

tribes, especially the Cherokees. First, many authors describe smallpox using metaphors (“shock troops”) and similes (“spread like wildfire”), language that obscures the human agency that facilitated its spread: “the Native slave trade, warfare, sustained commercial intercourse, and scorched-earth military tactics” (214). Second, to assume that Natives were passive victims overlooks their ability to absorb new diseases into their cosmology and to develop effective curative rites. Finally, application of the thesis is often founded on anecdotal evidence that does not always stand up to historical scrutiny, for instance, the claim that smallpox was deliberately spread by scab-laden blankets. According to Kelton, searching for such Lord Jeffery Amherst-inspired episodes is “a quest of futility” (136). I concur.

Benjamin R. Kracht
Northeastern State University

Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America. Edited by Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 344 pages. \$94.95 cloth; \$26.95 paper; \$94.95 electronic.

Genocide studies that focus on indigenous peoples have been untying the complexities of colonial expansion, conquest, and ongoing cultural domination in the Americas, and especially those English colonial patterns that led to the United States, while at the same time also steadily advancing a more sophisticated discourse. This edited volume, divided into four main sections, makes significant contributions towards our better understanding of this important topic.

“Intersections and Trajectories,” the opening section of *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, includes an essay on boarding schools by coeditor Woolford, analysis of “shatter zones” by Robbie Ethridge, and relational views of genocide by Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis. An “Erasure and Legibility” section follows, with Benjamin Madley’s powerful analysis of the Modoc resistance considering how genocide is camouflaged by colonial wars. Gray H. Whaley contributes an analysis of genocide in Oregon, Tricia E. Logan writes about how memory and erasure are connected to national myths, and Jeremy Patzer links dispossession with residential school violence and its harmful effects. In the “Transformation” section, Margaret D. Jacobs similarly examines child removal, finding it a habitus of elimination by settler-colonial nations. Jeff Benvenuto’s essay views ethnocide as colonial genocide, while Ladner identifies the passage of legislation that kills nations as “political genocide.” This section ends with an essay by Colin Samson, who finds land claims that dispossess the Innu in Canada to be genocidal.

“(Re)Imaginations,” the final and most critical section, begins with Joseph P. Gone’s strong counter-analysis of the limitations of identifying genocide as linked with historical trauma. Then, in a pointedly opposite approach, Tasha Hubbard sees the destruction of the great buffalo herds as genocidal both in intent and practice. David B. MacDonald applies the UN genocide convention to residential schools.

As most of these scholars and articles employ the terms of “settler colonialism” now dominant in indigenous studies, they may specify tribes or nations, but more often they defer to “settler-indigenous relations.” This academic discourse is problematic: genocide studies should clearly identify the perpetrator—usually the state and national policies that support settlers—but exterminationist expansion in order to create the larger American state also perpetrates genocide. This mode of discourse has resulted in a series of important, but uneven, contributions to the study of genocide in all its manifestations, especially those understudied and less-discussed examples.

Much of the book and many articles are concerned with boarding and residential schools as cultural genocide in effect and intent, and qualifying under Lemkin’s and the United Nations’ definition of genocide, as with earlier child removal policies. Herein Gone makes an important distinction between these processes, one that I illustrate in my first book in using the term *culturicide*. To paint colonial genocides in indigenous North America with too broad a stroke may have the effect of diminishing genocide claims that truly qualify as such, though Gone may go too far when he suggests that making an “understatement” is more useful than hyperbole. In many cases in California, as we have discovered, sometimes what may appear to be overstated isn’t at all.

Also, in calling for colonial genocide we tend to emphasize the colonizer as a process of colonialism, which becomes complicated when the early English colonies become independent states—the United States, Canada, Australia. In the transition to internal colonialism the state avoids responsibilities for its actions, including genocide, and is left off the hook with the overly strong focus on settlers.

One important distinction made in Whaley’s article is between what he calls “settler imperialism” (132) rather than colonialism, because of a relatively weak state authority that periodically slips into genocide (but not always); therefore it is not a genocidal state. Even so, Whaley observes multiple small-scale massacres (134) literally calling for the “extermination” of all Indians (136), at times regardless “of age or sex” (138). Whether it is Whaley’s “American Folk Imperialism,” or the state, or settler militias in southwest Oregon, there is clearly much genocide occurring in the region.

Similarly by referring more broadly to Indians and indigenous relations, we allow the racial construct to dominate the discourse, subsuming Native nations (or if you must, tribes, perhaps even bands). Herein the dominant discourse wins out—extinguishing sovereignty claims to Native nations and indigenous peoples is a central aim of the colonizer and the state—precisely to see the process as both inevitable and natural (in the order of things). By declaring and essentializing Indians we accept the racist discourse and miss the broader implications of genocide as a tool, a tactic, and at times a strategy to achieve some end or objectives, usually materialist, and in regard to Native peoples, always involving land. So is (or are) the drawbacks to a broad-brush category of settler colonialism or, for that matter, coercive assimilation.

Hinton returns to these issues in the afterword’s set of concluding statements, which is instructive of the problems the book raises but leaves unresolved. Referring to a set of interactions between Starblanket (who apparently wants to see the complete colonization, conquest, or settler dominance of North America as ongoing genocide), with Gone (who wants to utilize the concept and practice of genocide with

caution and limitations), Hinton sees this discourse as “destabilizing genocide,” which seems to suggest that there is something stable about genocide studies over indigenous peoples—and there’s the rub. The entire field is wide open and unstable as any earthquake fault line, particularly when discussing North America. First, there is the Churchill problem of “a little matter of genocide” that sees the entire process as genocide, rather than periodic genocides, genocide events, and lots of policies and practices that appear genocidal but do not meet rigorous definitions. Too many times I have run into analysis that starts with looking at Churchill’s claims and ends with dismissing them, and the entire field, by his systematic global overreach. By typologizing the state as purely genocidal, as Lindsay does in “Murder State” about California, identifying how genocide is employed becomes a more difficult task.

Hinton discusses this problematic as underscored by “hidden genocides” that comprehensively include boarding and residential schools, political or cultural erasure, and destruction of lifeways. I will not argue with those claims, but will focus on clear, pure, applied policy-driven genocide hidden in plain sight, namely California, when it is a new state in the United States. Even applying Fein’s intensive, rigorous conditions, California qualifies as genocide at every level, with the governor calling for “extermination” and local, state and federal governments supplying militias, soldiers, and financial support for genocide. Yet the state of California is in denial and not only averts any such discussion in its curriculum at any level, but subverts genocide analysis with a focus on the Mission system in the standard fourth grade curricula, with strong support from governmental institutions and the Catholic Church, which has canonized its founder, Junipero Serra. When Native activists claim the Mission system is genocide, most academics and political analysts easily dismiss this as overreach and abuse, thus not even arriving at an examination of the clear genocide that followed a few decades later.

Colonial Genocides in Indigenous North America contributes to a growing chorus of indigenous scholars, genocide analysts, and Native leaders who are bringing this most important topic into greater clarity, and makes an excellent resource for academics and university courses to launch that discussion. I encourage you to read and utilize the work, continuing the rise of indigenous voices about genocide.

James V. Fenelon (*Lakota/Dakota*)
California State University, San Bernardino

A Cross of Thorns: The Enslavement of California’s Indians by the Spanish Missions.
By Elias Castillo. Fresno: Linden Publishing, Inc., 2015. 235 pages. \$19.95 cloth.

Written amid Junipero Serra’s impending canonization, *A Cross of Thorns: The Enslavement of California’s Indians by the Spanish Missions* was also inspired by the reaction to a 2004 *San Francisco Chronicle* op-ed piece that author Elias Castillo wrote criticizing a proposed US Senate bill that would help restore the California missions by providing \$10 million in matching federal funds. In this book Castillo