twentieth century. Through her public writing Grimshaw reinforced ideas about the absolute primitiveness of the region’s inhabitants — including the indigenous peoples whose dispossession upheld Australian sovereignty — serving both British and Australian interests. Similar notions of race, place and gender were deployed in Australia to justify control as the century unfolded.

In turn, Tracey Banivanua-Mar considers in her chapter, “Cannibalism in Fiji: A Study in Colonialism’s Discursive Atavism”, the interface of colonialism and the idea of the “cannibal” during the past centuries of European — specifically British — contact with Fiji. Treating the construction of cannibalism in texts ranging from early seafarers’ tales to missionary journals, accounts of traders, and government officials’ reports, Banivanua-Mar demonstrates that the West came to regard Fiji predominantly through the prism of cannibalism. The discourse of cannibalism operated outside of verifiable evidence; the fact that accounts of gruesome human-eating could not be disproved lent them a compelling and fascinating edge. Western visitors were influenced by their belief in cannibalism to such an extent that the details of the colonising process served as a distant — sometimes non-existent — background to their experiences. To be called a cannibal was to be identified as a fitting candidate for colonisation, in desperate need of redemption. Banivanua-Mar concludes that a preoccupation with “cannibal Fiji”, seen for example in “historical” displays for western tourists and even in some contributions to current scholarly writing, reflects the on-going influence of this powerful colonial discourse.

Like Banivanua-Mar, the Japanese historian Takao Fujikawa takes as his central focus the construction of racialising colonial discourses. In “Silence on Aboriginal Presence: Australia’s Anti-Chinese Movements in the 1850s”, he considers the causes of, and the relationship of Aboriginal dispossession to anti-Chinese expression in mid-nineteenth century Australia. He examines in detail a derogatory public debate that emerged as a consequence of the migration of Chinese men to the Victorian and New South Wales goldfields in the 1850s. He challenges the idea put forward by some historians that opposition to non-European migrants before the late nineteenth century was driven by the fear of competition as workers, rather than racial factors. Fujikawa’s close reading of historical sources makes clear that the Chinese were compared with “coolies” and “cannibals”, the racial component of which cannot be ignored. The comparison of the Chinese to convicts was also not solely on economic grounds, since convicts were equated with non-white subordinate races. Fujikawa does not discount economic motives for anti-Chinese sentiment, but he emphasises that economic, racial, moral and religious factors were inseparably related in a society where the boundaries of classes and social groups cross cut race and ethnicity.

The anthropologist W. H. Stanner spoke in 1959 of the “great Australian silence” that existed on Aborigines in mainstream history writing, a phrase that has haunted Australian historians throughout the twentieth century. Fujikawa shows that a century earlier white colonisers represented Chinese migrants as a problem group in a way that obscured knowledge of the past and continuing oppression of indigenous Australians. One way for a settler society to assert the right to keep the lands of the continent for themselves and assert the whiteness of the emerging nation state was to wipe indigenous peoples from present consciousness and mainstream history. Settlers then furthered their claims to ownership of the land by labelling migrants of colour as sub-standard potential citizens. It was impossible to justify the invasion of Aboriginal country and the exclusion of the Chinese in the same context. Although the colonists were aware of the similarity of the two experiences, the “great Australian silence” was a necessary precondition for the rejection of Asian migrants and the foundation of a white Australian nation.

Russell McGregor writing on the Antipodes, and Norman Etherington on South Africa, are interested in discourses about “dying races”. McGregor’s “Fatal Collisions: Discourses on the Extinction of the Maori and Australian Aborigines” develops a comparative study of the social construction of race in the neighbouring British settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He explores how racialising discourses arose, who contested them, and the circumstances of their demise. Nineteenth-century colonists who witnessed the catastrophic decline in numbers of indigenous peoples comforted their consciences with a belief in the inevitability of the extinction of “primitive” societies which encountered people of civilised nations. This assertion in the later decades of the century was reinforced by social Darwinism and pseudo-scientific research. The similarities of colonialism in the two countries with respect to time, place and colonising power appear considerable. McGregor nevertheless notes significant differences in the way colonial discourses positioned Aborigines and Maori; in every aspect of the debate he finds that Aborigines were in a more oppressed position than their Maori counterparts. The doctrine of inevitable indigenous extinction was far more frequently and vigorously contested in New Zealand than in Australia, both before and after the conceptual impact of Darwinism. A key difference lay in the fact that Maori were themselves vigorous participants in the discussion, able to counteract some of the grievous Pakeha (New Zealanders of European origin) claims. This was not the case for discussion of the Australian case: there was no contribution from Aborigines themselves to public argument and definition of the debate. Apart from a few isolated humanitarians, there appeared to be not even much settler concern over the supposed inevitability of the decline in Aboriginal numbers. Aborigines in Australia faced more stubborn obstacles on every front in their initial pursuit of social justice.

Conversely, Norman Etherington in “The Political Uses of Dead Races: A South African Study” relates a story of how South African colonists at the identical time celebrated an indigenous culture that was clearly disappearing: that of the so-called “Bushmen” (now known mostly as the “San”). This celebration perversely still assisted the legitimization of the presence of European colonisers. In the 1870s a self-taught geologist and ethnographer, George W. Stow, began research and publication on the art and culture of the Bushmen, placing them in a favourable light that was taken up by his compatriots. At the same time, Stow expressed the most negative views of the Xhosa people whom colonists seeking expansion were fighting on the Cape Colony’s eastern frontier. If disturbed about the legality or morality of this usurpation, colonists could readily portray the “Bushmen” as the first people to populate southern Africa, only lately displaced by the Bantu-speaking Xhosa and others. The “Bushmen” had become, so the fiction ran, a dying race because of this original

aggression. Europeans represented the Xhosa as newcomers, as ruthless occupiers whom they could displace in turn with impunity. It was a false portrayal, but nonetheless powerful for that.

Finally, in the last chapter, “Constructing Indigenes in the Late Modern World”, Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb turn their attention from settlers’ discourses to a genealogy of the word “indigenous” itself. They offer an analysis that covers a wide landscape, foregrounding Asian experiences of dispossession and marginalisation. The paper unsettles the received notions of many historians of settler societies concerning the meaning and force of the term “indigenous” when applied exclusively to first nations’ peoples. They track the narrowing of the term from nineteenth-century usage in natural science through to people as “native to a place” and its evolution to the late twentieth-century meaning as the first people dispossessed by others. They implicitly question the efficacy of the term’s later meaning for successful outcome of the politics surrounding indigeneity.

History, Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb suggest, records countless examples of people shifting their abodes, since all peoples originally are migrants. People sought to gain better economic conditions for themselves and their families by occupying the lands of others, a process through which cultural diffusion occurred. The words for migrants took different shapes to the changing meanings of “native”, “aboriginal” and “indigenous”. In most cases the conquerors established themselves as not just political but moral superiors to those they invaded, although the ways in which they situated the colonised differed considerably. This was the case also for those who migrated for economic reasons. If they became numerically large and could dominate politics, new migrants could in time hold a superior place; where they were a minority they could become a stigmatised social group. Distinctions in the colonial area between new arrivals and older communities were sharp, but the boundaries could be permeable. The distinctions of Europeans, “foreign Orientals” and natives, for example, might be complicated by classifications of culture and religion, and even class.

The two scholars perceive a shift in the later half of the twentieth century. The term “indigenous” came into wide usage to denote original inhabitants. The word “Aborigine”, once used for first peoples everywhere, was increasingly reserved to denote just Aboriginal Australians. The definition of indigenes meant, not the long-standing non-European inhabitants of the land, but a small group of tribal or previously tribal peoples. These indigenous peoples were described as a global category of peoples who shared particular characteristics. For several reasons the narrowing of the definition enabled the creation of an advantaged position from which indigenous peoples could argue. First, indigenous peoples could insert themselves into the modern notion that priority should be given to the fact of being first. Second, recent decades have seen a growing scepticism, indeed alarm, about the capacity of new technologies to save the land and environment from degradation, leading to new respect for indigenous land management practices. Third, the identification of some people as indigenous has been a short-cut to protecting their general human rights, even if at the same time it denotes a separate category of rights from those available to others.

Ironically the greater propensity of dominant groups to approach indigenes with a degree of respect has in part coincided with a political move to deny the claims of migrants. While indigenous peoples might gain some advantage over underprivileged immigrant communities, the writers suggest, the protection offered to indigenous peoples brings the risk of confining them within a tradition that may not suit their needs. Those who seek a full place in the modern world may not find tradition helpful, since preserving tradition may homogenise and reify a culture against innovation and renovation. Above all, a claim to special status as indigenous within a country means, for the most part, giving up claims for national self-determination. The United Nation’s decision to recognise the rights of

indigenous peoples was only possible because the term has been emptied of any link with separatism. Finally, indigenous peoples' strategies to improve their life chances through evocation of past oppression, including abrogation of promises and treaties, have opened opportunities for their opponents to mobilise to counter indigenous claims to special consideration. Opponents of indigenous rights pursue their case on the basis of equality, as though there exists now a level playing field.

The chapters in this collection investigate the subject of the collision of cultures and identities with a rich complexity and boldly evaluate current scholarship. They raise issues that are vital for furthering our knowledge and understanding of comparative colonialism. These scholars' contributions are thus extremely timely and will be productive of further important research and reflection.

Notes

¹ Recent histories include: W. R. Louis, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998–1999); P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558–1995* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); S. Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also A. Pagden, *Peoples and Empires: Europeans and the Rest of the World, from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001).

² For recent comparative history see: J. Evans, *Edward Eyre, Race and Colonial Governance* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005); D. Kirkby, ed., *Law, History, Colonialism: The Reach of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); P. Havemann, ed., *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada and New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999); J. Evans, P. Grimshaw, D. Philips and S. Swain, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous Peoples in British Settler Societies, 1830–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Mahood Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (2001): 651–64; D. Pearson, *The Politics of Ethnicity in Settler Societies: States of Unease* (London: Palgrave, 2001).

³ See P. Wolfe, "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race", *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 866–905; P. Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassells, 1999); A. Moreton-Robinson, ed., *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004); V. Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992); R. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); R. Frankenberg, ed., *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); K. Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

⁴ See N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

⁵ See Peter H. Russell, *Recognising Aboriginal Title: The Mabo Case and Indigenous Resistance to English-Settler Colonialism* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006); P. Fitzpatrick, *Modernism and the Grounds of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); L. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); A. W. B. Simpson, *Human Rights and the End of Empire: Britain and the Genesis of the European Convention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

⁷ P. Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); C. Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate*

Bengali” in *the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); A. Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (London: Palgrave, 2006); M. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); A. L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); A. Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁸ C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁹ See P. Grimshaw, “Faith, Missionary Life and the Family” in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 260-80; P. Grimshaw and P. Sherlock, “Women, Missions and Cultural Exchange” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. N. Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 171-93.

¹⁰ For Australia see S. Macintyre and A. Clark, *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

¹¹ See for example B. Godfrey and G. Dunstall, eds, *Crime and Empire 1840–1940: Criminal Justice in Local and Global Context* (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2005); E. Darian-Smith and P. Fitzpatrick, eds, *Laws of the Postcolonial* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

Collisions of Cultures and Identities: A Comment

Richard White

Taken as a whole, these papers raise questions about modern attempts to establish the moral legitimacy of modern states and societies, the complicated and contradictory constructions of human difference over the last several centuries, the political uses of the category of indigenous in the modern world, and the continuing struggle of those people who have cast themselves as, or have been cast as, indigenous. They locate themselves within a range of disciplines: whiteness studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, legal studies, as well as more traditional studies of colonialism. They seem on the surface so diffuse, ranging as they do from colonial forestry in Africa, to discourses of disappearance in New Zealand and Australia, to treaties across several continents and multiple centuries, to the pressure from Christian missionaries to alter gender roles and marriage patterns among indigenous peoples, that the categories of settler and indigenous hardly seem sufficient to keep them in conversation. And, as Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb argue quite compellingly, the categories themselves are not historically constant. The term indigenous is an historical artifact that is both a residue - the product of filtering from what was once larger and broader categories of settler and native - and a creation of the colonial experience. As in any history, the historicisation of the terms of the discourse can cause categories to melt away before our eyes.

Having said all this, the papers still can come together in ways that provide the possibility for fruitful discussion. The first set of issues involves the interrogation of the categories themselves. Within these papers it is possible to distil out four separate sets of colonial markers of difference. The first is a pre-racial formulation of difference that is neither innate nor immutable; difference itself is to be eradicated over time through the imposition of appropriate cultural roles. The head note that begins Gunlög Fur's paper, "The Struggle for Civilised Marriages", gives a sense of this. It categorises the "wild men" of North America on the basis of "their religion, of which they have very little, and that is very strange, and secondly, on account of their marriages, wherein they differ from civilized societies; thirdly on account of their law, which are so singular". The marker of difference involves the creation of a legal discourse of treaties and later sovereignty in which indigenous peoples are marked as distinctive. The third involves, in Russell McGregor's words, a discourse of race, empire, and progress that constructs the racialised other — the aborigine — so that difference is to be eradicated through the extinction of indigenous people themselves. This extinction discourse was, as McGregor reminds us, not monolithic, nor did it go unchallenged. The final marker of difference is modern, and in it the valence of indigenous moves from negative to positive.

These discussions of difference can be fruitfully brought into conversation. I would, for example, regard treaties as critical moments in the reification of indigenous populations so that they transmute in the eyes of empires and states into creatures of colonialism. Treaties often mark the moment they become nations or tribes. And I wonder if the category indigenous, which Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb do such a nice job of unpacking, is an artifact, in part, of treaty making: of people who get marked as separate in a way the bulk of native subjects in other colonies do not. The later transformation in many former colonies of the category indigenous into a claim on power can also be part of the resurrection of treaties as a source of rights and identity.

On both sides of the settler/indigenous peoples binary, identities are forged in contest with each other, and such contests can sometimes disrupt the binary itself. By putting together, as Takao Fujikawa does, discussions of settler/aborigine identities with racialised discussions of Chinese, we can get a better sense of the uses and limits of these categories at any given moment.

The second set of issues raised by these papers goes toward power of cultural constructions that link certain peoples with nature or with civilisation. How indigenous peoples are positioned, or position themselves, in regard to an artificial civilisation/nature divide has enormous consequences. Such issues arise in Fujikawa's paper as well as those of Narangoa and Cribb, Fur and McGregor. As they stand, these papers concentrate on how colonialists categorise indigenes, but the discussion could be broadened by examining how indigenous peoples themselves were actively engaged in using, countering, or resisting the cultural models of civility and extinction that confronted them. Wardell's paper is a nice example of what can be done here.

One of the interesting, but undeveloped, issues raised by these papers is how the various categories of indigenous can provide ways to get access to things, both by indigenous peoples themselves, and, through them, by the state. Explicit in some of these papers and implicit in others are assertions that the framing of indigenous identity and rights can be a tool for access to things — particularly natural things. Whether we are considering modern environmentalists (or timber companies) supporting indigenous claims in order to influence land use, or interventions in treaty processes by corporations in the United States, or the complicated machinations involved in empire forestry in the Gold Coast that Wardell writes about, we need to be constantly aware that indigeneity is also a relationship between people and things.

Finally, although this collection is entitled "Collisions of Cultures and Identities: Settlers and Indigenous Peoples", the papers by and large take the identity "settler" as a given. I find it hard to believe that it is as unproblematic as it sometimes seems.