Against National Sovereignty: The Postcolonial New World Order and the Containment of Decolonization

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ABSTRACT   *In this paper, I examine the growing reliance on discourses of autochthony in nationalisms throughout the world. Native-ness (or indigeneity) is increasingly being made a key criterion for claiming national sovereignty over territory, as well as the more amorphous – but no less consequential – claim to national membership. By examining the crucial colonial genealogy of autochthonous discursive practices, I argue that claims to autochthony are metaphysical and, as such, deeply depoliticizing of the exclusions they produce. Drawing upon historical studies showing how imperial-states deployed autocthonous discourses to divide those they categorized as Natives and Migrants from one another in an effort to maintain their imperial rule, I show the continuities of such practices in the Postcolonial New World Order of nation-states. Despite their rhetoric, I argue that contemporary, nationalist discourses of autochthonies have not – and cannot – succeed in realizing decolonization, precisely because of their reliance on modes of political, economic, and social exclusion based on the separation of people categorized as either Native-Nationals or as Migrants. The material force of ideas of Native-Nationalism(s), because they are premised on territorial sovereignty and not on the end of practices of expropriation and exploitation across the planet, are part of the worldwide relations of ruling and not threats to it.*

KEYWORDS autochthony; settler-colonialism; national sovereignty; postcolonialism

Introduction

Racism was a crucial component of European colonialism. European imperial-states placed people into racialized typologies and categories, hierarchically ranking those holding imperial power as "superior" in all ways to the people whose labour created the vast wealth of empires and the people living on land incorporated into imperial territory. The categorical distinction

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made between "Europeans" and colonized "Natives" was a key negative duality of the racism of imperial-states. Rulers identifying as European, and later as "White" had long employed racism to elevate themselves from exploited and expropriated classes in Europe. In order to preserve imperial rule, European-ness (and, later, Whiteness) was eventually extended to working people racialized – and territorialized – as part of the imperial metropoles (see Hyslop, 1999; Miles, 1993). While this did not end their dispossession, exploitation, or denigration, ideas of White supremacy did give Whitened workers certain powers and privileges over workers categorized as the Natives of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The separation of the "White working class" from all other working people was critical to the continuation of imperial rule, as it profoundly weakened opposition to imperialism, capitalism, and racism. So too was the separation of various colonized people from one another. As Cedric Robinson (1983) put it, "the tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate – to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" (p. 26).

Just as racism was central to colonial practices, so too was anti-racism central to anti-colonial struggles. Those fighting colonialism well understood that collective liberation required eliminating racism (see Fanon, 1963; James, 1938; Williams, 1944). Today's efforts to narrow the definition of "anti-racism" to something that takes away from anti-colonial struggles is an act of disavowal of the deep connections between racism and colonialism. In particular, I argue that the view of anti-racism as only of importance to those negatively racialized people who are not also classified as Native (or indigenous people) is part of how the definition of "colonialism" has been expanded to include all people, things, and processes seen as "foreign" and, therefore, as Migrant. This is evident in increasingly popular efforts to re-make people categorized by the state or popularly represented as Migrants into "settler colonists," which is still the main framing, (Fujikane & Okamura, 2000; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Wolfe, 1999), "interlopers" (Nossiter, 2017), "occupiers" (Ward, 2016), or even "invaders" and "vipers" (Fuller, 2012). While some scholars have tried to complicate such formulations and have offered different terminologies by which to understand non-Natives, for example Jodi Byrd's (2011) much discussed category of "arrivants," a key distinction remains between Natives and Migrants.

Although for some readers, such distinctions are seen as largely relevant only to political life in the former British White Settler colonies of Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, the characterization of Migrants as "settlers/colonists" is, I show, prevalent across the world and across the Left-Right political spectrum. Indeed, nationalism(s) everywhere increasingly centre indigeneity – or autochthony – as a key criterion for claiming both national sovereignty over territory as well as the more amorphous – but no less consequential – idea of national membership.

Such discourses are reframing the basis for social, economic, and political life by reframing human mobility as tantamount to colonialization. An increasingly employed method for normalizing exclusive political claims to nationalized territory is to set the "nation" against people constituted as Migrants. As I discuss below, this is currently playing out in a particularly deadly way in Myanmar (formerly Burma), where, as I write, dominant Burmese Buddhists and the state are actively engaged in genocidal practices against Rohingya people who have been re-presented as "Migrants from Bangladesh," and, as such, "colonizers" who must be expelled. Indeed, autochthonous movements are themselves intensifying. Electoral districts within some nation-states have been re-defined as autocthonous places where non-Natives (allochthons) do not belong (and should not be allowed to vote). In Cameroon, for example, a prominent opposition leader, Samuel Eboua, stated that, "every Cameroonian is an allogène [French for allochthon or non-Native] anywhere else in the country… apart from where his ancestors lived" (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005, p. 390).

The separation of Natives from Migrants, and the related separation of anti-racism from anti-colonialism, is, therefore, part of the hardening of nationalisms and racisms (see also Sharma, 2020). In the process, national – and even sub-national – borders are being further reified and valourized. In this article, I reject the separation of anti-racism from anti-colonialism by examining the separation of people categorized as Natives from people categorized as Migrants. I discuss the philosophical and political premises of the imperial state category of Native (increasingly recast as indigenous) and show that it is incapable of acting as the basis for decolonization. Instead of leading to liberation, I argue that national sovereignty movements centering indigeneity, like other national sovereignty movements, work to ensure the continuation of the practices deeply associated with colonialism, namely the practices of expropriation and exploitation, dispossession and displacement. The hegemonic association of national territorial sovereignty with decolonization, might allow the rulers of nation-states control over territory and the people on it, but it has not – and will not – allow people living in those territories to regain access to land (or water or air). Instead, far from being crucial to the politics of decolonization, the autochthonous equation of migration with colonization is a critical part of contemporary racist discourses of anti-immigration, which help to legitimize nationalisms "from above" as well as "from below" (see Sharma & Wright, 2008/2009).

Thus, I discuss the historical separation of people categorized as either Natives or Migrants in order to situate the contemporary widening of their separation as a fundamental aspect of what I call the Postcolonial New World Order (Sharma, 2020). I show that after the end of World War Two (WWII), as the imperial form of state power was delegitimized, a new governmentality of nation-state power was put into place. By the 1960s, most imperial colonies and all of the European imperial metropoles had nationalized their sovereignties. Nationalism was so thoroughly legitimized that even in those

colonial sites without a national sovereignty of "their own," nationalism informed most of those engaged in anti-colonial efforts. This postcolonial world of nation-states (and nationalisms) failed to live up to the hopes, desires and expectations of those fighting colonialism (Gilroy, 2005). Instead, nation-sates facilitated the further globalization of capitalist social relations as well as the expansion of state power over people. Private and public practices of expropriation and exploitation accelerated in the First, Second, and Third Worlds alike and disparities of income and wealth ballooned within nation-states and across the international system (Oxfam, 2017).

This Postcolonial New World Order of national sovereigns, I argue, was critical to the political containment of radical, anti-capitalist and anti-racist demands to end colonial practices. Anti-immigrant politics – and the intensification of national border controls – were an important part of this containment. Claims of indigenous sovereignty played no small part in this process. By investigating the intersection of claims of autochtony with the hegemonic global system of national sovereignty, I show that viewing national sovereignty as the only legitimate form of political power, and making indigeneity the only legitimate grounds for wielding this power, have together intensified anti-immigrant politics the world over. Whether this discourse is deployed by those who see the existing nation-state as "theirs" or by those seeking a different national sovereignty over the same territory, both view Migrants as colonizers because they are are not Native to the territory they are living and working on. Consequently, the key binary of postcolonial rule – the figures of the National and the Migrant – are being further refracted through the lens of autochthony so that the "true" National is the National-Native, while Migrants are always seen as usurpers of Native territorial sovereignty.

The similarities between people deploying autochthonous political frameworks are not only semantic (e.g., their shared use of the term "indigenous"). Regardless of their variety, all autochthonous discourses assert that National-Natives are the original and ultimate source of law and the grantor of rights. All transform land (and water and air) into nationally sovereign territory. All autochthonous discourses rely upon – and are productive of – essentialist and ahistorical ideas of "nation" and "race." And, in standard postcolonial style, all claimants to autochthonous national sovereignty imagine themselves to be engaged in anticolonial resistance. This is why, as the hard, exclusionary edge of nationalism is further sharpened, the figure of the Migrant comes to be re-presented as a colonizer settling on National-Native territories. Today, re-making Migrants into colonizers is the surest way to not only delegitimize their political demands but also their very existence. These shared features belie claims made by some indigenous scholars and/or activists, particularly in the former British "White Settler colonies," that their understanding and use of the term "national sovereignty" is fundamentally different than those drawing upon "western" political theory (see Brown, 2018, for an overview of such claims). In the next section, I

argue that the philosophical basis of indigenous claims to national sovereignty have a crucial colonial genealogy based on discourses of autochthony. As did imperial discourses of autochthony, contemporary claims also rest on processes of racialization and on the related territorialisation of people's relationship to land and to one another.

The Metaphysical and Imperial Underpinnings of Indigeneity

Derived from the Greek *autos* (self) and *khthon* (earth), an autochthon is one (originally in the plural) who has literally "sprung from the earth." The term has historically referred to "an original or indigenous inhabitant of a place" (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], n.d.c). The term indigenous is also from classical Greece. To be indigenous is to be "born inside, with the class connotation of being born 'inside the house'" (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005, p. 385). Autochthony or indigeneity is inherently a territorialized identity, for anyone (or anything) deemed autochthonous or indigenous is seen to be "born or produced naturally in a land or region; native or belonging naturally to (the soil, region, etc.)" (OED, n.d.d).

The negative counterpart to autochthonous or indigenous people are those represented as allochthons. Its meaning is predicated on the Greek *allo*, referring to that which is other or different, and the Indo-European *allo*, referring to something or someone "else." It too carries a territorialized connotation. First used as a geological reference, classifying something (like rocks) as allochthonous denoted that it was said to originate from someplace else than where it was found (OED, n.d.b). Allochthony was first applied to people in the mid-nineteenth century (OED, n.d.a). These two figures – the autochthons and the allochthons – existed in a binary that produced imaginaries of static, geographical origins. Regarded as incommensurable, discourses of autochthony territorialized autochthons as the "people of a place" while allochthons became "people out of place."

Discourses of autochthony view indigeneity as a first principle of political action. In classic Aristotelian thought, first principles are concerned with discerning a particular kind of distilled truth or essence for any given social phenomenon. The "truth" claimed in discourses of autochthony is that an original and essential link exists between people identified as autochthons, specific territories, and political power. In such discourses, an autochthonous link to territory is the only rightful basis for power in and over a place (and the people in it) – in the past, today, and into the future. As with all forms of essentialism, that which is elevated to a first principle is its own validation. Within autochthonous discourses, autochthony is said to be originary. As a result, having indigenous sovereignty to national (and, increasingly, to sub-national) territory is presented as self-evident and divorced from history, contingency, or interpretation. One deeply troubling and uncanny consequence of this, one that reveals its colonial foundation, is that

autochthonous discourses constitute indigenous people as being "A People" without history.

The special relationship that claims of autochthony make between indigenous people and place is thus a metaphysical one. Michel Foucault (1977) pointed out in regards to other metaphysical worldviews that the search for an origin (*Ursprung*) that attempts to "capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities," allows one to be confident in the belief that "things are most precious and essential at the moment of their birth" (p. 142). Olaf Zenker (2011) notes that this is why autochthonous claims are usually represented as "'authentic,' 'primordial,' 'natural' and 'self-evident'" (p. 67). Consequently, autochthonous claims foreclose efforts at further explanation, inquiry, and, perhaps most especially, contestation.

For this reason, autochthonous discourses are profoundly depoliticizing. Making autochthonous claims to national, territorial sovereignty "unpolitical" immunizes them from the critical practice of deconstruction (Brown, 1995, p. 14). Within autochthonous discourses, whether emanating from the political Left or Right, only indigenous people have a just claim to territory. We can see this in the work of Leanne Simpson (2011, 2014), whose view of liberty is deeply infused by autochthonous – and metaphysical – views that see the sovereignty of indigenous people as grounded in their being the "people of a place." Although referring to "land," Simpson (2014) draws upon autochthonous discourses of indigenous territoriality when arguing that, "we cannot carry out the kind of decolonization our ancestors set in motion if we don't create a generation of land based, community based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations and whose life work is concerned with the regeneration of these systems…" (p. 13).

The "we" that Simpson (2014) refers to here is not the broader "we" of all those people living and working on the land, but the Nishnaabeg "nation" whose claim to the territorial sovereignty rests on their descent from autochthonous ancestors. Such autochthonous claims to territorial sovereignty transform people constituted as indigenous into The People (i.e., into "nations"), while making all non-Natives – with the figure of the Migrant being perhaps the quintessential non-Native – into "people out of place" in the places they actually live and work. In the process liberty itself is territorialized.

Emplacing Indigenous-Natives and Displacing Migrants

Like other discourses of "nationhood," autochthonous claims to indigenous national sovereignty are productive of ideas of "race." Through a discourse of shared origins, autochthony proposes an imagined sameness of the nation's members. The basis of this national sameness are racialized ideas of ancestral genealogies, kinship, blood, or national culture (Balibar, 1991, p. 43).

Claiming indigeneity as the grounds for political action on land reframed as national territory, autochthonous discourses establish racialized limits to belonging, rights, and political power.

Racialized imaginations of national territorial belonging are part of the continuing legacy of imperial thought. By the early seventeenth-century, the feudal ruling class category of Native had long been associated with "a person born in bondage; a person born to servants, tenants, etc., and inheriting their status" (OED, n.d.e). A 1604 definition of Native also denoted a person born in a particular place (OED, n.d.e). European imperial-states represented colonized people as Natives to try and normalize their exploitation while also portraying them as part of the "resources" of specific imperial colonies. By the end of the seventeenth century, nonhuman animals as well as plants also began to be emplaced and defined as Native (or not). By the mid-nineteenth century, these meanings of Native had intensified, so much so that any given place was identified by that or those said to be Native to it.

These related meanings combined to territorialize Natives as the colonized people "of" a given colony. Working in tandem with imperialist practices of racialization, each group of colonized Natives was ranked along a racist hierarchy and emplaced as a part of the wealth of particular administrative unit of empires. Just as Europeans remained European even when they were not in Europe, Natives remained Natives of the particular colonial territory they were racialized as being an essential part of, regardless of where they actually were. In short, people were categorized according to the birthplace of their "race."

Autochthonous discourses gained greater institutional traction as imperial state practices shifted from "direct rule colonialism" to "indirect rule colonialism" from the mid-nineteenth century onward (Mamdani, 2012). In the process, colonized Natives, long divided from – and subordinated to – Europeans, were separated from one another. The critical factor came to be whether a Native person was "indigenous" or if they were a "migrant." Those colonized Natives placed in the imperial-state category of "Indigenous-Natives" were racialized as having "sprung from" a given (then imperial) territory and represented as being temporally and spatially static (i.e., the "people of the place"). The negative counterpart to Indigenous-Natives were those colonized people re-categorized as Migrant-Natives. Empires claimed that this group of Natives did not originate in the colony but had moved there from someplace else. Migrant-Natives were thus defined by their mobility and by their lack of any territorial claim to the places they lived. Regarded as no longer being in "their own" Native land, they were seen by European empires, and by Indigenous-Natives, as "people out of place."

The making of these divisions between colonized Natives were part of the political effort of European Empires to retain power. Specifically, Mahmood Mamdani (2012) has shown that the shift to indirect-rule colonialism was a response by the British Empire desperately trying to quell further rebellions

in British India, one of its most profitable colonies. The 1857 Indian Rebellion had begun in May 1857 when soldiers of the Bengal army shot their British officers and marched on Delhi. The power of the rebellion grew across the northern and central parts of the subcontinent as civilian Natives joined in. Lasting well over a year, the Indian Rebellion was considered one of the greatest challenges made to a European imperial power in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Mamdani, 2012). It was feared that colonized Natives would overthrow imperial rule. This was neither an exaggerated nor a fleeting worry, and its effects were felt beyond the British Empire. In the United States, for example, the "British Mutiny" played into "an anxiety toward slave revolts in the late 1850s and into the Civil War" (Bilwakesh, 2011, pp. 1-2).

After brutally putting down the Indian Rebellion, Britain passed the 1858 Government of India Act and took control from the East India Company. Ironically, the British imperial-state's direct control over British India was accompanied by an "indirect" style of rule. The East India Company, reliant on existing elites to both extract wealth from Native workers and to suppress their dissent, had engaged in a strategy of "civilizing" the Native ruling class as well as Native members of its military by trying to have them adopt British laws, technology, and even Christianity. Otherwise, the Company mostly ignored the day-to-day lives of the working Natives. This changed when the British government took over in 1858. Believing that the Indian Rebellion was sparked by collective Native resentment at efforts to "civilize" them according to ideas of British-ness, indirect-rule colonialism presented direct imperial rule as a means to protect the traditions and customs of the Natives from the intrusions of a "modern" world (Mamdani, 2012). Of course, many of these "traditions" and "customs" were invented by the Empire precisely to maintain its rule over the colonized Natives (see Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

The imperial governmentality of "protection" was applied most stridently to those categorized as Indigenous-Natives (Sharma, 2020). Part of the protection services offered by imperial-states was to defend Indigenous-Natives from the predations of the supposedly more "modern" Migrant Natives (Mamdani, 2012). Imperial-states assigned Native Authorities to govern Indigenous-Natives to supposedly ensure the continuity of Native tradition and custom. In contrast, Migrant-Natives, were excluded from the political community represented by the Native Authorities and denied access to the land these bodies nominally controlled (see Mamdani, 2009). The imperial construction of separate legal systems, political constituencies, and differential access to land, produced juridical distinctions between the now bifurcated Natives. Indirect-rule colonialism also produced long-standing antagonism between the two.

This was the point. What British indirect rule colonialism was trying to protect, of course, was the Empire. The overriding goal of indirect rule colonialism was to dilute the strength of colonized people by normalizing

their separating from one another. Mahmood Mamdani (2012) has aptly termed such distinctions as part of the imperial strategy of "define and rule" (p. 45). "The ambition of indirect rule," he argues, "was to remake the subjectivities of entire populations" such that "cultural difference was reinforced, exaggerated, and built up" (p. 48). In such practices, the discursive practice of autochthony proved useful. Those categorized as Indigenous-Natives were temporally enclosed within "tradition" or "custom" and spatially confined as belonging to a specific geography. At the same time, the treatment of Migrant-Natives as "outsiders" to the colony was institutionalized. In the process of cementing the association of Indigenous-Natives with a particular place, people who moved between places became out of place. By employing interlocking ideas of racialized "blood" and territorialized "soil," the "sameness" of one group of Natives simultaneously materialized "differences" between Natives in the same imperial territory.

Over time, biopolitical technologies like the labyrinth of censuses and tax rolls initiated in the colonies, also from the mid-nineteenth century onward, established long-lasting social and political boundaries between people in separated Native groups. By collecting data on more and more facets of what the Empire believed defined and divided one Native group from another (e.g., in India, the British compiled data on the caste, religion, profession, and age of each Native), European imperialism eventually changed how people came to know and relate to one another through racialized temporalities and geographies of stasis and mobility. Started in the British Empire, imperial discourses of autochthony permeated the practices of other imperial-states, thus globalizing the distinction between people seen as either indigenous or as Migrants across the world. This played no small part in materializing "Indigenous" and "Migrant" as political identities. Imperial geographies thus manifested racialized ideas of essentialist origins in territorialized form and in so doing buttressed colonial rule.

Today's growing separation between people categorized as either Natives or as Migrants is part of this imperial legacy. Contemporary movements centering their claims on indigeneity draw from these discursive practices of autochthony. Whether it is in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, including the former "White Settler" colonies, each such movement mobilizes autochthonous philosophical, material, and relational ways of knowing and being that normalize the Postcolonial New World Order of nation-states. While each version of autochthonous discourse is contextual and layered through specific imperial legacies and nationalist politics, it is nonetheless the case that in each instance when political claims are grounded in autochthony, the idea that the "people of a place" (i.e., indigenous people), should rule is mobilized.

People deploying autochthonous discourses have wildly varying abilities to achieve national sovereignty. Indeed, it is not unusual that those making autochthonous claims have few alternatives to try and affect national politics or global markets and few chances at realizing their goals. Indeed, as Jean

Comaroff and John Comaroff (2001) have shown, autochthonous discourses have intensified since the 1980s, as the political legitimacy of neo-liberal reforms has become hegemonic. As the expansion of capital's reach and power, dramatic cuts to social services, and the intensification of state violence (e.g., the rise of mass incarceration) have been normalized, so too has the mobilization of autochthonous discourses. People across the world, perhaps most especially those without market-based access to the stuff of life, have increasingly made claims that centre indigeneity (see Sharma & Wright, 2008/2009). In such claims, indigeneity is normalized as the original and ultimate source of law and rights.

Significantly, in the Postcolonial New World Order of nation-states, the authority of which rests on the rejection of imperial-states, those mobilizing autochthony to make claims to power and resources also imagine themselves as engaging in anticolonial resistance. Anti-colonialism has long been imagined as opposition to someone/something represented as a "foreign invader." Colonialism has long been defined as the foreign usurpation of indigenous people's place as sovereigns over specific territories. As a result, anti-colonialism has been defined as the obtainment of national territorial sovereignty. In a world of nation-states, nationalisms have proceeded in their "anti-colonial" project by demonizing the figure of the Migrant who is defined as the quintessential outsider to national rule. Migrants have been redefined as "colonizers" who "settle" on indigenous territories. Today, this has become one way to delegitimize the presence of those people constituted as Migrants as well as their own political claims.

Postcolonial New World Order of National Exclusion:

The imperial-state legacy of separating National-Natives from Migrants is a constitutive feature of nation-state power in an era of postcolonial rule. Postcolonial rule became hegemonic shortly after the end of World War II (WWII), when the rapid nationalization of state sovereignty ushered in a Postcolonial New World Order. By the 1960s, the major imperial states effectively ceased to exist and the imperial form of state power had lost its political legitimacy. The imperial world order was replaced by an international system of nation-states whose control over territory and people was deployed in the name of the "nation." Under postcolonialism, nation-states were widely regarded as the only legitimate form political communities could take.

Assembled by the former colonizers, the formerly colonized who became "independent," as well as those people who organized themselves into The People whose "nations" still sought a territorial sovereignty of "their own," the postcolonial link between national identity, national territory, and national sovereignty fundamentally reorganized the political basis of making claims. "National self-determination" became a fundamental organizing principle for

the postcolonial international legal regime. As stated in the founding Charter of the aptly named United Nations (UN), the organization's very purpose was "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace" (United Nations, 1945, Chapter 1).

The UN channeled anticolonialism into postcolonialism by normalizing the organization of political communities as nationally sovereign states. Under postcolonialism, only people who could credibly claim to be a "nation" were able to lay claim to territorial sovereignty. To be "national," however, often depended on laying claim to the racialized geographies first established by European imperial-states. National geographies were formed by the placement of limits to both national citizenship and to immigration. Indeed, actions taken by states after WWII solidified the link between nation-state sovereignty and citizenship and immigration restrictions. It became unimaginable that states would not – and should not – control the entry of people into their territories or determine who could become their citizens.

By the 1960s, as empires were rapidly dismantled and most of their former colonies and metropoles were replaced by nation-states, capital was given greater ability to penetrate previously closed imperial economies. At the same time, each new nation-state enacted new immigration restrictions for anyone not deemed to be a national citizen. Indeed, national sovereignty was announced by the enactment of exclusionary citizenship and immigration controls (see Sharma, 2020). As Edward Said (1993, p. 303) cogently noted,

> The newly triumphant politicians seemed to require borders and passports first of all. What had once been the imaginative liberation of a people – Aimé Césaire's "inventions of new souls" – and the audacious metaphoric charting of spiritual territory usurped by colonial masters were quickly translated into and accommodated by a world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls.

As almost all people became The People of one or another "nation," identifying people by their nationality – and requiring them to bear state-issued papers attesting to this when crossing national borders or trying to access rights within national territory – became universal. Whether one was categorized as a National Citizen or as a Migrant thus also became more consequential. Postcolonialism thus took imperial practices of indirect rule colonialism and transformed them through the global implementation of national immigration controls. As nationalisms have hardened and citizenship and immigration controls have intensified, autochthony has increasingly been the grounds for limiting who can – and cannot – claim national sovereignty. The separation of National-Natives and Migrants now animates some of the deadliest conflicts in our world.

One of the most deadly is the persecution of Rohingya people in Myanmar (formerly Burma). Human rights observers call it a genocide (Green et al.,

2015). Rohingya are victims of the growing autochthonization of national belonging, and in their case, the autochthonization of formal national citizenship. Even before mass killings began in June 2012, the discourse of autochthony formed the ideological basis for the separation of "indigenous" Burmese from "migrant" Rohingya. In 1974, the Burmese state re-registered Rohingya, living primarily in the borderland regions of western Myanmar, as foreigners, effectively making them stateless – and deportable (see De Genova, 2002). The first mass expulsion of Rohingya took place in 1978. The situation intensified in 1982 when a new Burmese Citizenship Law was passed emphasizing the link between citizenship and *taingyintha* ("national" or "indigenous races"). The re-categorization of Rohingya as "not-national" and not-indigenous "races" normalized their exclusion from all areas of social, political and economic life in Burma.

Since that time, the discourse of autochthony has sharpened in Myanmar (re-named as such in 1989). U Oo Hla Saw, general secretary of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), the largest party in Rakhine state where most Rohingya live, proclaimed that "this is our native land; it's the land of our ancestors" (Fuller, 2012). RNDP chairperson and member of Parliament Aye Maung added that, "we need to rebuild the Rakhine State only for the Rakhine who alone are the indigenous on the soil" (Zarni & Cowley, 2014, p. 694). Responding to questions about the recent pogroms against Rohingya people, the head of a Buddhist monastery in the Rakhine capitol of Sittwe, U Pynya Sa Mi, maintained that "the Rakhine people are simply defending their land against immigrants who are creating problems" (Motlagh, 2014). Likewise, the head of an association of young monks in Sittwe, U Nyarna, was quoted as saying that Rohingya were "invaders, unwanted guests and 'vipers in our laps'" (Fuller, 2012). Buddhist monk leader Ashin Htawara encouraged the government to send Rohingya people "back to their native land" (Hindstrom, 2012).

These autochthonous discourses have great material force. In 2012, Myanmar constructed approximately sixty-seven camps and forcibly relocated about 140,000 Rohingya people there (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Many observers regard these as nothing less than concentration camps, both because of their biopolitical basis as well as the calculated pain suffered by those held captive in them (Motlagh, 2014). Since then, violence against Rohingya people has intensified further: from late-August 2017 to January 2018, two-thirds of all Rohingya in Myanmar – about 688,000 people – fled the raging violence against them, including the systematic raping of women and children, and crossed into Bangladesh (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). These attacks were led by Myanmar's military forces (see Ibrahim, 2018; UNHCR, 2018).

Myanmar's State Counsellor, and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung Sang Syu Kyi has been silent about it. So too has the "international community," led by the United States and China. Eager to maintain relations with Myanmar and gain access to the estimated "tens of billions of dollars' worth

of verified natural gas deposits… found in the Bay of Bengal off the coast of Arakan [Rakhine] State," where the targeted and supposedly "migrant" Rohingya minority primarily reside. While the Myanmar government persecutes them, the border controls of other nation-states work to thwart their efforts at escape. They are regularly denied entry into and rights within nation-states whose citizenship they do not possess. Together this leaves Rohingya people in a highly dangerous situation. They are, unfortunately, far from alone in facing such a situation.

In the Darfur region of Sudan, a "Save Darfur" movement has successfully reframed the economic, ecological and political legacies of European imperialism into a conflict between "indigenous Africans" and "migrant Arabs" (see Mamdani, 2009). This has played directly into the hands of oil companies and further fuelled the islamaphobic U.S. led "war on terror." In Rwanda in 1994, those acting in the name of Native Hutus killed approximately 800,000 Tutsis who had earlier been defined by the former imperial rulers as Migrants. Keeping with the tenor of contemporary autochthonous discourses, the most potent and inflammatory label for Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide was that of "colonizer" (Kabanda, 2007, pp. 62-72). A not dissimilar process took place in the 1991-2002 "Yugoslav Wars." Ideas of autochthonous territorial sovereignty fuelled the claims of Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian nationalists. People targeted for "ethnic cleansing" were re-defined as "foreign elements" who were "out of place" in other People's "Native homelands." 140,000 people were killed and another two million people were displaced in the process (Shraga & Zacklin, 1994).

Such politics also inform White supremacist moral panics over "immigrant invasions" across Europe. The far-right National Front party in France has been amongst the most successful to mobilize votes by employing autochthonous discourses. In 2017 it ran under the autochthonous slogan *Les Francais d'abord* ("First French"). At a rally in the southern port city of Marseille, party leader Le Pen promised a "moratorium" on immigration as a response to "interlopers from all over the world [who] come and install themselves in our home." She declared that she would make France "more French" and allow "the owner to decide who can come in." The crowd of about five thousand people roared its approval and chanted, "This is our home!" (Nossiter, 2017). Le Pen closed the rally by saying, "more and more are coming from the third world, taking advantage of our benefits," adding that, "it's a choice of civilization. I will be the president of those French who want to continue living in France as the French do" (Nossiter, 2017). That year, the National Front came the closest it had to date to governing France. In the first round of presidential elections, Marine Le Pen was second with 21.3% of the vote. She won almost 34% of the vote in the second round.

Discourses of autochthony are also evident in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Here, there are two competing discourses of autochthony claiming national sovereignty and territory. I have termed these two biopolitical groupings: White National-Natives and Indigenous National-

Natives (Sharma, 2020). White National-Natives identify as the heirs of European colonizers and base their claims to National-Nativeness on the autochthonous principle that they were the "first" to "productively use" (i.e., exploit) land and labor. As "improvers," they claim to have been the first to "civilize" (i.e., bring into the purview of state power) land and people, thus territorializing both to become their first sovereigns. In short, claims of White National-Nativeness are based on a discourse of White supremacy, one that now depends on a disavowal of its colonial basis. The other grouping, more commonly associated with claims to National-Nativeness, are those highly diverse people colonized by European imperial states and defined as the Natives of these former "White Settler" colonies. Indigenous National-Natives base their claims on the autochthonous principle that they are both the first inhabitants and the first sovereigns of these territories.

The discourses of White National-Natives and Indigenous National-Natives, each powerful in its own way, are highly asymmetric. The discourse of White National-Nativeness informs the operation of nation-state power and dominates its historiography. The discourse of autochthony deployed by Indigenous National-Natives, on the other hand, has no hold on the dominant structures of any of these nation-states. Nonetheless, their claims to autochthony carry a great moral and, sometimes, significant legal weight. Indeed, in the global field of autochthony, Bengt Karlsson (2003) notes that, "the 'archetypical case' against which indigenousness is to be measured remains that of white settler colonies" (p. 414).

Despite the massive dissymmetry between them, White and indigenous discourses of autochthony share some important things in common: both stake an exclusive claim as the rightful national sovereigns of the territory in question. Both also view the existence of Migrants as a barrier to their obtainment of this goal. This is evident in the growing intensification of anti-immigrant discourses, their manifestation in evermore draconian citizenship and immigration controls, and in the growing chorus of opinion that asserts that *all* people who are "not native," including those racialized as Black, Latino or Asian, are not only Migrants but also "settler colonists." Although some in the former British "White settler colonies" have attempted to excise Black people from the list of people of colour who are "settler colonists" by reframing them as "allies" – and by acknowledging the economic, political, and social importance of the enslavement of people from Africa to European imperial projects – nonetheless, the broader separation of Natives and (those left in the category of) Migrant is kept intact, as is the autochthonous basis for national territorial sovereignty (e.g., Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009).

The stretching of the category of "settler colonist" to include those expressly excluded from imperial, settler-colonial projects, is part of a politics that insists that, ultimately, national territory and sovereignty over it belongs to those who claim autochthonous belonging to it. This is evident not only in the discourse of "settler colonialism," but also in the everyday practices of policing national membership within indigenous political

structures. Two of the better known examples of this are the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Law and Moratorium on Mixed Marriages, which declared that "any Mohawk who married a non-native lost the right to residency, land allotment, land holding, voting, and office-holding in Kahnawà:ke" (Alfred, 1995, p. 165) and the effort to abrogate the Cherokee Nation's 1866 treaty with the United States (reportedly signed under great duress), which decreed that African slaves once owned by Cherokees and their descendants "shall have all the rights of native Cherokees" (Warrior, 2007).

Although each of these nationalist conflicts has its specific historical, political, economic, social and cultural context, what connects these different nationalist movements is their employment of a discourse of autochthony wherein the figure of the non-Native "migrant" is defined as the barrier to the realization of Native National rule. That autochthonous discourses are plausible, that they can do political work in a remarkably wide set of circumstances, ranging from the far-right to the social justice movements of some of the most immiserated, subjugated and oppressed people on the planet, demonstrates the importance of the politics of autochthony to the contemporary character of power.

Conclusion: Postcolonial Autochthonies

Across the global system of nation-states and across the Left-Right political spectrum, claims to place and to belonging increasingly rest on claims to autochthony. In this era of postcolonial rule, in which nationalisms have been thoroughly depoliticized and rendered normal, claims to indigeneity help to secure claims to territory and sovereign power over it (and the people on it). As autochthony is made the fundamental basis for legitimate political claims and for access to social and economic resources, violent competition and conflict across the world have created separations between the two key figures of the Postcolonial New World Order: National-Natives and Migrants.

With the consolidation of postcolonial rule over the past seventy odd years, a further solidifying of the autochthonous basis of nationalism has taken place. Sharing a national citizenship is increasingly less important than sharing the "bloodline" of National-Native ancestors. While some people figured as Migrants have become National Citizens, the racialized and territorialized grounds for being Native make it impossible for them to become National-Natives. Consequently, the deployment of autochthonous discourses across the world of nation-states – in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Oceania – present Migrants (even if they are formally co-citizens) as the barriers to achievement of "national self-determination." The very existence of people figured as Migrants (again, even if they are, in fact, co-citizens) is seen as usurping the national sovereign power of National-Natives. This is true for those people whose "nations" already have national sovereignty (but see it as under attack by

"foreigners") as well as those people whose "nations" still seek it. Across the world, and across the Left-Right political spectrum, we see Migrants increasingly being re-defined as "interlopers," "settler colonists," and even "occupiers," "invaders," and "vipers."

Embedded in all such national discourses that demonize those people deemed to be "out of place," is the older, imperial discourse of autochthony. Informed by the imperial discursive production of Indigenous-Natives as both natured and emplaced in the colony, nationalisms are grounded in a fantasy of familiarity on the part of those seen to share "origins." Much old imperialist wine has indeed been repackaged in new national bottles. Indeed, global inequalities in a postcolonial world of nation-states are worse than they were in the Age of Empires. As Jason Hickel (2017) found, "global inequality has tripled since 1960." One stark indication of the ongoing geopolitical divide between the Rich World nation-states and those in the Poor World, especially between the United States and the rest of the world, is the recent finding that, "an American having the average income of the bottom U.S. decile [was] better-off than 2/3 of [the] world population*"* (Milanovic, 2002, p. 89).

Another way of putting it is that the material basis for the Postcolonial New World Order of nation-states has not diverged fundamentally from the previous imperial world order. Yet, although disparities across as well as within nation-states have grown as practices of expropriation and exploitation have intensified in the Postcolonial New World Order, nationalist historiographies remain replete with always glorious pasts. And nationalist movements promise ever brighter futures for members of the "nation." The evident fact that postcolonial nation-states with "their own" territorial sovereignty have failed to bring about either the promised peace and prosperity or the justice and liberty demanded by anticolonial movements, has not dissuaded Native-Nations from trying to obtain the ultimate postcolonial prize: "national self-determination."

Yet, the poverty of autochthonous nationalisms is perhaps no more evident than when "nations" who possess a national sovereignty of "their own," continuously represent their suppression of those they define as not-Native (and re-present as Migrants) as usurping their power. Attacks against those people re-presented as Migrants are portrayed as part of the continuing "anti-colonial" struggle of Natives against "foreign rule." The autochthnous basis of much state violence is in full display in Myanmar's ongoing persecution of Rohingya people who have been removed from the rolls of this nation-state's citizens and officially re-categorized as "illegal migrants."

Recognizing that national sovereignty has not met – cannot meet – the dreams of decolonization is not an argument for a return to empire. It is, instead, a call to reject the postcolonial system of nation-states and build social relationships, social bodies, and practices of social reproduction able to meet liberatory demands. Key to this, I believe is a rejection of the politics of nationalism with their basis in discourses of autochthony. Across their

various permutations, all autochthonous discourses rely upon – and all are productive of – essentialist and ahistorical ideas of "nation" and "race." I thus conclude this essay by arguing that any and all claims to national territorial sovereignty work to further entrench relations of ruling. I further conclude that if we want a decolonized world – as I think we must have – we will need to achieve it against national sovereignty, not through it. Otherwise, we will be left with a nationalist, racist politics of anti-mobility that rests on the separation of Natives and Migrants.

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