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PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

Enclosures, Colonial Conquest, and Enslavement

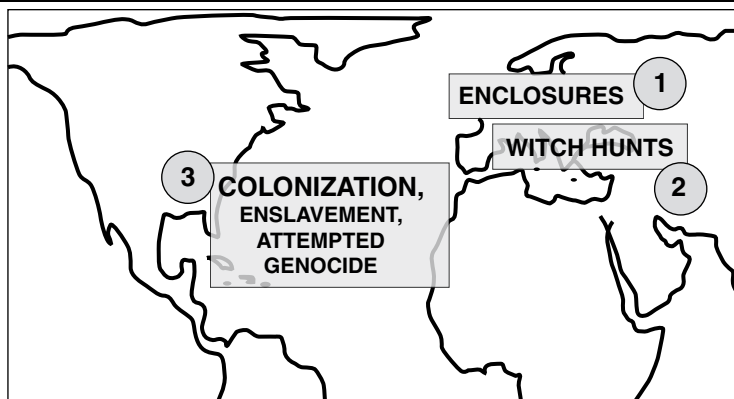
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify two errors in popular accounts of the rise of Western civilization.
2. Diagram primitive accumulation as the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England.
3. Explain the consequences of the 12th- through 16th-century witch hunts in Europe.
4. Assess the colonization of Hispaniola based on the accounts of colonizers and those who challenged them.
5. Appraise the impact of self-liberated communities on Hispaniola.
6. Critique progress narratives of the rise of the bourgeoisie using evidence from primitive accumulation in England and colonization of Hispaniola.

THE BARBARISM OF MODERN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

The end of the Middle Ages is celebrated as the birth of the age of reason. In 14th-century Europe, agrarian societies and the social obligations that structured them had begun to crumble. Many university courses in Western Civilization mark the beginnings of modern civilizations with the European technological innovations, art, science, religion, commerce, and state-making of this epoch. Such courses often make two errors. One is that some incorrectly teach about Europe as the site of the origin of technologies, innovations, and all things modern. Such **Eurocentrism** must be undone in our institutions, our scholarship, and in our minds: African, Asian, and Indigenous societies originated significant knowledge that was then appropriated by and credited to Europeans. Nevertheless, some aspects of modern civilizations did begin in Europe and should be taught as such. It *is*, for example, appropriate to study the origins of the modern economic system of capitalism by beginning with Europe.

A second error is that the history of human civilizations is often told as one of progress. Dominant **progress narratives** of the rise of modern civilizations obscure a key feature in the emergence of the modern states of Europe: systemic violence. This chapter examines the triplets of systemic violence—evictions, witch hunts, and attempted genocide—upon which the modern capitalist world system was founded (see Figure 1.1). Though the historical record is slim, there is also evidence of resistance to such violence by women, peasants, and maroons. We begin in England.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Primitive Accumulation: Triplets of Systemic Violence

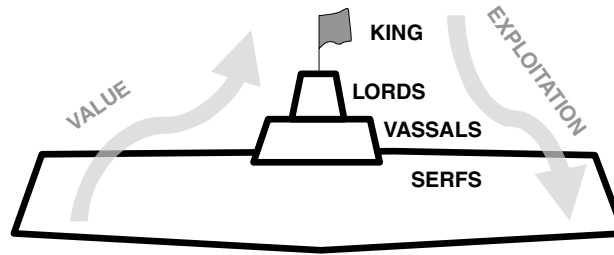
VIOLENT EVICTIONS BY THE RISING BOURGEOISIE IN EUROPE

In the Middle Ages, European societies were agrarian and structured by feudalism. **Feudalism** was a tributary economic mode that entailed a system of reciprocal obligations among lords, vassals, and fiefs or serfs (see Figure 1.2). In these societies, serfs cultivated land to produce food, wool, and other necessities, and they used tools to craft metal implements. They were bound to the land in obligation to lords and monarchs, who, in turn, provided military protection. Vassals, of middle rank, provided military service to lords and monarchs in return for land, office, and protection.

By 1300, poor climate, uncertain food supply, and the crisis of feudalism had brought European economies to stagnation. On one hand, the drive to expand their economic reach beyond Europe appeared as a solution to the crisis, with possibilities for more agriculture, new preservatives for foods, less expensive luxury goods, and more gold and silver (Wolf, 1997). On the other hand, wars and expansion required resources, so those taking tribute attempted to extract more, which prompted peasant uprisings.

Karl Marx studied England to document the birth of the modern capitalist world system. In contrast with other expansionist powers in continental Europe, England had two characteristics that made it the first country to develop capitalism (Wolf, 1997). First, during the 14th and 15th centuries, lords began to demand land rent from serfs instead of a portion of the harvest, making land a commodity. Second, expanding markets for wool drove landowners to convert agricultural land into sheep pastures. To accomplish this, they carried out **enclosures**—the process of removing people’s rights to common land by building fences, hedges, or ditches and appropriating the land for individual owners. Simultaneously, the process of expropriation of the commons required evicting serfs whose livelihoods depended on that land. These enclosures amounted to a violent process that has been characterized as a “revolution of the rich against the poor” (Polanyi, 1944, p. 35).

As a challenge to those who believe that capitalism is natural or superior, Marx demonstrates that our modern economic system arose in a particular historical period and began with violence. Although conventional history describes the transformation from feudal arrangements to capitalism as the *emancipation* of serfs from serfdom, Marx (1990[1867]) argues,

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Social Hierarchy Under Feudalism

these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And this history, the history of their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire. (p. 875)

Marx calls this process primitive accumulation, which marks the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. **Primitive accumulation** was the process by which people were forcibly evicted from lands on which they had survived through agriculture and craft production. They lost access to the land and were obligated to work for a wage to survive, becoming a new propertyless class called the proletariat. Those who evicted the peasants enriched themselves by appropriating or stealing land that was not their own. In other words, the original creation of capital for some occurred through theft and violence, which simultaneously impoverished others.

The social class that arose and was strengthened by primitive accumulation was the **bourgeoisie**. The term bourgeoisie comes from French and refers to residents of cities and towns. Their interests come to be defined by the acquisition and protection of private property and by the creation and preservation of **capital**, which is value in the form of money or commodities that controls the means of production, buys labor, and puts it to work to create more wealth (Wolf, 1997). The bourgeoisie gained property in the countryside but became linked with the rise of cities. By appropriating land, raising sheep, and selling wool or manufacturing cloth to accumulate profits that they would reinvest, this emergent class of landholders became the first capitalists. In this way, two principal antagonistic classes emerged with the rise of capitalism: on one hand, the capitalist class, or the bourgeoisie, and on the other, the working class, or the proletariat. Their characteristics are laid out in Table 1.1.

By the 16th century with the Reformation, church lands and estates were taken, given away to royal favorites, or sold. In the 17th century, state lands were fraudulently appropriated or given away at low prices. Independent peasants (the yeomanry) were destroyed by the late 1700s. By the 18th century, enclosures were legislated through a series of parliamentary acts to sell or give away lands previously held in common. In the 19th century, British soldiers violently evicted peasants in the Scottish Highlands. Figure 1.3 is a visual representation of these processes.

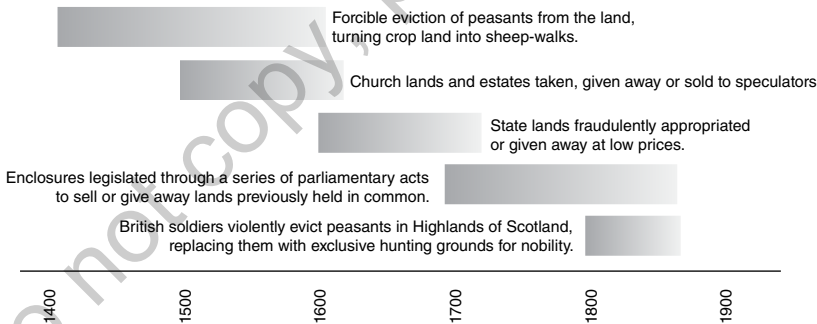
Early capitalists demanded support from the English Crown to protect the textile industry, develop technology, and build ships for its trade. The Crown chartered commercial enterprises to export English cloth, beginning with the London Mercer's Company and the Company of Merchant Adventurers in the 14th and 15th centuries,

TABLE 1.1 ■ Characteristics of the Two Principal Classes Under Capitalism

Capitalist Class / Bourgeoisie	Working Class / Proletariat
Owens the means of production and distribution as private property.	Dispossessed of ownership of the means of production and distribution. Includes those who are formally or informally employed, unemployed, disabled, and their families.
A tiny minority of society.	A large majority of society.
Buys labor-power; holds ownership of commodities produced by workers.	Sells own labor-power; produces commodities owned by the capitalist.
Creates no new value.	Creates all value in society through labor.
Accumulates surplus-value created by workers.	Works and (usually) makes enough for social reproduction but not enough for accumulation.
Uses accumulated capital to shape and control political and social institutions and the state.	Develops power through organization.
Despite competition among capitalists, holds a common class interest to maintain economic and political status quo.	Despite divisions based on identity, holds a common class interest to transform property relations based on exploitation of labor and the planet.

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Methods of Primitive Accumulation in England

"The clearance and dispersion of the people is pursued by the proprietors as a settled principle, as an agricultural necessity, just as trees and brushwood are cleared from the wastes of America or Australia; and the operations goes on in a quiet, business-like way" (Somers, 1848).



Source: Based on Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Fowkes, Ben. London: Penguin Classics, 1990 [1867]

respectively. As English wool cloth production developed, the state established trading companies for its respective markets, including the Russia Company, the Spanish Company, the Eastland Company (for trade in Scandinavia and the Baltic), the Levant Company, the East India Company, the Virginia Company, the English Amazon Company, the Massachusetts Bay Company, and the Royal Adventurers into Africa, replaced 12 years later by the Royal African Company (Wolf, 1997).

In this way, the feudal system was transformed and benefited an emerging class of capitalists. As the bourgeoisie expanded, merchants, conquerors, and colonizers traveled the world to seek raw materials and markets for the expanding capitalist economy. Under their

governance, the dominant economic policy from the 15th to 18th centuries became **mercantilism**, in which imperial and colonizing countries aimed to dominate trade with their colonies using tariffs and subsidies. They aimed to maximize exports and minimize their imports. At the same time, through enclosures, people who were forcibly evicted found themselves without the means to survive and were driven into the growing manufacturing towns. This dispossessed population would become the industrial working class.

WITCH HUNTS CONTROL WOMEN'S BODIES AND KNOWLEDGE

The mass dispossession of land and livelihood was gendered. In Germany, as cities grew in the 12th and 13th centuries, women began to work in crafts and businesses (Mies, 1998). The *mund* or traditional rights of male householders that established that women were property of their husbands, fathers, or sons, and could not hold their own property, began to dissolve in the 13th century. A growing number of single, widowed, or unattached women were economically active in trade and commerce, though they were often excluded from guilds or craft associations. These vagabonds or *wanderers* included poor women who survived as dancers, tricksters, singers, and prostitutes. They flocked to annual fairs and church councils and followed armies to prostitute themselves to soldiers.

It was at this time that a torrent of **witch hunts** occurred in Europe. From the 12th to the 16th century, men killed somewhere between several hundred thousand and ten million women in witch hunts (Mies, 1998). Although commonly explained as mass hysteria, witch hunts were systematic, organized, and financed by the church and state (Ehrenreich, 2010). As working men and city authorities excluded women from crafts and markets, women were treated as communal goods, women's activities were defined as nonwork, and their labor "began to appear as a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink" (Federici, 2014, p. 97). In the process, women's bodies and knowledge were appropriated and controlled for the reproduction and accumulation of capital (Federici, 2014).

A manual called the *Malleus Maleficarum*, printed in 1487, provided judges with rules for identifying and persecuting witches, including procedures for torture and killing of the accused (Institoris & Sprenger, 2006). Witch hunters particularly targeted women who were economically independent, including midwives, healers, and widows. The accusations most commonly leveled at them were of female sexuality, being organized, and having magical powers to harm or heal. Women were specifically charged with exercising medical and obstetrical skills (Ehrenreich, 2010).

Jean Bodin, a French theorist, author of mercantilist economic theory and defender of rationalism, built a police force to persecute women accused of being responsible for abortions, infertility, or sexual intercourse without conception. Francis Bacon, known as the father of modern science, combined rationalism, statecraft, and attacks on witches, advocating for a scientific method to extract secrets from nature (Merchant, 2006). "The interrogation of witches as symbol of the interrogation of nature, the courtroom as model for its inquisition, and torture through mechanical devices as a tool of the subjugation of disorder were fundamental to the scientific method as power" (Merchant, 2006, p. 518).

Witch hunts had material as well as ideological aims: the property of women midwives, healers, and widows was appropriated by a rising class, led by men (Mies, 1998). Economically independent women represented a threat to the emerging capitalist order

and the rising new male-led social classes. As a result, a bureaucratized church and state system of institutions was established with commissioners, lawyers, judges, and torturers who identified, prosecuted, and burned women.

The witch hunts strengthened the emerging bourgeoisie, including landowners, lawyers, and doctors—the “sons of the rising urban class,” according to Mies (1998, p. 84). The smaller princes of the declining feudal order and the rising property-owning classes of the cities confiscated the property of those they condemned as witches. Lawyers, judges, and other men of the law profited from lucrative trials that charged inflated fees for alcohol and food for the witch commissions and even for firewood for the execution by burning. The torture chambers served as the anatomy laboratories for the emerging medical profession which, unlike midwifery and healing in prior centuries, was dominated by men. Witch hunts held up male doctors as experts and denounced women’s healing knowledge as heresy (Ehrenreich, 2010). The rising class of merchants, miners, and industrialists destroyed women’s autonomy over their sexuality and reproduction, forcing women to breed workers (Mies, 1998). The rising bourgeoisie led and were primary beneficiaries of the torture and murder of women, and the appropriation of women’s wealth and property contributed to a consolidation of bourgeois power. The result is that women’s bodies, sexuality, maternity, and childbirth, are as feminist scholars argue, integral to capitalist accumulation, the site of women’s exploitation, and of our possibilities for resistance (Federici, 2014).

INCOMPLETE CONQUEST AND GENOCIDE ON HISPANIOLA

As Europe went from being economically dependent on Asia to becoming an engine of social and economic change, European leaders spread violent modes of accumulation by expanding their territorial reach through conquest and colonialism. **Colonialism**, a form of primitive accumulation, is the violent attempt to take, subjugate, and control entire nations, cultures, or peoples using military, political, and psychological tactics. Kingdoms consolidated their political and military power, and warrior rulers and merchants built collaborations to conquer, rule, and extract resources from new territories (Wolf, 1997).

Conquest and colonialism were another form of primitive accumulation involving the taking of land or territories, resources, and people, as well as their consolidation and administration. Key European states, Portugal, Castile-Aragón—which would become Spain—the United Provinces, France, and Great Britain, expanded globally as they competed for dominance in Europe. While their strategies differed, building on various state and class arrangements, all dedicated resources to conquest and commerce (Wolf, 1997). As Marx (1990[1867]) writes,

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. (p. 915)

The fact that today’s political-economic system was founded on genocide, slavery, looting and domination—all forms of institutionalized, structural violence—challenges dominant narratives of progress and modernization.

There may be no better illustration of the dynamics of genocide, conquest, and colonialism than that which occurred on Hispaniola, the island today shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The king and queen of Castile-Aragón sponsored a Genovese merchant clerk, Cristoforo Colombo, known to us as Christopher Columbus, to sail in search of spices for food preservation and treasures. In October 1492, Columbus was convinced he had reached India. Upon sighting land (an island of the Bahamas), his ship was met by Indigenous people, Arawaks, who wore gold ornaments in their ears. Columbus insisted they take him to the source of gold. He imprisoned some Arawaks and sailed to what is today Cuba and then Hispaniola, which he named to honor the Spanish monarchs. The Indigenous people there were mostly Taínos, along with some Caribs and Arawaks, who called their home Ayiti and Quisqueya. Hispaniola would be the site of the first permanent European settlement and would serve as the rehearsal and staging ground for subsequent incursions into Indigenous territories throughout the Americas.

Columbus' diaries were preserved for the public record because of a Spanish bishop, landowner, priest, and historian, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (see Photo 1.1). After having participated in the conquest of Cuba, las Casas had a conversion, gave up being an enslaver, and became a lifelong critic of the cruelty of the Spanish conquest. He wrote a digest of Columbus' diaries as part of documenting the history of the atrocities against Indigenous people.



PHOTO 1.1 Bartolomé de las Casas, priest, social reformer, and defender of Indigenous people. Museo del Hombre Dominicano, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Las Casas' interpretation, along with the work of many subsequent scholars, demonstrates that the arrival of Columbus was not an *encounter*, as it has sometimes been chronicled in history books. It was, rather, a conquest. The linguistic, religious, and historical connotations of the Spanish word *conquista* means that conquest for the Spanish can be understood as the "subjugation of a people and the territory they occupy by force of arms" (Schwaller, 2018, p. 614). With explicit instructions from the queen to take land and convert Natives to Christianity, Columbus began the invasion.

Columbus' (1989[1492]) diary entry on October 11, 1492, describes his impressions of the first Indigenous people he saw:

[T]hey took everything and gave of what they had very willingly. But it seemed to me that they were a people very poor in everything. All of them go around as naked as their mothers bore them. . . . They do not carry arms nor are they acquainted with them, because I showed them swords and they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves. . . . They should be good and

intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion. Our Lord pleasing, at the time of my departure, I will take six of them from here to Your Highness in order that they may learn to speak. (pp. 65–69)

This description probably tells less about the realities of the Taíno people than about what Europeans hoped for and projected upon them. Columbus hoped they would be friendly, not committed to another religion, easy to convert to Christianity, willing to trade, unarmed, and ignorant but also intelligent and ready to learn. It is significant that he noted that they would be “good servants.” There is no denying that his mission was to conquer and rule.

Dominican Scholar Frank Moya Pons (1998) has drawn from archaeologists and Spanish chroniclers to compile a more accurate picture of Indigenous society on Hispaniola at the time of Columbus’ arrival. Taíno people, descended from South American Arawaks who migrated to the Caribbean two to three thousand years before, had highly developed forms of social, religious, and political life. Taínos lived in large extended families and maintained a sexual division of labor. They farmed, hunted, and fished. They used tools, navigated the ocean and rivers in canoes, and made art of wood, clay, and stone. Their religion and mythology were well developed, and *behiques*, or herbalist healers, were intermediaries between the people and the gods. Politically, Taínos were led by *caciques* or leaders who controlled large sections of the island.

While Columbus might have succeeded in navigating to find people and land thus far unknown to Europe, he struggled at first to administer a profitable colony. After failed attempts with La Navidad, a fort, and La Isabela, a commercial outpost, Columbus’s brother Bartolomé founded the city of Santo Domingo on the southern coast of Hispaniola. Bringing hundreds more of “the choicest collection of riffraff ever brought together” (Simpson, 1929, p. 25) in subsequent trips across the Atlantic, the Spaniards enslaved the Taíno people and forced them to fulfill work quotas of gold, agricultural crops, and later, of sugar. According to Las Casas’ testimonies, the men were made to toil in mines and the women to work the fields, with so little rest and sustenance that most died.

The milk in the breasts of the women with infants dried up and thus in a short while the infants perished. And since men and women were separated, there could be no marital relations. And the men died in the mines and the women died on the ranches from the same causes, exhaustion and hunger. (Las Casas, 1974, pp. 51–52)

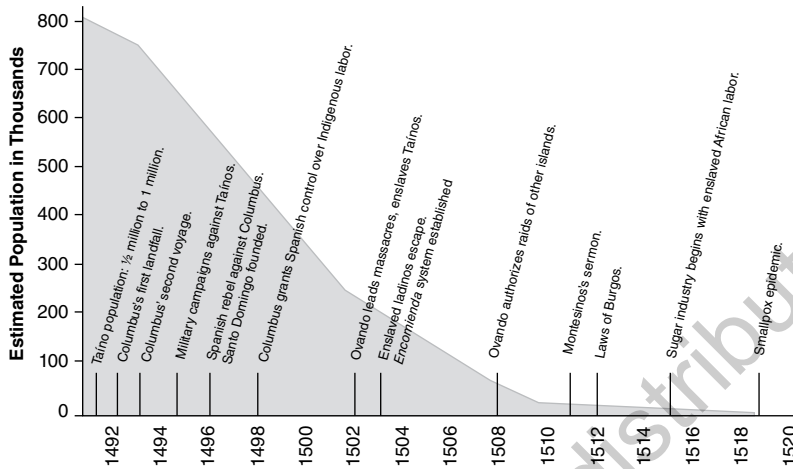
The colonizers deprived the Taínos of their means of survival, which included farming, hunting, and fishing. Forced labor was devastating. In 1492, as shown in the graph in Figure 1.4, the island had between a half million and a million inhabitants, but by the 1520s, the Native population was practically exterminated (Wolf, 1997).

In addition to being worked to death, starved, infected by smallpox, and murdered en masse, some Taínos committed suicide in collective ceremonies (Moya Pons, 1998) or opted for abortion or infanticide rather than allowing their children to be enslaved (Schiebinger, 2004).

Nicolás de Ovando was appointed governor in 1501 to impose law and order on Hispaniola. He conducted military campaigns to enslave Native people in the east and

FIGURE 1.4 ■ Devastation of Indigenous Taíno Population, Hispaniola, 1492–1520, With Timeline

Estimate of pre-Columbian Taíno population by Demetrio Ramos (in Pereña).



Sources: Adapted from data in Moya Pons, 1998; Pereña, 1992.

west of the island, executing Native leaders, most significantly Queen Anacaona (Las Casas, 1974). Anacaona would become a symbol of resistance and is venerated as a benevolent spirit in popular religious practices.

As the Taíno population was massacred, the colony required a replenished enslaved population and began importing enslaved ladinos, Africans who had been acculturated in the Iberian Peninsula. Colonial leaders believed that ladinos would more easily submit to enslavers. Yet in 1503, all enslaved ladinos ran away and joined Taínos fleeing from colonial enslavers (Ozuna, 2018). Ovando then sent expeditions to nearby islands to capture and enslave other Indigenous people (Moya Pons, 1998).

In 1503, the Queen established the *encomienda*, the legal mechanism for taking land and controlling Indigenous labor. The *encomienda* followed the Spanish system for extracting tribute and labor from Muslims whom the Spanish crown expelled in 1492. In the colony, leaders called *encomenderos* were assigned laborers from a specific Indigenous community who were to provide labor and tribute.

Dominican missionaries attempting to teach Indigenous people Christianity could not help but notice their earthly suffering. After about a year of discussion and prayer, clergy drafted a sermon that a young friar named Antón de Montesinos was charged to deliver (Hussey, 1932), condemning the treatment of Indigenous people on Hispaniola.

With what right and with what sense of justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude? By whose authority have you made such detestable wars on these people who lived quietly and peacefully in their lands, infinite numbers of them you have consumed in death and havoc? Why do you keep them so oppressed and fatigued, neither feeding them nor healing their illness, that from the excessive labor you press upon them they die, or to say it better, you kill them, to extract and acquire gold every day? (Montesinos, 1982[1511], p. 149. Author's translation)

Montesinos further challenged the religious hypocrisy of the colonizers, arguing that Indigenous people were human beings with rational souls. The sermon caused such consternation in the colony that King Ferdinand II ordered de Montesinos shipped back to Spain. Yet the King was persuaded by the friar and created a commission that developed the Laws of Burgos in 1512. The laws officially prohibited mistreatment and established that Indigenous people could be converted to Catholicism. The Laws of Burgos became the first European legal framework for the treatment of Indigenous people. The laws were received by the colonial authorities on Hispaniola but were not fully implemented. Brutal treatment of Indigenous people continued, and Taíno society was all but destroyed within a generation. Priests bent to pressures from the colonists to support the importing of enslaved Africans to work on the colony's sugar plantations.

Despite my focus on the genocide of the Taíno people, I do not mean to contribute to false narratives of the “disappearing Indian.” As the next chapter demonstrates, many Indigenous nations and cultures in the Americas continue to survive, even thrive, despite 500 years of attempts to eliminate and erase them. Even on Hispaniola, while Europeans exerted power that was dehumanizing and violent, their attempt to colonize was not complete. Recent scholars have begun to acknowledge that it often took decades or centuries to carry out the political, military, social and religious conquests after Spain claimed their dominion (Schwaller, 2018). On the island, from 1519 to 1533, Taínos who had escaped to the mountains came down to attack and raid Spanish settlements (Moya Pons, 1998). Though the record of events of this epoch will remain skewed and incomplete, there is enough evidence of individual and organized Indigenous resistance to be certain that the Spanish colonial project was not as successful as the colonizers proclaimed.

Atrocities were the method by which the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch carried out colonization in the Americas, in what was known as the East Indies, South America, and Southern Africa. In subsequent chapters, we examine the violent invasions of Europeans in North America, the enslavement of African people, as well as colonialism and imperialism in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The era of mercantile colonialism that began on Hispaniola, with the profits made from slavery, genocide, and the theft of continents, provided much of the capital necessary for the development of the capitalist mode of production. These violent episodes of history call into serious question capitalism's own origin story, the romanticized image of the hard-working, thrifty capitalist who scrimps and saves to start his own business.

THE DISPOSSESSED WHO DEFIED CONTROL

As the bourgeoisie accumulated wealth and power, a growing class of people was dispossessed in Europe and around the world. Some, including many Indigenous peoples, women accused of witchcraft and those too poor to survive the enclosures, were exterminated. These peoples' histories are unfortunately mainly documented by their oppressors (Ehrenreich, 2010).

In Europe, while the new capitalist farmers carried out a brutal offensive, “they found it no easy task to drive off and pauperize the population” (Cleaver, n.d.). Peasants violently resisted evictions. There were public debates, polemics written by economists and others. There were even laws passed to prohibit the enclosures, although overall they failed to prevent the process. Desperate and hoping to avenge the loss of their land and livelihoods, some of the dispossessed turned to “vagabondage and brigandry.”

Self-Liberated Taíno-African Communities Resist Enslavement

As European conquerors attempted to establish colonies and extractive industries in the Americas, and as they transported enslaved people from Africa, Indigenous people, Africans, and their descendants escaped from slavery. Enslaved people who freed themselves sometimes formed **self-liberated communities** to survive. Documented examples of self-liberation date from the 1520s. By the 1570s, self-liberated communities formed at the edges of practically every Spanish colony in the Americas (Schwaller, 2018). Also called *palenques*, *quilombos*, *cumbes*, *mocambos*, *mambises*, or *ladeiras*, their longevity ranged from less than a year to generations or even centuries.

One of the challenges of studying self-liberated communities is that the dominant historical record is most often written from the perspective of the victors, oppressors, or those who benefited, rather than by those who struggled to survive. Europeans have called runaways from slavery *maroons*. In studying resistance to slavery, scholars often distinguish between *petit marronage* and *grand marronage*, although these categories overlap somewhat. In *petit marronage*, people left slavery for a short period and often returned. *Grand marronage* refers to those who left plantation slavery permanently (Schwaller, 2018). The term maroon derives from the term *cimarrón*, which comes from the Taíno root *símará*, meaning arrow. Within decades of colonization, the term *cimarrón* was used to refer to domesticated cattle that had fled from the Spanish colony to the hills. Soon, the Spaniards used it to describe Indigenous people who had run away from slavery. By the late 1530s, the term was being used primarily with reference to African runaways and carried connotations of “fierceness,” of being “wild” and “unbroken” (Price, 2018).

On Hispaniola, Taínos and Africans who self-liberated fled Spanish control and created their own communities. They governed themselves independently and challenged the Spanish attempts to consolidate their conquest (Schwaller, 2018). Self-liberated communities were culturally syncretic, meaning that they combined cultural practices from their communities of origin. Cultural and linguistic commonality could not be taken for granted, since people were kidnapped and enslaved by the Spanish from wide-ranging geographies.

Self-liberated communities regularly disrupted commerce and trade and reconquered resources from colonial settlements. In 1519, an Indigenous leader, Enrique or Enriquillo, the nephew of Anacaona, fled the *encomienda* with 30 to 40 followers to the remote region of the Bahoruco. On Christmas Day in 1521, a group of enslaved Africans burned and fled from Diego Colón’s sugar plantation, attacking a ranch and killing colonists. Once faced with Spanish soldiers, the rebels retreated to Bahoruco where they joined Enriquillo’s community (Stone, 2013). In response to this uprising and to the threat of African and Indigenous collaboration, the Spanish authorities hardened the slave codes and strengthened efforts to oppose such interaction.

The Bahoruco community of self-liberated Taínos and Africans successfully lived outside Spanish control for over a decade (Schwaller, 2018; Stone, 2013). After evading several attempts to capture him, in 1533, Enriquillo agreed to negotiate with Spanish authorities. He and many of his followers agreed to relocate their community. Even so, the Spanish also left the Bahoruco region, leaving it open to new settlement by self-liberated African people (Schwaller, 2018).

By the 1540s, self-liberated groups regularly obstructed colonial trade. Reports to the Spanish authorities on Santo Domingo estimated that two to three thousand self-liberated Africans lived on Cabo San Nicolás, the Samaná peninsula, and the cape of Higüey on

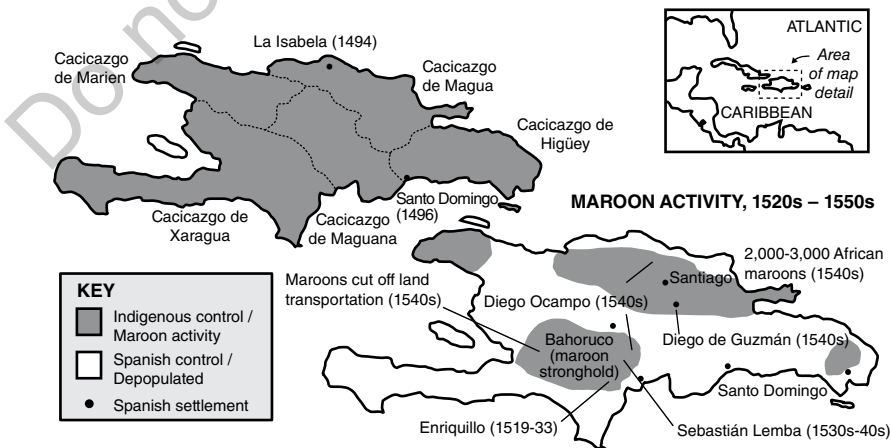
the east coast of the island (Schwaller, 2018). Townspeople of La Vega, Puerto Plata, and Santiago were afraid to leave their homes, and miners slept with their lances. An Italian conquistador estimated 7,000 maroons, though this may have been hyperbolic (Moya Pons, 1998). Self-liberated peoples effectively occupied the interior of the island, surviving on wild cattle and boar, covering wide distances on horseback. They cut off major roadways and created networks for transporting and trading material goods among self-liberated communities and with Africans living in Spanish communities. In collaboration with urban women called *ganadoras*, self-liberated African people sold stolen goods back to urban dwellers. Self-liberated leaders Diego Ocampo, Diego de Guzmán, and Sebastián Lemba were known and feared by the Spanish authorities for their raids across the island (Schwaller, 2018). The territories they controlled during several decades of the 16th century are shaded in gray in Figure 1.5.

Yet by the mid-1540s, the Spanish Crown appointed a new governor and president of the *audiencia*. The new governor commissioned squads to capture and kill maroons to retake the interior of the country. Ocampo and de Guzmán approached the Spanish authorities, negotiating for freedom in exchange for agreeing to serve as slave catchers. By offering freedom to Africans who knew the landscape, the governor's squads succeeded in capturing some maroons. Men captured were punished, tortured, or executed; women and children were exiled from the island (Schwaller, 2018).

Barbarism in Every Direction

Brutal victories by the Spanish royalty do not complete the story of Spanish conquest, however. During a good part of the 16th century, the colonial powers of Spain, France, and Britain were at war with each other. The French and British governments authorized corsairs to raid Spanish ships in the Caribbean. Corsairs captured ships and their cargoes, plundered and burned plantations, and represented a major threat to the Crown's revenues and authority. To avoid piracy, the Spanish Crown created a system of fleets so that ships would travel in Caribbean waters together (Moya Pons, 1998).

FIGURE 1.5 ■ Hispaniola: Indigenous Political Map and Spanish Settlements, 1496



Sources: Adapted from data in Moya Pons, 1998; Schwaller, 2018.

Attacks and raids by corsairs and pirates intensified from the 1560s to 1590s. Pirates raided not only ships but entire fleets, ports, and even cities. In 1586, Francis Drake assaulted the city of Santo Domingo and occupied it for a month, extracting a ransom for the Queen of England.

With infrequent service from ships, colonists faced higher prices for manufactured goods and limited markets for their products. They began to depend increasingly on contraband from maroons as well as from French, English, and Portuguese smugglers, and on selling their sugar, cattle hides, and other products. Treating contraband as not just a problem in trade, Spanish authorities lamented the incursion of Protestantism, beliefs associated with their enemies of war.

To address the threat of contraband, and with promises of increased revenues for the Crown and merchants in Seville and increased tithes to the church, the Crown ordered the displacement of residents and cattle from the north and west of the island (Moya Pons, 1998). The policy of *devastaciones*, or depopulation, went forward in 1605, despite protests. When people refused to leave, the governor burned their homes, churches, and crops. Residents of one of the communities, Bayajá, rose up in arms against the governor. But several communities were depopulated and resettled near Santo Domingo. The depopulation policy failed entirely. The residents displaced to Monte Plata and Bayaguana suffered from starvation, disease, and financial devastation, and Bayaguana was ravaged by a fire that left many homeless. The entire colony was impoverished, and those who could emigrated to other parts of the Caribbean (Moya Pons, 1998). Only three years later, Spain had signed treaties with Britain, France, and Holland, showing the depopulation policies to be unnecessary. In subsequent decades, Spain's ability to maintain a colony at all would come into question.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION IS THE TEMPLATE FOR SETTLER COLONIALISM

This chapter examined the process of primitive accumulation of capital, by which modern society came to be. It was by enclosing common land in England that groupings of feudal lords and retainers became the first bourgeois capitalist class. By accusing, torturing, and killing women as witches, doctors appropriated and concentrated medical knowledge previously held and shared by women. Lawyers, bureaucrats, and landowners seized murdered women's property, thereby becoming part of the rising class of the bourgeoisie. By claiming territories outside Europe, a rising class of merchants created and governed colonies based on enslavement and extraction of resources. With stolen goods and stolen labor, they began to enrich the rising bourgeois class.

The case study of the conquest and colonization of Hispaniola demonstrates the institutionalization of practices of genocide and enslavement. As the Spanish attempted to extract first gold, then sugar, their brutality intensified. The contradictions in this new world society were captured by the moral outcries of religious leaders and by rebellions, uprisings and self-liberated communities of Africans and Indigenous people. Self-liberated communities and corsairs laid bare the vulnerabilities of the Spanish colonial project. The violence of the colonial project was turned even on colonists themselves through depopulation policies. The violence necessary to set up and sustain this system of extraction should have revealed, and should reveal to us today, that it does not represent the progress portended in official narratives.

This more accurate chronicle of this period of social change, which acknowledges mass suffering, clarifies that our current economic system of capitalism was born out of violence. It was not the virtues of European civilization, but the collective pathologies of its society that allowed land to be taken, people to be treated as commodities to be bought and sold, and women healers and elders in particular to be treated as dangerous threats to society, worthy of death. This undermines the myth that the current economic system is the best or most advanced, modern or civilized.

A corollary lesson, when we study these processes and question official narratives, is that we find no justifications for colonialism. The colonized, we can recognize, were not inferior. They were not uncivilized. They had their own religions and did not need saving. They were not asking for help. They did not need development, improvement, or outside leaders. Their technologies were adequate.

Similarly, there is no justification for massive scapegoating and killing of women as witches. Witch hunts cannot be explained simply as collective madness or backwardness. In this case, they express a convergence of interests in accumulating property and in establishing power over domains of life including science, law, and medicine. The torture and murder of hundreds of thousands or millions of women over centuries (Mies, 1998) was the result of such an alignment of interests.

It is important to note, however, that domination by Europeans was not automatic or even easily achieved. On the contrary, resistance—by women accused of witchcraft, by peasants against dispossession from their means of production, and by people who self-liberated from slavery—was constant.

It is also important to recognize that colonial authorities were embedded in power struggles of their own. The Spanish crown and colonial officials appeared to possess full power and authority and commanded technologies that overwhelmed the Indigenous peoples and later Africans on Hispaniola. Yet in the context of Spain's wars with other European powers, when self-liberated communities interrupted roadways and collaborated with *ganadoras* to sell contraband, they undermined the policies of mercantilism and threatened the colonial economic model. In other words, colonies had to be constantly resourced and defended. When this wasn't possible, colonial powers lost territories and control over their subjects.

Military domination by Europeans was practiced. It was not inherent to the culture or character of all Europeans. Yet the logic of witch hunts, of inquisitions, of using knowledge, authority, religion, and science, and of using all of the institutions of society for control by a small group would be exported via European colonialism.

The ecological impacts of primitive accumulation were also devastating and continue to be so. A form of economics that leaves conquest and theft off of the account ledgers has left confusion and paradox in its wake. It resulted in monoculture production, privileging exports and extraction over meeting the needs of local populations. It began to replace nutrient cycles with extraction. It made once self-sustaining local populations vulnerable to the decisions of powerful leaders and elites who had no interest in their survival. It began a process of urbanization and industrialization that moved people off the land and away from rural communities and prioritized factory production. Primitive accumulation began the process of treating the earth and its elements as factors of production, not live members of a community.

The process of primitive accumulation resulted in the accumulation of wealth and capital by some, while others were left with little more than their own skin. Those who

were enslaved didn't even own that. It left rural communities subservient to urban ones. Primitive accumulation cut short the lives of millions in the interest of others' gain. It also left many parts of the world controlled by outsiders whose understanding and respect for local cultures was minimal, and whose principal interest was to extract, exploit, and accumulate.

In the next chapter, we turn to the Americas where patterns of primitive accumulation continued with conquest, attempted genocide, and settler colonialism, and where Indigenous people faced these processes with strength and creativity for continued survival. As the logic of capital accumulation expanded, the ideology, practices, and logic of the witch trials were implemented on the American continent through genocide.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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KEY TERMS

Bourgeoisie
Capital
Colonialism
Enclosures
Eurocentrism
Feudalism

Mercantilism
Primitive accumulation
Progress narratives
Self-liberated communities
Witch hunts

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