

The Doctrine of Discovery: The Legacy and Continuing Impact of Christian “Discovery” on American Indian Populations [Abstract]

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This article examines the ideology and laws that are grounded in the fifteenth-century “doctrine of discovery,” documenting both its influences over time on the ancestors of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas and its continuing negative long-term effects. The doctrine became institutionalized over time and codified into international and nationalist laws and policies. For US Native peoples, for example, 1823 and 1831 Supreme Court decisions that were based on the discovery concept lie at the root of federal Indian law today. European expansion also began the world capitalist system and its unending acquisition of Native lands and resources. With many struggling to get by today, the discovery doctrine’s power still plays a role in this impact, including the legacy of multinational corporations, international institutions, and state governments desecrating Native burial and sacred sites. The socioeconomic conditions of American Indian groups warrant a greater understanding and awareness of this issue.

Key Words: Americas, indigenous peoples, Christian discovery, globalization, international law

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