RECONSIDERING INCORPORATION: UNEVEN HISTORIES OF CAPITALIST EXPANSION AND ENCROACHMENT, NATIVE AMERICA

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A key component of world-system analysis, incorporation, or the concept of “how the world-system expands,” is understood as an inherent process of historical capitalism, a “secular trend” of its development. Through incorporation, internal contradictions of capitalism are worked out and areas once “external” are made “internal” by a seemingly omniscient, expansionary capitalism. Incorporation means merging, combining disparate zones “into a united whole” and admitting newly captured regions as members, most often peripheral states or the economically and politically weak “junior partners” of the interstate system. Given the logic of such an understanding, incorporation has apparent and significant limits. Eventually, through expansion it would seem that all that was “external” now stands “internal” to the modern world-system, playing a predesigned role in capital accumulation. Hopkins and Wallerstein confirm that “As [incorporation] continues over time, there can come a point where the ‘last’ zone external to the world-economy has been incorporated. We think such a point has in fact come.” This conveys a weight to the incorporation process, making expansion an additive function of the capitalist world-economy. Even more, incorporation becomes a truly historical process, resigned to the often distant past.

Taking a critical stance on world-system work, I offer an approach to rethinking how we understand capitalism’s expansion from a world-historic perspective. This means pulling incorporation from the past, seeing it instead as an ongoing and hesitant process visible in places even today. This also involves going against nearly all analyses of incorporation. Existing studies
construct a spatially and temporally bounded linear argument, the end result being today’s unhindered, global capitalism. Even for important critics of world-economic incorporation, expansion still has an apparent historic limit. These authors see incorporation as a terminal process, a condition of the past that bears on the present only in terms of how a particular zone was incorporated, most often economically and politically “peripheralized.” Such an understanding is fundamentally flawed.

My argument proceeds to discuss the idea of incorporation from early formulations through more recent conceptualizations. I focus on the way arguments have been constructed, bringing to the fore the presumptions that inform and limit understandings of expansionary capitalism. A major fault of work on incorporation results from tying Marxian primitive accumulation and world-systemic incorporation together and resigning both to the past. I next introduce extended examples from the incorporation process as experienced by indigenous populations of North America, principally in the United States (US). In discussing more contemporary experiences of diverse Native American groups, I look to reunite past and present — bridging the existing temporal disconnect and bringing incorporation and primitive accumulation into the ongoing processes of today’s global capitalism. To do so, I also examine how existing studies of incorporation view contemporary conditions, often through imperfect understandings akin to “internal colonialism.” Disconnecting past from present and resigning current conditions to different processes fundamentally misunderstands contemporary experiences (a fault common to much work on “globalization” as well). Instead, while drawing upon the best work on incorporation, I offer a new yet very much formative approach to viewing capitalism’s expansion as hesitant, ongoing, and highly uneven.

Incorporation into the Capitalist World-Economy: A Review of Early Formulations

Expansion has long been seen as essential to the operations of historical capitalism and attendant world-economy — a way of working out capitalism’s internal contradictions. Incorporation, the “expansion of the geographical loci included in the division of labour of the capitalist world-
economy,” is understood in world-system analysis as the very process by which the “external” is made “internal.” Incorporation thereby expands the world-economy’s sheer geographic scope. Paid little attention in early work on the modern world-system, incorporation has received considerable attention since. The devil rests in the details of such work.

Early analyses construct a world starkly dichotomized around an expansionary world-economy. Quite simply, a region was historically understood in terms of in/out, internal/external. Exemplifying such thought, Wallerstein notes “At one point in time, the Ottoman Empire was outside the capitalist world-economy. At a later point in time, the Ottoman Empire was incorporated into the capitalist world-economy.” Arrighi, weighing in on this process, delineates “effective” incorporation from “nominal.” “Effective” incorporation describes “a situation in which the patterns of production and reproduction typical of external arenas have ceased to be dominant within the region and tend to disintegrate qua systems [emphasis added].” A nominally incorporated region lacks the requisite change in relations of re/production. Incorporation then resembles a tipping theory of social change whereby once a certain critical mass is reached, the external arena “tips” and becomes irrevocably part of the capitalist world-economy.

For world-systemic understandings of incorporation, primary emphasis is placed on fundamental alterations to the relations of production. Expansion means a search for cheap labour; incorporation means altering such labour to contribute to capital accumulation. In order to determine when and where incorporation has occurred, production processes offer a first indicator. In other words, obvious incorporation entails “the integration of production processes into the interdependent network of production processes that constitute the world market.” Primacy is placed on how labour power in new regions is altered to meet the demands of production for a world market driven by never-ending capital accumulation.

A necessary (but not sufficient) condition for incorporation also involves changes wrought to political structures “such that they facilitate this economic participation [emphasis added].” While important, the political structures resulting from incorporation enable the realization of capital accumulation. Extended elaboration deserves attention:
As new areas became incorporated into this capitalist world-economy, the existing political structures of such areas were commonly reshaped in quite fundamental ways (including even the definition of their territorial and ‘ethnic’ or national boundaries) so that they could play their expected role in the relational network of the interstate system. These states had to be too weak to interfere with the flow of the factors of production across their boundaries, and therefore with the peripheralization of the production processes. Hence, in some cases, preexisting political structures had to be ‘weakened’ [emphasis added].

Elsewhere, Wallerstein argues for the “optimal” state structure of a newly incorporated zone being not too weak but strong enough to facilitate transfers of surplus. In some cases, this meant historically strengthening state structures.

The explanation offered by this early work seems particularly problematic. Illuminating a structure in which “roles” are not only played but predetermined, what Carlson later refers to even as a “grooming” process, imbuens the historical record with an overdetermined weight. Looking at an historical instance from this perspective, Wallerstein laments that “the Ottoman Empire was relegated to the common fate of the politically weak areas — of China and of southeast Asia, and indeed of Africa.” Rather than contingent and contested, incorporation becomes nothing more than the functional workings of a particular type of system. The system, the whole, looks to determine the parts and their role in capital accumulation. The understandings proffered are unable to avoid the pitfalls of determinism. The capitalist world-economy is seen in dangerously reified terms.

Building from this theoretical foundation, an important group of studies has looked at incorporation in a variety of settings. Concerning the incorporation of the Caribbean, for example, Phillips notes that “the logic compelling… incorporation… fundamentally depended on the character and rhythm of developments within the world-economy during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.” Here again, the “internal” needs of the world-economy push expansion into the “external arena.” Phillips, noting that incorporation can be a very uneven process, sees incorporation as linear, building up to an irrevocable and unavoidable endpoint “possible to date
relatively precisely.” Together, these accounts are best at constructing a linear history of the creation of the modern interstate system. Pulling in the “external arena” means most often the creation of a periphery, meaning today’s low-income, debt-ridden peripheral state. Martin makes this clear, as these regions “once masters of their own history... become via incorporation bound into a world network and its history, and bound in a subordinate position.”18 High-income, core countries, being imperial powers here, pull the strings, sometimes strengthening, sometimes weakening preexisting structures to assure the docile participation of new regions in capitalism’s expansion. Despite wanting to break with traditional overemphases on the state, strong states fill a crucial role in such explanations.19

Constructing an understanding of incorporation rooted in state-level interactions, these accounts downplay or ignore the role of local agency in shaping incorporation. Seeing incorporation as a highly contentious and partial process is beyond these studies. Beginning with an understanding of a world-economy “where the ‘last’ zone external to the world-economy has been incorporated,” incorporation can be seen only as inevitable and, today, complete.20 An emphasis on powerful states, “shaping” and “coercing” production and exchange at the expense of the newly incorporated, comes at the loss of the multitude of relations, including resistance, that shape and actually make incorporation. Constructing tight, bounded historical accounts resigns incorporation to the past, and this stems directly from one’s presumptions.

Interlude on “So-Called Primitive Accumulation” Near the end of volume one of Capital, Marx enters into an extended discussion of “so-called primitive accumulation.” As Marx apparently explains, such primitive accumulation “precedes capitalist accumulation.” In other words, it is “an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure.”21 Here, Marx brings history into his analysis and unfortunately (and inadvertently) sets up something of a temporal narrative for those concerned with the “idyllic proceedings.” As Marx argues, primitive accumulation “appears as ‘primitive’ because it forms the prehistory of capital, and of the mode of production corresponding to capital.”22 This apparent temporal narrative informs nearly all understandings of
incorporation. Incorporation, tied directly to primitive accumulation, historically facilitates the formation of capitalist relations of production and exchange in a new zone of the world-economy. What Marx describes, the expropriation of the peasant, the conversion of land (and then labour) into a commodity, presents the crucial change in production processes for “effective” incorporation. With a rather selective (or perhaps literal) reading of Capital, primitive accumulation is relinquished to the past. Incorporation and primitive accumulation are then different terms for similar processes. For the studies of incorporation outlined so far, incorporation and primitive accumulation are seen as prehistory, stepping stones to world-economic participation often found in the perceived emergence of some level of wage labour (privileging it as the marker of capitalist relations of production). Such an understanding, while making important and formative contributions, needs reconsideration.

Reconsidering Incorporation: Notes from Native America Expressing a clear discontent with the dichotomous conceptualization found in prior work — a zone being either “in” or “out” of the world-economy — Hall has pushed incorporation in new directions. Exemplifying this difference, Hall notes that “while considerable attention has been paid to the effects of incorporation on state societies, there has been scant attention to the consequences for non-state societies” [emphasis added]. Focusing on “non-state societies,” in his case various band societies of the American Southwest, Hall’s understanding has been influential in a small collection of studies focusing on the incorporation of different indigenous populations in what is today the United States.

As noted already, for much world-system analysis, incorporation only matters when it becomes “effective,” when production processes are fundamentally altered and placed in obvious relation to world-economic forces. Hall makes this contention his starting point, arguing that “by excluding milder forms of incorporation, world-system theory limits the range of social changes examined, masking pertinent variables and processes by inadvertently holding them constant.” In place of an either/or condition, incorporation is conceptualized as a continuum ranging from weak to strong. Seeing
Wallerstein and others focusing only on the strong pole or “internal” end of the continuum, Hall allows for weak incorporation as a significant process in its own right. This allows incorporation to be extended to moments of initial, even minimal, contact between world-economic and local actors. These “contact peripheries” as such have no place in other conceptualizations of incorporation.

For Hall, “incorporation begins much earlier and has stronger effects than world-system theory recognizes.”28 Rather than a stark contrast (internal/external) drawing an arbitrary line in space and time, Hall perceives incorporation as gradual, even “fuzzy.” Incorporation begins indistinctly, sometimes even preceding the sheer physical presence of an invading, European power into a formally “external arena.”29 Hall has developed an understanding of incorporation as an inherently sporadic process, a key characteristic even being its reversibility. From this perspective, capitalist expansion can move in starts, in waves, each with differing historical effect.

To his credit, Hall places emphasis on resistance at the “local” level. Whereas Kasaba, for example, ties reversal in incorporation of the Ottoman Empire almost exclusively to outside forces, Hall allows greater room for local resistance in causing reversals, stalling the process, and in part determining the final outcome.30 Hall’s focus on striking a balance between world-systemic and local actors represents a significant development in understanding exactly how expansion occurs. At length, Hall conveys the idea that:

\[ \text{The incorporation process is shaped by the internal dynamics of both incorporating and incorporated groups. The degree to which an area or group is incorporated into a world-system sets the context within which local changes may occur. Local social structures shape the effects and processes of incorporation [emphasis added].}^{31} \]

This understanding makes incorporation a more active, dynamic process and offers an important corrective to accounts dominated by world-economic forces. Those actually affected, such as the Navajo of the American Southwest who faced subjugation and displacement under capitalist incursion, are made apparent.
Contributions aside, Hall’s approach, like those he criticizes, has serious shortcomings. Despite a professed concern with introducing local aspects, Hall’s actual analysis is limited. Wanting to understand incorporation as an interactive process, “shaped by the internal dynamics of both incorporating and incorporated groups,” his analysis does not introduce agency. Hall still emphasizes external forces, and the “needs” of the world-economy — the demands of economic stagnation, political rivalry, trade — truly determine the course of incorporation. Hall, like many others working to understand the histories of capitalism, runs the risk of overgeneralizing the object of study. Local groups are seen as active only in response to the “asymmetrical” effects of powerful core areas on vulnerable peripheral areas — perhaps as victims rather than true participants. Even those working from within Hall’s framework see a problem here. Meyer’s analysis of the Anishinaabeg of the US upper Midwest, points out that “[Hall] calls his work social history, but despite his contribution his focus is on economic processes; Indian individuals and political processes are barely visible [emphasis added].” The task becomes to understand the distance between Hall’s understanding and the criticisms levelled at him.

Hall’s dilemma stems from a similarity he and many others maintain with earlier work. Hall still imbues expansion with a trajectory, an endpoint as such for the termination of the process. Despite starts and stops, even occasional reversals, net change is always towards stronger incorporation, resulting finally in the end of the process circa 1880 for the American Southwest. Along the way, “the process of incorporation necessarily entails a transformation of each ‘people’ into an ‘ethnic minority’ meaning that external definitions of the new group now shape identity [emphasis added].” Like everything else in the incorporation process, identity is even irrevocably altered to the designs of world-economic forces. The unfortunate result fills a contested, created social structure (and its attendant processes) with a life of its own — i.e., “once the world-system has incorporated.” Incorporation then remains an account of the “growth” of this structure to its presently understood, all-encompassing, global dimensions.

Much of the difficulty results directly from the way in which Hall and many others conceptualize local and global as separate levels of analysis in
their understandings of global capitalism. Such work is troubled by viewing the world-system, the global, as a “higher-level” structure with its own set of rules. At the tail-end of incorporation, Hall understands that “a larger system now encompasses the lesser systems. The social position of a lesser system within a larger system has important consequences for internal differences within the lesser systems [emphasis added].” Incorporation is argued as occurring at “multiple geographical scales — local, regional, global — simultaneously and recursively. The world-system serves as the largest, though not fully determinative, context for broad regional processes.” As such, incorporation becomes little more than the introduction of a superstructure or context, a set of new, determining conditions to which indigenous groups then respond; agency can be viewed only as reaction. At one level a world-economy operates; at another, it is the state (inevitably a high-income, powerful core state); at yet another level, there are local, nonstate societies. Trouble stems directly from this conceptualization; true dynamism rests with the world-system and results from the actions of core states pushing expansion.

Given this, how do the accounts following Hall develop and refine understandings of incorporation? Perhaps more than any other, Dunaway’s work on the experience of the Cherokee in what is today the southeastern United States links the concerns of earlier approaches (e.g., changes in production processes; political and economic aspects of incorporation) with those espoused by Hall (e.g., incorporation starting earlier as a gradual, even reversible process). Ultimately expanding Hall’s efforts, Dunaway sees incorporation as an interactive, contested process; for her, “incorporation cannot be unilaterally imposed by the core. Instead it is shaped by adversaries on peripheral frontiers.” Much more than Hall, Dunaway demonstrates the importance of indigenous resistance, so that, in the case of the Cherokee, total control was never realized. As Dunaway says, “[P]olitical dispersion and internal cultural diversity strengthened the capacity of indigenous Appalachians to resist subsequent incorporation into the capitalist world-economy.”

Again working from Hall’s foundation, Meyer’s study of the Anishinaabeg represents some of the most interesting possibilities present in the literature.
One particular passage demonstrates the conceptual divide travelled from earliest understandings:

Acquisition of capitalist values formed the very backbone of assimilation as policymakers construed it. However, some individuals had adapted to market conditions long before the United States had enough power to force cultural changes. Once US Indian policy did take on a coercive cast, native peoples approached assimilationist directives with their own objectives in mind, creating complex syncretic adaptations that policymakers had never dreamed of. Native people adjusted their behavior to circumstances they faced, as they had for centuries.41

This demonstrates just one way in which the expansion of capitalism was actively challenged and shaped. Incorporation is no simple matter of a one-way flow of influence altering preexisting patterns to suit the needs of a faceless, Eurocentric capital. What is more, Meyer cogently demonstrates the divisive impact incorporation can have. Capitalist expansion presented Native Americans with both obstacle and opportunity; in response, individuals turned to resistance and collaboration.42 The role of certain Native Americans was in fact critical to the success of the emerging market economy.

The collective contributions of these studies present a much more compelling and complicated understanding of capitalism’s growth across space and time. In analyzing indigenous groups in the United States, incorporation becomes a more dialectical process between social structure and social action. While a crucial addition to the discussion, the way in which structure and agency are brought together has fundamental limitations. Ultimately, in the same breath that agency is discussed, incorporation is viewed as “a multifaceted struggle at several antagonistic levels.”43 Agency enters at the lowest “level,” the world-system or world-economy at the “highest,” and the “incorporating state” somewhere in between. Despite discussions of agency, the world-system as “context” has analytical predominance; agency is only viewed from within the “opportunities” and/or “constraints” that capitalist incursion introduces. Structure overwhelms and predominates.

Structure/agency and global/local masks a more subtle understanding at work, that of tradition/change or tradition/modernity. So far, incorporation

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has been understood as a conflict between precapitalist (communal/subsistence) and capitalist (export) modes of production. For Navajos, Cherokees, Ashininaabeg, or Lakota, agency becomes most often the defense of “tradition,” a local reaction to global change. This separation is starkly apparent in Pickering’s *Lakota Culture, World Economy*, where the comma in the title literally carries the weight of the “tensions between the inducements of the world economy and the protection of local culture.” Economies and ethics are discussed in terms of tradition, and civilizations prior to contact are “pristine.” While there is little question that indigenous peoples and ecosystems were irrevocably altered by capitalism’s expansion, seeing cultures, economies, polities in terms of “tradition” or “pristine” runs the risk of dangerously freezing dynamic, ongoing processes; everything “outside” of capitalist relations becomes static. True agency then rests with global capitalism, the harbinger of modernity and change.

An unstated modernity/tradition juxtaposition appears in one final, important way across nearly all understandings of incorporation. These studies end discussion around the turn of the Twentieth Century resigning incorporation to the past. Again, this connects directly to the often implicit, sometimes explicit relation drawn in these studies between an “orthodox” understanding of primitive accumulation and capitalist expansion. Primitive accumulation and incorporation are not only linked but also constructed as an historical precondition for capital accumulation — the literal “pedestal” for capitalist relations of production. The unfortunate disconnect erected between past and present leaves the contemporary out of incorporation.

**Native America and Internal Colonialism: Internal to What Exactly?** It is a bit unfair to imply that studies of incorporation do not make any reference to contemporary conditions. Many do, however the particular manner in which the contemporary is addressed deserves consideration. At worst perhaps, Meyer’s work on the Anishinaabeg relegates the present day to an epilogue, quite literally placing the present outside of her concern with incorporation. Hall’s work on the American Southwest, meanwhile, develops an argument for the late emergence of ethnic identities among formerly more diffuse groups. Hall sees ethnicity significantly transformed by
incorporation and tied to particular states — “an ethnic group being some type of subcomponent of a state.” Harris clarifies that “It was during the reservation era in American incorporation, Hall argues, that the Navajo and other Native American societies became distinct ethnic groups. In the Twentieth Century, he postulates, increasingly internal colonialist incorporation has transformed them into ethnic minorities within a larger state.” The unfortunate outcome of subsuming ethnic group formation and inequality to the state implies the demise of world-economic processes (what world-system analysis purports to understand) in favour of state-based changes rooted for Hall and others in the tenets of internal colonialism.

Understanding internal colonialism’s benefits and limitations means returning to linchpins of the theory. Gonzalez Casanova and Stavenhagen pushed internal colonialism as a useful way to understand the uneven development of states. The inferior position of indigenous populations in certain Latin American states, the “Indian hinterland,” is understood as the result of their exploitation for the benefit of a Ladino, or Creole, elite. Quite literally, colonialism is made internal to a state, changing from an international to a national phenomenon. As Gonzalez Casanova contends, “With the disappearance of the direct domination of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerges.” In this way, internal colonialism becomes a second, later form of the colonial relationship.

Hechter’s analysis of the “Celtic fringe” of the British Isles develops internal colonialism as a way to understand the “persistence of ethnic attachments” and openly pushes internal colonialism as a theory of ethnic change. As Hechter sees it, “the spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups. As a consequence of the initial fortuitous advantage, there is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups,” ultimately resulting in the formation of a cultural division of labour. These “two groups” thereby occupy different positions in the cultural, economic, and political spaces of the state. Using familiar language, a national “core” dominates an ethnic “periphery.” Foregrounding ethnic and/or racial inequalities, internal colonialism has grown into a popular way to understand the relationship of different ethnic and racial groups to each other and an
exploitative state. Famously, Carmichael and Hamilton’s *Black Power* stresses the colonial situation of African-Americans in the US, drawing direct connections to African colonialism.\(^{54}\)

Perhaps not surprisingly, internal colonialism has sizable currency among those studying the history of Native Americans in the United States. It has even been argued that Native Americans are as an “archetype” of internal colonialism.\(^{55}\) Snipp describes the trajectory of Native American history as a move from “captive nations” to “internal colonies” — reservations becoming increasingly colonial structures under the weight of more recent natural resource extraction. Snipp makes three points: first, “reservations are the exploited satellite and American society is the exploiting metropolis”; second, “resource development is an invitation for yet greater exploitation and underdevelopment,” and third, “the relationship between the tribes and the federal government has nurtured underdevelopment and dependence in Indian communities.”\(^{56}\) Parallels and direct applications of the ideas developed around internal colonialism are obvious. The “metropolis” (core) benefits at the expense of, and expropriates the surpluses of the “satellite” or reservation (periphery); a “white” America progresses from the dependency and underdevelopment of a “native” America. Given the attentiveness to ethnicity and race, internal colonialism becomes attractive in any situation where obvious inequality and difference coexist. With Hall’s pursuit of an “ethnic change” argument as an outcome of incorporation, internal colonialism seems to be an appealing way to understand more recent Native American history.

More importantly, land appropriation and resource extraction are seen as prominent historical motors of inequality. Juxtaposed against a dominant, extractive United States, different Native American groups and their history have been viewed as internal colonies. Anders’ several accounts on the history of the Cherokee detail the gradual yet violent appropriation of land and resultant confinement on reservations. For Anders:

> These traditional Indians are a super-exploited minority who have been stripped of their valuable land and mineral resources and have been placed in a situation of economic dependence, deprived of the ability to manage their own lives... They are prisoners of an internal colonial system which uses their very presence as a resource for the benefit of the white dominated external economy.\(^{57}\)
Outright exploitation and dependence play critical roles and much like Stavenhagen or Hechter, a dichotomy of exploiter/exploited, colonizer/colonized, or core/periphery lies at the basis of the argument.

In taking up where Hall and others’ accounts of incorporation leave off, studies of Native American internal colonialism offer interesting details of westward expansion and its consequences in the United States. Given their inherent limits (the state being the beginning and end of analysis), the largest contribution these studies make in understanding global processes stems from the way they connect state action with the exploitation and manipulation of various indigenous groups and their land in the United States. The Severalty Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes or Allotment Act) for instance, which divided and privatized much reservation land into 160-acre parcels, is viewed as a common starting point or “smokescreen” for the rather rapid appropriation of remaining indigenous lands.58

Concerning the Cherokee, one generation after passing the Act only one fifth of the 4.5 million acres originally allotted remained in Cherokee hands.59 Under allotment — an open attempt to assimilate Indians and force concepts of private property upon them — the “main benefactors were whites and white-owned land companies which were able to buy Indian lands.”60 American corporations were especially adept at coercing Native populations into selling land, resulting in more than fifty million acres lost from 1887 to just 1934. Alongside outright appropriation, legislation such as the Omnibus Tribal Leasing Act of 1938, which authorized the US government to lease Indian mineral rights to corporations, facilitated further encroachment. Leasing of mineral rights has since offered the means by which the remaining acreage could be exploited. In other words, “it was this corporate colonialism, combined with colonization of Indian lands by both individual whites and white corporations, that led to the final subjugation of Indians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”61

Even viewed from the internal colonial perspective, the attention given to land by these works stands out. Looking across long histories, the expropriation of land presents a common theme to unite past and present. Yet, the temporal disconnect at work in these very same analyses makes this larger history difficult to construct. Starting where incorporation studies
leave off, internal colonial accounts go back only to the Nineteenth Century at best, seeing in US expansion the beginnings of an internal colonial process. The state thereby takes on an importance that blinds these accounts to longer histories and larger processes. As Sloan devastatingly points out, internal colonial understandings can suffer badly from an utter lack of attention to larger imperial processes.62

While the focus on land brings to the fore an important, overlooked component of incorporation, these accounts disconnect history from any sense of world-capitalist expansion. The expansion that is actually described is not world-economic but rather state-centric. Internal colonialism is viewed as a problem hindering the progress and development of national states and economies. Gonzalez Casanova argues that internal colonialism “is bound to the policy of the national government (of national integration, internal communication, and expansion of the national market).”63 Events and acts are then read and understood as particular to US history — despite the occasional work that even compares similar histories of land and internal colonialism in Australia and Canada.64 Such assumptions presume and, in turn, reinforce the very legitimacy of the state. From the perspective of world-economic analysis (the “global”) or of many indigenous groups (the “local”), it is highly questionable that the state is the political entity of concern.

To decry something as “not world-economic” or “not world-historical,” while a critical insight, is simply not enough. The way in which these accounts construct reservations, states, and the larger world points to more important limitations. Moreover, reliance on internal colonialism for the contemporary means these limitations then critically limit our efforts to understand ongoing histories of world-economic expansion. Without fail, accounts of internal colonialism also construct a tiered world composed of multiple, separate levels (local to global), each with different sets of rules and processes. Where a larger world-economy enters, it is viewed as environment, background, or opportunity structure. Indicative of this, Page understands that “as the needs of the United States and the rest of the world for more natural resources have increased through time, so has market articulation between reservations and the central sector.”65 Here again, the world-economy occupies the highest order, the US state the middle, and
the reservation the lowest. Reservations as internal colonies have ties to the national economy only, and only through the national economy can any connection to a world market be made.

A metropolis-satellite conceptualization blinds these accounts, relinquishing those in the “margins” to the status of superexploited role players in a larger history. Such an identity for indigenous groups actually reinforces an outcome of the (ongoing) processes of world-economic expansion; in exposing inequality, these accounts fall prey to the language and assumptions of the colonizers. Given a professed concern with agency by later proponents of incorporation, using internal colonialism to explain the contemporary becomes even more problematic. Accounts of internal colonialism are again quick to juxtapose tradition/modernity, seeing the “discontented” often as defenders of tradition in the face of change. From such a perspective, “American Indians are best understood as traditional peoples who are attempting to maintain the essence of their traditional cultures.”

Historical processes and relations that constantly recreate the differences at work are thus lost. Rather than fluid, enmeshed categories, modernity and tradition are isolated in opposite ends of the metropolis/satellite, core/periphery, or internal/external dichotomy respectively. The notion of indigenous/traditional societies “outside” a settler/modern state (or world-system for that matter) is a consequence of a racialized world-economic expansion. These studies actually reinforce this dualistic outlook.

Without question, marginalized areas and people, including American Indians, suffer from massive poverty even as the land and resources they hold are made grossly profitable elsewhere. For internal colonialism, Native Americans confined to reservations then occupy “domestic dependent” niches in a national economy, subsidizing the US economy through the cheap sale of resources and access to land. This focus on land and resources offers a crucial corrective to the incorporation literature that draws on the importance of cheap labour and changes in the relations of production as the markers of incorporation. Land acquisition, resource extraction, and the elimination of indigenous peoples’ political autonomy go hand-in-hand in world-economic expansion.
The shortcomings of a reliance on internal colonialism, however, reflect an analytical sleight-of-hand whereby colonialism as a transnational process becomes conflated as a national process of a somehow independent, isolated, legitimate state. Studies of internal colonialism begin with constrained understandings of the mechanisms of exploitation, dependency, and under-development, seeing colonies “attached” through exchange to the relative dynamism of a national economy. Any adequate understanding of a reservation’s place within the world-economy disappears here, while this is precisely what world-historic analysis should be seeking. One is left wanting for an account on how Native American land and resources have played, and continue to play, a role in the always ongoing pursuit of world-economic accumulation, primitive and otherwise.

Second Interlude on “Primitive Accumulation” In wanting to examine critically the process of incorporation, I argue for a fundamental reconsideration of the idea. Rather than relinquished to the past and complete, the process must be seen as ongoing and uneven. To understand world-economic expansion, the historical disconnect that has been constructed between past and present — incorporation and internal colonialism, respectively — must be torn asunder. This requires rereading work on both sides of the disconnect, making their contributions begin to answer new sets of questions.

A crucial step in reconsidering incorporation involves looking at primitive accumulation in a different sense. In The Accumulation of Capital, Luxemburg argues for primitive accumulation as a continuing process — part of an “incessant transition” between noncapitalist and capitalist conditions. Rather than a strict prehistory or a preceding stage, Luxemburg places primitive accumulation alongside other modes of production and surplus extraction. Capital accumulation is impossible without other persistent noncapitalist modes of production, seeing as “after many centuries of development, the capitalist mode of production still constitutes only a fragment of total world production.” From this perspective, primitive accumulation is ongoing. This means studies of incorporation, “how the world-system expands,” must be brought past the temporal disconnect to include contemporary processes. Leaving the contemporary to different
studies and frameworks, including internal colonialism, serves only to mystify capitalism's expansion.

Rather than a completed whole, the world-economy should be understood as a more differentiated, complex, and porous structure. Luxemburg again elucidates the tension at work:

Historically, the accumulation of capital is a kind of metabolism between capitalist economy and those pre-capitalist methods of production without which it cannot go on and which, in this light, it corrodes and assimilates. Thus capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organizations, nor, on the other hand, can it tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continuous and progressive disintegration of non-capitalist organization makes accumulation of capital possible.70

This interesting dialectical tension, whereby capitalist accumulation relies upon and creates other modes of production even as it seeks to destroy them, lies at the heart of understanding the expansion of the capitalist world-economy. Contemporary resource extraction and efforts to erode Native American autonomy take on new meaning in understanding this ongoing incorporation.

Reuniting Past and Present: Native America, Land, and Ongoing Incorporation This last substantive section aims to restore some continuity between past and present. Rather than internal colonies, “disenfranchised” regions show the broken and unbalanced nature of the expansion of the capitalist world-economy, marking trajectories of incorporation as hesitant and highly uneven. For example, studies of internal colonialism pull upon an impressive array of numbers — e.g., trade figures, mining totals, resource reserves — to indicate the colonial relationship between reservations and the US political economy. When reviewing these same numbers, one can gain some sense of reservations’ rather uneven and ongoing incorporation into the capitalist world-economy.

“Colonial-style” mineral leases, for instance, provide a virtual who’s-who of the world’s multinational mineral corporations’(e.g., Exxon, United Nuclear, Kerr-McGee, Amoco, Conoco, Gulf, and Anaconda) access to
resources at absurdly cheap rates that, in turn, generate massive profits elsewhere (i.e., primitive accumulation). The details on this profit maximization are truly startling:

In 1975, with uranium valued at $30 per pound, the Navajos received 60 cents per pound as their fair share of the agreement... In 1978, with uranium prices in excess of $69 per pound, the Navajo’s 60 cents had fallen to less than one percent of market value.72

A lease signed with Utah International dated July 26, 1957, for example, called for paying the Navajos between $.15 and $.20 per ton of coal, even though Arizona Public Service paid Utah International $6 per ton for the same coal.73

Such leases, negotiated by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs on behalf of Native Americans because of their rather partial sovereignty, were long set at fixed prices and were valid as long as the lessee produced on the site.74 Such multinationals “sought maximum access at minimum cost,”75 a strategy of primitive accumulation laid bare in more recent history.

The control of land and natural resources has long been a major source of conflict for Native Americans. In this continuous history cutting across several centuries, “the real policy has been to get the Indians off the good land, have them give over their resources, and then let them fend as they might.”76 Access to land pushed capitalist expansion onto indigenous lands in the first place, and this continues today — another indication of an ongoing incorporation. In their study of the Red Power movement, Josephy, Nagel, and Johnson confirm that “the exploitation of Indian resources has been the most consistent theme marking Indian-white relations since European contact. The acquisition of Indian land by colonial and US governments through the use of Indian treaties was, for the most part, a successful strategy in that it reduced Indian land holdings to an infinitesimal portion of the continent.”77 Today and for some time, this “infinitesimal portion” of land left to indigenous peoples has become the focus of increased exploitative efforts and corporate encroachment.

As long-held mineral reserves dwindle and new, exploratory reserves are often on inaccessible or politically unstable lands elsewhere in the world,
corporations have increasingly turned to resources on indigenous lands across North America. Compared to other locations where supplies are running out and costs high, the possibility of large profits from these accessible indigenous lands looms large for multinationals — with short supply lines, low transportation costs, and relatively cheap labour close at hand. This nicely captures the transnational dimensions at work, putting reservations on par with marginalized sites elsewhere in the world-economy. Global multinationals operate in multiple locales, including numerous reservations, for a global market, and these sites are openly manipulated against one another. For instance, “At the same time that Kerr-McGee was shutting down its New Mexico uranium operations, it was secretly acquiring mineral leases for potential uranium mining in northern Wisconsin.” Booms in resources like uranium prompt simultaneous movement onto reservations in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Navajo Nation in the American Southwest, as well as indigenous lands in Canada, Australia, and Namibia. Comparison of these sites is literally demanded. Rather than internal colonies contributing to the wealth of a national economy, these lands and resources contribute to an ongoing accumulation of the capitalist world-economy.

All of this is facilitated by the liminal status Native Americans have with the country that encircles them. Quite intentionally, their status has been left uncertain; they are both citizens of the United States but also members of separate nations. This again indicates the ongoing, rather hesitant nature of incorporation. While the Indian Citizens Act of 1924 and Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 made Native Americans citizens, “they are also dealt with, insofar as tribal lands and tribal rights are concerned, as members of a conquered nation whose rights can be expended, contracted, or otherwise modified as the conqueror sees fit.”

As part of resource extraction at costs vastly below market value, Native Americans are also exposed to atrocious health risks from mining efforts. Because of their compromised autonomy, their “denied integration... even as they were being stripped of land and other valuable resources,” indigenous peoples do not enjoy the benefit of equal protection under the law. This combined outcome is a major consequence of ongoing world-economic incorporation. Million confides that:
Environmental laws that are tight in some states are less so within federal reservation boundaries. This creates zones where extractive industries have operated with unregulated safety laws, at abominable costs to the health of the land, the workers, and their families. For instance, long touted as an economic savior to the Navajo and Hopi, the mining industry has also been free to use some of the least restrictive, most environmentally destructive methods on earth.83

These “zones,” including Peabody’s massive Black Mesa coal operation on Navajo/Hopi land in Arizona, are openly declared “national sacrifice areas” and left to fester among Native Americans. Likewise, United Nuclear uranium mining on Navajo land in New Mexico, for many years the most productive uranium operation in the world, exposed Native American miners (without minimum wage standards as well) to radon and radioactive tailings that led directly to startling rates of cancers and respiratory ailments. Runoff from these mines also enters the water table, most shockingly at Church Rock, New Mexico, when a contaminated pond’s tailings dam ruptured and flooded into the Río Puerco spreading health risks to the wider, predominantly Navajo population. This situation is further exacerbated by the use of reservations as dumping grounds for radioactive waste precisely because they are not subject to the same regulations and protections as the “public” domain.84 Given this, it is no surprise that “it is precisely in the United States that the chemical and radioactive contamination of native land is most widespread.”85 Native Americans are left to bear the burden of an industrial process from which they see little benefit.

The sum of this, often used to demonstrate a contemporary condition of internal colonialism, better describes an ongoing incorporation. By holding lands and people outside full participation in a world market, capitalist institutions are provided avenues to seek sources for original accumulation of capital. These hesitantly incorporated spaces offer a means to externalize costs or “export destruction.”86 Capital accumulation runs rampant fueling a world-economy in which the sites utilized only partially participate. Rather than breaking with the past, patterns of land loss and exploitation seen from the first colonial encounters continue today.
Conclusion

The nature of incorporation, creating uneven, broken landscapes of capital accumulation, appears in some interesting and unwelcome side effects that deserve future consideration. Across histories of treaties, leases, and outright theft, land tenure today can be rather nebulous. In recent years, Native American land claims have charged treaty violations and/or lack of legal land title, and this has challenged ongoing efforts at unhindered access to tribal land.87 Globally, Part Six of the Draft United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has also asserted the rights of indigenous peoples to control and to use their current lands as they deem fit, as well as to reclaim lands taken or used without full consent.88 Rooted in legal precedent dating as far back as the Indian Nonintercourse Act of 1790, land claims have openly challenged rights long held sacrosanct. Most interesting here, “the law seems clear: any title to Indian land that has been obtained without explicit federal approval is null and void.”89 This situation has given rise to a plethora of land claims in the last thirty years or so, and nations like the Oneida, Seneca-Salamanca, and Narragansett of New York have won significant court decisions.90 Today, Native Americans’ unique status as citizens and members of “domestic nations,” an outcome of an ongoing, hesitant incorporation, provides them with a weapon to challenge land title. The fact that many indigenous peoples worldwide still hold land in common and refuse to view land as an exploitable resource may provide the best indication of the partial nature of incorporation, or “how the world-system expands.” The unintended consequences of a fitful capitalist expansion can be as important as the intended consequences.

My argument here starts from a deep discontent with the conceptualization of the modern world-system. Rather than a complete, predetermined, and functional whole, I argue for a partial and contingent structure in which parts are as important as the whole. A first step towards reconsidering capitalism as a global phenomenon involves rethinking how we understand world-economic expansion, i.e., incorporation. Starting with original formulations of incorporation and moving through subsequent reformations, incorporation now needs to be rethought as an always ongoing and hesitant process. A critical first step involves restoring the connection between past
and present as well as recalling primitive accumulation from the dustbin of historical analysis. The questions concerning capitalism’s expansion, the idea that incorporation should be viewed as partial at best, remain to be answered more fully. The Native American instance in the United States has been explored to offer suggestive hints for understanding incorporation anew. Rather than ending incorporation in the Nineteenth Century and turning more recent events over to an unsatisfactory internal colonial analysis, accounts of incorporation must be brought to the contemporary. Taking the state as the unit of analysis, which internal colonialism does, is not a suitable world-historical approach and without problem accepts outcomes and categories of a racialized expansionary process. Land appropriation, resource extraction, and the erosion of indigenous people’s autonomy carry critical importance for an expansionary capitalism and must form the crux of a suitable understanding of the expansionary process, i.e., incorporation.

Notes

1. An extended version of “Reconsidering Incorporation” was presented at the 9th Annual Great Lakes Graduate Conference in Political Economy at Carleton University, Ottawa, ON (6-8 May 2004). I am grateful to Bill Martin, Dale Tomich, Leslie Gates, Tom Hall, Kelvin Santiago, Randall Germain, as well as Joyce Green, Sarah Todd, and Marie-Josée Massicotte for instructive comments and/or support at different times during this project.


5. The experience of Native Americans in the US has become the most prominent locus of studies concerning incorporation. The experiences of other indigenous peoples in settler states would be similar but not entirely the same.

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17. Ibid., p. 875.

18. Ibid., p. 391.

19. See Dunaway, First American Frontier, W. A. Dunaway, “Incorporation as an Interactive

27. Hall, Social Change, p. 15.
33. See also, later work on incorporation: Carlson, “Broadening and Deepening;” Carlson, “‘Otter-Man’ Empire.
39. Ibid. p. 466.
41. Ibid. p. 334; see also Meyer, White Earth Tragedy.
42. See also Kardulias, “Fur Production;” S. Faiman-Silva, Choctaws at the Crossroads: The Political Economy of Class and Culture in the Oklahoma Timber Region (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).
44. For example, Dunaway, First American Frontier.
45. Pickering, Lakota Culture, p. 137.
46. For example see von der Heydt-Coca, “When Worlds Collide.”
47. Marx, Capital.
48. Hall, Social Change, p. 246. This assertion precedes work on global racial formation, see, H. Winant, Racial Conditions (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
49. Harris, “Ethnicity and Gender,” p. 29.
Colonialism, and Acculturation," Studies in Comparative International Development 1/6 (1965), pp. 53-77.

51. Ibid., p. 27. See also, F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Publishing, 1963).


53. Ibid., p. 9.


58. McKenna, "Myth of Multiculturalism;" Churchill, "Indigenous Peoples."

59. Anders, "Internal Colonization of Cherokee."


61. Ibid., p. 168.


63. Gonzalez Casanova, "Internal Colonialism," p. 36; see also Stavenhagen, "Classes, Colonialism."


69. Ibid., p. 358.

70. Ibid., p. 416.


74. See Jorgensen, "Energy, Agriculture."


76. A. B. Kehoe, "Maintaining the Road of Life," in W. B. Taylor and E. Pease, Violence, Resistance,


79. Ibid., p. 190.


90. See Nelson, “Resolving Native American.”