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European Colonists and the Displacement and Repression of the Locals – North America and Canada

During the 17th and 18th centuries, European nations such as England, France, and Holland expanded their colonial powers in North America and Australia. North America, stretching from the Arctic Circle to the Tropic of Cancer and from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, was inhabited by people who migrated from Asia about 30,000 years ago. The climate stabilization about 5,000 years ago led to population growth.

Historians believe the earliest inhabitants of North America were from Asia, with the oldest artifact being an 11,000-year-old arrowhead. Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, followed by Spanish and Portuguese colonization. Europeans considered the native peoples uncivilized due to their lack of organized religion, urbanism, and literacy, though Rousseau admired their untouched way of life.

The native inhabitants lived in groups along river valleys, practicing subsistence farming by growing maize and vegetables and hunting or fishing. They spoke various languages and transmitted their history orally. Cultural values differed greatly between natives and Europeans; natives viewed exchanged goods as friendship gifts, while Europeans sought profit.

Initially, Europeans came as traders but were soon followed by settlers. Britain established 13 colonies on America's eastern coast, which declared independence in 1776 after a seven-year war, leading to the formation of the United States of America. The American frontier expanded until 1892, spurred by gold and silver discoveries and railway construction. Agriculture expanded with innovations like barbed wire fencing.

Canada and the USA emerged as nations by the late 18th century. The USA expanded territories through purchase (Louisiana from France, Alaska from Russia) and war. Native consent was not sought in land acquisitions, causing natives to be pushed westward. The US army forcibly evicted tribes such as the Cherokee, leading to the tragic 'Trail of Tears' where many died. Tribes were confined to reservations, often causing inter-tribal conflicts. Native resistance was crushed by the army, though some revolts like those by the Metis occurred between 1869-1885.

Industrialization in America grew to support railways and large-scale farming. By 1890, the US had become an industrial power and established colonies in Hawaii and the Philippines, becoming an imperial power.

Exam Questions

Q1: What were the main reasons for the displacement of indigenous peoples in North America?

A1: The displacement was caused by European colonization, expansion of settlements, land purchases without native consent, forced evictions by the US army, and the establishment of reservations.

Q2: What was the significance of the 'Trail of Tears'?

A2: The 'Trail of Tears' was the forced removal of the Cherokee tribe to the Great American Desert, during which a quarter of the 15,000 people died, symbolizing the harsh treatment of natives by the US government.

Impact on Indigenous People – Historians' Viewpoint

The democratic ideals of the USA, emphasizing individual rights and property, applied only to white men, excluding indigenous peoples. Until the 1920s, conditions for natives in the USA and Canada remained poor, with inadequate health and education. The Indian Reorganisation Act of 1934 granted natives rights to buy land and take loans.

In the 1950s and 1960s, governments attempted to assimilate natives by ending special provisions, but natives resisted. The Declaration of Indian Rights allowed some natives citizenship while protecting reservations. Canada did not recognize aboriginal rights until 1982.

Australia's Aboriginal people arrived about 40,000 years ago from New Guinea. By the late 18th century, there were 350–750 native communities with distinct languages. Initially, relations with Europeans were cordial, but deteriorated after incidents like the murder of Captain Cook, which justified violence against natives.

Between the 19th and 20th centuries, 90% of Aboriginal people died due to disease, loss of land, and conflict. Early settlers were often convicts who became free after their terms. Australia's economy developed through sheep farming, mining, vineyards, and wheat farming. Some natives worked in harsh conditions akin to slavery, with Chinese immigrants providing cheap labor.

From the 1970s, there was increased recognition of native cultures, with university departments and art galleries dedicated to Aboriginal heritage. Since 1974, multiculturalism became official policy, respecting native and immigrant cultures equally.

Exam Questions

Q1: What were the main impacts of European colonization on Aboriginal Australians?

A1: The impacts included dispossession of land, dislocation from traditional territories, loss of cultural identity, a 90% population decline due to disease and conflict, and harsh working conditions.

Q2: How did Australian policy towards indigenous peoples change after 1974?

A2: Australia adopted multiculturalism as official policy, giving equal respect to native cultures and immigrant communities, and increased recognition of Aboriginal history and rights.

Timeline of Key Events in Displacement of Indigenous Peoples

Time Period / Year	Event / Change	Importance
1492	Christopher Columbus discovers America	Beginning of European colonization in the Americas
1776	American colonies declare independence	Formation of the United States of America
1830s	Trail of Tears	Forced removal of Cherokee tribe causing many deaths
1865	Abolition of slavery in the USA	Major social reform in the USA
1934	Indian Reorganisation Act (USA)	Granted natives rights to buy land and take loans
1968	Equal rights granted to Australian natives	Recognition of Aboriginal rights and history
1974	Australia adopts multiculturalism policy	Official respect for native and immigrant cultures
1982	Canadian Constitution recognizes aboriginal rights	Legal recognition of native rights in Canada

Glossary

Indigenous People

People belonging naturally to a place.

Native

A person born in the place he/she lives in.

Settlers

People who settle at a place which is not their native land.

Reservations

Small areas of land locked off for native tribes, often different from their original territories.

Trail of Tears

The forced removal of the Cherokee tribe to the Great American Desert, resulting in many deaths.

Dispossession

The act of taking away land or property from indigenous peoples.

Dislocation

The forced removal of indigenous peoples from their traditional lands.

Terra Nullius

Meaning "land belonging to no one," a concept used to justify colonization of Australia.

Multiculturalism

Official policy of Australia giving equal respect to native and immigrant cultures.

Solved Examples

Example 1:

Question: Why did the US government justify the forced removal of Native Americans from their lands?

Answer: The US government argued that Native Americans did not use the land to its maximum potential and therefore did not deserve to occupy it, justifying forced removal to make way for settlers and agriculture.

Example 2:

Question: What were the effects of European diseases on Aboriginal Australians?

Answer: Aboriginal Australians had no immunity to European diseases such as measles and the common cold, leading to widespread death and a drastic reduction in their population.

Practice Set

Easy

1. Who were the first Europeans to discover America?
2. What is meant by the term 'reservations'?

Moderate

1. Explain the significance of the 'Trail of Tears' in the history of Native Americans.
2. Describe the impact of European colonization on the Aboriginal people of Australia.

Challenging

1. Discuss the reasons why indigenous peoples were displaced during European colonization in North America and Australia.
2. Analyze the changes in government policies towards indigenous peoples in the USA, Canada, and Australia during the 20th century.

Answer Key

Easy

1. Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover America in 1492.
2. Reservations are small areas of land set aside for indigenous tribes, often different from their original territories.

Moderate

1. The 'Trail of Tears' was the forced removal of the Cherokee tribe by the US army, resulting in many deaths and symbolizing the harsh treatment of Native Americans.
2. European colonization led to dispossession of land, loss of life due to disease and conflict, cultural dislocation, and harsh working conditions for Aboriginal Australians.

Challenging

1. Indigenous peoples were displaced due to European expansion, land acquisition without consent, forced evictions, and policies aimed at assimilation or removal to reservations.
2. Government policies initially excluded indigenous rights but gradually evolved to recognize land and cultural rights, with acts like the Indian Reorganisation Act (USA), constitutional recognition in Canada, and multiculturalism policy in Australia.

Quick Reference

- 1492: Columbus discovers America, starting European colonization.
- 1776: American colonies declare independence.
- 1830s: Trail of Tears forces Native American removal.
- 1934: Indian Reorganisation Act grants some native rights in the USA.
- 1968: Australian natives granted equal rights.
- 1974: Australia adopts multiculturalism policy.
- 1982: Canadian Constitution recognizes aboriginal rights.