

Alberto Chirif

Editor

# Towards the conquest of self-determination

50 Years since the Barbados Declaration



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50 YEARS SINCE THE BARBADOS DECLARATION

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# THE BOOK AND THE MEMORIES

**Alberto Chirif**



## **The book**

This year, 2021, marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic meeting held on the Caribbean island of Barbados, where a group of 15 anthropologists (14 men and 1 woman) from Amazonian, Central American and European countries met to reflect on the situation of Indigenous peoples in the Americas. The symposium, organized by the University of Berne's Institute of Anthropology in coordination with the Geneva-based World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), was held at the University of the West Indies in Bridgetown, Barbados.

This book was first published in Spanish in January of this year. This English edition contains the same articles, the only difference being the addition of an interview with Aqqaluk Lynge, leader of the Inuit people of Greenland, conducted by Jens Dahl and Alejandro Parellada.

The Barbados meeting was preceded by international accusations against the governments of Brazil and Paraguay that they were promoting and implementing genocidal plans against Indigenous peoples with the aim of clearing areas so that they could be handed over to transnational corporations. This was the topic of one of the thematic break-out groups at the 39<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists, held in Lima in 1970. It was in this context that a group of participants, mainly anthropologists, agreed to hold the Barbados symposium a year later.

The participants in the meeting presented reports on violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples in their countries, specifically: Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico. At the end of the meeting, they signed an historic declaration, "For the Liberation of the Indigenous People", in which they harshly criticized governments, the Catholic and Evangelical churches and the anthropological trend that sees Indigenous peoples merely as objects of study and refuses to recognize the problems that affect them or, when they do recognize them, limits itself to rhetorical denunciations without any commitment to a resolution.

Both the declaration and the presentations were compiled into the book "*La situación del indígena en América Latina*", edited by the Austrian anthropologist

Georg Grünberg, organizer of the meeting, in which he also participated. The book was published by the Terra Nueva publishing house, in Montevideo, in 1972, but was immediately publicly burned by the ruling dictatorship in Uruguay as a subversive document.

A second meeting was held in 1977, Barbados II, this time with the participation of Indigenous leaders, many of them persecuted by the authoritarian governments or open dictatorships exercising power in their countries at that time. The papers presented, as well as a further declaration, were published in the book *"Indianidad y decolonización en América Latina"*, edited in Mexico in 1979 by the Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, who had also participated in Barbados I.

The Barbados group met for the third and last time in 1993, in Rio de Janeiro, at the invitation of Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, to analyze the theme of "Ethnic Plurality, Autonomy and Democratization in Latin America". The result of that meeting was a new declaration and a book entitled *"Articulación de la diversidad. Pluralidad étnica, autonomías y democratización en América Latina"*, published in Quito in 1995.

Since then, Indigenous peoples have become strengthened organizationally, both nationally and internationally; they have strengthened their alliances and have obtained the approval of a series of international legal instruments that have developed and furthered their demands. Noteworthy among these are the 1989 ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries; the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the 2016 OAS American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Notwithstanding these advances, forces opposed to the rights of Indigenous peoples have also been consolidated. Transnational corporations, in cooperation with national governments, are increasingly interested in exploiting the resources found on Indigenous territories and, to this end, are deploying all their corrupting power, both over these governments and over Indigenous leaders and organizations. On top of which many Indigenous peoples living in local communities have absorbed the mantra of a "development" that, according to the official rhetoric, they will be able to access if they "capitalize" the resources on their territories.

Fifty years on from the first meeting in Barbados, an event that marked a turning point in the development of anthropology, with the emergence of what became known as "committed anthropology", it is important to reflect on the road travelled so far but also on future threats. The time is therefore ripe for the publication of a new book bringing together both the people who played a central role in promoting the original initiative as well as those who have continued this work dynamic since then.

This book is divided into three sections. In the first, entitled *Founders and Participants*, we meet the people who founded the movement and who attended the first meeting in 1971. Of that original group, more than half have now passed away and one, Venezuelan anthropologist Nelly Arvelo, is in poor health. I must note here with sadness that my efforts to include some of her already published articles in this book have not borne fruit. The second section, entitled *Contemporary and Beyond*, comprises Indigenous professionals and leaders, some of these latter also professionals, who, since the 1970s or even before, were undertaking work committed to the rights of Indigenous peoples, plus some younger people who followed the same direction in the following decades. Finally, the third section, *Barbados and IWGIA*, comprises interviews with individuals who have played an important role in the life of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA).

### **The memories**

I would like to reconstruct memories and reflections of my own involvement in the dynamics of the committed anthropology that was proposed by the Barbados group. I confess that it is impossible for me to write a purely objective text when referring to issues such as the ones addressed in this book, and this for two reasons. The first is that many of us who chose anthropology as a life option in the 1960s and 1970s, at least in Peru, did so as part of a personal search which, starting from a questioning of our own society, was aimed at finding a way of organizing relationships between people other than the one we were experiencing at that time, free from inequalities and injustice, and from the lies that served to justify these. And the second is that this life choice, as is logical to assume, has shaped my professional actions ever since.

I went to university at the insistence of my (loving) father who was horrified at the thought of his son enduring the same hardships he had endured for lack of a profession. I arrived at anthropology, after a few years in sociology and in the practical cultivating of the land, through Stefano Varese, as noted in greater detail in the introduction I wrote for the edition of his emblematic book "*La Sal de los Cerros*" published by Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú. And I arrived at the Amazon and the Indigenous peoples through a series of more or less fortuitous events, if we are to assume that fate does not exist nor anonymous hands weave invisible threads so that we end up being the way we are, or similar.

One of those fortuitous events was a news item I read in some newspaper or other during the second half of the 1960s stating that cattle ranchers (I think) had killed a group of Indigenous peoples in Colombia. I do not remember the details but it is not unreasonable to assume that it must have been with the aim of removing the annoying Indigenous presence from the area so that they

could “implement progress”. (Years later, in a meeting held in the context of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, at the headquarters of the Simón Bolívar National University in Caracas, I heard a Brazilian military officer, one of the gorillas of the dictatorship in power in his country, say: “We do not want a primitive Amazon”, a phrase with which he justified the “civilizing acts” carried out by his government to expand the colonization frontier). Regarding the massacre in Colombia, perhaps more surprising than the event itself was the court resolution declaring the murderers innocent “because they did not know that killing Indians was a crime”. The syllogism was clear: they knew that killing people was a crime but they did not know that killing Indigenous peoples was also a crime; therefore, Indigenous peoples were not people.

This last reasoning was to be confirmed by another random fact. Among my father’s books I found one published in 1915, entitled “*El Proceso del Putumayo*”. When I inquired as to its content, I saw that it referred to despicable events that had taken place in that basin and in neighbouring areas during the Amazonian rubber boom. The author of the book was Attorney Carlos E. Valcárcel, who had served as chief judge during the process. The perpetrators of the atrocities were the employees and foremen of the so-called Casa Arana - which in 1907 became the British *Peruvian Amazon Company* – and whose leader, Julio César Arana, was an influential businessman and later senator of the Republic. Curiously, most of the foremen came from Barbados, which was a British colony until 1966.

In this case, the mistreatment and killings were being perpetrated by rubber tappers. The accused in this case were also released, and although they did not argue that committing atrocities against Indigenous peoples was a crime, they did emphasize their justification as the bearers of civilization and defenders of national borders, given that their area of action was in dispute with Colombia at the time. A thread connected the two events - the massacres of Indigenous peoples by cattle ranchers and by rubber tappers - which occurred little more than half a century apart, and the genocide against Indigenous peoples, which was the theme that mobilized a group of anthropologists to organize the Barbados group.

And yet the most important event that was to cement my relationship with the Amazon region and the Indigenous world would be a trip I was invited on in mid-1968 to the Alto Marañón. The area is the ancestral habitat of the Aguaruna and Huambisa (or Awajún and Wampis as they are known today), near Peru’s northern border with Ecuador. The promoters of this initiative were two students in their final years of Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, who had already visited the area and written a brief report on their impressions. For various reasons, one by one, both organizers and their

guests had to back out of the trip and, in the end, the last person to have been invited on this journey, i.e. me, was left alone and I therefore travelled alone. It was a short trip of some 15 days but it captivated me emotionally with the new reality that had opened up before my eyes. Since then, every time classes at the university took a break, I would stop somewhere on the *Panamericana Norte* highway, backpack in hand, to “hitchhike” to Lambayeque, where I would get the Army to take me on one of the trucks that they periodically sent to the Alto Marañón with personnel and supplies for their garrisons.

From that point on, the events that guided my actions were no longer random but decisions and actions linked to the path I had already taken. Among these I must mention a trip to the area known as the “*selva central*”. It was following a request from Stefano Varese, in 1969, to attend a large meeting organized by communities of the Amuesha people (today the Yánesha), in a town near Oxapampa, an Amazonian city standing at almost 2,000 metres above sea level. With the support of anthropologist Richard Smith, they had decided to meet to discuss their problems and reach agreements to solve them. It was an historic event - although we did not know it at the time since only the passage of time and the resonance of the event has made it so - because, at that meeting, the first modern Indigenous organization in the Peruvian Amazon was born to defend their rights, at a time when there was still no legislation to protect them. It was also an important event for me because of the friendship that blossomed with Richard Smith and which we maintain to this day. The birth of the Amuesha Congress is described in detail in the article included in this book.

Another important encounter on this path was my relationship with the German physician Theodor Binder, director of the Albert Schweitzer Amazonian Hospital in Pucallpa and, although this also began by chance, by then my path had already been chosen. One day, in the Alto Marañón, in the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, which was promoting the colonization of the area, a copy of *Selecciones* magazine fell into my hands. In the index, I found a report on a hospital located in the Amazon. Among other things, it referred to its way of working with communities in the region. The subject piqued my curiosity, and this only grew when I realized that the hospital was in Pucallpa, a newly-founded city located on the banks of the Ucayali River, in the Peruvian rainforest.

My trips to the Alto Marañón had brought me into contact with a reality that presented two major aspects. On the one hand, the existence of an organized society with a logic different to ours and in which the central theme was a reciprocity that united people from different families, based on the exchange of goods and services and visits. And, on the other, the threats coming from the outside world that were besetting that society. In this case, the main danger came from the colonization that the State was promoting in the area with the

stated objective of consolidating the north-eastern border, the object of political tensions and not a few armed conflicts between the armies of Ecuador and Peru. It was a colonization that was being promoted jointly by the Peruvian Army and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Awajún were, at most, part of the civilizable landscape, like the forests that had to be cleared to establish crops. If they wanted land security they had to apply for it as settlers, and this is what happened in 1969 in the settlement known as Tutumberos, in the Tuntungos ravine (a tributary of the Ampiyacu River which, in turn, flows into the Marañón), where a group of Aguaruna, faced with the risk of losing everything, opted to receive individual plots similar to those the State awarded to settlers. Years later, with the enactment of the native community laws (1974 and 1978), the Awajún of that and another nearby river, where they had also been subjected to the same process, were able to recover their collective lands and succeed in expelling the settlers. (Forest Trends, 2020: 89.)

At that time, there was no law protecting the Indigenous peoples, despite the fact that the country had already been a republic for 150 years. Only ILO Convention 107 referred to “Indigenous and tribal populations” but its clearly integrationist orientation reinforced the view that Indigenous peoples were at a stage in the social evolution of humanity that would culminate in their civilization. In spite of this, I must say that this Convention proved very useful in 1989 when the Amazonian confederation Aidesep (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest), in coordination with the Peruvian Indigenous Institute and the ILO, undertook remarkable work to free hundreds of Indigenous peoples openly enslaved by the logging and cattle raising “bosses” in the upper part of the Ucayali basin. In addition to liquidating the bosses’ power, this work allowed for the formation and titling of Indigenous communities and their coordination into second-level organizations. (On this subject, see García et al, 1998 and, in this book, the article by Søren Hvalkof).

Other changes, however, had already begun at that time, the impacts of which would only become evident years later.

The report on the Amazonian Hospital piqued my interest to inquire as to how it was handling the changes generated by the integration of Indigenous peoples into market channels and in relations with the State since, as already noted, the work of this institution was not limited to the administration of health but had broadened its horizons to other issues with the Shipibo communities of Ucayali such as education, capacity building in health and “development”.

A letter that I sent to Dr. Binder and his reply initiated a collaborative relationship that was to last for two years and during which, while I was learning and trying to contribute a comprehensive view of the reality of the Shipibo communities, I

was preparing an initiative that would allow me to work on health, education and “development” (with all the gaps in knowledge and prejudices that I had at that time) with the Aguaruna communities of the Alto Marañón. The initiative did not bear fruit and, for reasons that are not relevant to the matter at hand, my relationship with the Amazonian Hospital ended. In fact, the hospital itself ended, too, in the sense that a new administration put a halt to its work with the communities and re-directed its focus onto hospital treatment. Years later, it ended up being transferred into State control. My friendship with Binder, on the other hand, continued through letters or personal conversations during his visits to Peru, and I remember it as an important part of my professional and personal development.

By then, General Juan Velasco had already been president of Peru for four years, a position he had reached by overthrowing President Fernando Belaunde in 1968 when his government became caught up in corruption networks and agreements harmful to the country. It seems contradictory to speak of the democratization of the country in the case of a government installed in this way but the truth is that, during this period, actions were taken that gave power to those who had always been denied it, such as the Andean Indigenous peoples who, through the Agrarian Reform, were freed from the feudal *latifundia* prevalent in the Andes, and the land that had been taken from them returned; the law turned those who until then had worked as domestic slaves into employees, with the right to work regulated by work schedules, with social security, holiday and retirement benefits; and, in the case of the Amazonian Indigenous peoples, the rights to organize freely and access ownership of their lands and forests.<sup>1</sup> These, among other measures, made it clear that there was for the first time an idea to structure the country around other aspects than simply actions taken to continue favouring the same groups that had always benefited from power.

After my experience at the Amazonian Hospital, I took up the position that Stefano Varese was vacating in the office of the Social Mobilization Support System (Sinamos), which was in charge of the “native communities”, a name officially established in the aforementioned laws to refer to the Amazonian settlements in which Indigenous groups of diverse ethnic identities were settled. He had left a well-progressed bill of law in place for these communities. I was institutionally in charge of giving continuity to this bill, which was finally enacted into law in June 1974. From there began the long road to make the theory correspond to the facts. But that is another story.

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1 In 1978, a new law on native communities introduced the absurd notion that forests and lands with aptitude for forestry should not be titled as property but ceded for use. This subsequently gave rise to a series of arbitrary decisions and conflicts, which are considered in another document. (See Chirif and Garcia, 2007)

Those laws have largely been superseded by new norms, such as ILO Convention 169 and, above all, by the reflections and organizational dynamics of the Indigenous peoples themselves. Today they are demanding recognition of integral territories, meaning on the one hand physical continuity and, on the other, no overlapping land rights. The spatial redrawing of many Indigenous peoples will be difficult to achieve due to the colonization processes that their territories have already undergone with particular intensity since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, colonization has also influenced their organizational systems, weakening the networks of reciprocity on which they are based. Aware of this reality, some Indigenous peoples are currently working on the construction of new social agreements to support their demands and affirm their collective rights.

### **And the book once more**

As already mentioned, the articles and interviews of 24 contributors have been organized into three sections entitled *Founders and Participants* (of the movement and at the Barbados meetings), *Contemporaries and Beyond*, and *Barbados and IWGIA*.

Before presenting reviews and comments on the works included in this book, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed articles and interviews to make this publication possible. Some of them have also contributed with the translations of their own works: Scott S. Robinson, João Pacheco de Oliveira, Richard Ch. Smith, Thomas Moore, Silvel Elías and Søren Hvalkof. The interviews were all written in English and, at the time, had to be translated for the Spanish edition. The other translations, as well as a review of the interviews, were done by Elaine Bolton, to whom I express my sincere thanks. Finally, my thanks to the layout artist, Gredna Landolt, for her excellent work.

### *Founders and Participants*

Esteban Mosonyi's text, as I told him when I thanked him for sending it, "is beautiful, it is a song about the hope and wisdom of the Indigenous peoples and also an expression of your own wisdom, which you convey through clear concepts and accessible words". The strength with which he expresses his optimism, forged throughout his long life and his intense relationship with the Indigenous peoples, especially with the Wayuu who have incorporated him into one of their clans, is moving. He tells a story of which he is a part and begins by describing the vicissitudes of his life in a Venezuela in crisis, in which devaluation means that the currency is not worth the paper it is written on and where Indigenous peoples are suffering terrible threats due to gold mining, which is evicting entire communities, clearing the forests, polluting the rivers and destroying Indigenous

societies, forcing them to accept mining. And this despite the fact that Venezuela has excellent Indigenous legislation, the best in South America, set out in the Constitution, in a specific law and in approval of ILO Convention 169. It is a well-known story as the same thing happens in other countries, where laws are toothless through lack of enforcement. Beyond the narration of tragedies, however, some of which are also common to other countries of the Amazon basin, we must pay attention to what Mosonyi points out about the importance of the Barbados Declaration, and the movement it gave birth to, in terms of claiming Indigenous peoples' rights. The author ends his work by considering the value of the knowledge and practices of Indigenous peoples in overcoming the current crisis of civilization, as generated by extractivism, consumerism and ideological fundamentalism, and affirming, not as an achievement but out of conviction, that Indigenous cultures are the best defenders of megadiversity.

Georg Grünberg's article explains the motivations that led to the formation of the Barbados group in 1971. The author describes events that took place in previous decades regarding the treatment of Indigenous peoples by governments and companies. The main problem at the time was the genocide that was triggered to a degree only comparable to that which took place during the rubber boom in the Amazon at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It deals with the debates between representatives of applied indigenist anthropology and a new movement of anthropologists who viewed Indigenous problems with a critical eye. The author recalls as central milestones of these debates, and ones that highlighted the atrocities suffered by Indigenous peoples, the meetings of the International Americanist Congress in Stuttgart in 1968 and in Lima in 1970; the meeting of the German Anthropological Society in Göttingen in 1969; and the symposium on "*Ethnocide throughout the Americas*" in Paris in 1970. Finally, Grünberg describes with great precision the context in which the three meetings held by the Barbados group took place, their composition and characteristics, as well as the value of the reflections they generated for developing a committed anthropology and a critical vision, not only of anthropologists but also of other sectors, on the problems of Indigenous peoples.

Stefano Varese's article combines his personal memories as an anthropologist committed to the reality of Indigenous peoples with reflections on the ethical foundations of Indigenous worldviews. His book "*La Sal de los Cerros*", pioneering in Amazonian anthropology in Peru and which encouraged many people, myself included, to devote their efforts to learning about the region and supporting the struggles of Indigenous peoples, is an example of the anthropologist's commitment to the reality he studies. From that point on, the events he narrates were linked to his life, from the denunciation of the bombing of the Mayoruna or Matsés in 1964, through his work as a lecturer at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos - and later in universities in other countries -, his role as a civil

servant in drafting the law on native communities and his participation in national and international fora such as the three meetings promoted by the Barbados group and others. In his work, Varese highlights the mobilization of Amazonian Indigenous peoples in Peru from 1960 onwards to confront the problems derived from the colonization of their territories and the invasion of different types of extractive companies. Secondly, Varese addresses the importance of territory for Indigenous peoples, both for their physical and their cultural survival since it is on this territory that Indigenous societies weave collaborative bonds between themselves and with the beings of nature, and where they build knowledge that constitutes the central elements of their well-being. In his analysis, the author highlights the antagonism between the Indigenous peoples' vision based on a nurturing and development of biodiversity and that of colonialism aimed at exploiting nature as a set of marketable resources.

Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article develops the theme of anthropology written by Indigenous peoples, something that constitutes a new stage in a long road that began when civil servants from the colonial metropolis began to analyze the customs and thinking of the Indigenous peoples in order to design better policies for their domination, which continued with the presence of anthropologists studying their societies - some to fulfill academic goals and others to try to strengthen their demands for rights (and some who combined the two aspects) - and continues now with the growing presence of Indigenous intellectuals, some of them anthropologists, who are deepening their understanding of their history, knowledge and social structures in order to reconstruct the autonomous spaces they lost through the colonial invasion. It is not a question of successive stages in which one ends before you move onto the next but of three visions that are today coexisting at the same time, sometimes with changing actors, for example, the transnationals replacing the metropolises. The task of Indigenous anthropologists is today more urgent than ever in the face of the debacle of a system based on the destruction of nature and the degradation of human beings. As can be deduced from a reading of Bartolomé's work, it should not be assumed that intellectuals have only recently emerged in Indigenous societies, for they have always existed. It should instead be realized that the current intellectuals are prepared to understand the processes that have affected their societies and to make proposals to reverse them. The author quotes Julian Caballero, from the Ñu Savi people, who sets out the difference between Indian professionals and Indian intellectuals. The former, he says, are those who have obtained some degree or other within the national education system, while the latter are those who "have a clarity about the community's multiple problems and who have the influence to ensure that these problems can be adequately solved". This is more than enough reason to undermine those who argue that Indigenous peoples lack the necessary distance to delve into the search for objectivity, since they do not operate in the same field or with the same interests as professional anthropologists.

In his article, Scott S. Robinson refers to his work as a screenwriter and director of documentaries that record conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the States and companies that invade their territories but, above all, to his work as a promoter of community networks using the digital technology of the Internet, a task that has been hindered by administrative barriers and political interests. The year 2000 saw the documentation of a process aimed at providing traditional and urban communities with access to useful and strategic information. Robinson refers to digital capitalism and the complex Mexican context that combines mining, forestry, agro-industrial and industrial companies, drug cartels and a vast array of armed gangs defending each of these interests. It is also true, however, as Robinson points out, that these forces do not enjoy a clear playing field because, since the 1980s, there has been growing resistance from Indigenous and mestizo organizations to the imposition of megaprojects, and coordination between these organizations has allowed them to form international networks. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increasing digitization of human activities (meetings, distribution, consumption and others) and has therefore accelerated the expansion and strengthened the dominance of the consortia managing this technology. In this context, governments play with the rhetoric of reducing the “digital divide” (bridging the divide is now the mantra of national administrations, which apply it to poverty, access to justice, health care and others) while, in practice, consortia continue to expand their markets. While satisfying a demand, this reduces self-managed connectivity initiatives and, above all, puts the security of their data at risk, which can then be exploited by these consortia for their own purposes. Hence, the author argues, the need for Indigenous organizations, with the advice and support they deem necessary, to participate in formulating public telecommunications policy for the benefit of Indigenous peoples.

The article by Víctor Daniel Bonilla, entitled “A parallel history: Barbados and the Indigenous movement in Colombia”, begins by reminding us of a crucial issue: the way in which the Colombian State placed the so-called “Indigenous issue” in the hands of the Catholic Church, with an evident civilizing, integrating and evangelizing intention. At the time of the first Barbados meeting, the country was governed by the 1886 Constitution, backed up in 1890 by two treaties with the Vatican State: the Concordat and the Mission Convention. These colonial forms were recognized that year by Law 89, which established conditions of protection for the “savages” until they became civilized. The fact is the Indigenous movement and its advisors in Colombia were able to turn this law around and put it at the service of the recognition and titling of “*resguardos*”, the name given in that country to titled communities. It is a law that has been used to this day, and through which millions of hectares have been titled to Indigenous peoples. This leaves us with a valuable lesson: it is not the perfection of the laws but the ability to apply them that is important when

it comes to the recognition of rights. Bonilla's article gives a rich description of Indigenous peoples' struggles to gain recognition of territorial rights and autonomy and the recovery of their memory, acting in contexts marked by political and criminal violence, unleashed by drug cartels and paramilitaries. Talking maps have been fundamental in the recovery of territorial and collective memory, a methodology of which Bonilla was one of the precursors. It was initially developed with the Nasa people but later expanded to other peoples and even other countries.

There are two texts in which the Nahuatl poet, writer and university lecturer Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin participates, in one as author and, in the other, as interviewed by the anthropologist Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo and the lawyer Dulce Patricia Torres Sandoval. The first of these texts is a heartfelt tribute that Hernández pays to the Zapotec poet Víctor de la Cruz, between whom there was a deep friendship that began in 1977, precisely at the Barbados II meeting. At that time, as Hernández states, they had their "first encounters and disagreements as thinkers and leaders of the Indigenous movement in Mexico", the latter motivated by their different political visions and the former by their overlapping demands related to linguistic rights and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. I would like to note here that the lucid presentation made at that time by Víctor de la Cruz was the basis for the final declaration of the Barbados II meeting. In the second text, the authors intersperse an interview with Natalio Hernández with their own reflections. Among these, I would like to highlight those dedicated to my Venezuelan colleague, Nelly Arvelo-Jiménez, for her defence of women's rights. I am not going to repeat what they say and I just want to comment that Nelly, an outstanding researcher at the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research, also played an important role in defending the territorial rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Venezuelan Orinoco. It was precisely because of this issue that she invited me, many years ago, to visit communities of the Yekuana people to which her husband belongs, who at that time were fighting for the demarcation and titling of their lands. Because the current condition of her health is fragile, it was clear to me that she would not be able to write for this book. My indirect attempts, since I was never able to communicate with her directly, to get her to authorize the publication of any of her articles, were sadly unsuccessful. I am grateful for the valuable memories that the authors of this interview dedicate to her since, thanks to them, Nelly still has a presence in this book. In his statements, Natalio Hernández refers to his criticism of Mexican assimilationist and vertical indigenism, represented in the 1970s by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán; and emphasizes the reaffirmation of horizontal dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in order to build what he calls the humanism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His final reflections deserve to be read with particular care.

In her article, Alicia Barabas formulates important reflections on what was given the name of “committed anthropology”, a way of approaching the discipline taking into account that it studies human societies which, since the European invasion of their territories and their subordination to the interests of, first, the colonial and, later, republican powers, have undergone perverse transformations. These are the consequence of the expropriation of their habitats, an attack on their knowledge and beliefs, the dismantling of their social fabric and their loss of autonomy to express themselves as free collectivities. The author explains how, starting in the 1970s, a series of transformations began to take place in Indigenous societies, bringing their problems to light at the national and international levels. And what is even more important is that this visibility has been the result of thinking from within on the problems of these societies, by Indigenous leaders and intellectuals critical of the indigenist and leftist positions, both integrationist, the former due to its conversion of Indigenous peoples into undifferentiated citizens useful to the system, and the latter for transforming them into a proletarian mass that could contribute to creating the communist ideal. And, in the midst of these visions, the devastating advance of extractivism, which does not only reside in doctrine given that its interest lies in converting resources into capital. And, in these positive changes, the Barbados Declaration and the movement it generated played a role that must be recognized. One very important contribution of his article is the analysis, with concrete examples, of what the Catholic Church described as inculturation, clearly an ideological premise manufactured by the Church in its attempt to continue to keep control over faith.

### *Contemporary and Beyond*

The second part of the book opens with a text by Pedro García Hierro, “Perico”, a Spanish lawyer who became a naturalized citizen of Peru and who, since his arrival in Peru in 1971, has been accompanying Indigenous organizations, not only in Peru but also in other countries, especially Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua and Venezuela, in their demands and in the advancement of their demands. I had the opportunity to work with him and learn from his experience in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, both in the evaluation of NGOs’ and Indigenous organizations’ projects financed by international cooperation in those countries, as well as in the preparation of books. One of these evaluations, which included several of the countries mentioned above, gave rise to the book *“El Indígena y su Territorio”*. (Lima, 1991. COICA/OXFAM AMERICA), on which my colleague and friend, the cartographer Richard Ch. Smith also collaborated. Then came *“Marcando territorio”* (Copenhagen, 2007. IWGIA) and *“Organizaciones indígenas de la Amazonía peruana: logros y desafíos”* (in Ana Cecilia Betancur, ed., *Movimientos indígenas en América Latina*. Copenhagen, 2011). His text “Territorial Governance and Indigenous Peoples”, included in this book, is the

written version of a presentation he made to the UN Permanent Forum on 12 May 2015, which he attended on behalf of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the association Peru Equidad. He shared the panel with Jaime Martínez Veloz, Mexico's National Commissioner for Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and Robert Joseph, Professor at Robert Waikato University. Pedro died in 2015. Alejandro Parellada, from IWGIA, asked me to edit a book paying tribute to his work and human qualities. The result was "*Querido Perico*" (Lima, 2015), which contains 36 collaborative works from different authors.

The article by Zulema Lehm and Kantuta Lara clearly describes the situation and problems of Indigenous peoples in Bolivia, both in the lowlands and in the highlands and, in the latter, the problems of unionized peasants and those with approaches that reflect organizational conceptions rooted in their own cultural tradition. The 1952 Revolution approved a radical Agrarian Reform Law that abolished the antisocial systems of Indigenous labour on the *haciendas*, put an end to the *latifundios*, established that their lands should be redistributed among the peasants so that they could work them directly, and ordered the return of lands taken from the Indigenous communities since 1900. The emphasis was on individual ownership, however, and organizing the peasants into agrarian unions. The Indigenous population of the lowlands was forced into *reducciones* ("reductions") under a system of tutelage aimed at incorporating them into the "national life". At the same time, and as was happening in Peru at that time, colonization programmes began to be promoted in the lowlands to relocate the surplus Andean population. This generated conflicts with the native peoples, who began to organize to defend themselves from the invaders. This process led to the founding, in 1982, of the *Central de Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano*, later renamed the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (CIDOB). This and other lowland organizations were to promote and undertake 10 powerful marches between 1990 and 2019 in defence of their territorial rights. Although Bolivia's Indigenous organizations have achieved important advances in the consolidation of their rights, they are permanently confronted with a legal and political framework in which the requirements for achieving rights are maliciously complex, with the aim of turning them into barriers that prevent any results from being achieved.

João Pacheco de Oliveira's article places the start of his reflections in the early 1970s, years in which Brazil was ruled by one of the most brutal military dictatorships in existence at that time. These were also the years of the so-called "Brazilian miracle" and its not-so-wonderful victims, the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, overrun by the machines of progress which devoured the forest to build roads, exploit timber and establish monocropping and pasture for cattle raising. In its most benevolent expression, the Indigenous peoples were confined to official settlements and subjected to a rapid acculturation process.

In practice, however, things were different, since the officials from the body created to protect them - the Indian Protection Service - were involved in scams and acts of genocide against the Indigenous peoples, leading the State to replace it with the National Indian Foundation, still in force today with a similar role. The universities also suffered from military surveillance and were forced to promote short technical courses, while social science classes were openly controlled. The Missionary Indigenist Council (CIMI), linked to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, offered a space for reflection and demands related to the rights of Indigenous peoples. As happened in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship, the banner of the rights of native peoples would once again serve to open up channels of democracy. Pacheco bears witness to the performance of the Brazilian participants at Barbados, with information which, for many, is unpublished. He considers the 1988 Constitution, which strengthened the rights of Indigenous peoples, and the role played by NGOs and Indigenous organizations. He highlights the importance of the Barbados Declaration in the design and execution of research related to the demands of Indigenous peoples, especially territorial demands, and affirms the role of anthropology as an instrument of cultural critique and decolonization of knowledge.

Richard Smith refers to the birth of the first modern Indigenous organization in the Peruvian Amazon, the Amuesha Congress, in 1969. Modern in the sense of bringing together a traditional Indigenous peoples to face up to the problems resulting from the occupation of their territory by the State with policies to resettle unemployed people and landless peasants, but, above all, to put the region at the service of big capital. This offers the systematization of a pioneering experience that would later be continued with the formation of other organizations of different Indigenous peoples having to face similar problems. Among them, networks would later be woven that would contribute to the process of setting up increasingly complex organizations at higher levels: regional, national and international. He also emphasizes the pedagogical value of this work for new generations of young Yánesha (as the Amuesha are now known), whom school and so-called "modernity" have alienated from a knowledge of their own reality. Smith's work presents and analyzes the events that resulted in a crisis in the Amuesha Congress, driven by different groupings and interests: the State, NGOs and political parties, especially the Communist Party of Peru (PCP Unidad, aligned with the USSR). It was a process that began in 1973 and gradually undermined the foundations of the Congress until its dissolution in 1981 and replacement with the Federation of Native Yánesha Communities (Feconaya). Although Smith's work ends on a pessimistic note, I believe that the Yánesha have the potential to reclaim their destiny. The fact that the actors who were involved in this history of harassment (NGOs, State agencies and political parties) have disappeared or lost influence while the people still maintain their identity as a collective is cause for hope.

Rodrigo Villagra's article, like that of João Pacheco de Oliveira, is set in a country in the hands of a strong military dictatorship, in this case that of General Alfredo Stroessner. With respect to Indigenous peoples, this regime had a first stage of integration policies, influenced by the indigenism established in the 1941 Pazcuaro Congress, and a second stage of exclusion, based on a scaling-up of conflicts with Indigenous peoples and communities that had been empowering themselves to claim their rights. Much of these peoples' strengthening was generated by the Marandú project, promoted by Paraguayan anthropologist Miguel Chase Sardi, signatory to the 1971 Declaration of Barbados, and other outstanding professionals. The project was closed down by the dictatorship and its promoters were imprisoned and tortured. Despite the setback, the seeds had been sown and bore fruit with the emergence of the country's first Indigenous organization, the *Asociación de Parcialidades Indígenas*. New organizations and institutions were to follow in the same direction. The 1992 Political Constitution of Paraguay contains specific norms related to the rights of Indigenous peoples, the main one perhaps being recognition of "the existence of Indigenous peoples, defined as groups with a culture prior to the formation and organization of the Paraguayan State" (Art. 62), which implies the priority of their rights over those created subsequently. A year later, Paraguay ratified ILO Convention 169. On this legal and organizational basis, the Indigenous peoples in Paraguay have achieved great success in getting their rights recognized and have even obtained, with the support of specialist institutions, three favourable rulings from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. While the path to achieving these was often tortuous, the progress made is undeniable.

Thomas Moore's article begins by acknowledging the context of the early 1970s. He had arrived in Peru as a student in 1971, the year in which the first Barbados meeting and the Declaration that today brings us together in this book took place. In that context he met Stefano Varese, who at the time was working with the government on a bill of law that would recognize the country's Amazonian Indigenous peoples as subjects of law. Since then, he has worked with the Harakbut of the Madre de Dios region, a people and a region with many special features. The first of these is the fact that the Arakbut *parcialidad* (subgroup) had only recently emerged from its isolation in 1950 and a second is that it offered the clearest expression of the schizophrenia that was prevalent in the Peruvian State. Madre de Dios is, on the one hand, the Peruvian region with the largest number of protected natural areas (three national parks - the highest environmental category -, and two reserves, one national and one for Indigenous groups in voluntary isolation) and, on the other, the region with the most environmentally destructive and socially corrupting activities, the main one being alluvial gold mining, followed by deforestation by loggers and settlers. In coordination with Indigenous leaders in the region, Moore began working in the 1980s to promote an organization that would represent them and coordinate their efforts to defend their rights. In time,

this became established as a multiethnic organization bringing together peoples and segments of peoples who had been brought to the region by the rubber tappers at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, another peculiarity of the region. The subsequent tensions due to its multiethnic nature and other problems are neatly placed in context by Moore, who also gives an account of another peculiarity of the region, which is the alliance between Indigenous, peasant and mining organizations for the defence of their common rights.

Silvel Elías' article begins by highlighting the concurrence in time between the Declaration of Barbados I and the transformation of conceptions in Guatemala regarding how to deal with the so-called "Indigenous problem". As in other countries in the Americas, Guatemala's Indigenous peoples were considered a barrier to the country's progress, and their "integration" into a supposedly modern and democratic "national society" was proposed as an alternative so that they could overcome their situation of poverty. This deceitful argument falls apart when one looks at the huge sector of non-Indigenous poor who are perfectly "integrated" into the networks of the surrounding society. The strategy is still in force, however, now under the name of "entry into modernity", for which, through siren songs, the idea is promoted that Indigenous peoples should alienate themselves from their ancestral heritage in order to "capitalize" on it and, with the money obtained, become prosperous citizens running their own businesses. Elías notes the simultaneity between the Declaration of Barbados I and the decline of integrationist indigenist thinking in Guatemala, and states that this is not a mere coincidence. In fact, he says, approaching Indigenous issues from that point of view was already in decline in other American countries, such as Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. This was due to the emergence of Indigenous movements with their own voice and protagonism, which began to demand recognition of their collective rights from their States and the world, enriching the debate with new concepts, as Indigenous peoples with an integral territory. The greater visibility of Indigenous peoples, Elías states, is evident in the censuses, and this increase was not due to an exponential increase in births but due to having overcome the fear that racism implanted in them. The path is a difficult one and, in Guatemala, the commitments made to Indigenous peoples in the 1996 Peace Agreement are still pending.

Frederica Barclay's article begins in the mid-1970s when she was a student of anthropology at the Catholic University of Peru. Here, as she points out, the curriculum was conventional, the lecturers, with few exceptions, worked with their backs turned to a Peruvian society that at the time - the government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado - was undergoing great transformations - agrarian reform, nationalization of the oil industry, the law on native communities and other fundamental changes - and was directed towards Andean studies. Suddenly, however, a course entitled "Tropical Forests" emerged and, later,

another on Amazonian ethnology, which opened an unsuspecting door to many students who, in defiance of the Andean trend, began to look at the region east of the Andes. And the world began to expand for them through conversations with Stefano Varese and knowledge of the Barbados Declaration which, as the author says, “offered them almost a blueprint for action”. By that time, this group of students was experiencing the world of critical reflections on the permanence of the *Instituto Lingüístico de Verano* in the country and certainly of a confrontation with several of their lecturers, who defended the Bible translators. And that story, in which I was also involved, continued with the good idea of colleague Richard Ch. Smith to link up anthropology students interested in the Amazon from the Catholic and San Marcos universities with professionals who were already working on issues related to the collective rights of Indigenous peoples - individually or from the State - and various activists who were supporting community initiatives in fields as diverse as health or the production and marketing of handicrafts. These meetings were later joined by community leaders or leaders of newly-founded Indigenous organizations. We had no idea that the coordination of these leaders would give rise, a short time later, to the national confederation known as the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (Aidesep).

In his article, Søren Hvalkof discusses the social and political changes in the Gran Pajonal and the upper Ucayali River, in the vast Amazonian region known in Peru as the “*Selva Central*”, inhabited by several Indigenous peoples, mostly of Arawak descent, such as the Asháninka, the Ashéninka, the Nomatsiguenga and the Yánesha. He traces the historical panorama of this region, subjected early on to the system of missionary *reducciones* that were established there from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, the evangelization led by the Franciscans was violently halted by the 1742 uprising of Juan Santos Atahualpa, a leader of Andean origin who claimed to be descended from the Inca. The insurrection expelled the missionaries and prevented new settlers from entering the region for almost a century. During the Republic, however, new penetration strategies, including “pacification” by the Army, succeeded in expanding the colonization frontier across the region, appropriating Indigenous territories and breaking up their settlements into small islands surrounded by settlers. In much of the area, the population was subjected to a regime of exploitation, debt bondage and even slavery (limitations on free movement and physical punishment in cases where the Indigenous peoples committed acts that, in the opinion of the bosses, transgressed their rules) that was to last until the 1980s. At that time, driven by various actors, including the Indigenous communities and organizations themselves, two processes took place that were decisive in changing the region’s history. The first was the titling of the communities of the Gran Pajonal; the second the broad work to denounce the barbarity of the employers inflicted upon the population of the Alto Ucayali. The Indigenous confederation Aidesep

and the Peruvian Indigenist Institute played a major role in leading this latter. The merit of this work is immense because it was carried out in a context of extreme violence on the part of the bosses and the local authorities that supported them, drug cartels, armed groups and anti-subversive forces of the State.

### *Barbados and IWGIA*

The third section, *Barbados and IWGIA*, contains four interviews with people who have been important to IWGIA's work plus an annex to one of the articles in the second section. The first of these is an interview with René Fuerst, by Espen Wæhle, a Norwegian social anthropologist, who is currently working as a curator at the Norwegian Maritime Museum in Oslo. Fuerst is a Swiss ethnologist, museum curator and photographer who has worked with the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon. He is now blind and in poor health, which is why Wæhle had to conduct the interview by telephone while Fuerst was in a Geneva hospital. In this conversation, among other things, he confessed that he was not planning on dying any time soon. In 2019, Fuerst published a memoir entitled *Indiens d'Amazonie. Vingt Belles Années | 1955 - 1975*. He considers that the 1970s "was the beginning of the end for many Indigenous peoples" in Brazil due to the construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway and the colonization plans implemented by the government, together with the handing over of the region to large transnational corporations. At that time, some Indigenous peoples had disappeared and others were dominated by evangelicals. For denouncing these abuses, the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil expelled him from the country in 1975. Upon his return to Europe, he became acquainted with Helge Kleivan, founder of IWGIA, and thus began his collaboration with the institution. He believes it is important for IWGIA to continue to support the demands and struggles of Indigenous peoples around the world.

The second interview, with Jens Dahl, was conducted by Alejandro Parellada. Alejandro Parellada, an Argentine anthropologist based in Denmark, has been working at the IWGIA Secretariat in Copenhagen since 1991 as advisor to the Indigenous governance programme and coordinator of publications in Spanish. Jens Dahl, a Danish anthropologist, has been involved with IWGIA almost since its inception due to his friendship with Peter Aaby and his having been a student of Helge Kleivan, both Norwegian anthropologists, and the latter being the founder of the institution. Dahl points out that the 1971 Declaration of Barbados has been fundamental in guiding the life of the institution. In fact, it was IWGIA's first publication in its "Documents" series. One of the issues addressed in the interview is the compatibility between the political work of anthropologists committed to the rights of Indigenous peoples and their role as academics. He argues that Danish academia, then and now, considers these to be incompatible and, for this reason, at the time criticized Helge Kleivan's work. "The creation of

IWGIA was not primarily the result of the Danish anthropological environment but rather of the Norwegian, Swedish, German and Swiss," Dahl comments. This topic is addressed by several of the articles included in this volume. What is clear, however, is that, motivated by the discussions in Barbados, IWGIA's work has been important in terms of Indigenous peoples in Latin America claiming fundamental rights, especially those related to lands and territories. The discussions promoted by IWGIA have also played a central role in the creation of organizations in other regions, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (later renamed the Inuit Circumpolar Council) and the holding of the first conference of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia, Canada.

The third interview, of Peter Aaby, conducted by Søren Hvalkof and including the latter's appendix to his article included in this book, can be reviewed together because both texts address the emergence of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs as well as other support institutions and the emergence of Indigenous organizations. Hvalkof refers to the scant importance that the University of Copenhagen, where he studied anthropology, gave at that time to Indigenous peoples, which is the same thing that was happening at the Catholic University of Peru at that time, as Frederica Barclay writes in her article in this book. The author states: "Indigenous peoples and their rights were not part of their agenda." A similar situation arose at the large international meetings of anthropologists at which Indigenous issues were addressed. In his interview, Peter Aaby mentions that, at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in Chicago in 1973: "There was much opposition to allowing the entry of Indigenous peoples, considered a political interference with no relevance to science". Although discriminatory positions such as this are unthinkable today, attitudes persist that continue to deny the authority of Indigenous peoples to analyze their own society, as Miguel Alberto Bartolomé points out with great lucidity in his article in this book. The 1960s and 1970s were central to generating significant changes in the world, as evidenced by the great student protests, in Paris and Mexico, both in 1968, against authoritarianism in the universities but also against the injustice of the system as a whole. These were also the years in which denunciations of the atrocities committed by States and extractive and agro-industrial companies against Indigenous peoples were made public. It is a situation that gave rise to the organization of institutions to denounce these outrages, and who found in this context the ferment with which to emerge. Such was the case of IWGIA, which plays a substantial role in supporting the struggles of Indigenous peoples around the world and is the most important publisher on issues concerning them, whether reporting on violations of their rights or highlighting the triumphs of their demands. Similar initiatives were also emerging in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States. For their part, Indigenous societies were gradually organizing and establishing associations that would

soon achieve a strong presence in the national and international arenas. But these were also the years of the great tyrannies in Latin America: in Brazil (1964), Chile (1973), Uruguay (1973), Argentina (1976) and Paraguay (1954-1989). Years in which the United States, surprised by the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, wished to prevent history from repeating itself and instigated the Camelot project, in 1963, under the direction of its army. As Aaby notes in his interview, this was with the purpose of investigating and gathering information that would be useful for its counterinsurgency strategy and for unleashing psychological warfare. To this end, it recruited hundreds of social scientists to begin working in Chile, where Salvador Allende had taken power through the ballot box. In short, the path followed by the Indigenous organizations has been an arduous one, with some setbacks and failures, but also with undeniable triumphs, laboriously achieved. This scenario does not seem likely to change in the future, and so the strengthening of Indigenous organizations and the coherence of their allies will continue to be essential in order to face new problems.

The fourth interview, of Aqqaluk Lyngé, leader of Greenland's Inuit people, was conducted by Jens Dahl and Alejandro Parellada. Greenland's Inuit have achieved recognition of their self-government status from Denmark, by which they are able to make free decisions in various areas of their work as a people. Aqqaluk has served as President (1997-2002) and Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2010-14). In the interview, he recounts how he became committed to the cause of his people and that of Indigenous peoples in general. This process began in 1973, at a symposium held in Le Havre, France, on oil and gas operations in the Arctic, resources in which the United States has always shown enormous interest. The awareness that his and other young Inuit youths' participation in this meeting created in him soon came up against a problem because the Greenlandic Provincial Council did not want to clash with the Danish authorities. Despite this, in coordination with other Arctic Indigenous peoples, they succeeded in forming a Greenlandic delegation to the First World Conference of Indigenous Peoples held in Port Alberni, Vancouver, Canada, in 1965. In spite of the difficulties faced by the Arctic peoples' delegates in reaching an understanding with the Indigenous representatives from Latin America (due to language issues and different contexts), to which Aqqaluk himself refers, the meeting was an eye-opener because, for the first time, they heard about the violence being unleashed by governments and power groups against Indigenous peoples in Guatemala and other countries. Since then, his commitment to the fate of the Inuit and the problems of other Indigenous peoples has been strengthened. Up to that point, he notes, "we were living in a little bubble in Danish society." He is aware that the process of claiming rights has been strengthened since the Declaration of Barbados.

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# PART 1

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## Founders and Participants





# THE AWAKENING OF THE INDIGENOUS WORLD: FROM INVISIBILITY TO POTENTIAL SAVIOURS OF HUMANITY.

Reflections on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the successful “Declaration of Barbados”

**Esteban Emilio Mosonyi**



I

Anyone reading this title will very quickly realize - with little risk of error - that its author must be a “Barbadian anthropologist” and highly enthusiastic about the cause it represents. They will probably go on to assume that the author must be rather optimistic, naive perhaps, in view of such expressions as “saviours of humanity” and “successful Declaration”. This is an interpretation with which I would beg to differ, as it seems a touch hasty. Perhaps I am a little optimistic, for genetic or cultural reasons. But I do not consider myself overly optimistic, and nor do I have any reason to be.

My life has not exactly been a sea of happiness, now less than ever. I live in a country that is drowning in a complex and deep, structural and circumstantial crisis, one that is still far from any apparent resolution. And it is not just me saying that. It is a general opinion based on fact. Personally, I feel out of place in this so-called “revolution”. I would say it has failed, both due to serious intrinsic errors and because of the efforts of a ruthless opposition, internal and external. The following will better explain my position. At the age of 81, I find myself helpless, almost persecuted for my critical opinions, with the salary of a retired tenured professor not exceeding US\$ 20 a month, and which I try to supplement with some occasional work.

This is the country of the so-called “zero wage”, since the minimum wage is less than two dollars a month and there is a large informal sector plus mass unemployment. The little boxes or bags of food and the minimal bonuses that some sectors receive from the government, generally those closest to the governing party, in no way solve this precarious life, which is almost unbelievable for the few visitors and tourists that arrive in Venezuela. And these people are far fewer now, with the pandemic here to stay.

## THE AWAKENING OF THE INDIGENOUS WORLD

The situation of the Indigenous peoples, in this context, is particularly distressing, despite their extensive constitutional rights, complemented by a rich and nuanced set of regulations. It would be unfair and even petty of me to downplay the obvious fact that it was the revolutionary commander and president Hugo Chávez Frías - clearly influenced by the Declaration of Barbados - who made a genuine effort to turn the so-called Bolivarian Constitution of 1999 into a true instrument of struggle in the hands of the Indigenous peoples, defying even the resistance of the conservative Right, of a semi-dogmatic Left and of the military constituent assembly members. Venezuela is an Amazonian and peri-Amazonian country and, as such, subject to the cruelest attacks from mining and oil extraction. The gold rush sweeping through the country today - a hangover from the "Myth of El Dorado" - is frightening. Since I will need to return to this subject several times in what follows, I will for now limit myself to saying that it is because of gold mining that entire Indigenous communities are being evicted, large areas of forest deforested, and community members induced and almost forced to take up mining as their only lifeline given the impossibility of practising their traditional culture in the face of pressure, threats, false promises and the contamination of river waters with mercury and cyanide.

It is important to add that most of our Indigenous communities and peoples live in border areas along the Colombian, Brazilian and Guyanese/Esequiban (an area still claimed by Venezuela from the Republic of Guyana) border. I do not wish to go into details but it has to be said that, for decades, the native peoples of Venezuela - the Pemón and the Wayuu in particular - have been burdened with a series of frightening names: secessionists, separatists, proponents of a "state within the state", traitors to the homeland, bad Venezuelans and others that the keen reader will be able to divine. We must not forget that Venezuela is and always has been a strongly militarized country and President Maduro never tires of boasting of the importance of a close "civil-military-police" union. The most persecuted people are currently the Pemón but no Indigenous peoples is safe.

Living on the border also brings other complications. The entire Colombian-Venezuelan borderline is plagued with irregular armed groups comprising guerrillas, paramilitaries, drug traffickers and criminals of all kinds. They have more power than the military on both sides of the border, but the military are also abusive in their own way. The Indigenous Piaroa (Wóthiha), Hiwi (Guajibó), Arawak, Ye'kwuana, Yanomami and others have faced them all firmly and decisively, and even with an impressive legal and political arsenal, supported by their best allies - anthropologists, lawyers, doctors, educators and others - but always exercising their own protagonism, without letting themselves be overwhelmed by anyone. As in other countries, Venezuela also has the phenomenon of peoples living in voluntary isolation and semi-isolation.

Much further north, in Zulia state on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, the numerous Arawak Wayuu people (formerly known as “Guajiro”, with more than half a million members between the two countries) are suffering their own existential drama. After thousands of years of freedom of movement on their extensive peninsula and its outreaches, they now have to suffer ignominious - in some cases severe - separation from their own clans, lineages, communities and, quite often, even nuclear families and members: such is the case, for example, of hamlets and even houses nestled at the border. The two governments - not their peoples - are now deeply at odds with each other, to the extent that we can speak of an undeclared war. In addition, there is the dainty looking coronavirus wreaking havoc in Indigenous areas.

II

I think the above clarifies that I am not a dreamer blinded by a false optimism which, in extreme cases, can hide reality. Nonetheless, we still have to answer the two questions implicit in the very title of this article. The first refers to my statement that the “Declaration of Barbados was a success”. I say it was, it has been, and it continues to be: not only the Declaration but the entire team that participated in one way or another in any of the three emblematic meetings organized and held with the utmost punctuality and discipline. If some sceptic were to state in my presence that social activists do not generally obtain their desired results, I would reply that we Barbadians, with all our limitations, triumphed far beyond our initial expectations.

In arguing this, I will base myself on my own experience here, in Venezuela, also referring to the rest of the continent when the circumstances merit it. I am not going to say that things started to improve overnight as a result of our deliberations and ensuing documents. But there was much greater visibility of the Indigenous issue among growing sectors of the national population, and this had a very strong impact on both the political and ecclesiastical classes, just as we had expected although to an even greater degree. By the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority political parties - those with real decision-making power - were showing a sincere concern for the Indigenous population and a desire to improve and increase their knowledge of this complex reality.

The ever-present devil’s advocates, more abundant than the devils themselves, will already have their answer prepared with their usual casualness: “But perhaps this greater interest in the Indigenous world had little or nothing to do with Barbados as such but came instead from the work of the Indigenous organizations themselves, supported by numerous allies on a continental and global level,” these friends of the cause will argue, downplaying our achievements. And our unambiguous response is that of course we are not alone but that

our direct influence on the bodies to whom our message was directed had a multiplier effect on the numerous organizations it reached indirectly, through the intermediation of the direct recipients.

We can give a series of examples, without any great difficulty, of perfect logical and pedagogical consistency. In my personal case, even before I became a Barbadian, I had an evident influence - together with my friend and colleague, Omar González Nãñez, an illustrious Venezuelan anthropologist who recently passed away - on the anthropological profession and on a large number of other professionals and sympathizers of various origins, mostly young. I also mobilized in relation to our Indigenous movement, incipient but eager to work. Without being a "*copeyano*" (member of the Copei Social Christian Party), some friends close to government invited me to contact the Minister of Education, Dr. Rafael Fernández Heres, who was planning to draft a decree on Indigenous education. I managed to advise him and, in 1979, President Luis Herrera Campíns decreed the Bilingual Intercultural Education System (Decree 283, REIB) for Venezuela's Indigenous peoples. This document was still too "*chucuto*" (limited) for our taste but it represented a very important step forward in the claims of the original peoples; and not only in Venezuela because, at that historic moment, our country was serving as an example for the continent in a number of public policy matters. Along with other Barbadians from Venezuela, I never stopped working in close union with the wide but not unconnected Indigenous world. That is why it is so ironic that it was precisely this increasingly decadent "Bolivarian Revolution" that demoted me from V.I.P. to V.U.P. (Very Unpleasant Person) although I will not allow them to take my well-earned space away from me.

Without claiming to systematize our contributions, I still want to delve a little further into the adventures of the Barbadians of Venezuela and our best collaborators, who are legion. The "*maestra*" (in the Mexican sense) Nelly Arvelo has exerted huge influence over an institution as fundamental as the IVIC (Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research), where she has settled and enjoys international renown. She is another of our lifelong activists, and her influence over continental public policy is of the highest order. The Indigenous Barbadians, Arcadio Montiel (Wayuu) and Simeón Jiménez (Ye'kwuana and husband of Nelly Arvelo), have contributed hugely to the Venezuelan Indigenous movement, both politically and academically. Wayuu matriarch Noelí Pocatererra - linked to Barbados - has been a leading figure in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

The same is true at the inter-American and international levels. I am not writing a chronicle so I would ask you to forgive me for not naming names, to ensure that I do not sin by omission, something that would be too painful for me. But, even so, I cannot fail to name the illustrious Darcy Ribeiro, above all because of his presence at the highest level of Brazilian politics, today demoted (and

this needs to be read in Spanish with a Castilian-castizo accent) “*de la cima a la sima*” (“from top to bottom”) by the outrageous Bolsonaro, who I wish would stop doing so much harm to the Indigenous and other peoples of our beloved Brazil (unfortunately, all populations commit stupidities). Nonetheless, while we grieve for those in pain now, we Barbadians have been an extremely successful team and the world’s Indigenous population has become a global-level power.

I would like to conclude this part of my reflection with a brief reference to the changes that have taken place in the daily lives of our Indigenous brothers and sisters as a result of this bloodless cultural revolution in which the Barbados group played such a prominent role. By way of example, I am always very excited when the students at our Indigenous University of Tauca show so much ethnic pride, vindicated knowledge and willingness to overcome the stubborn obstacles that they must face in each of their appearances; something unthinkable prior to the partial recovery of their human and constitutional rights. As far as the now proud and protagonic Wayuu are concerned –to whose Aápüshana clan I am honored to belong–, their own documents prior to 1960 still reproach the Venezuelan State for the continuity of their specific ethnic identity rather than to be fully incorporated into the widespread *mestizo* majority.

### III

I am aware that I have yet to answer the second question implicit in the title with which I dared to label these reflections: why do I consider Indigenous peoples to have an important place among the possible saviours of humanity? This needs to be argued clearly and, as the arguments are many, for reasons of space I am forced to summarize in just a few lines those areas that seem of most significance and relevance to me. In fact, I will list them:

#### **1. The current crisis of the Western civilizing model is forcing us to resort to a global dialogue between cultures and civilizations**

I am convinced that no intelligent, moderately informed human being today, provided they suffer from no irrational or extreme prejudice, can fail to recognize the existence of a growing planetary mega-crisis with its multitude of manifestations and expressions across the whole world. It has already become tedious to mention some of them, and yet it is difficult to prioritize anyone because they are all interrelated. Some opinion makers stop at global warming and ecological disaster. Others at the growing threat of a nuclear conflict between increasingly aggressive rival powers. Yet others point to the frightening inequality between a minority population of no more than 10% of the inhabitants of this endangered world who hold all the economic, military, political, media, technological, religious and symbolic power, and the remaining 90%, condemned to an increasingly impoverished and precarious existence.

Such is the crisis of today's "Westernized" world, and sensitive thinking people are compelled to keep other ways of life in mind.

### **2. The undeniable crisis of the Left and of so-called "progressivism" in general**

The Left of today and also to a great extent the Left of years ago is not and does not represent what it represented in its philosophical and symbolic origins: the triumph of good over evil; the inclusion of the great multitudes; freedom-equality-fraternity; the redemption of the poor and helpless; true justice beyond the interests of the moment and the time. Today, the Left is very much confused with the Right: authoritarianism, fanaticism, inequality, corruption, pharaonism, cruelty, technocracy, unbridled extractivism: multipolar neo-imperialism. And yet there are also ever more honest people - I come across them in my daily life - who are eager to restore the dignity of this immortal epithet, that means belonging to a worldwide Left. The West is not enough for them. They need to turn to the original peoples who have preserved and deepened many unfading virtues.

### **3. Environmental and anti-consumerist activism needs Indigenous support**

At this point in the world crisis, it is not enough to simply be "green", to boast about a "generic environmentalism". Today, many green policies are being designed that contribute to neoliberal capitalism, aimed at destroying the economies and natural bases of Indigenous and peasant communities with their "energy" producing monocultures. Nor is "pure environmentalism" valid, as this despises the human being, just as "anthropocentric environmentalism" is an aberration. In our experience - and this is shared by numerous activists and thinkers - the Andean, Amazonian and other native peoples, for the most part, are the ones who are setting historically validated parameters on how to combine a great "religious" respect for the natural assets with a "good life" (*sumaq kawsay*) that avoids the traps of both excessive frugality and crazy consumerism.

### **4. Inter-religious movements taking Indigenous spirituality increasingly into account**

As an old activist of different inter-religious initiatives - which also influenced the birth of the Barbados group - I know rather well what the religious expressions, original or intercultural, of the Indigenous and Indian-descendant peoples (for example, the *mestizo* peasants) mean. Catholicism is now asking forgiveness of the Indian peoples (end of the struggle) of Latin America; see the great work that Pope Francis has been doing in our martyred Amazon. Most Protestants, however, are continuing with their excessive fundamentalism. Islam is even divided into opposing sides. There is still so much religious and anti-religious fanaticism throughout the world. The beautiful Indigenous spirituality, with its

love of nature, its links with the cosmos and its respect for humanity continues to harvest triumph everywhere.

### **5. Voluntary isolation: humiliation and a warning to the West**

It is well-known - especially among my fellow Barbadians - that I am not a supporter of isolationism but rather one of the founders and cultivators of interculturality. However, in certain cases I not only accept the voluntary – and I hope only temporary - isolation of some communities, I advise and support it. For example, the relentless “petrolification” of the Ecuadorian Amazon does not seem to offer any alternative strategy for the survival of various peoples and cultures. Moreover, there is no greater humiliation for a self-important and self-sufficient Westernism (whether Right-wing or pseudo-Left) than these or similar words from a wilful Indigenous leader: “I don’t need anything from you. Keep for yourselves all your overwhelming haberdashery; we want to continue happy with our age-old culture”.

### **6. The great Indigenous struggles do not exclude the rest of humanity**

Indigenous peoples are not selfish. It gives them great pleasure to share with others; this is something I have experienced on many occasions. We saw only recently how the Indigenous vanguard movement managed to stop some of the neoliberal excesses of Lenin Moreno’s government in Ecuador. The Zapatistas of Mexico, the Chilean and Argentinean Mapuche, even the tiny Indian villages of gigantic Brazil all give us telling examples and it is clear we are falling short. Evo Morales did a tremendous job as President of Bolivia; it is a real shame - perhaps not irredeemable - that he paid so much lip service to the siren song of Marxism-Leninism and transmigrated to an anti-environmental and even anti-Indigenous extractivism in the final years of his term. What a stark contrast to Chief Seattle, the world’s first great environmentalist!

### **7. Multiple Indigenous cultures are the best defenders of the world’s megadiversity**

This is not the simple slogan many thinkers and desk-based humanists still believe it to be; I can bear witness to this first-hand as Chancellor of the Indigenous University of Tauca. I myself did not want to believe my eyes and ears when our students handed in splendid works, for example, on the slash-and-burn or grazing systems of their respective communities. Their farming methods and techniques were clearly differentiated according to impeccable epistemic bases, in line with each of the multiple botanical, edaphic, phytogeographic and microclimatic varieties: micro-ecosystems, in brief, converging in the final outcome. The scientists of the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research were amazed at such a display of biodiversity and sociodiversity in our Amazonian civilizing model.

### IV

In the previous section, I endeavoured to make a credible case for my assertion that Indigenous peoples are among the possible saviours of the human species and of planet Earth itself within its current environment. I hope my arguments and approaches were, at the very least, relevant. I do not consider myself a neo-Rousseauian (from Rousseau) or a Romantic, despite my sincere recognition of the work of the Geneva-born philosopher and of the most exalted representatives of Romanticism. Other winds are now blowing and new categories have to be considered. I do not overestimate the Indigenous cultures: they are fallible and perfectible as is everything human. This makes them even more valuable albeit in need of a wide intercultural fertilization. This does not, however, detract from their long creative accumulation of values and knowledge, in constant flux, and without whose contribution humanity would wither and die.

The Amazonian-Caribbean civilization - or, better put - civilizing process represents no less than the Mesoamerican or Peri-Andean and is no less worthy than the Pan-Western or the East Asian systems seen as a whole. This can be easily understood when we see that, within the Western world itself, a physicist or an engineer is neither more nor less civilized or important than a philosopher, an artist, a poet, a worker, an entrepreneur or a politician: I am referring, of course, to an honest, well-trained, committed politician, aware of their duties and limitations: nonetheless, in principle, this applies to the other categories as well. Interculturality, horizontal and democratic, brings peoples closer together and makes them more fruitful but it neither suppresses nor distorts their diversity, which is healthy for our species and for the entire telluric-cosmic environment. And, without being a panacea, their strengthening would greatly facilitate a more harmonious coexistence between humans themselves and the universe of which we are a part.

And yet, even recognizing and subscribing to all that has been said, how can we assert our socio-diverse, ecumenical and intercultural activism in the midst of a global mega-crisis that risks ending in chaos and destroying everything in existence? We must in no way underestimate the severity of the situation but we can nonetheless take up the challenge. The mere ability to adequately describe the wider problem, in large part thanks to the resistance and resilience of the Indigenous world, helps us to formulate an initial response. The mobilization of the native peoples is contributing significantly to consolidating the immense network of counterbalances that is emerging from the oppressed 90% of the earth's population, aimed at effectively confronting the 10% of the so-called elite that keeps us alienated and subjugated (cfr. III.1).

To conclude, let us illustrate this with the case of Venezuela. The chaos in which Venezuelan society is currently embroiled has forced us to speed up the strategic

unification of the counterbalances that are emanating from social, community, cultural, sports, student, union, business, inter-religious, academic, sex-diverse and feminist movements, in whose free alliance - albeit aimed at national reconciliation and the integral recovery of the country - organized Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples play a prominent role. The unexpected and unplanned success of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, decreed by UNESCO, is also contributing to this successful participation with extraordinary input and momentum. In spite of the pandemic, an unusual, unimagined and highly interesting perspective is opening up for the full revival and recovery of our immense cultural and anthropological heritage.

We need to dwell on this point briefly due to its significant role in everything related to the issue of “language” as characterizing the reality of Indigenous peoples. My “obsession” - albeit in a good way - with the vitality of Indigenous languages is not unknown in the Barbadian environment: it has been with me almost since birth. That is why I have long viewed with immense concern the fact that - in the heat of the struggle for demands - the preservation of native languages almost always occupied a subordinate place. It was the “Cinderella” among the priorities of Indigenous peoples and allies alike. I have tried to understand this in terms of the urgency and visibility of other issues that needed to be addressed first, such as genocides, epidemics, large-scale invasions, outrage over transnational companies and so on.

When, for example, a massacre occurs within a community, it would be futile to dwell on whether the victims speak their own or a borrowed language, whether they are passing it on to their children, or even whether the school - if they have one - practices a good and successful Intercultural Bilingual or Multilingual Education. And, unfortunately, emergency situations exist and persist and are increasing, now and who knows for how long. The transnational companies are currently taking advantage of the immobility created by the pandemic to extract even greater concessions from governments - the “Venezuela case” is really pathetic - for the exploration, extraction and exploitation of all types of raw materials, “commodities”, without limitation, invited in with the blessing of the authorities themselves who even have the cynicism to baptize their mafia businesses “eco-socialism”.

In spite of it all, it would be petty of me to deny that - thanks to so many valuable fighters - serious progress has been made in the multifaceted defence of native languages, although legislative progress always predominates over the real and daily practice. Even with such limitations, Indigenous leaders have understood that their own language - when it exists - is fundamental, an invaluable treasure: much more than a means of communication, a monumental creation sublime in form and rich in content. It is aesthetic perfection with an historical and

contemporary as well as a transgenerational identity. Indigenous movements and their members - in their vast majority - want to preserve and strengthen their languages; paradoxically, however, they often fail to achieve this goal even in very favourable intercultural circumstances.

I am an eyewitness and attentive observer to many such situations. There is a great deal of evidence in the Venezuelan Guajira of successful educators and professionals - generally urbanized or semi-urbanized in Maracaibo who, while wanting to preserve their entire culture and strengthen their daily use of the language, cannot find a way to introduce the necessary parameters into their daily family life that would allow them to adequately fulfill their demanding “*wayúuwaa*” (the deep Wayuu identity). Many have Creole partners and there are many longstanding *mestizos* among them. Their day-to-day life is spent in the eternal hustle and bustle of the big city with its inevitable commitments, a very Hispanic bureaucracy independent of them, and the presence of the “*alijuna*” (Creole) even in the most intimate location of their home life.

The children and grandchildren of this emerging Wayuu middle class, in particular, are rapidly losing the use of their language; there are too many who no longer speak it, except for a few greetings and petrified phrases. And, once you lose your language, it is a difficult thing to regain. There are courses on offer but they tend to be long-term and somewhat abstract and passive, like most language courses (including English), and not excluding the more “online” and computerized ones. This is why I have made such an effort to design an entire intercultural methodology - with contributions from both traditional Indigenous ethnoscience and contemporary anthropology - which we have called “Immediately Activated Anthro-linguistical Workshops” (TAAI: *Talleres Antropolingüísticos de Activación Inmediata*), the details of which are set out in other writings that I am systematizing.

Since before the proclamation of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, I have been testing my method at different opportunities and in different circumstances, and I feel a sense of well-deserved pride at the recognition and success it has achieved. In just a few well-conducted sessions, non-speakers - of any Indigenous or non-Indigenous language, not just *Wayúunaiki* - can begin to speak that language correctly, and with good melodic and rhythmic projection; meanwhile semi-speakers - who are more common than you might think - can improve their performance considerably. The President of the Venezuelan Academy of Language, the anthropologist and linguist Horacio Biorid himself and other experts in the field - including the musicians of the National System of Orchestras - have congratulated my initiative, and the continuation of the TAAI workshops will be encouraged and supported once the pandemic is under control and the turbulent situation in our country has been more or less normalized.



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**First Barbados Meeting (1971)**

Photo 1. From left to right: Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, Miguel Chase Sardi, Esteban Monsonyi and Darcy Ribeyro.

**Second Barbados Meeting (1977)**

Photo 2. Some well-known faces. From left to right at the back: Stefano Varese, Pedro Agostinho, Nemesio Rodríguez, Silvio Coelho, Esteban Mosonyi, Guillermo Bonfil and Georg Grünberg. Squatting in the front, on the far left: the Ayacuchan anthropologist Salvador Palomino; in the centre, a Brazilian Jesuit priest and, on his right, behind, Víctor Daniel Bonilla.

Photo 3. From left to right: Víctor de la Cruz, Zapotec poet; unidentified participant; anthropologist Miguel Alberto Bartolomé; and Juan López, teacher and Yánesha leader.



## BARBADOS 1971, AN ONGOING CHALLENGE

Georg Grünberg

The Barbados Conference of January 1971 marked the starting point of a Latin American anthropology aimed cooperating with the Indigenous peoples. It was called “committed”, “anti-imperialist” and “liberating”. Since the conference took place at the University of the West Indies in Bridgetown, on the island of Barbados, it adopted the name by which it has since become famous. It was possible only after the shakeup of 1968, for the sciences linked to European colonialism and its scandalous replication as internal colonialism, as practised in the Americas for more than two centuries, were heavily criticised and this on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time the conference put an end to the doctrine of Indigenism that had been institutionalized by all American states and was considered by many intellectuals - with hypocritical benevolence - as a lesser evil. In retrospect, it seems inevitable that a call for the *liberation of colonized peoples*<sup>1</sup> would emerge from within anthropology. Due to unforeseeable circumstances, it happened precisely in Barbados, giving rise to an open and flourishing search that remains alive to this day.

By the end of the 1960s, statements from a number of European and Latin American anthropologists at congresses and seminars<sup>2</sup> had led to heated discussions between representatives of an “applied anthropology” in the style of North American indigenism and those influenced by a “critical anthropology” imported from Mexico. A body of documentation on the extreme violence being experienced by Indigenous peoples in Latin America did exist but remained little known in academic circles. Racism and post-colonial “decolonization” were discussed mainly from an African perspective.<sup>3</sup>

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1 This article is based on an essay published in German: “*Barbados und die Folgen*”. In: Gerhard Drekonja-Kornat (Hg.) Lateinamerikanistik. *Der österreichische Weg*, pp.25-33; 2005; Vienna, and in the preface to the reprint of the book *La Situación Indígena en América del Sur. Aportes al estudio de la fricción interétnica en los indios no andinos*, 1972; Montevideo. Reprinted in 2019, Editorial Abya Yala; Quito, preface by Georg Grünberg and Stefano Varese, pp. 8-13. See also Varese, 2006:36-42.

2 For example, in August 1968 at the 38<sup>th</sup> International Americanist Congress (ICA) in Stuttgart; at the meeting of the German Anthropological Society in Göttingen, October 1969; at the Symposium on “*Ethnocide throughout the Americas*” in Paris, February 1970; and, decisively, during the 39<sup>th</sup> ICA in Lima, August 1970, with a “*Resolution on Ethnocide and Latin American Policy*”.

3 In 1969, together with my colleague René Fuerst, I published a “Critical Bibliography on the

In 1969, as a newly-hired assistant in the Ethnology Department at the University of Bern, Switzerland, I contacted Rev. José Chipenda, from Angola, who ran the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) in Geneva. The texts and reports I brought back from Brazil on cases of genocide of Indigenous peoples had a great impact on him. He suggested to me, to organize an international symposium on the situation of Indigenous peoples in the South American lowlands, in partnership with the University of Bern.

Using the term "inter-ethnic friction", coined by Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira and which was being discussed in Brazil at the time, I was able to invite a group of Latin American anthropologists committed to combatting anti-Indigenous violence to a symposium on "Inter-ethnic friction in South America outside the Andean region". We decided to hold a conference not in the countries involved but geographically close to South America. Through the PCR, the choice thus fell to the University of the West Indies in Bridgetown, in the Caribbean, a place completely unknown to any of us. And so, 14 male anthropologists and one female, mostly from Latin America, came together in January 1971. Our task was, based on our own research data, analysing the situation of Indigenous peoples in the region, paying special attention to the Indigenous peoples of the South American lowlands.

We all arrived prepared with detailed reports on the situations of genocide and ethnocide that we had witnessed more or less directly. After a painful week of testimonies and objective evidence of atrocities against the Indigenous peoples of Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico we were exhausted. We could only express our anger in the rhetoric of a strong and accusatory statement accompanied by a detailed record of the

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Genocide of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil", focusing on several cases documented by Brazilian colleagues which were still almost totally unknown in Europe. Georg Grünberg, René Fuerst: *"Kritische Bibliographie zum Genozid an Indianern in Brasilien"*, Veröffentlichungen des Seminars für Ethnologie der Universität Bern Nr.1, 1969. Bern. The most important and overwhelming source on mass killings and premeditated attempts at mass extermination of the Indigenous population in Brazil was, however, the report of Prosecutor Jader de Figueiredo Correa, prepared in 1967 at the request of the Brazilian Ministry of the Interior and concealed by the military government. It covers the decades from 1940 to 1960 and was rediscovered at the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro in August 2012. This 7,000-page typed report far exceeds what we knew about the crimes committed by the Indian Protection Service (SPI). It is a document about horrific acts of genocide in Brazil that went unpunished and were reconsidered in 2014 by the National Truth Commission (CNV) - *Violações de Direitos Humanos dos Povos Indígenas. Relatório Final da CNV*, vol 2, text 5: 204-262. In 1974, the *Associação de Expresos Políticos Antifascistas (AEPPA)* secretly published a 42-page booklet entitled *A Política de Genocídio contra os Índios do Brasil*. The attempt to exterminate the Aché in Paraguay was at the same time documented by Mark Münzel and Bartomeu Melià in 1972, see: *Los Aché del Paraguay: Discusión de un Genocidio*, 2008 IWGIA; Copenhagen. In 1980, finally, it was the 4<sup>th</sup> Russell Tribunal in Rotterdam, Netherlands that, with the participation of several Indigenous delegates, addressed the issue of ethnocide and genocide of Indigenous peoples in the Americas.

available data and an extensive dossier of complaints. This was to be the “Book of Barbados”, irrefutable documentation of the crimes against Latin America’s Indigenous peoples,<sup>4</sup> crimes that continue for much the same reasons to this day: to dispossess them of their lands and territories and overcome their resistance to colonization, forced labour and integration into a system that denies them the right to their own way of life and being.

### **Barbados 1 and the reactions**

The original copy of the text, published in Montevideo by the Publishing House “Tierra Nueva”, was doomed to a heroic destiny. It was publicly burned by the police force of Uruguay’s military dictatorship as a subversive document.<sup>5</sup> The English edition survived almost unnoticed in a Swiss publication of the World Council of Churches.<sup>6</sup> Only the few pages of the original declaration managed to escape academic anonymity and the wrath of the extreme right.

Written in Spanish and immediately translated into Portuguese, English and French, the Declaration of Barbados I became a political tool in the hands of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, a number of emerging political organizations and even some government officials, members of the Catholic Church and NGOs. The document simply and frankly exposed those responsible for the mistreatment and abuse of Indigenous peoples: the states and governments, the Catholic Church and the different evangelical and Protestant denominations, the private sector, anthropologists and the scientific community.

The key messages included “... *providing the colonized peoples those data and interpretations both about themselves and their colonizers useful for their own fight for freedom. On the other hand, to redefine the distorted image of Indian communities existent in national society, thereby unmasking its colonial ideological nature with its supportive ideology.*”

Anthropologists themselves “... *have an obligation to take advantage of all junctures within the present order to take action on behalf of the Indian communities. Anthropologists must denounce systematically by any and all means cases of genocide and those practices conducive to ethnocide. At the same time, it is imperative to generate new concepts and explanatory categories*

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4 See the interviews with participants Miguel Alberto Bartolomé in 2012 <https://vimeo.com/62885968> and Victor Daniel Bonilla in 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTzQUpSVgTs>

5 G. Grünberg (coord.) *La Situación Indígena en América del Sur. Aportes al estudio de la fricción interétnica en los indios no andinos*, 1971; Montevideo. Reprinted in 2019, Abya Yala Publishing House; Quito

6 The translation into English and German was published by Walter Dostal, Professor at the University of Bern, albeit without the consent of the authors: “*The situation of the Indian in South America*”, 1972; Geneva, respectively: *Die Situation der Indios in Südamerika*, 1972; Wuppertal.

*from the local and national social reality in order to overcome the subordinate situation of the anthropologist regarded as the mere 'verifier' of alien theories."*

The theme of self-liberation forms the declaration's leitmotif: "...that Indians must organize and lead their own liberation movement or it ceases to be liberating. When non-Indians pretend to represent Indians, even on occasion assuming the leadership of the latter's groups, a new colonial situation is established. This is yet another expropriation of the Indian populations' inalienable right to determine their future."

A re-founding of the State is a precondition for liberation: "*Irrelevant are those Indian policy proposals that do not seek a radical break with the existing social situation: namely, the termination of colonial relationships; breaking down of the class system of human exploitation and ethnic domination; a displacement of economic and political power from a limited group or an oligarchic minority to the popular majority; the creation of a truly multi-ethnic state in which each ethnic group possesses the right to self-determination and the free selection of available social and cultural alternatives.*"

Of the 15 participants, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (Mexico) and Darcy Ribeiro (Brazil) were the most influential in giving the declaration its content and wording. Reactions to the Declaration of Barbados, some violent, were quick to arise in the ensuing months:

The Catholic Church, already aware of the issue through the conference of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) in Medellín in 1968, issued a "*mea culpa*". In Brazil, the declaration provoked a process of radical change in missionary practice through the CIMI (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*), founded in April 1972. In March of that year, an Ecumenical Meeting took place in Asunción, Paraguay, where "Barbadian"<sup>7</sup> participants and missionaries from different churches and denominations in nine Latin American countries recognized that "...our churches, more than once, have lived alongside or have been instrumentalized by ideologies and practices that oppress man"<sup>8</sup> and they committed themselves to opening up a space for the participation of the Indigenous peoples themselves in a missionary ministry with the aim of an "*entirely human liberation*". "*We recognize that, historically, our churches have been incapable of imbuing Latin American societies with a liberating Christian love, without discrimination due to race, belief or culture (...) The churches should not fear but rather decisively support the formation of organizations that are properly Indigenous.*"

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7 Miguel Chase Sardi, Georg Grünberg and Gonzalo Castillo Cárdenas participated.

8 Colombes, Adolfo (coord.): *Por la liberación del indígena. Documentos y testimonios*. 1975; Bs. Aires, p.35

Some governments, in contrast, reacted by denying visas to anthropologists and issuing threats against the “communist subversion of the Indians” (for example in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay). After the meeting in Asunción and after my wife and I were denied a return visa to Brazil, we started a project to accompany the communities of the Pai-Tavyterã (Guarani) in northeastern Paraguay in their struggle of defending their communal lands and, in some cases, their survival, putting “the spirit of Barbados” into practice<sup>9</sup>.

In 1974, the Brazilian ecumenical evangelical churches founded CEDI - the *Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação*, giving rise in 1994 to the *Instituto Socioambiental* (ISA), an NGO that has since been at the forefront of civil society’s political support for Indigenous organizations and the defence of their constitutional rights.

The academic anthropology already established in some South American capitals initially remained silent on the matter. In Europe and the US, it was quickly received/welcomed by a number of relevant NGOs (IWGIA in Copenhagen, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, Cultural Survival in US, the Association of Socialist Anthropologists and the Society for Threatened Peoples in Germany etc.) but the strongest and most prolonged reactions against the statements set out in the declaration emerged in Mexico, Guatemala and, from 1979 on, in Sandinista Nicaragua.

An attack on Aguirre Beltrán’s State indigenism, led by Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Guillermo Bonfil and Arturo Warman from the “New Mexican Anthropology”, had unleashed fierce controversy and resulted in the emergence of a “Critical Anthropology” of Marxist positions, only partially identified with the content of the Declaration of Barbados. This controversy surrounding the “correct” strategies with which to support Indigenous peoples’ struggles took on political importance, and only increased in the context of Indigenous involvement in the armed conflicts in Guatemala and Nicaragua between 1982 and 1986.<sup>10</sup>

One term that was always at the heart of analysis and reflection among the members of the Barbados group was “ethnic identity”. The “Barbadian” participants turned up to the 41<sup>st</sup> Americanist Congress in Mexico City in 1974 with a new “Declaration on Ethnic Identity and Indigenous Liberation”, specifying

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9 Grünberg, Georg y Friedl Paz Grünberg: *Cómo los Guaraníes regresaron al futuro: el nacimiento del nuevo indigenismo paraguayo*. In: *Ignacio Telesco y Gabriel Insaurralde (Ed.), Melià...escritos de homenaje*, pp.125-138; ISEHF, 2012; Asunción del Paraguay.

10 For an analysis of the conflict see Andreas Wimmer: *Die komplexe Gesellschaft. Eine Theorienkritik am Beispiel des indianischen Bauerntums*. 1995; Berlin, chapter 7.1. on Indigenous movements and Barbados.

that: *“Ethnic identity historically precedes the formation and consolidation of social classes and will continue beyond their dissolution. Ethnic plurality therefore constitutes a fundamental element in strategic alliances for liberation and for the construction of national projects. In other words, ethnic plurality and differentiation are not just a means to achieve a radical transformation, a mere circumstantial fact in the global process. They form the very basis of any national project that seeks to suppress class-based society and the international construction of a new pluralistic and self-determined society, thus capable of offering its own historically distinct alternative for human coexistence.”*<sup>11</sup>

This declaration signified a break with Marxist anthropology since the claim that ethnic identity was older, more permanent and more sustainable in the revolutionary struggle than the class alliance was perceived as a sacrilege. Therefor the followers of the Barbados group were marginalized and labelled as “primordialists” and “essentialists”.

On the other hand, a growing number of Indigenous movements and organizations took up the Barbados discourse, as it gave them room for manoeuvre in the face of their “revolutionary friends” and permitted alliances with them without falling into unconditional subordination.

The doctrine of the revolutionary struggle in Guatemala stated that “Indians”, as products of colonization, were vitally important companions in the struggle, but the affirmation that, after the victory, they would continue to be Indigenous Peoples was denounced as an imperialist trick.<sup>12</sup> The constant fear of the left-wing *Ladino* elite was that “ethno-national” factors in the “Indigenous sector” might overwhelm the “class-based elements” of the “popular sector” in a country largely populated by Indigenous people. This conviction gave rise to a kind of inquisition against any Mayan comrades who referred to the Barbados discourse. According to an internal document of the Guatemalan Army of the Poor (EGP), the strongest faction of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) using military terms:<sup>13</sup> *“The leadership of the revolutionary movement is obliged to investigate and evaluate every aspect [of Mayan culture] to distinguish the positive from the negative elements, so that the former can be exploited and the latter eliminated.”*

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11 Colombres, Adolfo (coord.): *Por la liberación del indígena. Documentos y testimonios*. 1975; Bs. Aires, p.37.

12 Severo Martínez Peláez, one of the most prominent Guatemalan historians and an advisor to the URNG.

13 In an EGP document from 1983, cited by Morna Macleod 2008:127.

## Barbados 2 and the Sandinista Revolution

The second Barbados Conference, once again in Bridgetown, took place in July 1977 with a total of 35 participants, this time mostly Indigenous: 18 of them were activists in the Latin American Indigenous movement. The geographical coverage had extended to all of Latin America, and some Indigenous members had to travel to the island in secret. The Guatemalan Mayans and the Colombian Páez were risking their lives by attending this working meeting, which was entitled “Indigenous Liberation Movements in Latin America”. Both anthropologists and Indigenous leaders of newly formed-movements participated and the results were collected and edited by Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and published in Spanish and German.<sup>14</sup> In this second symposium, the political struggle to construct an identity for the “Amerindian people” was highlighted with the broad objective of: *“Achieving the unity of the Indian population, given that to achieve this unity the essential factor is their historical and territorial location in relation to the social structures and the nation state system, insofar as they participate fully or partially in these structures. Through this unity, to take up once more the historical process and endeavour to draw the chapter of colonization to an end.”* (1979:391).

In only one Latin American region did the Indigenous organizations’ struggle to conquer a political space reach the level of a strategy based on the Declaration of Barbados and an attempt to build a regional Indigenous autonomy shared with the nation state, and this was in Sandinista Nicaragua. In early 1979, an alliance was formed between Sandinistas and the small group of Miskito students in León that was to transform Alpromisu (Alliance for the Progress of the Miskito and Sumu), an organization established by the local Moravian Church for community development in the Nicaraguan Moskitia into a political movement called Misurasata (“Miskitu, Sumu, Rama, Sandinista Aslatakanka”<sup>15</sup>). From August 1979 to May 1980, I had the opportunity to advise Misurasata, on behalf of the newly created Institute for Agrarian Reform (INRA). For the Misurasata leadership, the Barbados discourse formed the basis of a call for the joint establishment of a multi-ethnic state in which regional autonomy for the Moskitia, recognition of communal lands and official recognition of regional languages formed the framework for participating in the revolutionary political process for “regional autonomy and self-determination”.<sup>16</sup>

14 Grupo de Barbados: *“Indianidad y Descolonización en América Latina - Documentos de la segunda reunión de Barbados”*, 1979; México. A German translation appeared in 1982 under the title: *“Indianer in Lateinamerika - Neues Bewusstsein und Strategien der Befreiung”*; Wuppertal

15 It means “Miskitos, Sumus and Ramas together with the Sandinistas”.

16 For a description of the situation on the Caribbean Coast before the outbreak of war between the Sandinista army and the Miskito guerrillas, see G. Grünberg: *“Las nacionalidades de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua en la Revolución Sandinista”*. In: *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* 103: 33-55, 1982, UNAM; México

Prior to its split with the Sandinista government, Misurasata's 1980 "General Guidelines" state, in line with the Barbados discourse: *"Ethnic identity historically precedes the formation and consolidation of national social classes and will continue beyond their dissolution. National ethnic plurality therefore constitutes a fundamental element in the defence and consolidation of our revolution and in the construction of the new Nicaragua. In other words, plurality and ethnic differentiation are not just a means to achieve national transformation, they are not just a circumstantial fact in the global process. They are the very basis of any revolutionary process that seeks the suppression of a class-based society and the intentional construction of a pluralistic and self-determined society, thus capable of offering its own historically distinct alternative for human coexistence ("Convivencia")."*<sup>17</sup>

These demands were soon interpreted as "secessionist" and, from February 1981 onwards, were violently repressed by the Sandinista People's Army (EPS). William Ramírez, the political commissioner responsible for the "Atlantic Coast", consequently announced the "Sandinization of the people from the Atlantic Coast" and their "reintegration" in the nation-state of Nicaragua. Instead of promoting a "Miskito revolution in alliance with the Sandinistas", this unleashed a war between the Miskito guerrillas and the EPS.

Between 1982 and 1984, there was a widespread Miskito uprising against the Sandinista "occupiers", supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with weapons and logistics from Honduras, and during which the Sandinista army committed serious violations of human rights against the civilian population of the Moskitia. The expulsion of all the inhabitants of the 40 communities on the Nicaraguan side of the Río Coco (Wangki) in December 1982 ("Red Christmas"), razing and burning houses, churches and the only regional hospital, left the population desperate, suffering the effects of a war between Miskito guerrillas and the EPS in which both sides had devastated Miskito and Sumu territory. The EPS systematically used hunger and torture for tactical purposes during the conflict.<sup>18</sup>

The "hot" phase of the war lasted until the beginning of the peace negotiations in 1985/6 and ended in January 1987 with the approval of the new Political Constitution of Nicaragua, which recognized the rights of the Atlantic Coast communities to their ownership of the communal lands. Three months later, the

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17 Misurasata, Lineamientos Generales Miskitu Sumu Rama Sandinista Aslatakanka. La unidad indígena de las tres etnias del Atlántico de Nicaragua, 1980; Managua (p.9-10, 13)

18 Testimonies from actors in the conflict and a preliminary analysis were presented by an international team from the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN). Sandra Davis (coord.). *Wangki Awala: Nuestra Memoria de la Guerra para vivir en Paz*. 2012; Bilwi, RAAN, Nicaragua

“Statute of Autonomy for the Regions of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua” was approved and remains in effect to this day.

In the context of this armed conflict in Nicaragua, strong divisions arose between Mexican, US and Central American anthropologists who supported the struggle for Miskito liberation and those who declared themselves defenders of the Sandinista revolution from imperialism. The Latin American Council in Support of Indigenous Struggles (CLALI) was founded in Mexico City in 1982. Its main task was to support Sandinista policy in the war against the Miskito guerrillas and to label any criticism of the EPS’s actions as “defamation” and “treason” of the cause. Throughout these years, representatives of the Barbados group were attacked by CLALI members at all international conferences on Latin America, especially in the meetings of LASA (the Latin American Studies Association) and at the International Congress of Americanists (ICA), interpreting the armed conflict from a “politically correct” point of view, i.e., seeing the Sandinistas as the victims of imperialism and the Miskito insurgents as being manipulated by the “contra”. This situation made any critical analysis of the tragedy in the Moskitia impossible. Whoever tried to do so, like this author, was branded an enemy of the revolution for trying to understand the roots of the conflict, since “... unconditional support was required for the revolutionary struggle of the Nicaraguan people”.<sup>19</sup>

The climax of the ideological attack on the “Barbadians”, especially on Guillermo Bonfil, was the “Declaration of Mexico on the Ethno-national Issue”, published and commented on in 1984 by Héctor Díaz-Polanco in his book *“La Cuestión Étnico-Nacional en América Latina”*. Supporters of the policy of “integrating” Indigenous peoples into the state, who still existed as defenders of the old-fashioned “indigenism”, especially in Mexico, were tarred with the same brush as supporters of the Barbados discourse, who were ridiculed as “ethnopolitists”, “Indianists” and reactionary “culturalists”. However, the texts of the published documents or analyses were not used for this purpose but rather a narrative was formed around “Barbados” that could be offered up in many variations

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19 “El Consejo Latinoamericano de Apoyo a las Luchas Indígenas (CLALI)”, in: *Polémica* 10-11, July - October 1983, p.93; Mexico City. See also Macleod 2008:187-2011. In August 1985, four members of the Task Force on Human Rights and Academic Freedom of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) traveled to Nicaragua’s Atlantic Coast to issue a report on the human rights situation of the Miskitu, Rama, Sumu and Creole peoples affected by the war between the Sandinista government and the Miskito guerrillas, with the support of the United States. Unwittingly, Barbados group member S. Varese became involved once more in the controversy unleashed by Mexican anthropology as regards “ethnic discrimination” or “class discrimination”. See Martin Diskin, Thomas Bossert, Solomon Nahmad and Stefano Varese, *Peace and Autonomy on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. A Report of the LASA Task Force on Human Rights and Academic Freedom*. Austin, Texas: Latin American Studies Association, September 1986.

and at any time to bring the faithful into line. The possibility of colonial or even discriminatory relations between the Indian peoples and the “revolutionary left” was *a priori* excluded.

It was only when the Sandinista command accepted a statute of Autonomy for the peoples of Nicaragua’s Caribbean Coast that Díaz-Polanco and his followers began to change the concepts of “ethno-national” conflict, introducing regional autonomy and the self-determination of Indigenous peoples into the canon of Mexican Marxist anthropology.<sup>20</sup>

In summary, I would like to refer to what I wrote to Morna Macleod, in September 2003, as quoted in her thesis (2008: 208): *“I believe that this conflict took on the nature of a war that became almost religious in nature, in which both sides hated each other even though the Barbadians, as powerless dissidents, were somewhat marginalized. I experienced this myself in 1979 and 1980 in Nicaragua, when MISURASATA was accused, among other things, of having been influenced by the Barbados doctrine, Díaz-Polanco being called upon to lead an exorcism. This all seems ridiculous today but, at the time, it was terrible and resulted in a great loss of blood in the Moskitia. The decline of Sandinismo was also the end of the demonization of the Barbadians and, instead of the Barbadians of Barbados, it was the Indians themselves who took up these positions albeit in another context. For me, Barbados is - in the best sense of the word - obsolete because it has been overtaken by the multiple Indigenous movements themselves, leaving us as witnesses to something that used to be worthwhile, that incipient alliance between organized Indians and dissident anthropologists (from all sectors: party, academia, churches...)”*.

### **Barbados 3 and globalization**

There was a third and final Barbados Conference in December 1993, this time in Rio de Janeiro, to which we were invited by Darcy Ribeiro. Shortly prior to this, Guillermo Bonfil suffered a fatal accident and so the conference, in which 18 anthropologists participated, ended up becoming a tribute to him. The theme this time was “Articulation of diversity - ethnic plurality, autonomies and democratization in Latin America.” The collapse of the revolutionary paradigm and the evident dysfunctionality of the nation state in the face of growing external hegemony (“globalization”) became the starting point for an analysis of the 20 years that had passed since the first Barbados Conference, the element of building Indigenous peoples’ autonomies strongly re-appearing on the basis of a defined territoriality and criticism of a distorted geopolitical vision:

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<sup>20</sup> Héctor Díaz-Polanco: *Autonomía Regional. La autodeterminación de los pueblos indios*. 1991. Siglo XXI; Mexico City.

*“Militaristic ideologies, particularly, which often degenerate into geopolitical paranoia, do not consider Indigenous societies as distinct peoples but as potentially subversive groups, and therefore treat them as a danger to national unity. Indigenous peoples’ demands for territorial reorganization and greater linguistic and cultural autonomy are then considered as if they were manifestations of separatism... (...) A democratization process in Latin America that effectively includes the Indian peoples will not be possible without taking into account the need for geopolitical reorganization, including the specific forms of Indigenous territoriality. In this sense, the concept of people corresponds to human populations that are socially organized, ethnically defined, culturally distinct and endowed with a spatial dimension that is their territory. This is conceived as the area defined by the total and structured set of ecological, social and symbolic relations between a society and the continuous or discontinuous geographical space in which they take place. Even in the many cases where Indigenous peoples have been divided by state borders, it is right that they may aspire to dual or multiple citizenships, according to the context. In any case, territorial autonomy implies not only decision-making with regard to the use of natural and economic resources but also political and cultural self-management, a self-determination that can only be effectively implemented on the basis of a global acceptance of shared sovereignty.”*

The outcomes of the third and final Barbados meeting were published by Abya Yala in Quito in December 1995.<sup>21</sup> They comprised a collection of 15 articles from authors related to the different meetings in Barbados plus a special tribute to Guillermo Bonfil. I was at that time convinced that an end point had been reached for the Barbadian current of Latin American anthropology, something like a *saturation of arguments*. The situation of Indigenous societies was already very different and was now focused on new issues such as globalization, the environmental crisis, the deterioration of the nation state, migration as a mass phenomenon, etc. Traditional concepts such as “class struggle” and “genocide” no longer had such a presence in the discourse. Indigenous peoples re-emerged as political actors in all countries of the continent, transformed into historical subjects and no longer objects of study, of integration into “national societies” or linked to the “popular sector” in political party struggles.

The commemoration of 500 years of colonialism, dependence and Indigenous resistance in 1992 opened up a new space in which to move from indigenist policy towards a proactive Indigenous policy in many countries, achieving continental visibility in the new Latin American constitutionalism. Anthropology,

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<sup>21</sup> Georg Grünberg (coord.) *“Articulación de la diversidad - Pluralidad étnica, autonomías y democratización en América Latina. Tercera reunión de Barbados”*. 1995. Abya Yala; Quito

however, continued with its European epistemological canon, opening spaces for Indigenous students but not yet for their knowledge and knowledge systems. The much heralded “dialogue of knowledge” was maintained as a repetitive monologue and only in the last few years did a critical mass of Indigenous students emerge in the region’s universities with a strong participation of their communities.

Experiences of conversations with Indigenous students gave me a new perspective on the Barbados message, which I perceived as an unforeseen and somewhat frightening challenge. These conversations took place during academic activities at URACCAN<sup>22</sup> in Bilwi, Nicaragua, at the *Faculdade Intercultural Indígena* of the UFGD<sup>23</sup> in Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul and at the *Centro de Estudos Ameríndios* of the University of São Paulo, Brazil, at UPS<sup>24</sup> in Quito, at the Faculty of Agronomy of USAC<sup>25</sup> in Guatemala City, and at the School of Anthropology of the UCR<sup>26</sup> in San José, Costa Rica.

Indigenous students would insistently ask me, almost interrogate me, about the reason behind the change in attitude among anthropologists towards Indigenous peoples since 1971, becoming allies in their struggle against the denial of their importance as thinking human beings and against an aggressive form of racism fed by contempt for their languages and ways of thinking. What must have gone through the heads of anthropologists, all of them “white” and urban, to write something as unheard of and strange as the declaration: “For the liberation of Indigenous peoples”? Who came up with such an idea and why? They found it difficult to understand such a sudden change of attitude in the face of such an obvious and prolonged reality.

Given so many changes that have taken place for Indigenous peoples in the last half century, we can first of all list what has not changed. And this is the whole litany of consequences of unalterable internal colonialism, the weight of the “imperial” system of a globalized and voracious capitalism, the fallacies of a democracy kidnapped by the usual elites, a justice system that works only for those who can pay for it, the abysmal stretch between what has been said and what has been done, in terms of the rights of Indigenous peoples “enshrined” in national constitutions... Nothing new, although now with greater presence from the media and an echo in Latin American societies that cannot be silenced easily.

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22 University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN)

23 Federal University of Grand Dourados

24 Salesian Polytechnic University

25 University of San Carlos

26 University of Costa Rica

On the other hand, the number of allies, from all professions and from very different social strata, has increased, not only in the urban upper middle classes and illuminated by TV documentaries. Even more important, however, is the emergence of a new Indigenous leadership, bilingual and bicultural, educated on both sides of their different cultural and political environment and with the firm conviction that they can defend themselves from the contempt and ignorance of those who believe that “the Indian has no future”. They are favoured by the socio-environmental “green wave”, which highlights the need for Indigenous knowledge and wisdom to “defend the world”; the new doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding a duty to take care of our common home<sup>27</sup>, a metaphor taken from the Amazon communal house (maloca); and, in an incipient way, the emergence of an already quite numerous group of Indigenous intellectuals and academics in Latin American universities who defend systems of knowledge and an epistemology outside the European matrix, impregnated by half a millennium of colonialism.

I believe that, 50 years after the Barbados Declaration, it is worth to continue searching for an anthropology that is not only “southern” and committed to the real world, but built, step by step, from a sincere dialogue with the people who follow the liberation struggle from their communities and with their Indigenous colleagues, rooted in their current urban world, but trying to get out of the framework of colonialist perception.

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# FIFTY YEARS SINCE BARBADOS I: INDIGENOUS ETHICAL COSMOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF THE COMMONS<sup>1</sup>

**Stefano Varese**



“The ultimate goal of *Sumak Kawsay* is freedom.” Franco Viteri Gualinga, Kichwa of Sarayaku (2003)

“Within American Indian epistemologies *where* something takes place is more important than when... and the land itself is mnemonic, it has its own memories.” Jody A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 2011

“The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.” Thomas Berry

## *Prior Clarification*

*To the initial commitment I made to Alberto Chirif to approach this text from an ethnopolitical analysis of the situation of the Indigenous peoples of the wider Andean-Amazonian region of Peru, I now wish to add some reflections on the ethical foundations of Indigenous cosmologies, which are both the sustenance and the instrument of the political activism of all Indigenous peoples of the Americas (Davis, 1 August 2020).*

## **Foreword. Of rage and memory**

Ever since the 1970s, when I presented the case of the Indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon to the first meeting of the Barbados Group, whenever I write a few lines or say a few words in public about Indigenous peoples and their civilizations, a wave of indignation flows over me regarding the latest aggressions and violence committed against one Indigenous community or another. It began in the late 1960s when I denounced the aerial incendiary bombing of the Mayoruna-Matsé people in the Peruvian rainforest by the government of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a modified version of a paper I presented at the Second International Symposium on Native Cultures of the Americas, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba, 11-14 October 2016.

President Fernando Belaunde Terry, supported by helicopters from the U.S. Army Southern Command in Panama and with the technical cooperation of the International Petroleum Company (Talara, Peru), which supplied the Peruvian Air Force with the bombs so tragically popularized by the United States in Vietnam. After those first incursions into the atrocious reality of the Indian peoples, I became, unwittingly, a kind of chronicler of the most brutal colonialism and imperialism exercised without reservation by the governments of the Americas and their bedfellow, savage capitalism.

The massacres of the Barí and the Ñanbikwara were followed by violence against and massacres of Indigenous peasants and miners fighting to recover their lands in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia; and then the horrors of State terrorism in response to the misguided Shining Path and Tupac Amaru movements which, between them, caused the deaths and disappearance of some 70,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including nearly 5,000 Asháninka men, women and children from the Central Peruvian rainforest. And starting before all this and continuing after was the genocidal war against the Guatemalan Maya in which a quarter of a million people perished, plus the selective assassinations in Central America and that other genocidal war financed and organized by the United States against Sandinista and Indigenous Nicaragua on the Atlantic Coast.

In 1994, having been an almost mute witness to the innumerable massacres and violence against the Indigenous peoples, I began to view with some hope the new and old forms of Indigenous struggle and resistance that were emerging among the Zapatista Maya of Chiapas. This peaceful armed resistance was unmasking the hypocrisy and falsehood of Mexico's indigenist populism and its complicity with colonial neoliberalism and the most brutal extractivism and was forcing us all to rethink the Indigenous liberation movement in light of the globalization of capital.

In June 2009, I wrote the following lines for a conference I was giving in Catalonia and, later, in Peru:

“While I was trying to write these reflections on the relationship of Indigenous peoples with that sphere of reality that we in the West call ‘nature’, a new manifestation of global neoliberal barbarism in its servile expression of Peruvian national colonialism was taking shape in the Peruvian Amazon, culminating on 5 and 6 June 2009 in the massacre of dozens of Indigenous Awajún and Huampis near the city of Bagua, in the northern Peruvian rainforest. The post-democratic misgovernment of the most recalcitrant right-wing, Alan García's Aprista party, had been building for more than a year, manifesting in authoritarian decree-laws, together with the old scenario of confrontation between the racial and cultural

superiority of capitalist modernity and the supposed political-cultural inferiority of the Indigenous communities of the Amazon. According to anthropologist Alberto Chirif, "...the Executive Branch has issued a hundred decrees of different types... which certainly go far beyond the objective of their delegated powers... [the supposed need to] adapt certain national laws in order to better implement the Free Trade Agreement signed between Peru and the United States. Among them, for example, is one that exempts police officers who kill or injure civilians 'in the line of duty' from prosecution and permits the arrest of persons without a warrant. And there are several that target Indigenous peoples who, over the years, have achieved recognition of a series of rights, both nationally and internationally."<sup>2</sup>

National and international Indigenous organizations, human rights groups and international agencies were already citing more than a hundred dead and missing, several hundred wounded, others detained by the special police without right to legal defence, and hundreds more internally-displaced persons or refugees. The macabre exercise of Peruvian neoliberal democracy included the well-known technologies of State terrorism: mass graves, disappearances and detentions without the right to defence.

Fast forward some seven years on from the massacre of the Awujún and Wampis at Bagua and let's travel a few thousand miles north to the Standing Rock Sioux-Lakota reservation in North Dakota, USA. There, near the Little Bighorn battlefield where, in 1876, George A. Custer and his soldiers were annihilated by the Lakota and Cheyenne of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, more than 2,000 men, women and children representing nearly every tribe in the United States have been gathered since April 2016 to block construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which is to carry crude oil from the fields of North Dakota 1,172 miles to the main pipeline in Illinois and then on to Texas. This broad national coalition of Indigenous peoples is opposing the construction of the pipeline on the basis of two fundamental principles of Indigenous political culture. Firstly, they oppose the desecration of their sacred territories in which their ancestors- dating back thousands of years and the victims of the American war of conquest - are buried and, secondly, because they have taken it upon themselves to represent all the Indian citizens of the United States and other progressive citizens of the country - and I would add of the world - who have for years been rejecting the increased production and consumption of hydrocarbons and coal, which is responsible for

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2 Chirif, Alberto, "No es tiempo para permanecer callados", Servindi virtual news bulletins ([www.servindi.org](http://www.servindi.org)), May 2009; other denunciation and analysis notes published by Servindi: Chirif, Alberto and Federica Barclay, "Ataques y mentiras contra los derechos indígenas"; García, Pedro, "En respuesta al Sr. Althaus".

highly-polluting carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions and, in this specific case, the danger of polluting the Cannonball and Missouri rivers if the more than 200 pipeline crossings under the two rivers were ever to rupture.

### **Imperialistic undertones**

It could be argued that what is innovative about the Standing Rock Indigenous movement is its global environmentalist perspective, its “legal” radicalism within the parameters of Anglo-American legality and the ambiguous and precarious assurance that the federal government - under the Democratic administration of Barack Obama - will not engage in violent repression as was the case at Wounded Knee in 1973 when a confrontation between the Oglala Sioux, the South Dakota government and the administration of Richard Nixon ended with two dead, 13 wounded and several arrested on charges of sedition.

The Standing Rock case has the advantage that, since the late 1970s, the world’s Indigenous peoples have had a voice, albeit with no vote, at the United Nations and have achieved the enactment of several international legal instruments such as Convention 169 of the ILO (International Labour Organization), which has been ratified by some 20 countries, and the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signed by almost all UN member countries with the exception of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and, until recently, Canada. On 20 September 2016, Standing Rock Sioux Reservation Chairman Dave Archambault II addressed the 49 members of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, denouncing the U.S. government’s failure to respect the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, both ratified by the U.S. Congress and recognizing the National Sovereignty of the Sioux People within the United States.

Dave Archambault II, Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, was able to travel to Geneva on a US passport and Swiss visa thanks to funding from the Indian Law Resource Centre which, since 1978, has been at the forefront of many of the Indigenous peoples’ social and political struggles in the Americas, including, for example, the case of the Secoya and Cofán of Ecuador against the Shell and Chevron oil companies. On 22, 23 and 24 September, Secoya leader Humberto Piaguaje and another leader from the Amazonian communities that won the Indigenous peoples of Ecuador’s multi-million dollar lawsuit against Shell and Texaco for their ecological and social crimes, travelled to Standing Rock to participate in the Sioux resistance and occupation in a demonstration of pan-Indigenous and global solidarity. It is once again an initiative that demonstrates the firmness and strength of the global Indigenous social and environmental movement, one that does not view the borders of nation states as a barrier but as a binding thread running through the hammock of humanity.

## Neoliberal conquest and its pawns

The script for the Bagua massacre - and for all the other thousands of genocides of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala, Peru, Chile and Mexico - was written many centuries ago by the European invasion of the Americas. The various revisions of this narrative of Indigenous oppression and exploitation are simply variations on the same theme, that of the superiority of *Western civilization* and its science, its technology, its “morals” and, above all, its demonstratable success in dominating and controlling the physical and biotic world. Alan García’s government, like those of the various “democratic” dictatorships in Latin America that have succeeded each other over the last 200 years, has been merely a pawn executing a programme of violent social and biotic intervention based on ideological assumptions dressed up as Eurocentric science and rationality. From the “no-reason” of the Judeo-Christian theology of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the “un-reason” of the enlightened despotism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the “super-reason” of industrial and post-industrial empiricism through to the intellectual dictatorship of the sociobiological sciences that aspires to subjugate the life of the cosmos to the designs of capital, colonial and imperial science has been constructed and reproduced behind the backs and against the Indigenous ethics of a universe made up of intersubjective relations in the biophysical whole (Ingold, 1990).

I draw from Tim Ingold’s work (1990: 224-225) the central ideas of his revolutionary reinterpretation of the relationship between biology and culture, which attempts to overcome the oppositional nature/culture dichotomy of Western anthropocentric rationalism, instead repositioning the human in society as one aspect of a greater organic life generally. This “anthropology of the person”, according to Ingold, is contained within the biology of organisms whose focus is on processes rather than the disconnected events that underlie the hypotheses of post-Darwinian biologists. Ingold’s exhaustive and convincing arguments in favour of a paradigmatic change in biological-anthropological relations reintroduce into the Western scientific debate the founding civilizing principles of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, who assume life-existence within a cosmic relational logic of reciprocity in diversity and in the dynamic multiplicity of biocultural processes.

It is from this Indigenous civilizational paradigm - unrecognized by the great narrative of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic and rational-scientific West - that I suggest analysing the political economy of Indigenous peoples and their relationships with knowledge systems, their epistemologies, their moral cosmologies, their politics of resistance and autonomy and, consequently, their relationships with nature, that is, the world-universe. Analysing nature/culture relations among Indigenous American peoples through their production, trading, and consumption processes involves a dual task of analytical examination. On

the one hand, in order to understand the complex network of relationships and meanings in an economic system that classical anthropology has classed a “subsistence economy” but which I prefer to call “social economy” and, on the other, to review the dense history of conflictive and contradictory relationships that Western social science has maintained with Indigenous social economies and, consequently, with the varied and diverse Indian communities which, over the decades and centuries, have been the object of study and of colonizing, genocidal or assimilating political interventions.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Indigenous political universal economy and its struggle to resist**

There is no need to repeat all the arguments for and history of the different secular forms and manifestations of the Indigenous peoples of America’s cultural and political resistance to Euro-American occupation and domination in its various national and - now - global expressions. I think it more important to emphasize that these forms of Indian resistance and opposition have always been based first and foremost on Indigenous peoples’ autonomy and cultural independence, i.e., on what Indigenous intellectuals in the United States have been calling “intellectual sovereignty”. The issue of Indigenous cultural and intellectual sovereignty is consequently related to Indigenous epistemological autonomy and its age-old history of territorial-spatial rootedness, i.e., its specialized biosocial history and cultural ways of fostering a biophysical environment (nature) appropriate for the survival and development of the group of human organisms and “all their relatives” (the Indigenous peoples of the United States refer to “*all my relatives*”).

Issues of territoriality, land and “resources” - understood not as potential commodities but as an integral part of the cosmos - and the millenary rights of Indigenous peoples to the cultural and political exercise of their full jurisdiction must therefore be understood from the Indian paradigm of relational cosmologies and not on the premise of Western bio-physical-social sciences that fragment, “taxonomize” and instrumentalize the universe, separating the person from all his or her cosmic “relatives”, from all their relationships.

For Indigenous peoples, place, space, memory, language and, above all, relational dialogue with all the organisms of the world take place in the “inhabited culture” that is always expressed in the “language of place”, even when the specific locality of origin has been lost through migration, deportation or exile. Examples

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3 There are four sources of modern Euro-American thought that can help me in these tasks: Karl Marx [1857-58] (1973), Karl Polanyi (1944), Fernand Braudel (1993) and, finally, concepts related to the “*moral economy*” drawn from E.P. Thomson (1971) and one of his followers, James C. Scott (1979). I have to thank Verena Stolke most particularly for the discovery of Tim Ingold’s writings, which she has helped me incorporate into my thinking on culture and nature.

of symbolic ritual and sacred “jurisdiction” over one’s territory abound among members of the growing Indigenous diasporas. For example, the ritual offering of the first drink to the land of the ancestors performed by Peruvian Quechua in Wyoming or Nevada or New York; the sacralization of the Mixtec ball game field or the *tianguis* stall at the California farmers’ market; the herbal and “shamanic” healing of physiological-emotional imbalances that refer to one’s own symbolic relationship with the Indigenous geographical space, even if the subject is in Buenos Aires or Lima or Los Angeles; and, finally, the constant, repetitive exercise of “Indigenous communal citizenship”, which requires reciprocity - deferred and/or distant - with all the “organisms”/people of the whole biosociety itself. These are just a few cases of these Indigenous cosmological conceptions and praxis that are exercised in spite of the secular desacralization of modernity.

### **Euro-American roots and the narrative of capitalist modernity**

As we all know, for the Western world it all began in Greece, or perhaps in the Middle East or North Africa. In any case, it is to the pre-Socratic philosophers that we owe the antithetical difference between *nomos* (custom) and *physis* (nature or reality) and to Aristotle the “humanization” of nature, which turns into the vital principle of non-inert organisms - that is to say, in opposition to entities that do not have the vital force that is the origin of movement and rest and the realization of their potential. In this way, the founding belief that the distinctive mark of the organic is found in its vitality, its high organizational capacity and its vital elan is established as a foundation of Western thought. For centuries, the Judeo-Christian-Islamic theologies would attribute the origin of the vital and organizational principle to extra-natural divinity, culminating in its secular versions of Renaissance humanism, Cartesian rationalism, Kantian enlightenment and empiricism as a prelude to the pragmatic and “calculating” natural science that prioritizes a reason that seeks “results” rather than a “contemplative” reason that seeks meanings, in Martin Heidegger’s words (1966).

The “great transformation” brought about by the European Industrial Revolution introduced and rooted in Western ideology and practice once and for all the notion that everything in the world is a commodity with a price, something that can be bought or sold in a supposedly self-regulating “market”. The materialization and commodification of the universe includes the whole of humanity which, violently, begins to have a price in an unregulated capitalist labour market in which workers, peasants, Indigenous peoples and all the inhabitants of the global periphery can be exploited for centuries without any protection (Polyanyi, 1994). For the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, however, the greatest tragedy is the violent commodification of “nature”: of ancestral territory, the *Apus*, the trees, animals, waters, subsoil and all the visible and invisible entities that make up the whole network of kinship relations. One tragic example of a genocide of thousands of

Indigenous peoples caused by the commodification of land and animals was that of the U.S. plains where, between 1868 and 1881, some 31,000,000 buffalo were slaughtered in an intentional biological war against the Native Americans.

It is important to remember that this process of commodifying the world and “nature”, sustained and accompanied by a theory of knowledge and a materialistic and empiricist epistemology, is based on an eminently experimental scientific practice in which “calculating intelligence” hegemonizes thought without leaving any room for “contemplative intelligence”, far less for emotional intelligence. Animals, plants, bacteria, soil, insects, rocks, water and air, in other words the complex biophysical world, is conceived as an unarmed and conquerable entity, without intelligence, directionality or teleology of its own. A reified universe, emptied of teleological intelligence, is an amoral universe, one that requires neither ethical considerations nor spiritual attentions let alone emotional empathies; it is a universe that cannot be celebrated, that can only be used and abused for the benefit of an economy of unrestricted individual monetary gain (see Narby, 2005).

### **Root and branch**

By the end of World War II, modernity and its travelling companion colonialism had succeeded in establishing Eurocentrism as the hegemonic system of thought and practice among minority social elites throughout the world. Neither the Marxist socialist tradition nor the Third World nationalist movements were exempt from Eurocentric visions, analyses, discourses and practices (Prakash, 1994: 1475). In the mid-1960s, George Gurvitch (1971) was able to write his taxonomy of the sociology of knowledge with impunity in which, using a social evolutionary analysis, he disqualified all forms of knowledge based on immediate comprehension, understanding and organization of the local sphere, of the concrete locus of cultural experience and reproduction. By that time, L. Lévy-Bruhl had produced the book *La mentalidad primitiva* (1923) in which he proposed, and imposed on non-Westerners, the prelogical forms of primitive mentality associated with the corresponding rudimentary levels of technology and social organization.<sup>4</sup>

E. Durkheim and M. Mauss had already formulated their famous propositions that “the classification of things reproduces the classification of men” in 1903 (Bloor, 1984: 51) based on the Zuni Indigenous classification system; however, their hypotheses were immediately challenged for their poor ethnographic information. What Western science was actually challenging was the validity of the materials of so-called “primitive societies” as empirical examples of

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4 See Prakash, G. (1994), Gurvitch, G. (1971), Lévy-Bruhl, L. (1923), “Durkheim and Mauss Revisited: Classification in the Sociology of Knowledge”, in Stehr, Nico and Volker Meja (1984), Lennhardt, M. (1937), Tedlock, D. and B. Tedlock (Eds) (1966).

human rationality. Nor were the heterodox proposals of ethnographers such as Maurice Leenhardt (1937) sufficient, who highlighted some of the most complex and sensitive features of non-Western Indigenous thought, or the subsequent revolution of C. Lévi-Strauss (1963, 1966) who, with his method of comparative and contrastive analysis of Indigenous myths, rites, kinship and social practices, enabled the structural inquiry of Indigenous worldviews and their knowledge as complex organized forms of meaning. Lévi-Strauss, in fact, may have followed the methodological route of Martin Heidegger (1966, cited in Tedlock & Tedlock, 1975: XV-XVI) who proposed the existence of *contemplative thinking*, common among Indigenous societies, as opposed to *calculative thinking*, the dominant form in capitalist societies. The first mode of thinking is oriented towards meanings, the second towards results (Stehr, N. and Volker, M. (Eds.)) (1984).

As the sociology of knowledge drew closer to philosophy, and philosophy - as epistemology - became more sociological, it became clear that both disciplines - unable to accept the reality that there were other knowledge systems, other epistemologies and countless clandestine histories of non-Western Indigenous intellectualities - were becoming distanced from the rich comparative materials accumulated by ethnographers in Indigenous regions as well as from Indigenous intellectuals (Bloor 1984, Luhmann, 1984).

When ethno-scientists revisited Indigenous knowledge systems in the 1960s and “discovered” the extreme rationality, analytical depth and practicality of Indigenous classification systems, it was too late. The hegemony of one thought, one “logos” and a reputedly superior Euro-American scientific system had become established and rooted in the minds and institutions of the ruling classes and elites of both the first world and the countries of the periphery.

Modernization theory, proposed by analysts and politicians of the empire such as Talcott Parson (1951) and Walt Rostow (1960) and the functionalist sociologists of the United States, had destroyed any possibility of self-determination and intellectual sovereignty for many of the world’s Indigenous and peasant peoples. Nothing the local Indigenous peoples knew was of any value. Indigenous, peripheral and marginalized cultures were considered empty vessels or rather obsolete funerary urns and heavy legacies of the past that had to be replaced by Euro-American education, technology, forms of government and economic organization. The economic part, obviously, was the central focus of this mental colonization, since Eurocentrism has always placed the economy at the heart of every social existence while Euro-American historicism has projected the West as History (Prakash, 1994): 1475), even more so as Universal History. The central postulates of this functional-structural modernizing theory, with special reference to Indigenous peoples, was and is that Indigenous peoples and “traditional societies” hinder regional, national and international economic development and

that developing countries, in particular, need agents to release them from the prison of tradition. They believe that such agents can be recruited from within the society (the modernizing elites and co-opted leaders) or can be imported from outside through educational models and capital injection, and that all this will eventually result in societies similar to those of Europe and the USA. The open secret of this societal model, as all the world's Indigenous and non-Indigenous poor already know, is that the end result is a society polarized between a tiny minority of rich and powerful and an absolute majority of the poor, dispossessed of any elementary right to a dignified life and of their cultural and ancestral memory.

### **Indigenous narratives: diverse networks of reciprocity**

While everything seems to begin in Greece or in the Middle East for the West, for the Americas there is a less obvious or at least less unitary and identifiable origin. The Olmec of the Gulf of Mexico, the Zapotec of the Isthmus and Oaxaca, the Andean and coastal pre-Quechua and pre-Mochica of the Pacific, the "Mound-builders" of the Midwest of North America, the Maya of the Petén or Yucatán, the ridge builders of eastern Bolivia, the peoples of the lower Amazon who populated the vast region with cities based on agroforestry technologies or indeed any of the peoples who left behind archaeological evidence could have participated in constructing the Indigenous civilizations of the Americas. What is clear is that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were for millennia constituted and reconstituted into two major types of sociobiological entity whose respective basic characteristics corresponded to the temporal-spatial adaptations of the organic - and inorganic - whole in its relational dynamics (Ingold: 224-225). Throughout Central America, Mesoamerica, the great Andean Cordillera, the North and Southeast and in spatial niches in the Southwest of present-day USA, over the last 10 or 12,000 years, agrarian societies arose that had complex stratified social organizations and productive technologies based on sophisticated knowledge of plant genetics, domestication and constant adaptive diversification. It is to these Indigenous peoples that the rest of humanity owes the great variety of cultivars that made possible the demographic - and political and cultural - growth of many of the societies and countries of the post-invasion world of the Americas.

Alongside this and in coordination with agrarian societies, throughout the American continent, from the sub-Arctic plains through the northern and southern temperate plains, the tropical plains, part of the Amazon basin, the deserts and the mountainous forest areas, other Indigenous peoples formed entities whose economies included various small-scale horticultural production activities, hunting, fishing, "gathering" and the "semi-domestication" of plant and animal species. The European colonial system and its ensuing national ideologies refused to acknowledge these *mixed* or *hunter-gatherer economies* of Indigenous societies as civilization and cornered them into the evolutionist archive as outdated and

disappearing human forms. Contemporary anthropology prefers to assign these Indigenous communities the economic category of “foraging societies”.

The foraging of the Huaorani people of the Ecuadorian Amazon, studied exhaustively by anthropologist Laura Rival (2002), proves itself to be a highly refined use of the landscape, the tropical rainforest in which the Huaorani are fundamentally foragers who roam permanently and seasonally through the anthropogenic forest that they themselves and their ancestors have nurtured and raised for centuries and millennia. It is not quite a question of domestication but of guided accompaniment in order to maintain productivity in terms of animal protein and botanical abundance and diversity. The Huaorani, Tagaeri and Taromenani territories, in their whole and all their ecological complexity, are consequently not simply ancestral lands passed down the generations but forests that have “cultivated and nurtured” through centuries of intelligent human action. The Huaorani, Tagaeri and Taromenani territories therefore constitute and express the age-old anthropogenic construction of their own civilization.<sup>5</sup>

### **Agrarian Indigenous peoples**

As is well-known, the agrarian Indigenous peoples, with their great demographic potential, ended up forming a large proportion of the colonial system’s labour force. This latter turned them into communal peasants, landless peasants (on *haciendas* and plantations), workers in mines, mills and services and, finally, into the unemployed and underemployed of the late capitalist market. In this long process of peasantization and proletarianization, those Indigenous peoples that have been able to maintain a transgenerational relationship with their ancestral lands and territories do at least retain some portions of their cosmologies and knowledge system - particularly their native language - as part of their symbolic culture.

Those Indigenous peasants who, throughout their continent’s tortured agrarian history, were able to maintain a continuous relationship with their lands and territories adapted their knowledge system and their environmental practices - their relationship with “nature” - to the new circumstances of the political economy of the capitalist market. Before the European occupation, the Mesoamerican or Andean commoners practised a village and tributary economy in which the surplus was put into circulation via markets and/or tributes but the changes introduced by Europe meant significant readjustments in the amounts and objectives of surplus labour and surplus product, through specialization in agricultural (and now livestock) production, the monetization of production-consumption-circulation

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5 With a view to their “long historical duration”, in the manner of Fernand Braudel (1993), the Taromenani-Tagaeri-Huaorani do not distance themselves from other peoples and civilizations of the Americas and the world who have built and recorded their own history in space, in the place of their millenary occupation. See Laura M. Rival (2002).

and, consequently, a fundamental ideological and axiological change: the growing and omnipresent notion of merchandise that was now attributable to elements of nature and their transformation into commodities-products.

Other factors of the capitalist economy were becoming increasingly established in the Indigenous mentality and social practice, in their adapted cultures, in such a way that notions of “private property” began to conflict with the tradition of “the commons”, individualism with solidarity, interest and profit with reciprocity, diversity of management and production with market specialization and monoculture. The concurrent reduction in their former ethnic territories, now fragmented into discrete units politically disconnected and dependent upon the colonial and republican capitals (the neo-*ayllus*, the neo-communities, the *resguardos*, etc.), was limiting their perception and knowledge of the historical biocultural landscape in such a way that the epistemological system based on a complex and integrated natural reality began to fragment, with gaps appearing in knowledge that reflected gaps in nature, gaps in cosmological landscapes, gaps in relationships.

The colonial transformations suffered by the Andean *ayllu*, *marka* and *tawantinsuyu* and the Mesoamerican *calpulli* and *altpetl*, to cite only the most obvious cases, are a manifestation of the dismantling of the integrated bio-socio-territorial whole of Indigenous agrarian societies and which, together with the State and the nation, lost their knowledge and integral management of the integrated ethnic territorial whole. We know that the vertical management of the Andean mountain range, the management of its different ecosystems, as studied by John Murra (1975), Olivier Dollfus (1981) and others, assumes a native socioecological conception and practice that conceives of the territorial boundaries of the *ayllu* (mistranslated by the Spanish as “community”) not in a continuous and uninterrupted manner in the European way but as a series of tangible biophysical entities alternating with other intangible ones that require as much if not more practical and ritual attention. Human, animal, plant, physical, climatic, astronomical and spiritual behaviours all therefore combined in a relationship of intersubjective correspondence, and the knowledge of an “organism-entity-segment” presupposes knowledge of the whole network of relationships that this organism-entity has with the rest of the whole.<sup>6</sup>

The American functionalist sociology of modernizers such as Talcott Parson laughed at these knowledge systems of the Third World’s “rural peoples”, accusing them of being primitive and superficial because they were not specialized: plants are studied by botanists, animals by zoologists, rocks by geologists, people like you by anthropologists and people like us by sociologists.

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<sup>6</sup> For a quasi-poetic approach to the fundamental importance of ritual in Indigenous life, see: Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (2011).

When the issue of Indigenous peoples' land fell under the remit of economists and agronomists, and Latin American governments wanted to respond to the land claims and struggles of Indigenous peasants through land reform, their absolute ignorance of Indigenous societies and their lack of knowledge and understanding of these peoples' cognitive systems and practices led to the further destruction of Indian communities.

The agrarian reforms of Mexico (1917), Bolivia (1952) and Peru (1968) literally had to "invent" an interpretation of the Indigenous biosocial reality based on European models: the *ejido* and the Indigenous community of Mexico, the Indigenous communities of Bolivia, the peasant community of Peru: all are artificial socio-biocultural constructs imposed by bureaucracies of the right, centre and left - in many cases well-intentioned but without any knowledge of the relationship that Indigenous communities and peoples have maintained for millennia with their natural environment and their biocultural landscape. The guiding principles of these national agrarian actions have always been the idea of private property, in combination with some recognition of the rights of the commons ["the commons", the *ejido* (from the Latin *exitus*) of Spain], but always with the State's aspiration to achieve the privatization and commodification of land and resources, even those of the commons and, finally, the parcelling of land and territory into family plots.

### **Mixed-economy horticultural or foraging peoples**

These permanent attacks on the conceptions and practices of territory, knowledge, use and treatment of nature within an integrated totalizing cosmological system were evidently intentionally aimed at its dismantling, alongside ideological campaigns to smear everything that the Indigenous peasant peoples have been doing in the political economy of nature.

External aggression was and is less successful, however, among those Indigenous mixed-economy horticultural or foraging peoples who, due to the vagaries of a colonial-imperialist occupation - partially defeated by the hostility and unfamiliarity of the tropical humid environment - remained more on the margins of the initial territorial expropriation and demographic destruction, intentionally isolating themselves over the following years and centuries to preserve the greatest possible degree of autonomy and independence, first from the colonial and later the republican powers.

### **The case of the Peruvian Amazon: the moral basis of Indian territoriality**

The Indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon belong to the civilizational cycle of Indigenous horticultural societies with a mixed and foraging economy who were not totally engulfed by the colonial occupation and expansion of modernity

and capital. As such, they lend themselves to comparative analysis with agrarian Indigenous peoples. At this point, I will allow myself an autobiographical aside in order to discuss the theme of nature and culture among the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon from concepts and practices that seem to me to sustain their struggles in defence of their territories and their intellectual and epistemic sovereignty.

In 1968, the Revolutionary Government of the Peruvian Armed Forces, under the leadership of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, initiated a series of radical social reforms that transformed the Indigenous peasant regions of Peru from a semi-feudal system into modern forms of self-managed cooperative economies. I had the good fortune, although others might say the bad taste, to work for the Peruvian Revolutionary Government from 1969 to early 1975, in charge of promoting “agrarian” and territorial legislation for the Indigenous populations of the Amazon region and, subsequently, coordinating the implementation of these measures. Initially, I worked for an administrative division within the Agrarian Reform and then, later, the project for the rainforest Indigenous peoples became part of Sinamos (National Social Mobilization Support System) and a support programme of the ILO. Finally, in 1974, the Revolutionary Government enacted the Peruvian Native Communities Law, which recognized the collective right of ownership and use of lands, territories and renewable natural resources to all Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon.<sup>7</sup>

In its original formulation, the Native Communities Law had comprehensive aspirations: for the first time in the history of Peru (and possibly Latin America), it recognized the full individual and national citizenship of each ethnic-Indigenous group in the forest, established a self-managed system of Indigenous communal civil registration, recognized the right to self-government, ethno-political organization, regional and national groupings of Indigenous peoples, and guaranteed the historical territorial claims of dispossessed peoples.<sup>8</sup>

One of the central problems we had to face in those years of redefining the political-economic relations of the Amazonian Indigenous peoples and the rest of the Peruvian national community related to the number and the method of legal recognition and territorial endowment of the nearly 60 ethnic groups or Indigenous “nationalities” of the Amazon. The ideological battle with economists,

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7 Law of Native Communities and Agricultural Promotion of the Forest and Cloud Forest Regions. Decree Law No. 20653, Republic of Peru, 1974.

8 For a comprehensive analysis of the Native Communities Law, see Alberto Chirif, “Postscript. Indigenous Lands in the Peruvian Amazon (2006)”, in Stefano Varese. 2006. *Witness to Sovereignty. Essays on the Indian Movement in Latin America*. Copenhagen. IWGIA. On the Peruvian military revolution, see Carlos Aguirre and Paulo Drinot (Eds). 2017. *The Peculiar Revolution. Rethinking the Peruvian Experiment under Military Rule*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

agrarian economists and social planners was intentionally taken to the cultural and civilizational terrain. We had to argue against prevailing notions that land and resources (nature/world in all its cosmological complexity for Indigenous Amazonians) could be treated exclusively as quantifiable commodities. The officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform wanted the quarter of a million Amazonian Indians to aspire to obtain a certain fixed number of hectares of land per family according to an abstract formula designed in a social laboratory.

At the Centre for the Study of Popular Participation (Sinamos/ILO), we began to play this ideological game on two fronts: a strictly quantitative approximation of the number of hectares necessary for an Indigenous family to survive and be productive and an alternative qualitative approximation. Here, we proposed looking critically at Indigenous definitions of notions and practices of family, economy, production, land and resource use, the sacred/symbolic value of territory, and historical rights. With the help of social researchers and “numerical experimenters”, disciples of the great Argentine physicist, Oscar Varsavsky, who, together with the Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, worked at the Centre, we developed an inclusive mathematical model. In this we took into account all the environmental, agro-ecological, cultural, historical, social and political variables that need to be considered when defining the minimum requirements for recognizing sufficient land for the survival and social reproduction of a group. First, in its “traditional” subsistence economy, i.e. the mixed social economy and, second, in its combined integration into the regional and national market economy. To this mathematical model we were going to add the more complex model of “numerical experimentation” and “ethnic project” developed along the *theoretical and methodological lines of Oscar Varsavsky*. *We were trying, to use Varsavsky’s expression freely, “... to create an abacus to calculate the truth of our dreams.”*<sup>9</sup>

We never got to finish our project at the Centre for the Study of Popular Participation. On 11 September 1973, the bloody military coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile marked the beginning of the end of the Peruvian Revolution. The Centre was politically and economically suffocated throughout 1974 and, finally, closed a few weeks before the counter-revolutionary *coup d’état* of General Morales Bermudez. Juan Velasco Alvarado suffered from coronary heart disease, the amputation of a leg and an early death which, at least, spared him from having to witness the systematic dismantling of six years of fundamental and progressive reforms and changes that had restored confidence and hope to all of Peru’s poor.

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9 For a review of the theory of “National Projects” by the Argentine mathematical physicist Oscar Varsavsky, see Carlos E. de Senna Figueiredo. 1983. *Encontros na América do sol. A era dos projetos nacionais*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Antares.

What took place between the start of the activities of the Division of Forest Native Communities in 1969 and the enactment of the Forest Native Communities Act in 1974, however, was an intense and accelerated process of “politicization” or “ethnopolitization” of the Indigenous peoples and communities of the rainforest. The very change of name from “tribes”, “forest peoples”, “Indians”, “chunchos” to the official designation of native communities of the rainforest and the explicit intention of the government to designate each Indigenous peoples with its own ethnic name in its own language, was an important qualitative leap forward in the Indigenous self-perception of identity and the public opinion of the rest of the country. The multiple meetings, congresses, study circles, Indigenous working groups that emerged from the social mobilization provoked by this political opening were producing native organizations of all kinds. In 1969, the First Conference of Amuesha (Yánesha) Leaders was held with the support of *Reforma Agraria* and the central participation of anthropologist Richard Smith. A few months later, the Asháninka of the Perené River, the Awajún (Aguaruna) and Wampis (Huambiza) of the Marañón and Santiago rivers, the Shipibo of the Ucayali River, and the Quechua of the Napo mobilized.<sup>10</sup>

The involvement of a few urban social scientists and political activists and their honest and open interaction with Indigenous peoples in a context of revolutionary creativity resulted in the release of powerful creative social and cultural forces that had been oppressed for centuries in the Amazonian peoples. The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (Aidesep) was formed in 1977 to represent the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, while in 1983 the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) was established to provide international coverage of all the Indigenous organizations in countries of the Amazon basin. COICA represents the Amazonian peoples’ access to an international platform and to the political phenomenon of what has been called “globalization from below”.

Beginning in the late 1960s, this process of mobilization among the Amazonian Indigenous peoples of Peru was accompanied by a minority of social scientists and activists in several Latin American countries who were not content to play the restrictive role of academic intellectual normally assigned to “scientific” activities nor aseptically distance themselves from political activism. From the Barbados Meetings I (1971), II (1977) and III (1994) to the 4th Bertrand Russel Tribunal on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Rotterdam, 1981) and the formation of the

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10 See Richard Chase Smith, “Los indígenas amazónicos suben al escenario internacional”, in Morin, Françoise, Roberto Santana (Eds.), 2002, *Lo Transnacional. Instrumento y Desafío para los Pueblos Indígenas*. Quito: Abya-yala Ediciones. Also Brysk, A.2000, *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Chirif, Alberto and Pedro García Hierro, “Peruvian Amazon. Indigenous Organizations: Challenges and Achievements”, *Indigenous Affairs*, Copenhagen: IWGIA (3-4/08), pp 36-47.

UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1983, Indigenous peoples have been able to count on technical support, solidarity and external cooperation which, in many cases, reflected and reciprocated what we anthropologists had learned over the years from the Indigenous peoples themselves.<sup>11</sup>

### **Cosmocentrism and anthropocentrism**

It is well-known among American ethnographers that land and territory have been the central axis of Indigenous peoples' struggle for survival, for the reproduction of their culture, the search for and preservation of their autonomy and, finally, the very sustenance of their ethno-political sovereignty projects since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. No other constituent element of the individual and collective identity of each Indigenous peoples has played such an axial and fundamental role as their spiritual, emotional and cognitive identification with their own territorial space, the landscape marked by the history of real and mythical ancestors, the land, the waters, the plants, the animals, the tangible and intangible beings that participate in the complex and mysterious cosmic pact for life. The intense spiritual identification with one's own territorial space has not, however, resulted in a cultural neglect of the material and concrete relationship that the landscape and the land have with the human community that inhabits it. It is this close coexistence of the spiritual and the material, of the sacred and the secular, that are complex and unassimilable to the categories of Western urban modernity, the age-old relationships that the Indigenous peoples have established with their own territory and environment, in short, with nature as a whole.

Hence the difficulty of dealing with the issue of Indigenous territoriality - as a field of human/nature relations - in an analytical framework that prioritizes, albeit not very consciously, the materialistic - essentially economic - dimension of the relationship between humankind and our territorial space. Contemporary social and biological disciplines have tended to emphasize materialistic interpretations of the relationships between territory, land and Indigenous community, leaving the symbolic and non-tangible aspects of Indigenous peoples' relationships with their own geographic space on the margins of cultural studies. The most intelligent case studies demonstrate the superficiality and little practical relevance of synchronic economic-materialistic analyses as these lack historical depth and cultural breadth and end up

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11 The real history of the ethno-political liberation of the Indigenous peoples of Latin America began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala, the Quechua intellectual from Peru, author of *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (1600-1615) and other Andean and Mesoamerican Indigenous writings. For a brief history of Indigenous intellectuals and activism, see S. Varese, G. Delgado, R. L. Meyer, "Indigenous Anthropology Beyond Barbados" in Deborah Poole (Ed.). 2008. *A Companion to Latin American Anthropology*. Malden, MA - Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

resulting in a poor and distorted picture of the complex network of biocultural and symbolic relationships that the Indigenous community establishes with the environment as a whole, with the tangible and intangible landscape as it is culturally constructed and reproduced, with the cosmos made up of relationships of reciprocity and complementarity.

Two themes intersect in the analysis of Indigenous territoriality as a field of encounter between culture and nature. First, the cosmological dimension of the community's relationship with the environment (in its tangible and intangible dimensions); and second, the ecological and epistemological dimension of the chorographic relationship that Indigenous peoples maintain with the environment.<sup>12</sup>

For millennia, the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, the Andes, Central and Mesoamerica have maintained relationships with other Indigenous peoples, other village communities, other Indigenous territories or native states and other complex political and state formations, both centralized and multiple decentralized. Over the last 500 years, the same Indigenous peoples and communities have related to the Spanish colonial state and, latterly, to the modern republican state in its different manifestations. From ethnohistorical and anthropological sources and collective memory, it seems clear that, in these complex power relations, the grassroots community, the village community (in all of its different socio-cultural and political expressions) has managed to maintain a cultural continuity rooted in each ethnic group's vision and practice of the occupied and productive space, the space of social and sacred exchanges, the ethnically defined landscape in local cultural terms. This comprehension, reproduction and praxis of the local cultural landscape (which these days I provisionally call *ethnochorography*) seems to form the axis of a local exercise of power and, consequently, the axis of resistance in the face of extra-communal forces.

Over the centuries of colonial and republican occupation, Indigenous peoples have struggled to maintain or regain their independence in the social and economic spheres, their self-determination and fundamentally their "ethnic sovereignty", understood and practised as an exercise of authority and dominion over their intellectual, cultural and spiritual life. Combined forms of active and clandestine resistance have been practised collectively and individually in the

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12 I use the term chorography as suggested by my colleague Guillermo Delgado who, in an unpublished article, "Imagin/ing Border Indigeneity: Two Notes on Decolonization and S/P/L/L/ace" (UC Santa Cruz), proposes this word of Greek origin to indicate an intimate knowledge of space, territory and land: precise knowledge, in a specific ethnic language resulting from deep rooting in a culturally-reproduced landscape and in the historical permanence of a community in this territorial landscape.

realm of intangible culture, in the secrecy and clandestinity of personal intimacy where language, culture and consciousness intersect in the daily task of reading the universe, living in it and acting in/on it. Under colonial occupation, this immense Indigenous task of interpreting, caring for and nurturing the world could not always be accomplished. While imperial and colonial intentions aimed to control the subjugated peoples as a whole - their spirits, their reason, their bodies, their labour - broader, more systematic and constant efforts were directed at expropriating their nature, their associated Indigenous knowledge and technologies and, ultimately, their lands. And these seem to me to be the reasons why even a superficial and revisionist look at the history of Indigenous peoples' resistance reveals the centrality of both land and territoriality, and the "environmental-ecological" question (to use contemporary terms) or the question of nature and the sacredness of the cosmos. It is this centrality of the sacred nature of the nature-cosmos that appears from the very first moment of Indigenous opposition to the European and mestizo settlers.

The pre-eminent role of place-space in defining human community is particularly clear in the case of the Indigenous peoples of the Andean Amazon, who reveal extremely important data in this regard. I quote the Spanish-Peruvian scholar who has lived for years among the Awajún of north-western Peru's rainforest: "...it has to be said that an Indigenous territory... does not end at specific points, it is not defined by demarcation lines but tapers out into areas of insecurity... whether in shared or bordering spaces with other neighbouring peoples, or in culturally protected natural areas... [These] intermediate spaces, unclaimed and unoccupied yet established... [are] important in the Indigenous territorial perception." (Pedro García Hierro).<sup>13</sup>

I focus on the example of the Amazon because of my anthropological background but I could extend this type of analysis to the case of the Mesoamerican Zapotec, Mixtec or Chinantec Indians or to other ethnic groups in the Americas. For thousands of Amazonian Indigenous peoples scattered in multiple social units across diverse ecological zones, the issues of territory, land, resources, nature and the world are intrinsically linked to the cultural conception and social practice of what they understand by "community". *Nosháninka*: my people, an Asháninka from the Gran Pajonal would say. This is your community. And this is in the first instance the place, the "village", the chorographic space where one was born and where the ancestors (real or imaginary) were born, died or transmuted. This communal space with names, stories, narratives, cosmological references is where individual and collective identity is constructed in a dense network of meanings, expressed in the specific ethnic language. It seems essential to me to

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13 Pedro García Hierro in *Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina: Retos para el Nuevo Milenio*. Multimedia Presentation, CD, Lima: Ford Foundation/Oxfam America

recognize that, for Indigenous peoples, territoriality, spatial location and issues of land are central to any discussion that refers to a sense of community, ethnicity and identity politics, cultural reproduction and aspirations for autonomy. For these reasons, I focus my comments on the centrality of notions and practices of spatial and cultural jurisdictions in Indigenous communities, as well as the related issues of Indian intellectual sovereignty and epistemological autonomy, which constitute a set of strictly interrelated themes.

The Indigenous axiological and epistemological approach to relationships between individuals, society and nature (cosmos) uses what Lakota Indigenous scholar Elisabeth Cook-Lynn calls the “language of place”. A language woven into the locality, into the concrete space in which culture is rooted and constantly reproduced in a familiar landscape whereby the names of things, space, objects, plants, animals, living people and the dead, the underworld and the celestial infinity evoke the whole cosmic web in its mysterious and fearsome sacred (or spiritual) construct.<sup>14</sup> And this seems to me to be the reason why a paradigmatic shift that emphasizes the “*topos*” rather than the “*logos*” and the “spiritual-sacred” together with the productive-economic, is necessary to understand Indigenous peoples in their relationship with the nature-world. Indigenous cultural language is built around a few principles and a cultural logic or cultural topology that prioritizes (biocultural) diversity and heterogeneity over homogeneity, eclecticism over dogma, multiplicity over bipolarity.

There are several cultural consequences for a society imbued with this sacramental logic of place, of the environment always understood as part of the cosmic landscape, and of a social praxis founded on the principle of diversity. First, the correlation and mutual influence of diversified bio-management practices and diversified socio-management practices is historically and ethnographically proven. Polyculture, as a biodiverse practice in agricultural production, is a civilizational characteristic of Indigenous American peoples. The *milpa*, “sacred triad” or “three sisters” and the principles associated with polyculture are present from the north-eastern United States and Canada down to Central America, then to be replaced with more elaborate forms of polyculture in the humid tropics such as the Amazonian *chacra* and *conuco* or the Andean *chacra*.

This conception of productive use holds that the concentration, breeding and development of diversity in the reduced space of human agricultural intervention, as well as in the expanded space of the economic activity of the whole social

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14 It is interesting to note how the very language at my disposal, be it Spanish or English, forces me to use terms such as “sacred” (Lat. *Sacer*), spiritual (Lat. *Spiritus*, breath), which certainly do not reflect either the Indigenous ontology or its epistemology.

group, is the most appropriate way of relating to land, water, animals, biological resources and, in general, to the preservation of the humanized landscape and the farming/nurturing of the natural world. This praxis of diversity presupposes a chorographic conception (as opposed to the geographical and topographical one introduced by colonialism, which brought to the Americas the geopolitical notion of *Terra Nullius*) and a relational kinetic conception of the natural world.

Polyculture, the nurturing of biodiversity, and the multiple uses of the landscape (tangible and intangible) seems to constitute the crucial conception of what James C. Scott has called the “moral economy” of peasant-Indigenous peoples.<sup>15</sup> Such a notion, which operates according to the principle of diversity, accompanies and shapes innumerable Indigenous cosmologies that place at the centre of the universe not man (the anthropocentric, patriarchal, dominant character of the sacred and secular culture of Euro-America) but diversity itself, expressed in a multiplicity of “deities” and spiritual entities with their polymorphic characteristics and sometimes contradictory functions. *Pachacamaite*, the spiritual entity of the Asháninka Pajonalinos, is a cultural hero, a divinity in exile and prisoner of the Peruvians, a divine trickster duped, a utopian hope for a return to archetypal times but, above all, a symbol of resistance to oppression. The ancient Quetzalcoatl of Mesoamerica, to give another example, is both serpent, bird and human. It is a cultural hero in its return to take back the usurped Indigenous world and is the morning star. It is also the fragile and sacred humanistic principle that prioritizes the offering of jades and butterflies over that of human sacrifice. It is certainly not at the heart of Mesoamerican cosmologies because there is not one single centre but an interwoven polyphony of symbols and values, a “spiritual polyculture”, a sacred “*milpa*” or “*chacra*”, an infinite domain for the encounter and interaction of diversity.

In contrast to Euro-American anthropocentrism (of long date in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic and scientific cultural heritage), Indigenous peoples have for millennia built *cosmocentric* and *polycentric* cosmologies based on the logic of diversity and the logic of reciprocity. This is a diverse cosmos, in which there is no privileged centre nor hegemonic singularity. A world that is permanently enriched by the interaction of each of its elements, even those that are antithetical, requires a moral code (a code of custom and behaviour) based on the *logic of reciprocity*. Whatever is taken has to be returned in similar or comparable “value”. What I receive (good, gift, service, resource) I will have to reciprocate at some point with similar comparable value. That which I take from

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15 In fact, J.C. Scott takes the term moral economy from the British historian E. P. Thompson who applied it to an analysis of the transformation of the English working class. Similar analyses were also conducted by the French Marxist sociologist Henry Lefebvre in relation to the French working class.

the earth, from the world, from nature has to be returned, that which I give to the earth or to the gods or to my human counterparts or to any of my cosmic relatives will be returned to me. The sociologist of religions, Van der Leeuw, several decades ago splendidly summarized this civilizational logic with the Latin formula: “*Do ut possis dare*”.

Our analytical proposal maintains that, for Indigenous peoples, the principles of *diversity (biocultural)*, *reciprocity (social and cosmic)* and *complementarity* have formed the axiological, ethical and epistemological structure of their civilization projects since time immemorial. Their cosmocentric conception of societal and biophysical life is based on and expressed through the principles of diversity, reciprocity and complementarity. In terms of a contemporary socio-economic analysis, this cosmocentric conception and praxis is organized around “use value” and therefore around a *culture of the use economy*. With the European invasion and the establishment of colonialism, the consequent intrusion of “exchange value” established, first hesitantly (until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, depending on the regions) and, in the end, forcefully, *a culture of the economy of profit and added value*.

The coexistence of two economic rationales within Indigenous territorial communities, one governed by the productive logic of use value (reciprocity and complementarity), the other by the productive logic of exchange value (individualism, profit, surplus value), generates a social tension within the community that is becoming increasingly acute as the capitalist market and its values penetrate community life with ever greater force. In most Indigenous territorial communities, however, especially in the Andean Amazon, the two logics of production (and territorial use) - consumption and exchange - have to a greater or lesser degree reached a certain balance in which the social or subsistence economy fulfils the fundamental function of satisfying basic needs while the rest of production (surplus) and/or income and/or salary - if it exists - enters commercial exchange circuits through the capitalist market.

In the Indigenous communities of the Amazon, the subsistence economy (social economy), with its strict cultural rules of reciprocity, complementarity, diversity, ritual and sacramental formalization, its spiritual density, plays a hegemonic role in shaping the entire network of internal social relations in terms of a “moral economy” involving all organisms and persons in a dynamic network of relations. The primary right enshrined in the Indigenous moral economy is *the right of each member of the community to a livelihood*, to a place in the territory under Indigenous jurisdiction, to a space to live, produce, reproduce and consume. This right to direct production, enshrined for millennia in Indigenous practices, in a land/territory of individual and collective use and usufruct, has formed the basis for developing a culture of moral ecology that considers nature, the

environment - the territory in its most total and integrated sense - as an asset of limited use regulated not only by human decisions but by a cosmic pact that involves the entire living universe.

In this Indigenous cultural sphere and mode, the need for exchange (of goods or labour) in the capitalist market becomes a secondary factor, de-ritualized, empty of symbolic meaning, “stripped” of significant socio-cultural relations. The late capitalist economy (neoliberal and global) is, in fact, an amoral economy that pays no attention to axiology, to values, to the ethical components of its actions/processes. Any ethical component is absent from the behaviour of the capitalist economic community. The rules-laws-regulations that guide individual and social behaviour do not have a moral but rather a pragmatic foundation the main principled aspiration of which is supposedly to facilitate equal opportunities for all those who participate in the market. But these opportunities are scarce and limited and, consequently, there is no guarantee that even if the rules of the game are followed, a full and equitable distribution of opportunities will follow. On the contrary, in the Indigenous moral economy, the principle and underpinning of the system is the recognition and practice that everyone has a right and access to the means of subsistence (even when these are scarce) and all members of the community have the right to a livelihood.

## **Two ethical foundations, two Indigenous peoples**

### ***Sumak Kawsay***

More than three decades ago, the Quechua/Kichwa expression “*sumak kawsay*” began to circulate, first among Indigenous thinkers and then slowly among Latin American activists. To seek the origin of this Indigenous thought and attribute it to specific individuals would be to distort the deep, millenary and transpersonal meaning of a concept and collective practice that has defined Indian civilizations for the last 12-15,000 years throughout the Americas. The Spanish translation of “good living”, which adorns the populist rhetoric of some Latin American governments, is more a response to the usual process of neocolonial cultural expropriation than to an Indigenous willingness to allow themselves to be nationalized by the Creole bourgeoisies. *Sumak* in the Kichwa language of the inhabitants of the Amazonian river basins of Pastaza, Bobonaza, Curaray and Napo is more than an aesthetic adjective, it constitutes an entire and complex semantic field that defines the ontology of the *kawsak sachá*, the world of the Indigenous communities, the *living forest* in which millions of visible and invisible, tangible and intangible entities and beings exist in an agreed mutual and reciprocal family relationship.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kichwa intellectuals, elders and activists from the communities of Sarayaku, Ecuador are the ones who best define the profoundly spiritual and revolutionary meaning of the expressions

***Kametsa asaïke***

The Andean-Amazonian Kichwa language, spoken by millions of inhabitants of the Andes and the river basins of eastern Ecuador and Peru, is age-old and, like all Indigenous languages, forms the cultural archive of the long memory of these peoples, whom archaeologists thought to be of Andean origin. In the eastern pre-Andean region of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia there were, and still are, hundreds of other Indigenous peoples from other linguistic families, some even older than the Kichwa language. Ethnolinguistics and ethnohistory speculate that peoples of the Arawak linguistic family, such as the Yánesha and the Asháninka, have older temporal roots than speakers of Amazonian Kichwa and Andean Quechua, and a temporal path of territorial dissemination that is much more extensive than their current location of colonial origin. Recent studies by Richard Chase Smith and Fernando Santos Granero have revived the original proposal of the Andean archaeologist Julio C. Tello who, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, argued that the origin of Andean civilization was possibly to be found in the Amazon rainforest, a hypothesis that was later elaborated on by Donald Lathrap in the 1970s to finally lead from the 1990s on to a radical re-evaluation of the Amazonian civilizations and their role in the history of American civilizations on the part of North American, Latin American and European teams of ethnoarchaeologists, ethnobotanists and anthropologists.<sup>17</sup>

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*sumak kawsay* and *kawsa sacha*. See Kawsak Sacha-*The Living Forest. An Indigenous Proposal for Confronting Climate Change*. Presented by the Amazonian Kichwa People of Sarayaku, COP 21, Paris, 30 November - 11 December 2015; this Indigenous cosmology is nevertheless so complex and historically profound that it has generated an abundant body of academic study in several countries of the Americas and Europe; see, for example, the ongoing studies of PhD candidate Chris Hebdon at Yale University (2016, unpublished), who traces the meaning and use of *sumak kawsay* on the part of Ecuadorian Indigenous organizations in the 1980s and 1990s under the influence of Catholic missionaries, and even that of the developmentalists, resulting in the autonomous Kichwa formulation by C. Viteri in his Master's thesis: "Sumac Kausai: una respuesta viable al desarrollo" (2003) and the text by José Gualinga M., President of Atayak-Sarayaku: "Declaratoria de Kausak Sacha-Selva Viviente (Territorio Sagrado, Patrimonio de la Biodiversidad y Cultura Kichwa en Ecuador), in *Ecología Política: Cuadernos de Debate Internacional* 29:168-174.

17 Smith, Richard Chase (2006), "Where our Ancestors Once Tread: Amuesha Territoriality and Sacred Landscape in the Andean Amazon of Central Peru," in Christian Gros and Marie Claude Stigler, eds. 69-84. *Être Indien dans les Amériques. Spoliations et résistance*, Paris, Institut des Amériques and IHEAL-CREDAL, Université Paris III; Santos-Granero, Fernando, (2005) "Writing History into the Landscape: Yanesha Notions of Space and Territoriality», in Alexandre Surrallés and Pedro García Hierro (Eds.), *The Land Within. Indigenous Territory and the Perception of Environment*, Copenhagen, IWGIA, 2005; Donald Lathrap, (1970), *The Upper Amazon: Ancient Peoples and Place*, London: Thames and Hudson; finally, see the excellent summary of Amazonian and South American studies published by Charles Mann, (2011) 1491: *New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. New York: Vintage.

When, more than 50 years ago, I spent several months living and learning with the Campa-Asháninka of the Gran Pajonal in the Central Amazon Rainforest of Peru, I had difficulty grasping the meaning of some of the fundamental terms of the ethical-philosophical semantic field of their civilization. My own linguistic-cultural categories (my Indo-European languages and my Euro-American sociohistory) imposed on me an ideological straitjacket of millennial Mediterranean roots, in which categorizations of a Newtonian physics, a Cartesian logic and a spirituality (or religiosity) not only secularized but also desacralized had been added to the Judeo-Christian depths. When terms such as *kamétsa* and *kamári* appeared in the narratives (myths?) of and conversations with the Asháninka, I mentally ordered them in binary opposites, in the Judeo-Christian (or is it Persian?) bipolarity of good and evil: *kamétsa* is good, positive; *kamári* is bad, negative. All reflection and dialogue on life, the world, the universe, humanity, animals, plants, the firmament and invisible beings was thus transformed into an operation of Western taxonomy in which each entity is imputed to one or the other of the two mutually exclusive poles. The *amatsénka* spirit beings-brothers who surround us in a normally invisible way and who can materialize if the subject enters into synchrony with them (with or without the help of hallucinogenic master plants) cannot be defined in terms of a binary simplicity: they are *kamétsa* but can manifest themselves in a terrifying way by opening the sacred space of the beyond up to the subject, in which *kamári* can also manifest themselves. In the same way, the *maninkari*, “the hidden ones”, spiritual entities that populate the universe, do not correspond to a single binary pole but to ambiguity, to the enigma of a relational universe in constant flux: an ontology more similar to quantum physics than to Newtonian.

What then is *kametsa asaike* for the Asháninka? Is it the literal translation into Spanish of essentially European, neo-Latin, Spanish semantic concepts of “good living” or “the good life”? Or is it, instead, an ontological conception in which life and goodness, beauty and harmony are interwoven in a delicate and fragile thread, always exposed to the manifestation of *kamári* and therefore to the loss, even if temporary, of goodness and beauty? In my initial studies of Asháninka philosophy and ethics, that is, their cosmology, I proposed the term “gnostic” to characterize the existential conception and practice of this people. I argued that, for the Asháninka, knowledge saves and ignorance loses; error allows the intervention of *kamári* and the temporary dissolution of *kametsa asaike*, of a good life in harmony.<sup>18</sup>

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18 Varese, Stefano, Moisés Gamarra, “Deux versions cosmogonique campá: esquisse analytique” in *Annales. Économie, Sociétés, Civilisations*. Anné 1976, vol. 31, no. 3, pp.469-480. See also *La sal de los cerros*, Havana, Cuba: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2011 (fifth edition).

The fragility of the *kametsa asaike* and the constant threat of the emergence of *kamari* due to human error, a cultural lack, forces the Asháninka to tread lightly in the world, to transit through the cosmos respecting the order of the cosmogonic beginning, of that archetypal time in which all entities were human relatives and who now manifest themselves as earthly reflections and shadows in the constant uncertainty of being caught by the invading foreigners, those Peruvian *wiracocha*, *chori* and *kirinka* (*gringos*) that take possession of the world by profaning it.

### **A possible point of encounter**

Since Paul Radin's initial studies of Indigenous peoples' thought and philosophy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and C. G. Jung's analyses of non-causal forms of knowledge - a mental process Jung called synchrony - it has become evident that the Eurocentric theory of Cartesian and Newtonian knowledge is insufficient to explain the complexity of most Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and practices in the Americas. If we accept that the principles of quantum physics can be part of the contemporary way of doing "science" then we can open the doors of our mental and emotional laboratory to the principle of "ontological uncertainty" as advanced by the physicist Wener Heisenberg in 1925. Under different experimental conditions, matter and light appear either as waves or, at other times, as particles. Particles and waves are ontologically incompatible: they cannot be the same thing at the same time. Consequently, in a Western causal logic, this paradox forces us to accept that some of the strangest and most absurd claims of Indigenous peoples about their own reality may be closer to quantum physics than to Cartesian-Newtonian science.<sup>19</sup>

With respect and intellectual humility, I propose the philosophy of the Kichwa people of Sarayaku of the Bobonaza River in Ecuador as the ethical definition of what Amazonia has been for millennia, and what it continues to be for thousands of lineages of Indigenous peoples, the principle of life in harmony - *Sumak Kawsay* - in this immense territory of South America threatened by neo-imperialist destruction. The Kichwa of Sarayaku call their forests, their territories, their whole landscape: *Kawsak Sacha* - The Living Forest "...a forest of living beings in a relationship of communication between all...these beings, from the microscopic plants and fungi to the supreme entity that protects the entire forest, are people - *runa* - that inhabit the waterfalls, the lagoons, the swamps,

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19 See the contributions of theoretical physicist F. Davis Peat to a possible encounter between quantum physics and Indigenous epistemologies in his book *Blackfoot Physics. A Journey into the Native American Universe*. 2005. Boston, MA: Weiser Books. By the same author, see also: *Synchronicity. The Marriage of Matter and Psyche*. Pari, Italy: Pari Publishing, 2014. Also Frédérique Apffel-Marglin. 2011. *Subversive Spiritualities. How Rituals Enact the World*. Oxford, G.B. & New York: Oxford University Press.

the mountains and rivers, which, in turn, compose The Living Forest - Kawsak Sacha - as an integrated whole.”<sup>20</sup>

I propose that this epistemological paradigm shift produced by the acceptance of the possible relationships between an intangible and empirically not accessible or verifiable reality and our Newtonian causal world also requires an ethical shift that allows us to recognize the legitimacy of the Indigenous peoples’ argument for an ethical order of “Good living/*Sumak Kawsay/Kametsa Asaika*” based on a deeper and more spiritual understanding of humanity’s place in the cosmic order.

The most suggestive analogy is that expressed by quantum physicist Francis David Peat who argues that Indigenous knowledge systems are very similar to the image of the material world proposed by quantum physics as an external manifestation of patterns, forms, balances and energy relationships which, in Indigenous knowledge, are understood as relationships between the spirits and powers that surround humanity. These relationships require obligations and the need to carry out periodic renewal ceremonies and reciprocity agreements.<sup>21</sup>

Indigenous conceptions of the world, in our case the Amazon, and its treatment as a living network of interrelationships rather than a fixed structure of “inanimate” entities with no will of their own, no intentionality and no intelligence, imply that Indigenous knowledge-science always occurs in a context where “... nothing is abstract since all things occur within a landscape of and by virtue of a network of interrelationships” (Peat, 2002:234). These critical and comparative approaches to Indigenous knowledge systems are accompanied by a radical revision of modern Western science, questioning even the ability of Indo-European languages and logics to operate in cosmologies in which entities can be members of two mutually exclusive categories at the same time: both good and bad, living and dead, material and spiritual, “particle and wave”.

This epistemological revolution - at once both ethical and ontological - has been possible thanks to the radical vision of reality deduced and demonstrated by the quantum scientists Bohr, Heisenberg, Bohm, Einstein and all the others who have forced modernity to reintroduce metaphysics into our worldview - our cosmology - and to accept the principles of “ontological uncertainty”, “complementary descriptions” and “mutually contradictory relations”, all phenomena that Amazonian and Indigenous shamanism consider normal. More

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20 Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku. 2018. *Kawsak Sacha-Selva Vivente*. Sarayaku, Rio Bobonaza. See also *Declaración Kawsak Sacha- Selva Viviente. Ser Vivo y Consciente. Sujeto de Derechos*. Declaration Adopted at the General Assembly of the Native Kichwa People of Sarayaku, in December 2012 and updated in June 2018. [www.kawsaksacha.org](http://www.kawsaksacha.org)

21 F. David Peat. 2002 *Blackfoot Physics. A Journey into the Native American Universe*. Boston, MA/York Beach, ME: Weiser Books.

than anything else, however, the quantum revolution, together with Indigenous knowledge, confronts us with the existence of mysteries and the ancient philosophical question of how to coexist with them in peace and harmony in what the Sarayaku people call Sumak Kawsay.<sup>22</sup>

### **Return to an Indigenous cosmological ethic**

As we come to the end of this review of the ethical foundations of Indigenous territoriality and of the culture-nature relationship that sustains the sociobiological life of Indigenous peoples, it seems to me necessary to propose the inevitability of a paradigmatic change in the theory of biocultural values - that is, the axiology of nature in culture. As we have seen, the socio-ideological complex of modernity-colonialism-capitalism has established the dominance of a theory of knowledge that is de-territorialized, without place, without community, without local culture and, consequently, with an anonymous and limited moral and social responsibility. In its claim to be “universal”, the Western theory of knowledge claims a single epistemology that is centred on exchange value and is therefore “econocentric”, monetized, commodified. It is an epistemology whose ethical obligation falls exclusively on the market. In contrast, in the peripheries, on the margins of the complex of modernity, in what is at the same time both anti-modern and post-modern, Indigenous knowledge systems are deeply rooted in the land, in the community of total relations, in concrete places socially and culturally constructed over centuries and millennia. Places that have ancient names and memories, landscapes of age-old relational dialogues, of the co-development of all animal and plant organisms, of all waters, rocks, winds and stars, and of all tangible and intangible symbolic entities that give order to or provoke imbalance in life or death.

It is to this deep and ancient rootedness in the landscape and in the place, always constructed and reconstructed in human relations with the whole complex biophysical network, that Indigenous peoples refer in their territorial claims and in their unique way of understanding their space, of knowing it intimately, of not distancing themselves intellectually and emotionally from it in exercises of calculating knowledge but appropriating it and allowing themselves to be appropriated by it.

To be rooted in place, even when one is in exile, means to be organically linked to the referential matrix, to the cultural and linguistic framework that sustains the

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22 For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between science and spirituality, see Dave Pruet. 2012. *Reason and Wonder. A Copernican Revolution in Science and Spirit.* Harrisonburg, Virginia; Alba Enterprises LLC. Also, Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, “Western Modernity and the Fate of Anima Mundi: its Murder and Transformation into a Postmaterial Ecospirituality” in F. Apffel-Marglin and S. Varese (Eds.) 2020. *Contemporary Voices from Anima Mundi – A Reappraisal.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

entire interpretive system of life. Earth means production, consumption, sacred celebration, a mirror of cosmogony. Maintaining dominion, sovereignty over one's own territory means exercising jurisdiction over the concrete, historical manifestation of one's own place in culture, one's own system of knowledge, one's own epistemic structure and the mode of praxis linked to such belonging. At the same time, being epistemologically linked to the local, to the spatial concreteness of one's own culture, does not mean abdicating a cosmopolitan and ecumenical vision of the world; it means recognizing that one's own world is only a fragment of a "pluriverse" (not a universe) within which each individual and each society has to learn to live. Communication between the diverse systems is not only possible but a necessity which, however, requires reciprocity between equals and diversities, a world ethical system based on principles of symmetrical reciprocity, not only at the level of intellectual and epistemic coexistence but also in the economic and political domain and, above all, in an ethical code of human conduct conceived as an expression of the integrated whole of organic life and of the whole life of the cosmos.

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# A NEW INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE: ANTHROPOLOGY WRITTEN BY INDIGENOUS AUTHORS<sup>1</sup>

**Miguel Alberto Bartolomé**



It is now 50 years since our first meeting in Barbados and our unforgettable Declaration and, as we say in Mexico, “*ya llovió desde entonces*” - so much time has passed since. The passage of the years has confirmed our early demands, and cultural pluralism is now generally accepted even if this is sometimes only as mere rhetoric and subordinate to the short-term interests of nation states. And yet the protagonists and beneficiaries of the Declaration have shown remarkable vitality, as can be seen in the proliferation of ethnopolitical movements over the last half century. It is one specific sector of these movements that I wish to refer in these pages: the Indigenous intellectuals who are producing an enormous anthropological literature that tends to be overlooked by national academies. These rarely considered colleagues offer us a further dimension to the ethnic question and form one aspect of the apparent Barbadian utopia that needs to be recognized and valued today.

Anthropology has often, and for reasons not unrelated to the whims of academia resulting from so-called post-modern perspectives, been accused of producing a unitary discourse, closed to the dialogue necessary to bear witness to the presence of concrete social subjects among the societies and cultures it analyses (with which it dialogues). We are accused of creating a discourse about others in which the intellectual authority of the ethnographer constructs an all-encompassing representation that shapes his or subject, even though the latter is absent from the development of this representation (see, e.g., C. Geertz, 1988; J. Clifford and G. Marcus, 1986). And it is absent to the extent that we

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1 My closest empirical references in this essay are the Native Peoples of Mexico and, particularly, in Oaxaca State where I live and which has the largest and most diverse Indigenous population in the country. I also draw on my experiences in Argentina, Paraguay and Panama. In conducting this research, I have counted on the generous and invaluable collaboration of my colleague, Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado, who was responsible for the long and arduous task of compiling the scattered bibliography produced by Indigenous peoples, often contained in regional magazines with very little circulation, in local newspapers or in almost lost institutional reports, managing to bring together 400 publications issued in Oaxaca between 1970 and 2000. This text is a summary of the major publication in which all this production is recorded.

speak about them and for them but without them, although little is clarified with regard to other possible expository strategies. It is even suggested that, in today's "post-colonial" contexts, the natives are refusing to be represented by external professionals. In short, new arguments are being coined in favour of the "original sin" of our profession, linked at one time to spurious colonial interests. To this first fault is now being added that of inventing the "other" through ethnographic discourse, this being considered a form of literature that depends more on the author than on the reality to which that same author is intending to refer.

The anxieties of metropolitan anthropologists are once again being projected onto a task which, locked up in their ivory towers after a season of "illuminating" field work, is becoming the focus of research that is beginning to question its very meaning. Any criticism of a professional tradition opens the possibility of discussing the validity of that criticism, however, and would seem to call for a position on the subject. This is precisely what I propose in these next few pages. I start from an assumption that although these perspectives are not totally false, neither are they necessarily true, a proposition that implies accepting that criteria such as falsehood or truth have some kind of epistemological status in the ambiguous contemporary theoretical horizon. This is why I propose this brief reflective and bibliographic exploration of the anthropological production of Indigenous intellectuals in the hope of contributing to both the debate on the current meaning of the anthropological task, and the possible relations that could be established with our colleagues from among the original peoples. I thus intend to prove that anthropological reflection no longer lies solely in the hands of professionals who are members of cultures external to the peoples studied, and thus the dialogical perspective and polyphony demanded of us are already a fact that simply requires greater recognition on the part of Western academic traditions.

### **Indigenous intellectuals**

Every society has its own intellectuals, a term I use to designate not only specialists in some branch of knowledge but also curious people who are seeking to learn more than they have been taught or who feel drawn to reflect on their social reality. You do not have to be a shaman, a healer, a member of the Council of Elders or a time management consultant to develop an analytical spirit with regard to the social world of belonging. Each member of a culture inhabits the same symbolic structure although there are not so many who can claim to know all the details of its architecture. Many make the knowledge of their ancestors their own and treasure it, on the assumption that the most important thing is to know that it was passed down once and for all, and so the role of the knower is to try to recover it, remember it and pass it on. Nowadays it is also very

common to find people handling explicit discourse, products of social ideologies constructed by their peoples or drawn from external discourses; this group includes the committed activists of ethnopositional organizations. Others, like birds that fly out of formation in their flocks, keep a certain personal and emotional distance when considering their own worlds. Tradition, ideology or reflection are not necessarily irreconcilable or contradictory and they are perspectives that frequently guide the thinking of Indigenous intellectuals as they do the world over. I have spent long nights in discussions with men who can talk about the most remote past with a closeness that comes from the depth of participating in a collective memory. Sometimes it is passion that guides societal understanding and action, based on an ideological discourse; I have had discussions with many Indigenous friends whose ideology was so all-consuming as to lead them to give their lives for the causes they embraced. But I have also known people, perhaps more solitary, whose melancholy remoteness gave them a distant viewpoint not only of society but of themselves as well, and who were trying to understand their own reality from a disillusioned lack of passion.

The old Gramscian concept of the organicity of “traditional” intellectuals can thus have very different meanings. Even our colleague Juan Julián Caballero (1996), who belongs to the Ñu Savi (Mixtec) people, prefers to differentiate between what he calls *Indian professionals* and *Indian intellectuals*. The professionals are those who have obtained a degree of some kind through the national education system and the intellectuals are those who “have a clarity about the multiple problems of the community and an influence that enables these problems to be adequately resolved”. The same author points out that the difference between the Indian and non-Indian intellectual lies in the fact that the former is basically concerned with the life of the collective while the latter may be alien to his or her surroundings. In other words, the Mixtec intellectual is perceived not as a solitary thinker but as a social actor whose very existence and tasks are responsive to the needs of community life.

I am not here trying to construct an inevitably precarious typology of intellectuals but rather to emphasize that this is not a category that belongs to a single exclusive cultural tradition.<sup>2</sup> Thinking about the culture of others has been seen as a traditional task of anthropology, while thinking about our own culture has been considered philosophy. Perhaps then it would be preferable to speak of “native philosophers”, as pioneered by Paul Radin more than half a century ago (1960) in his positivist vindication of logical thought, countering the

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2 This might seem an obvious conclusion, and yet it is not so obvious when it refers to the contemporary Indigenous intellectuality, as Alicia Barabas once commented: “...there seems to be a deep-rooted prejudice that, by definition, an Indian is not an intellectual and, if he has become one, it is because he has stopped being an Indian...” (1979:58).

notion of “pre-logical” mentality as coined by Lévy Bruhl’s imaginary ethnology. But the term “primitive” is not a fair one to use for our contemporaries from other cultures, and nor am I interested here in delving further into the nature of analytical thinking. I start from the assumption that the bookish knowledge of generic Western culture, to which the Mexican cultural configuration could be ascribed, has been sufficiently disseminated among Indigenous peoples that they find in it a means of expressing their own cultural traditions.<sup>3</sup> Many native intellectuals are thus now writing about their cultures in essays that are aimed both at their own people and those outside of their local environment. This is an anthropological literature with an intercultural orientation that I believe merits more consideration than it is usually accorded. To explore its characteristics is a task that exceeds the objective of these few pages, which are limited to attempting to demonstrate the validity and growing importance of Indigenous anthropological production. This importance has often been under-estimated by an academic tradition that is too attentive to fulfilling its own internal logics.

However, it is not only those who write and publish their writings that can be considered intellectuals in the sense of what I am writing here. It has been rightly pointed out that the pre-Hispanic native traditions of Oaxaca were oral societies with writing (B. Maldonado, 1994). Reading and writing were the privilege of a few specialists so the transmission of tradition and systems of communication generally took place orally. Since the Spanish invasion, and to this very day, the education imposed by the State institutions, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has massively spread the written word in Spanish albeit without succeeding in displacing the pre-eminence of oral communication in both languages. Until now, many native intellectuals have either not been able to access the ability to write in their mother tongue or did not consider it so important for their tasks. The old oral tradition still favours the use of the word, which finds more avid recipients than written pages. Community assemblies, trading and kinship relationships, marriage proposals and wedding speeches, the telling of myths and narratives of all kinds, the communication of various information on community radio and other aspects of public and private life have thus far largely been oral. Municipal authorities, like the members of the Councils of Elders, are generally recognized for their ability to give speeches appropriate to different social contexts. Ritual specialists are distinguished according to their knowledge of how to speak to the deities. There is undoubtedly a little known (to us) *art of*

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3 It is worth recalling in this regard the interesting albeit controversial proposal of Jack Goody (1985) for whom the development of analytical thought, in the “Western” sense of the term but stripped of all ethnocentric connotation, is intimately related to the development of writing, insofar as this makes it possible to conjugate different temporalities, compare sentences, separate words and vary their order, construct syllogisms, keep identical records and notice contradictions that are difficult to identify in oral discourse, thus creating a special type of activity or cognitive capacity.

*the word* that is expressed through the various native languages. This is not a sign of the proverbial ineffectiveness of education systems in Indigenous areas but rather a vigorous expression of the importance of orality, which is resisting being displaced by the colder and more anonymous written tradition.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I am referring to the written production of native intellectuals, never forgetting that it is not only intellectuals who write.

In relation to the above, I think we need to remember the words published more than five decades ago by Georges Balandier when he pointed out that "...anthropology no longer has a monopoly over explanations of traditional societies; it must now face the first Indigenous contradictors..." (1951). In spite of the time that has passed, these words may seem novel to more than one colleague who is too attentively contemplating his or her own historical navel. Despite the lack of explicit recognition, the monologue of anthropology has for many years now been invaded by the presence of discordant voices: the voices of the very members of the societies that have represented the object of our professional concern. Many have not wanted, and many still do not want, to accept the legitimacy of this alternative discourse. It has been all too common that Indian intellectuals, by the mere fact of standing up as such and given the language of protest they sometimes use, have been accused of racism. I do not intend to comment further on the grotesque logical inversion that results in such a perspective: the victim being accused of rejecting his or her aggressors. This aggressiveness is the product of legitimate resentment, of a need for personal and social affirmation that initially involves denial of "those dominant". Experience shows, however, that the maturity of the authors leads them eventually to seek an intercultural dialogue, i.e., to demand equal recognition from those they initially rejected.

### **On so-called post-colonial writing**

When, half a century ago, Georges Balandier described the colonial situation as a total situation, following the theoretical tradition of the "total social phenomenon" coined by Marcel Mauss,<sup>5</sup> the written production that came to be known as "post-

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4 This process of claiming ownership of writing is obviously not the exclusive heritage of rural Mexican or Andean Indigenous peoples. Even in the wilds of the Brazilian Amazon, the natives are now resorting to the "frozen text", as writing has been called, in contrast to orality, when making their political and legal demands to state society. See, in this respect, Alcida Rita Ramos' essay (1990).

5 The concept of "total social phenomenon" is a matter of combining *generality*, insofar as it aspires to universality, with *reality*, since it allows for a concrete approach to social matters at both the diachronic and synchronic levels. An explanatory autonomy of the social is thus sought, including the symbolic dimension, insofar as it is not reduced to some of its components but requires everything to be understood. It is in this line of thought that Balandier conceptualized the colonial situation, not only as a situation of political but also economic, cultural and symbolic domination, not only objective but also subjective (1951).

colonial” had not yet emerged. And yet its very existence was foreshadowed in Balandier’s proposal insofar as, in order to transcend the colonial, its all-consuming presence first has to be recognized and an assumption made that all actions taken by a people previously colonized are influenced by this defining situation, which has marked not only their history but also their present and which will long accompany their future expectations. The validity of Balandier’s coherent formulation highlights, on the one hand, the almost universal explanatory clarity of an ethnological reflection such as his and, on the other, forces us to recall it in order to understand processes of the present when they are in contexts in which a colonial logic has been reproduced beyond its formal legislative deconstruction. It next becomes necessary for us to attempt to connect this theoretical formulation, coined in Africa by a French colleague, so that it can help us understand the current social projection of Oaxaca’s Indigenous intellectuals.

This social projection can be seen in the development of a new written tradition, some expressions of which could be described as post-colonial given that this textual production has been conceptualized from the works of intellectuals from other countries that also experienced the presence of colonial powers. So-called post-colonial studies began in the 1970s, in universities in both England and the United States, based on the works of academics and intellectuals from countries that had been colonized and who, as already recognized academics, were questioning how knowledge was being produced about their peoples in the intellectual tradition of the West. It was assumed that this new literature would result in a reworking of the texts of anti-colonial writers such as Algeria’s Franz Fanon, Tunisia’s Pietro Memmi or Guinea’s Amilcar Cabral, whose denunciations of colonialism had lost some of their validity following decolonization and the subsequent fall of socialism, so longed for as the path to a modern and egalitarian society. The fiery arguments of social exclusion, typical of this type of protest literature, did not so much question the project of Western modernity as the impossibility of their own peoples accessing it. One of their criticisms of colonialism was that it did not enable them to take advantage of technological modernization as full subjects, without realizing that such modernization was simply another name for Western civilization. It is in this line of thought that we can better understand the writings of many native Oaxacan intellectuals who demand greater access to the so-called “modern world”. Even the institutional discourse that, as tends to happens, has also become popular rhetoric for the protesters through its dissemination via the mass media, speaks to us of the social and economic “lags” (delays) existing in Oaxaca, referring to those sectors of the population that have still not managed to obtain their inclusion into this supposed modernity, more illusory than real, that the rest of us apparently enjoy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I remember years ago a political party candidate visiting an Indigenous area near the Oaxaca coast. According to traditional political ritual, a community leader was elected to respond to the

The classic work that is considered to have heralded a post-colonial perspective is that of the Palestinian intellectual, Edward Said, whose book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, highlights the continuity of ethnocentric ideology, so characteristic of colonialism, through the way in which Western science has constructed its image of the East. It is no longer a question of an inferiorizing or discriminatory imaginary, typical of colonial writings, but of the application of the exclusive and excluding principles of a Western epistemology to represent “the other”. The Hindu intellectuals who took up Said’s proposal, gathered in a group called *Subaltern Studies*, thus stressed that the victimization of India as a subject of European colonialism, so typical of anti-colonial writers, merely repeated the same Western Christian rhetoric in which the humiliated people demonstrated, by this very fact, a moral superiority over their dominators. Put another way, the same ideological and discursive model was being used, albeit inverted, that had served the English as moral justification for the colonization in the first place, namely as an endeavour to civilize and redeem the pagans (S. Castro-Gómez and E. Mendieta, 1998). The Latin American background to this perspective is much older and is represented, among others, by the works of Cuba’s Fernández Retamar, Mexico’s Leopoldo Zea and Brazil’s Darcy Ribeiro. And yet, ironically, Said’s very position as a professor at a prestigious metropolitan university meant that his discourse was able to gain worldwide traction coming as it did from one of the academic centres from which theories emanate. It seems that even to get anti-colonial discourse heard one has to occupy a position in one of the centres of contemporary colonial power.

In Mexico, in terms of historical discourse, some years ago the historian Enrique Florescano was disconcerted by the fact that the Indigenous chroniclers of the colonial era resorted to Hispanic logic to address their own past (1985:19)<sup>7</sup>. The author did not explain that the chroniclers were writing for the Spaniards and not for their own people, that the audience of their discourse was not the natives but the colonizers. Based as it was on a system of cognitive and temporal categories that had no relation to those of the European tradition, a native historical logic would merely have confused their readers. This has always been the great challenge for the Indigenous - now called post-colonial - intelligentsia: that of

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candidate, in terms that are significant for the argument I am making. The Mixtec leader thus responded, “...we know that there is a great crisis in the country, that the price of electricity has gone up, that the price of gas has gone up, that the cost of telephone calls and drinking water has gone up. Mr. Candidate, in our village there is no electricity, gas, telephone or drinking water, so do tell us, how can we be a part of the crisis that everyone else is enjoying?

7 “...What is tragic in the situation of these *mestizo* historians is not only their inability to identify with the history and interests of their ancestors but also their inability to create their own, authentic discourse. The raw material that feeds their work comes from Indigenous sources and historical traditions but does not create an Indigenous discourse of history because the rules guiding this discourse are European...” 1985:19).

generating a discourse which - in order to be recognized as legitimate - must pass through codes that are not their own. The expository and argumentative structures now being developed by authors such as Edward Said or Homi Bhabha (1994) are based on demonstrating an overwhelming Western erudition, with authors who are recognized as fundamental to their academic audience but who are unknown by the social groupings to which they belong. This is one of the most complex challenges that intellectuals coming from colonized and thus subordinate peoples have to face: that of generating a textual production that is based on their belonging but which at the same time is recognized by their readers as belonging to the Western tradition. It would perhaps be easier, or at least less schizophrenic, to choose the path of writing for just one or the other. Yet it is extremely difficult to build a truly intercultural literature in which systems of categories and social representations produced by different cultural codes converge. It is a question of not only gathering together authors or narrators from different cultures but of combining them into a unitary discourse that is understandable to both. This is not an easy task but it is a necessary undertaking for those whose circumstances have placed them in an intercultural situation, where they are required to have their works reflect participation in historically clashing cultural traditions.<sup>8</sup> Clifford Geertz noted that anthropological research is a biographical experience that has to be translated into academic terms but, in this case, we are talking about entire lives that need to be translated into terms alien to that life experience.

I would like to emphasize in this regard that the very concept of “post-colonial” is not alien to the somewhat unthinking, contemporary fashion that proposes both a post-Marxist and a post-structuralist position, a post-modernism and a post-intellectualism. But the same *post* prefix assumes that you are starting from something that was once present and is now past. And yet in Latin America in general, and in Mexico and Oaxaca in particular, the ideological, political and cultural structures so characteristic of the neo-colonial management of nation states have only disappeared formally or legally. Stigmatization due to ethnicity, racism and systems of economic and political control are reproduced as if they had a life of their own regardless of political and legislative changes. This is why much of Indigenous anthropological literature remains protest literature, seeking access to dignity and to the recognition they are still denied through the written word once owned by Westerners. The same assertive texts, which propose their own cultural or political options, such as different forms of autonomy, usually

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<sup>8</sup> These reflections come from my own experience, not only as a Latin American anthropologist but also as the supervisor of doctoral theses by several Indigenous Oaxacan colleagues intended to be defended at an important European university. Our work sessions involve both academic analyses and personal questions regarding the destiny and meaning of the information they are handling and which they must present in their writings.

take their starting point as an idealized defence of and apology for the native. This usually surprises those who have not had any involvement with people still considered second-class citizens and whose personal stories are plagued with episodes of humiliation and subjugation. These episodes come from the mere fact of speaking a language other than Spanish or following cultural practices that are seen as expressions of an “essential” primitivism. To become post-colonial writers, as proposed in the hegemonic centres, they not only need to abolish the current neo-colonial conditions but also renounce grudges that are very difficult for them to overcome and for those who have not suffered them to understand.

### **The State’s construction of a native intelligentsia**

As far as Mexico is concerned, and Oaxaca State in particular, the presence of two broad types of Indigenous intellectual can be noted, both of whom are producing anthropological essays.<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, there are those who independently, and without the mediation of any kind of institution, are trying to offer a written testimony of their cultures. This is perhaps still a small sector but it is relevant insofar as it demonstrates the presence of a growing collective interest in appropriating the written word and producing their own cultural testimonies. On the other, there are Indigenous intellectuals expressly trained by State institutions, generally belonging to academia, and who have different levels of professional training in anthropology or related disciplines such as linguistics or Indigenous education. Many of them originally formed part of the large sector of rural teachers who managed to pursue higher studies within the education sector or who had access to institutional training scholarships. The presence of this vast group of native intellectuals deserves a brief reference to its origins in order to better understand some aspects of how it has developed and become socially integrated over time. The recruitment of Indigenous cadres by State indigenism in Mexico has been described as part of a strategy of manipulation that followed the lines of British colonialism’s policy of *indirect rule* (L. Collin and F. Báez-Jorge, 1979). For Aguirre Beltrán (1957), the role of the cultural promoter was that of an agent of acculturation, trained to introduce the components of national modernity into the Indigenous communities in order to replace those “traditional elements that are considered harmful”. But, with their training, some of these “natural leaders” (according to the obscure terminology of the time) gained a better understanding of the way in which their peoples were integrated into asymmetrical regional and national inter-ethnic contexts. This ethnic and political awareness led many to become agents opposed to the

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9 I consider anthropological production to include historical texts which, in reality, form local or regional ethnohistories, essays on ethnography, social anthropology, linguistics, pedagogy and intercultural education, even some of the demands of the ethno-political movements can be understood in terms of political anthropology and legal conflict as legal anthropology.

very policies they were being asked to implement. This paradoxical process contributed to the establishment of the first organizations of Indigenous professionals in the 1970s. They may have been linked to State institutions but they represented an element of opposition to the integrationist proposals.<sup>10</sup> In that same decade, the *First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples* was held in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán. Organized and manipulated by State institutions, it resulted in the appointment of a series of *Supreme Councils* that were supposed to represent Indigenous peoples in their dialogue with State bodies. Some of its members carved out local, and even national, political careers in the service of the then ruling party but a few took on the role of representing their people and acted as flagbearers of their demands. The fact is these cultural agents and political leaders, created for the purposes of *indirect rule*, actually contributed to the development of a professionalized native intelligentsia, people who could live from their institutional work and therefore dedicate themselves to full-time political and intellectual debate. This is what Alicia Barabas corrosively called: “the domestication of the barbarian via post-revolutionary indigenism”, and which gave rise to the emergence of a new ethnopolitical actor: “the enlightened barbarian” (A. Barabas, 2000).

### **Another aspect of intercultural dialogue**

The growing and necessary relationship between “Western” researchers and anthropologists and researchers from native cultures requires a separate paragraph aside. If the world of contemporary social sciences were truly free from discriminatory colonial ideologies (which still manifest themselves primarily in unspoken sub-theoretical prejudices) then it would not be necessary to recall, as I now have to, that many members of the native peoples have had access to the university training that is required to become formal colleagues of those of us who believe ourselves to be their only analysts.<sup>11</sup> It is obvious that not all Indigenous groups have their own university anthropologists but, where they do exist, they constitute an essential link for establishing a dialogue with their cultures. It is not a question of using them instrumentally, considering them as “qualified informants”, but of accepting them as witnesses and cultural analysts capable of reviewing and critically questioning our representations of their social worlds.

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10 Such is the case, among others, of the *Association of Nahua Indigenous Professionals*, which later became the *National Association of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals* (ANPIBAC), comprising primarily teachers and other people linked to the education sector.

11 Personally, in the last 30 years, I have taught and worked with community members and had exchanges with colleagues with some kind of academic training in the social sciences from the Kuna peoples in Panama; the Maya peoples in Yucatán; Mixtec, Chinantec, Chatino, Zapotec, Mixe, Zoque and Chocho in Oaxaca (Mexico); and have also participated in academic events together with Mapuche from Chile, Coya from Argentina, Nahua from Mexico, Chulupi and Guaraní from Paraguay, Aymara from Bolivia and Quechua from Peru.

It must be recognized, however, that academic teaching within the dominant anthropological traditions is generally not set up to work with these kinds of students and colleagues. As a teacher and as a colleague, I am constantly in contact with numerous native professionals whose distorted training during their student years had led them to disregard their own knowledge and replace it with what anthropologists have historically said about them. The self-knowledge that contemporary ethnography proposes as a necessary technique for approaching others becomes even more essential in those who have previously been taught to devalue and deny their own cultural learnings, on the premise that the possessors of “knowledge” are “us” and the “other” are merely its potential consumer.

The same ethnocentric logic that makes anthropologists in metropolitan countries consider their colleagues from the previous “Third World” (and now members of the so-called “emerging economies”) as no more than a special kind of qualified informant, capable of providing data but rarely theoretical reflection, also applies to native ethnographers. The power relationships that we often question when we are their victims are thus reproduced, we reproduce them. Membership of “closed corporate communities” such as academic organizations in metropolitan countries which, in Irving Goffman’s terms,<sup>12</sup> behave as “total institutions” induces people to assume they are the only possible professional communities. The social theory they generate is thus limited to gathering metropolitan contributions, deliberately ignoring contributions from peripheral countries, even committing unacceptable theoretical omissions that force them to discover what has already been discovered or to “inaugurate” paths of thought which, in reality, have already been well-travelled. Something similar occurs when they underestimate our native colleagues, something I do not want to assume is based on racism but on a widespread belief that they are incapable of viewing their own cultural context with the distance that would permit them to develop the necessary scientific “objectivity” with regard to their own societies. One of the most questionable perspectives on this subject, shrouded in ethnocentrism and intellectual arrogance, is that proposed by two of the most well-known ideological mentors of post-modern anthropology (rediscoverer of hermeneutics), J. Clifford and G. Marcus, whose words on the Indigenous ethnographer I would like to quote here (1991:37-38):

“...Immersed in their own cultures, studying them in depth, they offer other points of view, facilitating our understanding of them. Their work,

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12 In his work *Internados* (1970), I. Goffman conceptualizes the “total institution” as one within which individuals obtain not only objective satisfiers, such as salaries, but also subjective satisfiers and resources, as in the case of academies that provide social integration, professional recognition and personal prestige.

however, is restrictive and contaminated by the sway of power in one respect. Belonging to post-colonial, or neo-colonial societies, they do not possess, as scientists, the necessary distance with which to deepen the search for objectivity because they are forced to work with spurious aspects of their own culture. It is impossible to establish which is the best method of analysis since everything, even the assessments, evolve. But something that arises from an ideological shift, from different rules of play, and from new political commitments, is under a pressure and this, at times, cancels out the very value of the studies..."

And yet it is this same lack of objectivity, or distance, that can be seen in metropolitan anthropologists who are incapable of reflecting on their own style of knowledge production as part of the project of a hegemonic *logos*. No dialogue can take place without recognizing the intrinsically equal status of our partners. An egalitarian social and intercultural relationship with Indigenous colleagues is a necessary and fundamental step for contemporary anthropology. This is obviously not a simple undertaking but it is also clear that it is not an impossible one. And this statement is more than simply a call for liberation from multiple mutual prejudices; it also raises the need to try and build communication channels that are different from those currently existing. First, it must be noted that it is not merely a question of deepening our knowledge of each specific culture, a task in which the superiority of the native colleague is evident insofar as, at the age of 20, an *ayuuk* holds a doctorate in *ayuuk* or a *binnizá* the equivalent in *binnizá*, i.e. they have both completed their socialization within their culture of belonging. The aim is not to appeal to a "Mixe-ology" or "Zapotec-ology", however, but to share the reflections derived from ethnographic data, a task in which both the native and foreign anthropologist can find shared themes of communication that facilitate dialogue. It is precisely such social reflection that makes it possible to connect the particular to the general and the local to the global, helping to combat the extreme particularisms that tend to generate a knowledge that is overly exclusive. A great challenge open to Indigenous colleagues even lies in the possibility of studying the "national" culture or the regional subcultures that have had contact with their peoples with the same anthropological methodology they have learned to use when investigating their own. Perhaps this will not only contribute to a new perspective on national society but also release them from an unspecified obligation to study only their cultures of origin.

### **A difficult mediation**

Taking up once again the State's training of intellectuals, I must clarify that what really matters for the argument set out in these pages is the assumption by many of them that writing is an instrument of cultural participation and a way of exposing the alternatives and demands of their peoples. It is not simply a

question of forming a new local power elite made up of literate intellectuals, since their communities often do not recognize leadership when not based on traditional forms of community political participation. While some have been and are appointed to municipal office, skipping steps up the ladder of responsibility, others who return to their villages with an academic degree are inducted to serve from the grassroots. The role of these intellectuals as political leaders sometimes implies their full commitment; on other occasions, however, it is only an alternative for their own careers within State society, in relation to which they assume a representation that is not rightfully theirs. A complex situation thus emerges in which the intercultural position and the bicultural training of the intellectuals means they are questioned both by their original world of belonging and also by the external environments they have learned to navigate.

Many of our Indigenous colleagues and friends manage to navigate this somewhat schizophrenic position and dual relationship but it causes them not a few uncertainties and anxieties along the way. There are things they want to explain but others that should not be told because they refer to cultural spaces that are too intimate and too sacred to be recounted. There are issues that are often implicitly excluded from the dialogue: just as an urban intellectual would not think to talk to a peasant farmer about Hegel, some Indigenous intellectuals tell us only the things they think we can understand. And yet it is often this more sophisticated knowledge that the academic institutions where they work require them to divulge. Each of them, then, has to make a peculiar selection and elaboration of the cultural *construct* that they want or are able to transmit.

It should be noted that the tasks of native intellectuals take place within a system of domination that operates on an economic, political, ideological and cultural level, typical of the operational logic of a hierarchical and asymmetrical multicultural society. The success of their works thus often depends on the recognition they can gain from agents outside their own communities. Their fellow countrymen and women generally value this written production positively, even though they often cannot understand it as it is based on a symbolic logic the features of which may be unknown to them. One of the risks involved in processes of this nature is that part of the surrounding society assumes this written production is a basic dialogue with Indigenous peoples. This is doing them a disservice and, at the same time, giving them too much responsibility as they are forced to express themselves in a language that is legitimized by the outside world but which is generally alien to their own cultural systems. While every anthropologist is able to generate an existential ambiguity or disorientation, derived from the affective intensity of their relationships with alternate cultural traditions, the position of our native colleagues is even more complex. It is not an easy task to be part of *and* simultaneously live with two clashing worlds, as a *binnizá* colleague from

the Isthmus likes to remind me: “Intellectuals are like fish, they begin to rot from the head first”.

The fact is we anthropologists who come from that confusing *collage* that is the Latin American and particularly Mexican generic Western tradition are not alone. And yet there is still a lack of greater acceptance and recognition of the presence and work of our Indigenous colleagues. A franker and deeper dialogue with them could contribute to a bilateral transformation of our respective perspectives on the worlds of belonging and reference. We can help them to deconstruct and reconstruct what participating in a specific and possibly all-encompassing everyday life prevents them from recognizing; they can help to remove the objectivization and misunderstanding of our visions of their worlds. But it would also be highly desirable if they too could finally study us, in the same terms that anthropology uses to analyse them. Perhaps we would thus be able to walk together along a path to mutual understanding, something that is increasingly necessary in a State environment marked by prejudice, racism and ignorance of the differences between the many cultures.

One topic that deserves special comment is the ethnographic essays produced by our Indigenous colleagues. The very meaning of this professional production tends to be different from that of an anthropologist who does not belong to the culture in question. What for us is research and discovery for them is remembrance and reflection; what for us is openness to the unknown for them is self-awareness and also protest. Self-awareness because it implies an immersion in one's own world, and protest to the extent that narrating one's own culture constitutes a means of presenting it to strangers. In other words, demonstrating that their peoples are not empty vessels only willing to receive material and symbolic content from abroad but societies capable of offering their own cultural achievements and realizations. In this sense, the exposition of ethno-knowledge, of classification systems or of complex local notions of the sacred not only has a defined ethnological value but also constitutes an act of existential affirmation since the individual who is writing is taking up and explaining what their community has given them. They thus express the existence and validity of their own *knowledge*, in other words, precisely what ethnic discrimination has attempted to deny, considering Indigenous peoples as beings who have everything to learn but nothing or almost nothing to teach, with the exception of some dance or handicrafts beneficial to tourism. Even the compilation of mythical texts and narratives is conceived as recognition of the knowledge of the ancients, preserved in the collective memory and reproduced by the tales and stories of the elders. Essays that often idealize participatory political systems or the regulatory equality of community life, beyond their archetypal proposals, are thus arguments in favour of a world that can now also be defended through writing.

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# TO AVOID DIGITAL FEUDALISM<sup>1</sup>

**Scott S. Robinson<sup>2</sup>**



During the fifty years since the 1971 publication of the Declaration of Barbados, native resistance to the lengthy colonial process still underway in our hemisphere has come of age. Isolated at that time, diverse struggles grew in intensity and impact in many regions, often consolidating in national federations, while becoming key institutional actors in each State's hybrid political mix, always employing coalitions and strategic alliances with civil society organizations. Today, many of these mobilizations remain weak, at the margins of power and influence, others flourish. Nevertheless, native organizations are now a part of governance networks, in their respective nations and often, in regions beyond borders. Their natural resources have increased in value for different markets in light of accelerating climate change, technological evolution, a growing international commitment to forest and clean water preservation, ongoing within the emerging jurisdictions of international public law.<sup>3</sup> Others will no doubt synthesize the origins, causes, key documents, factions, risks, contradictions, strategic challenges and foreseeable conflicts for the current large scale hemispheric movements, wherein native societies are defending their rights, territories, resources and cultures.<sup>4</sup>

After early research in the Ecuadorean and Peruvian Andes and the *Oriente Ecuatoriano*, in the late 1960's, as the oil boom began, I landed in Mexico. The challenge was to combine an academic career with my self-taught skills as a documentary film producer and cameraperson. The result has been work illustrating over time aspects of conflictive internal decolonizations in Ecuador,

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1 <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/platform-economy-digital-feudalism-by-mariana-mazzucato-2019-10>

2 What follows is my translation of a text first published in *Por la Conquista de la Autodeterminación*, IWGIA, 2021.

3 A neoliberalization of non human resources is underway to sustain capital circuits' accumulation rhythms. Theorizing this topic is beyond this essay. Viz. Noel Castree, Neoliberalising Nature: the logic of regulation and reregulation, environment and planning A, 2008 40:131-152. DOI:10.1068/a3999.

4 An ample bibliography now available justifies many reviews and discussion. A singular piece by Alberto Chirif is a benchmark: "Auge y Caídas de las Organizaciones Indígenas" en *Selva Vida – De la destrucción de la Amazonía al paradigma de la regeneración.*; Stefano Varese, Frédérique Apffel-Marglin y Roger Rumrill. IGWIA / UNAM / Fondo Editorrial Casa de las América. Lima, 2013, pp. 135-164.

México and the Philippines. By the late 90s – film to video to the WWW - led to involvement with evolving Community Telecenter networks the fledgling regional Internet permitted. Configuring and promoting the Rural Information Network – México (1994+) as a useful Internet website, I encountered regulatory and political obstacles – predictable in hindsight – while connecting rural organizations with information and communication technologies (ICT).<sup>5</sup> In 2000, after creating with others a small community telecenter network in Morelos state, I edited a video documentary about then novel *telecentros* and the strategic and useful information Internet could offer, *TELECENTROS EN AMÉRICA LATINA*.<sup>6</sup> This background provides some understanding of today's buoyant digital capitalism and risks inherent for users, fifty years after wandering on my trail.

México witnessed an early social revolution (1911-1917), profound in provoking structural changes anchored in a new Constitution. A struggle betrayed, however, in the interim, over scores of years, by an historic colonial elite intermarried in time with an increasingly technology savvy, university trained modern cohort, shrewdly able to use its discretionary power as well as soft loans or grants from a market-anchored development model adopted by the emergent Mexican State, with the United States and private banks looking in. Here and elsewhere to the South, a recurrent dialectic is observable in native territories blessed with resources, between regional and national elites committed to extracting value from often defenseless native communities. During the 80s, a fast growing resistance to the imposition of extractive investments, megaprojects of different types despoiling these communities, *de facto* nations, along with mestizo neighbors, illustrates the backdrop curtain behind today's scenario. There is no disguising the struggles to sustain degrees of microregional sovereignty in the face of large scale private and public investments that invade native spaces. These diverse communities face mining consortia, timber harvesters, agro plantations, water bottlers, narco cartels, old school ranchers with their private guards, even paramilitary groups and counterinsurgency programs. This mine field, observable in Mexico and elsewhere in the hemisphere, engenders intense long term conflicts wherein communities tenaciously battle to avoid losing control of their resources and territories. Nevertheless, investor's and public "development" officials share a hegemonic colonizing conscience and commitment, along with the inevitable national security faction defending fragile borders, and this powerful coalition confronts many well-organized native organizations and regional confederations, aware of the market value of their forests, springs, and biodiversity, with a role to play in climate change policies and politics. With the pace of climate change, these resources have increased in value and there are no fixed prices in free wheeling markets.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rir.laneta.apc.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.antropologiavisual.net/2005/telecentros-en-america-latina/>

Within this disputed, often violent context, sometimes negotiated peacefully, a new governance mechanism has emerged in several States, often in vast regions, whereby public and private consortia – with domestic and foreign capital – pressure State agencies reluctant to recognize in law territorial rights of native groups. These same communities occupy and administer their often rich habitats with their time-tested technologies, and more recently, allied with civil society organizations and international cooperation programs, along with scattered activist academics, haggle in a cacophonous digital chamber, on the ground and in court. The identities of these actors negotiating aspects of power, a continuation of the traditional colonial process, in a word, can be observed, for example, in the online bulletins of SERVINDI ([www.infoindigena.servindi.org](http://www.infoindigena.servindi.org)). It's quite evident that global digital platforms are now part of the tool box of any negotiated mode of governance. ICT – Information and Communication Technology, was the vanguard acronym in the late 90s, it's rhetoric painting the virtues of an interconnected planet. Lo and behold, we are now almost there!, participating in a technosocial evolution, indeed skewed for the powerful, but after twenty years consolidated throughout the region.

Connected native communities, Abya Yala, are few, yet growing in number; telecomm services for them has not been a State priority and leadership now recognizes its importance. This has become a priority issue on the governance agenda.

Many communities share pending issues regarding how best to employ digital tools, when available, to defend resources and territories. A novel process is underway, employing new connectivity strategies and organizing tactics where online information is needed and shared. This new century's second decade in part was devoted to crafting a consensus on kindred issues.<sup>7</sup> In fact, coalitions and confederations of native organizations were catalyzed as Internet access and skills expanded in space and within group leaderships. Governance issues shifted as well. Some organizations, the Tagaeri and Taromenane of eastern Ecuador prefer their isolation.<sup>8</sup> Their neighbors who form the CONFENIAE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana) created and sustain a flexible alliance while negotiating disputes with State agencies and oil and mining consortia. Civil society allies are invited to accompany some groups. Each

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7 For example: CRIC (2010). *Primera Cumbre Continental de Comunicación Indígena del Abya Yala. Memorias y Declaración*. Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca; REDES A.C. (2013). *Recomendaciones de Política Pública para el Desarrollo de las TIC en Comunidades Indígenas*; FIMIC (2017). *Foro Internacional sobre Medios Indígenas y Comunitarios. De la Experiencia de los Pueblos y Comunidades a las Mejores Prácticas*; Huerta, E. (2017). *Guía Comunicación y Derechos. Programa de Apoyo a la Formación en Comunicación Indígena. Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad A.C.*

8 <https://gk.city/2018/11/04/indigenas-no-contactados-ecuador-amazonia/>

country registers a unique scenario of organizations with their regional alliances, unwritten rules, dark chapters and betrayals of bureaucratic covenants, together fueling an effervescent emerging mode of governance. Native confederations, their civil society allies and advisors, State agencies and extractive consortia are engaged in intense negotiations, employing diverse narratives and tactics, access to the courts, media and the Internet. In 1971, the very idea of international civil society organizations in coalitions with native groups faced with ethnocide of the moment was not on the agenda at Barbados I, nor the possibility of leaderships communicating via their own digital tools.

It is not surprising the growing adoption, indeed slow and unbalanced, of new digital tools among native organizations intensified the filing of legal demands – injunctions, *amparos*, and the like. Together with mass mobilizations, a shrewd use of remittances sent by those who have already migrated plus the energy and skills of a young generation of graduates from public schools and universities, feed a renewed ethic to defend territories and customs of the grandparents. In many places, new leadership is consolidating, thanks in part to an expansion of public education, digital communication with kindred groups in alliances, and to a lesser degree, internal struggles to sustain language skills and control over local territories. Civil society organizations (distinct from non governmental NGOs), often financed by foreign foundations and crowd funded sources, are today a key actor. This prolonged ethnic resistance to neocolonial domination is another chapter in the history of late 20<sup>th</sup> century globalization and people's struggle for their rights and dignity. This struggle has been aided by a steady expansion of digital telephony and Internet connections, and a significant drop in costs of equipment and access. As a consequence, the mode of regional governance has often shifted in the past few years. Today, distinct Confederation campaigns and mobilizations are convoked by the network of online alliances, especially via Facebook and its subsidiary, WhatsApp. Global digital platforms assist ongoing resistance to extractivism.

Alliances – their ups and downs among neighboring or distant native organizations and tribes along with civil society groups merit a separate essay. Each country has a distinct story to tell, some not worth telling. What needs underscoring are the challenges to native leadership seeking to avoid losing more sovereignty in their spaces, often led by a young and fragile leadership inserted in fluid and sometimes unstable coalitions: negotiating in unequal conditions imposed by the State, with both domestic and foreign allies, obliged to operate without all the information theoretically public and available to some, and often without the blessing of the moment's national political leadership. Manipulation in the media is common, stemming from partisan, urban, even ecological militants, not to mention State factions and private consortia, sharing a corrupt historical tradition of dispossessing native groups. At the same time, all strategic

ideological factions of domestic and foreign interests are represented in the donations, solidarity events, international conferences, scholarships, training workshops and publications native organizations receive and utilize as best they may. International cooperation agreements also express this fragmentation of interests linked to native organizations and their resources. Forestry sector funding sources manifest this syndrome: The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, World Wildlife Federation, Forest Stewardship Council, Forest Peoples Program, Rainforest Foundation and Forest Trends. Ideology is inherent to the terms of reference for donations and grants. Occasionally, local officials of these international groups exercise a respected discretionality that birth innovative projects and set standards and precedents.

Donations from domestic sources tend to be less generous and place more restrictions on how funds may be deployed, often with implicit links to partisan and factional agendas, in each country's "native policy" administrative mix. Frequent use of fiscal discounts for private consortia's "philanthropic" activities and donations is commonly used to enhance public perceptions, with a risk this publicity justifies a reduction in public funds for similar purposes. "The consortia contribution resolved the issue!" is unwelcome. Without question a neocolonial ethic prevails among funding sources, including, it need be said, the remaining different flavors of yesteryears' "ethnic minority policy". Yet it is undeniable that these "donations" from different sources fortify groups with a solid leadership struggling, for example, to consolidate their legal authority over their traditional forests.<sup>9</sup> In parallel, over time, community radio stations have proliferated, often the result of lower costs in low power FM transmission equipment and external technical support, broadcasting today in their native languages. These strategies are inevitable if rapid culture change on top of dispossession are to be mitigated with public policies. Capable leadership among native organizations has capitalized on these external allies and their resources, fortifying themselves in the doing. And digital communication networks sustain these challenging activities and fruitful alliances, while religious groups also harvest their benefits.

A broad brush overview reveals a dense ecosystem of diverse native organizations devoted to the defense of their rights, territories and customs interlinked via ICT. For example, nine national federations are allied in COICA (Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica), portraying visible contrasts in their representation and capacity to negotiate and litigate the many threats to their territorial and cultural integrity. The role of civil society organizations, as advisory staff and trainers, cannot go unnoticed. This larger scenario constitutes a multicolor mosaic, compiled by the systematic use of digital communication

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9 [https://territorioindigenaygobernanza.com/web/necu\\_01/](https://territorioindigenaygobernanza.com/web/necu_01/)

networks in the hands of decisive leadership with clearly defined objectives in defense of their interests.

Extractivism is a useful if clumsy label for a concept synthesizing historic and contemporary conflicts during the turbulent chapters of colonialism in the Americas. Based on domination of people and resources by foreign powers, in time the term refers to mining and plantations, then forests, oil and increasingly, clean water, marine and renewable energies.<sup>10</sup> As a voracious generic mode of capitalism and market-anchored national growth policies, justified rhetorically by investment elites as instruments of a quasi-sacred “development and progress”, the essential focus, however, is on returns on their investments (ROI). If extracting value from other people’s territory is at the core of this ongoing, often violent historical process, can we also include religious institutions and their continued evangelization as a form of extractivism? After all, missions from Rome achieved a unique scale on the blank areas of the early regional maps (and power at the Vatican as well). Today, these Catholic missions have evolved and more recently, fill the larger Christian landscape together with Protestant missionaries of many colors. All remain active among native societies throughout the hemisphere. The role of the Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wycliffe Bible Translators in the latter half of the twentieth century must not be forgotten. While this global evangelical endeavor was diverted by native organizations and their allies, other Protestant missions expand tenaciously while operating low power community radio stations, acquiring credibility and political power in many regions (Viz. Guatemala). Both Christian missionary coalitions are now significant actors in any regional governance equations, alongside native communities, extractive industries and State agencies. Most regional native coalitions share the support of a missionary organization which offers leverage in negotiations with the State. Since Barbados I the panorama of evangelizing Christians has grown to include more theologically friendly factions, whose endorsement of a native organization enhances its legitimacy and for some, can be strategic in conflictive situations.

COVID 19’s 2020 pandemic has been brutal if not disastrous for the health of native populations North and South, while, of course, affecting the world as a whole. One product has been an unanticipated acceleration of the use of digital tools and resources to manage business and governance. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has taken off, and this translates into novel forms of control (and power) of the social and technical consortia whose equipment, networks and platforms, software, cloud storage, user applications and web content, undersea cables, fiber optics, antennas, content streaming firms, as well as licenses and permits to use a portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, all become part of an expanding and

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<sup>10</sup> <https://cedib.org/publicaciones/abusos-de-poder-extractivismos-y-derechos-en-la-region-andina/>

influential digital ecosystem. States employed lockdowns of their populations, justified by COVID 19 ravages, thereby empowering even more the Internet ecosystem, notably Facebook and WhatsApp. In Amazonian Ecuador, CONFENIAE created an information network for members, an indication of the growing role of digital tools and data as groups struggle to adapt to the pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

Connectivity and relevant content are now priorities in sustaining the growth, and why not just admit, the domination of a few consortia with a name and address: Facebook, Twitter, Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and diverse secondary clones. Facebook's campaign in the upper Amazon, cleverly labeled "Internet for Everybody" is indeed worrisome, for it personifies digital extractivism as a strategy directed at native communities yet without connectivity.<sup>12</sup> And this takes place within the oft mentioned "digital divide", whereby urban connectivity is far outpacing rural connectivity (for the evident contrasts between the costly physical infrastructure required). While there is a rhetorical commitment to reducing the "digital divide" among international and national telecomm public policy leaders and institutions, private consortia are moving to fill the void with their products and services, expanding their influence and control over a vital public communication resource. One result may be a reduction in community anchored networks and content. Any self-designed ICT project, including community radio in local languages, require native organizations, and their allies, to confront the dominance of powerful private tech consortia who tend to capture the telecommunications regulators in each nation State. And every struggle to breach the digital divide begins in negotiations within these often arcane regulatory public administrative bodies.

"COVID accentuates the digital divide", screams one headline as this text was crafted.<sup>13</sup> Other texts in the region's technical publications point to the complex issues involved:

"We need to observe digital transformation in the context of each country's development strategy, not as isolated issue: OECD"; "Mexico – HISPASAT backhaul can accelerate 5G in rural and remote environments"; "MinTIC installs the first rural digital zone in Colombia"; "Brazil suspends mobile payment services via WhatsApp"; "Now you can pay with Facebook in Mexico"; "Huawei launches a digital payment solution in the cloud"; "Internet for All will bring Internet a half a million Peruvians en rural areas"; "The new era of collaboration with Artificial Intelligence (AI) has arrived";

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11 <https://confeniae.net/covid19>

12 <https://www.telefonica.com/es/web/sala-de-prensa/-/telefonica-facebook-bid-invest-y-la-caf-crean-internet-para-todos-peru-para-expandir-la-conectividad-de-internet-en-latinoamerica/>

13 <https://emerging-europe.com/news/covid-19-is-accentuating-the-need-to-bridge-digital-divides/>

“Ecuador guarantees InfoCentros operations until 2021”; “Perú will begin a connectivity project in Cuzco end of 2020”; “Colombia seeks community television services bringing Internet to rural regions”; “Brazil – Sercomtel requests shifting from a concession model to authorizations”; “Claro and Movistar will offer free Internet to Peruvian health centers with provisional spectrum”; “Colombia advances in rolling out ten thousand digital centers offering free Internet”; “44% of Brazilian bank transactions were managed by smartphones in 2019”; “Perú proposes a new norm for telecom concession renewal”; “Colombia proposes exchanging spectrum licensing payments for connectivity projects”; “ICE will improve connectivity among Costa Rican native communities”; “Ecuador advances connectivity in Amazonian region”; “G20 approves Ministerial Digital Economy Declaration”.<sup>14</sup>

“In the last decade, Latin American countries have moved on a progressive trajectory adopting new technology, connectivity and digitalization. Unique circumstances provoked by the COVID 19 crisis has detonated an acceleration on the part of individuals, homes, governments and businesses in the appropriation and insertion of these productivity tools.”<sup>15</sup>

Some propose more flexibility in telecom regulations and, at the same time, endorse a differential policy to expand access to domestic electromagnetic spectrum that permits today’s digital rollout. Yet there is no generic proposal circulating in the current (2020) regulatory mix and technical culture that favors the interests of native communities defending their territories from aggressive extractive market players, with their corresponding need for control over new tools, assigned spectrum and communication networks. Indeed, it is time national and regional alliances be well represented in regulatory conversations and negotiations of spectrum and bandwidth assignments for native communities. Allowing some norms to be flexible, without reforming implementing legislation, thereby lowering startup costs while subsidizing tech training can contribute to a self sustaining network, a disparate process barely underway in different regions. Staff from native organizations and Federations already harvest an understanding of the business of digital services from regional civil society efforts profiled below. But much social commitment and work is pending...

The reason is simple: the expanding digitalization and monetization of ICT data and services is one face of *Big Data* capitalism,<sup>16</sup> a transformation well

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14 Schneider, I. (2018): Bringing the state back in: Big Data-based capitalism, disruption, and novel regulatory approaches in Europe, in: Schneider, I.; Rudinow Saetnan, A.; Green, N. (eds. 2018): *The Politics of Big Data: Big Data, Big Brother?* New York: Routledge: 129-175

15 <https://www.theciu.com/publicaciones-2/2020/8/17/transformacin-y-empujn-digital-en-latinoamrica>

16 Schneider, Ingrid. *Democratic Governance of Digital Platforms and Artificial Intelligence?*

underway, inducing new configurations of a global and digital political economy, with rewards for a few and risks for many. Our behavior is now shaped by almost ubiquitous new tools— for work, networking, money management, shopping, and entertainment. Increasingly, leadership of native organizations defending territory, rights and resources also share these ecosystem patterns, as digital consumers and to a radically lesser extent, content producers. Similarly, an organization’s strategic, confidential information, maps and internal conversations are subject to eavesdropping and digital thievery. As connectivity expands, often with official regulatory incentives for private consortia and sometimes, alliances among native groups and civil society organizations, so does what can be called a digital mode of production. This is uncharted territory for the leadership of what are often politically delicate alliances in unfriendly relations with national elites. And these organizations are also allies in the digital rollout in the forests and mountain valleys, for they share a network of trust that is used by private firms installing connectivity in different forms, in the emergent market. Their data and knowledge are also of interest to key actors in the kindred extractive markets generating microregional cash economies that can pay for connectivity. As COVID 19 has intensified the connectivity rollout, new ways of working are in order within the evolving digital political economy in regions controlled by native organizations. Connectivity can enhance power and influence. Familiarity with new tools may strengthen internal administrative procedures while nurturing capacities to engage with telecomm regulators together with their allies.<sup>17</sup>

National telecommunications regulators need to open conversations with native organizations and their coalitions. At the same time, these groups need to lobby the regulators so that modest capital costs and spectrum flexibility allow for hybrid and sustainable community radio, telephony and telecenter projects. Yes!, this is a tall order expecting native organizations to also get up to speed in the alien context of national telecomm regulatory agencies, often “captured” by the powerful actors therein, private consortia and public programs financed by fiscal resources. This constitutes an inescapable and paradoxical challenge: in order to protect their forest, water and land, and all they represent to native societies, survival in the emerging global political economy may be enhanced by using imported digital tools while confronting in political spaces the greed and chicanery that often accompanies extractors anxious to invade their territories. Possessing robust networks linking legitimate leadership is essential for creating and managing community radio and digital messaging services. In short, this medium is the message and more.

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Exploring Governance Models of China, US, EU and Mexico. DOI: 10.29379/Journal of Democracy v12(1):1-24 2020

17 Toussaint, Nothias, Access granted: Facebook’s free basics in Africa. *Media, Culture and Society* 2020 42(3):329-348.

## TO AVOID DIGITAL FEUDALISM

How to acquire more leverage and authority if and when native organizations engage with telecomm regulators and their staffs. For example, ANATEL in Brazil, SUBTEL in Chile, OSIPTEL in Perú, ENACOM in Argentina, CRC in Colombia, ARCOTEL in Ecuador and IFT in Mexico, have become new axes of power in their respective countries. However, few if any regulators are publicly committed to expanding affordable connectivity with public resources – digital inclusion –for poor native communities. Although COVID 19 has forced consortia and public actors to move for an expansion of connectivity among native communities, where today many go without, there is push back from traditional mega telecomm players who control existing markets and seek more. Perhaps there may be a market where there was none before, not to be shared with local interests. Private telecomm consortia are also part of the extractive political economy, hence native organizations enter with a marked disadvantage.

In this context, native organizations, their allies and friendly public and no doubt some nationalist officials need conduct a public conversation about public policies linked to telecomm services in unconnected regions. One central theme may be different, perhaps complementary notions of sovereignty, where national and business elites' interests may contrast with the will of those defending their homeland, history and identity. Community and connectivity are now complementary, and the growing anxiety about Climate Change provides leverage to those who defend their forests, fresh water and extensive natural habitats with customary wisdom government programs cannot surpass.

Private capital investments in digital extractivism – expanding affordable connectivity where none existed – requires some analysis.<sup>18</sup> One key dimension is the huge volume of online users (Facebook >two billion). Digital service promoters know: “If it’s free, then you are the product”. Value is extracted from patterns in users’ data, when “free” online services package our data and sell it to diverse marketers, devoted to selling us via online publicity, products and services akin to our own user history. Data brokers are key players in the digital political economy. Online advertising campaigns are designed as a result of analyzing huge tranches of information about ourselves as we use smart telephones, computers and the web. Political campaigns are also customers of data marketers. We are often unaware of how we feed other people’s business.<sup>19</sup>

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18 A related project, Google Loon has been cancelled and Alphabet spokesperson declared: “We talk a lot about connecting the next billion users, but the reality is Loon has been chasing the hardest problem of all in connectivity — the last billion users: The communities in areas too difficult or remote to reach, or the areas where delivering service with existing technologies is just too expensive for everyday people..” [https://www.theregister.com/2021/01/22/alphabet\\_deflates\\_its\\_loon\\_internet/](https://www.theregister.com/2021/01/22/alphabet_deflates_its_loon_internet/)

19 In Mexico, there’s a popular expression: “Nadie sabe para quien se trabaja.”

One aspect of the growing digital ecosystem is the manner that “smartphones” have altered relations among men and women, in different social contexts, within families, and of course, within native organizations. Access to strategic information on the part of young women staffing native organizations and working with recent mobile telephones may well transform – with some tension – the patterns of information flow within authority structures traditionally led by men, nowadays older men without a phone and distrustful of the new tools. Elders no doubt recognize the value of their grandchildren’s skills with their phones and how this can assist each organization’s respective projects and struggles. Mobile phones are a basic instrument of women’s empowerment within modernizing groups. Networking today can mean young women and men being more efficient in complying with norms for negotiating with State agencies, extractive consortia, churches and international donors as well. Governance is a function of wise and expedient usage of ICT in the context of each alliance’s objectives and allies.

It’s evident that every native organization dedicated to defending its cultural and material patrimony– forest and fresh water, for example, requires trained personnel of their own. And these groups also require sufficient funding from allies to sustain an office equipped for the tasks profiled here. Community radio transmission in the local language is also a requirement. Difficult goals, but overall essential to sustain their legitimacy, continued training and always tense negotiations in defense of their resources. Generational shifts in leadership and staff has led to expanding services and responsibilities, as costs diminish and connectivity expands. Organizations devoted to defending extensive forest tracts need to create spatial databases that may be subject to digital “capture” or piracy on the same servers these groups are trusting to store their data. This can occur in habitats with intense pressure from oil, gas and forestry investments pressuring local communities. In effect, each group needs to agree on a code of ethics for managing their data, maps and confidential documents. Privacy and security are difficult in these fragile environments. Digital extractivism is ongoing on the same networks native organizations and outsiders are employing in their respective regions. No doubt, it’s time these organizations receive permits to operate their low power radio stations, even 4G digital mobile telephony using Wifi links between isolated communities. All this along with legitimate land titles to their territories. Many have been waiting fifty years for this process to lift off.

### **Digital feudalism<sup>20</sup>**

The concept is novel and ambiguous at first glance. It refers to the contemporary profile of mega Internet consortia controlling content and digital real estate on

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20 In footnote 1, Mariana Mazzucato argues: “Creating an environment that rewards genuine value creation and punishes value extraction is the fundamental economic challenge of our time”.

the web, public and dark. Our personal data and messages are now subject to online surveillance and theft, impacting our work and that of native organizations as well. Well known global platforms – Facebook, Google, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo et al represent feudal figures, extract value (consider personal information as tribute) from captive digital service users with few affordable options in ample spaces served. Few sources of the relevant technologies are managed by the few suppliers who house and administer the digital landscape, a veritable cartography of overlapping networks around the globe. “...as a docile herd we deliver our personal data, money and time with our digital addiction, while youth it has become integrated with online friendships.”<sup>21</sup> Our data do not belong to the feudal lord, as per the democratic ethic, but many lords and their enterprises, including State agencies, fail to respect this norm. New Huasipungo may be a valid label capturing our dependence on digital tools and services administered by a few largely operating with impunity.<sup>22</sup> We not only pay for these services (nowadays with money and not serfdom in the fields), but we are obliged to deliver our data or be excluded from the social contract and network management, as per consortia lordships’ will. Native organizations defending territories need use these digital networks with caution, aware of the risks of revealing confidential data, and better yet, controlling content on leased networks. Admittedly, true privacy may no longer be possible.

At the beginning of the Internet takeoff period, 1994, I created a website, RIR - Rural Information Network / Mexico ([www.rir.laneta.apc.org](http://www.rir.laneta.apc.org)) to assist rural producer organizations to acquire and use information needed for their work. These groups were NOT taken into account during NAFTA’s design and 1992 ratified agreements.<sup>23</sup> Oaxaca and Chiapas coffee producers, Guerrero state communities resisting cartel takeovers, Purépecha towns defending their forests in Michoacán, and Mayan community organizers in Yucatán became “connected” for the first time with this network. The modus operandi required these diverse organizations, at first distrustful of the “foreign” tools, to dial into modems at public universities, Mexico’s initial linkage to the Internet. As project anchor, my university (UAM-) signed agreements with state universities. To be sure, there was resistance as well from university and national security sources. To secure access to daily market prices for basic foodstuffs – grains, fruit and vegetables, it was necessary to hoodwink officials at the National Market Information Service (Servicio Nacional de Información de Mercados – SNIM), who were unfamiliar with the Internet and its swift distributive capacity. Project funds, via the UAM-I, were spent on the annual purchase of several data bulletins, while the signed covenant specified they would be placed on the Internet. Mexico’s

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21 Agradezco a Adriana Labardini esta observación, 1 septiembre 2020.

22 <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/monterrey/incursiona-oxo-en-telefonía-celular>

23 [www.rir.laneta.apc.org](http://www.rir.laneta.apc.org) was funded by the Ford Foundation, 1994-95.

budding National Association of Rural Producers (ANEC – Asociación Nacional de Empresas Comercializadores de Productos del Campo) resent the bulletins they received online to their widespread membership and consolidated their institutional credibility in the offing.<sup>24</sup> However, when renewing the purchase agreement for the second year, SNIM officials balked because RIR was “giving away” their bulletins. It was my ingenuous mistake believing that distributing useful information was SNIM’s policy objective. At that moment in Mexico’s market-oriented public administration, authorities were told to be “self-sufficient” and cover costs by selling their information! No more bulletins for RIR. Indeed, this was a starting point when governments as a matter of policy were reluctant to share credible information they produced with public funds, to current commitments to online government twenty five years later. This has been a stop and go process in many countries.

Why this checkerboard access to useful information online? Reluctant and slow may be the best terms referring to national governments devotion to distributing useful information they produce to their online citizens over the past twenty plus years. Public programs to enhance digital skills are scarce. Mexico’s expensive eMexico program (2001-2020) and its heirs was in essence a bountiful subsidy to large scale domestic and foreign (satellite) Internet suppliers. User access points in public institutions respected official working hours and calendars, dramatically restricting use among youth. Prevailing rhetoric assured us that the private firms would bridge the country’s digital divide, as was allegedly true elsewhere. Those who could afford it, an elite, contracted service, while the vast majority visited cybercafés and telecenters that began sprouting throughout the region since the late 90s. But the commitment to adding value to useful public information has been slow in coming. While public officials touted Internet virtues at international events, back home different free market factions inhibited any devotion of significant public funds to rolling out Internet connectivity and data services. This process remains underway and is largely responsible for today’s digital divide shaped by regulatory decisions of twenty years ago. Connecting rural, native communities is not profitable and early subsidies were not well designed nor administered.

In 2000, Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) granted funds via my public Mexico City university (UAM-I) to produce a video documentary, “Telecenters in Latin America”.<sup>25</sup> Five years after launching the Rural Information Network – Mexico, it became painfully evident any forward-looking strategy need prioritize technical training while expanding production and usage of online culturally relevant materials. No small matter. A regional IDRC-

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<sup>24</sup> [www.anec.org.mx](http://www.anec.org.mx)

<sup>25</sup> <https://antropologiavisual.net/documental/telecentros-en-america-latina/>

sponsored Community Telecenter network offered an opportunity to profile the pilot projects in eleven countries, the Peruvian Science Network (Red Científica Peruana) among them. Telecenter activists discovered Microsoft was recycling our public documents about community telecenter creation and administration for their regional network of Microsoft-sponsored cybercafés. At the time, open source and free software, early Linux, for example, was competing for users with commercial Windows software. With Maria de la Paz Silva Contreras, three telecenters were opened in three highland Morelos state rural municipalities. A telecenter without support from a community organization becomes a simple, pay for computer time cybercafé, today's popular digital ecosystem of rural and urban connectivity. Early projections about the consequences of the perceptible digital divide – between digital haves and have nots --- are now accepted as truthful.

Pilot demonstration projects are often used when introducing innovation technologies and procedures. Behavior and sometimes beliefs may be transformed. Stark contrasts exist today between the integration of digital tools and content in urban environments, and the absence of connectivity among the inhabitants of small villages in the mountains and forests on the periphery of national spaces. People living in and from these native habitats must also guard their integrity from external, extractive endeavors, often while struggling to register their property in their historic territories. Change has been slow. In the context of climate change, native communities are now better organized, with councils, alliances, federations, cooperative networks, rural social producers, often with offices staffed with young women and men responding to local needs, complying with official paperwork, and occasionally mobilizing in demand of rights trampled and services denied. Many geographical niches harbor the digital ecosystems of native organizations. Three brief project profiles illustrate this process and point to the future.

For the past thirty years the Comunalidad Foundation has been the axis of cultural and social mobilizations in the Northern Sierra of Oaxaca., Mexico. One byproduct is an active group of native video producers, a press service (BECU) and a community radio station.<sup>26</sup> A network of sixteen villages applied to federal authorities (IFT) and were awarded Mexico's first "social concession" for mobile (2G) telephony. *Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias, A.C.* (Indigenous Community Telecommunications) is a non profit receiving financial and technical support from two kindred civil society organizations: *Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad, A.C.* and *Rhizomática*.<sup>27</sup> A new generation of media producers and programmers is maturing, working to "indigenize cyberspace" as

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26 <https://www.facebook.com/librespacio.lajicara/posts/828747507479015/>

27 [www.tic-ac.org](http://www.tic-ac.org)

well as additional community radio stations.<sup>28</sup> This endeavor represents a triangular strategy, wherein legal, technical and management skills are codependent.

Rhizomática is a civil society organization whose mission statement states: “By means of efforts at distinct global points, we employ new information and communication technologies, notably mobile telephony, to facilitate wellbeing, community organization and personal and collective autonomy.<sup>29</sup> Our focus combines activism and reform of the development of decentralized telecommunications infrastructure, direct participation on the part of communities as well as a critical commitment to novel technologies. Our mission is to expand access and participation in telecommunications by means of supporting communities’ construction and maintenance of their own self-administered infrastructure.”<sup>30</sup>

Rhizomática personnel have birthed three unique projects, generic models for the future: two subregional community level mobile telephony networks in Mexico and Colombia, the Brazilian Hermes project (telephony by short wave), and a network of technical and organizational support for communities defending their territories.<sup>31</sup> The latter offers valuable online materials stemming from concrete experiences: Manual for Community Cellular Telephony – Connecting the next Billion 2017; Emergency Communications, A Quick Guide for Community Radio, 2018; and Methodological Proposals to Implement Community Communication Projects, 2020. Rhizomática is a singular achievement due to the significance of its products as well as technical and legal support for native organizations.

Rhizomática and Colnodo.apc.org have successfully launched the *Red Indígena, Negros y Campesinos* (Native, Black and Campesino Network) in Cauca Department, southwest Colombia.<sup>32</sup> These pilot rural 2G mobile telephony networks demonstrate practical applications of novel technologies and the challenge of local personnel assuming a responsibility for creating and maintaining a stable organizational base, while carefully administering a low cost (<usd\$2/month) network with sufficient technical capacities to sustain the hybrid technical mix functioning 24/7.

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28 Elena Nava Morales (2020), “Para que las lenguas indígenas también puedan tener presencia: indigenizando el ciberespacio,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, 45:1, 122-142, DOI: 10.1080/08263663.2019.1662670 Viz. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKHNGXm1jYI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKHNGXm1jYI)

29 [www.rhizomatica.org](http://www.rhizomatica.org)

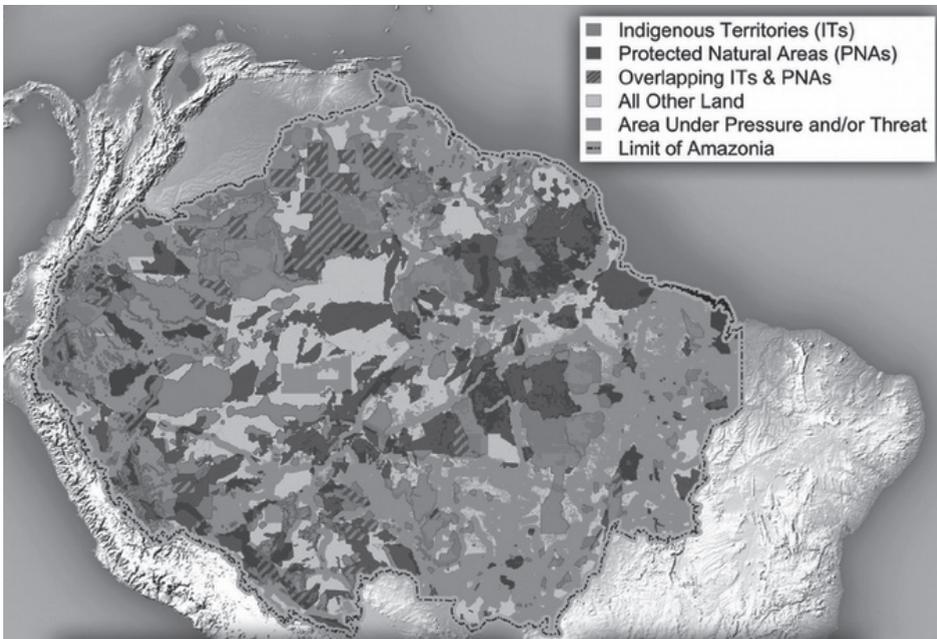
30 [https://wiki.rhizomatica.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](https://wiki.rhizomatica.org/index.php/Main_Page)

31 [www.redesac.org.mx](http://www.redesac.org.mx) Redes, Asociación Civil, founded by Erick Huerta, operated before Rhizomatica was formed (2015), and together they created Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias, TIC A.C., to carry out the 2G mobile telephony project in Oaxaca, Mexico.

32 <https://www.apc.org/es/news/colnodo-el-espectro-y-las-redes-comunitarias-las-conexiones-de-calidad-en-el-area-rural-son>

Undeniably, the global climate crisis is the backdrop curtain for the post COVID 19 epoch.<sup>33</sup> Efficient native control of vast blocks of forests is a product of arduous struggles to sustain traditional territories accompanied by necessary legal reforms still underway. These forests administered by their historical inhabitants today constitute a major negotiating chip in the ongoing negotiations with national elites conscious of the value of these boreal resources competently managed by their rightful owners. These forests and their biocultural diversity are today a major asset in the revaluation of emerging market resources and the ongoing and increasing politicized ecological debates as demands grow from extractive investment plans. For native communities committed to defending their forests and corresponding biodiversity, training cadres of forest guardians using contemporary tools and communication networks is a major priority.

FIGURE 1



Source: Map of sustainable forest management in the Amazon basin.<sup>34</sup>

Any new governance model for the forest patrimony of native communities – in mountainous and rainforest habitats – requires adopting digital tools in the corresponding *modus operandi*. A robust program of forest protection and forest guardians is in order. And there’s a broad range of community forestry projects throughout the region, creating value in the face of Climate Change.

33 <https://events.iadb.org/calendar/event/22323?lang=en>

34 <https://dokumen.tips/documents/casos-ejemplares-de-manejo-forestal-sostenible-en-america.html>

In the unusual case of the Cofán, just east of the Andes along both sides of the Ecuador – Colombia border, in 2002 Ecuador recognized a large portion of traditional Cofán lands as a Protected Natural Reserve (*Reserva Ecológica Cofán Bermejo*).<sup>35</sup> Since then, a Cofán organization has been responsible for four functions of State recognized rights: control access, harvest Reserve products, administer the space and exclude outsiders (in this case, homesteaders, gold and oil prospectors).<sup>36</sup> A FOUNDATION FOR COFAN SURVIVAL has recruited funds, largely from US sources, to establish and sustain a program of forest guardians in all their four, official forest blocks (Figure 2). Not every year are there sufficient funds to sustain the program which encompasses 33,578 hectares recognized by the Ecuadorean environmental authorities, plus another 148,907 in possession, all dispersed in a regional mosaic of oil wells, pipelines, pumping stations, and extensively deforested mini-regions with colonists from elsewhere in Ecuador. This may be a special case in the entire region, with lessons for others.<sup>37</sup>

FIGURE 2



Map Cofan Forest Reserves, Northern Ecuador

All Ecuadorean CONFENIAE members – Achuar, Andoa, Cofán, Kichwa, Secoya, Shiwiar, Shuar, Siona, Waorani and Zápara – participated in the

35 A profile of Cofan leadership: A FUTURE FOR AMAZONIA: RANDY BORMAN AND COFÁN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS, M. Cepek, University of Texas Press, 2012.

36 <https://rightsandresources.org/en/tenure-tracking/forest-and-land-tenure/#.X00mxB2ZKEI>

37 [www.cofan.org](http://www.cofan.org) y [http://territorioindigenaygobernanza.com/web/ecu\\_06/](http://territorioindigenaygobernanza.com/web/ecu_06/)

historic marches on Quito in May and June of 1990. A prolonged series of lobbying efforts began – with many demands shaped by the expansion of the petroleum concessions in the Amazon lowlands, which clearly influenced the new Constitution of 2008. This led to Ecuador’s historic affirmation as a multicultural and plurinational society. Nevertheless, the challenging struggle to register tribal property rights in their traditional territories faces continual opposition from oil companies, homesteader colonists from elsewhere as well as traditional national elites opposed to land reform.<sup>38</sup> Herein a key chapter in Ecuador’s social history, a process still underway and whose labyrinths must be described by others.

In Perú’s Loreto Department, the Hispanic-American Healthlink Foundation (Fundación Enlace Hispano-Americano de Salud – EHAS) created a long distance WiFi linked network of rural clinics and a Catholic missionary hospital along 500 kilometers of the Napo River.<sup>39</sup> Fifteen clinics and a hospital are connected to the public hospital in Iquitos with a wireless signal skimming the forest canopy. This maternity focused telemedicine project also permits private use by health and education personnel, as well as those with WiFi enabled telephones near the towers in all the villages. But no Kichwa or Witoto organizations actively participate, including many families escaping the contaminating oil boom and intrusive colonists upriver, inside Ecuador. Catholic missionary infrastructure and legitimacy, with the Spanish quasi-official NGO receiving technical assistance from the Jesuit University in Lima (PUCP), forms the core of this pilot project. While telemedicine services for expecting and post natal mothers has been a catalyst for generating a socially legitimate and practical use of digital tools, the apparent absence of an effective alliance among native organizations and the regional health bureaucracy hampers using this project as a generic design for elsewhere in the Amazon region.

Telemedicine as a digital service represents an opportunity in the Upper Amazon for well organized native groups to request connectivity for the fragile, extant network of health clinics and schools. In fact, telecomm consortia – using the COVID 19 pandemic as backdrop – are requesting regulators to authorize more spectrum in return for offering “free” telemedicine services where they intend to expand connectivity. However, these well publicized offers do not commit to returning the spectrum once the unspecified “free usage” period ends. This is a clever way to grab scarce spectrum that native telecomm projects need.<sup>40</sup> Experience suggests that after telemedicine, we can expect online commerce

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38 Ecuador abolished the medieval Huasipungo on landed estates in 1963.

39 <https://www.ehas.org/que-hacemos/investigacion-y-desarrollo/proyecto-napo-innovacion-social-con-conectividad-y-salud/>

40 <https://digitalpolicylaw.com/con-espectro-temporal-48-centros-de-salud-tienen-acceso-a-internet-gratuito-en-peru/>

and financial services via digital telephony to compete for consumer demand in regions without connectivity today.

These pilot projects share challenges in regard to the institutional integrity and continuity of regional telecomm projects anchored in native organizations residing in difficult habitats: legal identity, sufficient operational income to sustain infrastructure and personnel, required technical training, operational problem solving and system maintenance issues. As well, future projects require forming regional coalitions and alliances with national civil society factions, development banks, foreign funders and “international cooperation” program officers, in order to create, sustain and grow. Domestic telecomm regulatory agencies need to join the consensus to solve common issues. Value creation rather than value extraction can be the underlying commitment. This is a tall order that can be addressed with hybrid solutions.

## **Conclusion**

The evolving digital political economy has been fortified by the COVID 19 pandemic while assuming a yet to be specified role in the forthcoming battles to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We confront an inexorable process that augments the value of native people’s forest, water and mineral resources as climate warms and populations grow. Major telecommunications consortia are pressuring national telecomm regulatory agencies to authorize their increased use of appropriate but scarce wireless spectrum of appropriate frequency bands in order to offer more commercial connectivity at the peripheries of many nation States. Most are now globalized in terms of open capital, technology and mercantile markets; in effect, telecommunications is just another yet very strategic investment opportunity in capital markets, incorporating satellite Internet services in addition to fiber optic cables and in some cases, low cost long distance Wifi and regional 4G cellular telephony networks. Mitigating climate change may be the prime justification for accelerating connectivity among native communities defending and protecting their resources.

Yes, there may be essentially two generic models of future telecomm connectivity expansion that today’s domestic wireless signal regulators need to confront: the ongoing, “we can do it all”, capital-intensive 5G telephony rollout now underway by global consortia or a hybrid model with public and private relationships that permit native organizations to own and manage their telecommunication needs from their base communities in regional niches. Unused authorized spectrum and television “white spaces”, accessible obligatory capital expenditure needs, available technologies, operationally proven pilot projects, trained technical cadres and differentially organized networks of potential users in diverse rural spaces and habitats -- many actors, some borders to be crossed, many coalitions

## TO AVOID DIGITAL FEUDALISM

to be sustained – suggest, to me, a budding opportunity for tinkering with emerging hybrid models. Today is a starting point for renegotiating spectrum allocations, waiving licensing fees for native telecomm initiatives, eliminating spectrum rental charges, assuring these organizations a voice at national telecomm regulatory hearings and planning meetings, whereby a differential policy in each country rewards native communities’ connectivity proposals while no doubt also deferring to consortia aggressively selling 5G (faster, better, new phone) to already saturated global urban telephony and television consumer markets. Why not agree to the two tier model?

At the same time, it makes sense to assist and fortify forest guardian programs throughout the remaining territories of many native groups who live in and manage their forests and its resources.

Nevertheless, a network of such projects is only possible by expanding connectivity under local control using digital tools and communications. Results of balancing networks of different costs and scales may surprise us if such a scenario were to come about.

These negotiations occur in a context of an intensification, call it recolonization of the no data areas on our maps of wireless connectivity. Expansion of already intense mobile phone usage in nearby mestizo communities, especially among young folks, also translates into increased acculturation into “phone culture” in extensive rural and urban communities. Cultural systems merge with borrowed symbols and rhetoric into a hybrid mix that challenges key aspects of what many consider cultural autonomy. In parallel, the politics of regulatory reform agendas and openness to expanding connectivity with a mosaic of different regulatory, financing, technology and project design strategies will require an understanding of current markets and actors’ interests, while in short recognizing native organizations’ efforts to achieve a measure of cultural and administrative autonomy while guarding their forests and other resources. Some populist leaders may object to even more alliances among civil society organizations and native groups, observable in Mexico as I write (January 2021). Native communities and their allies face the challenge of negotiating laws and regulatory norms governing ICT service expansion among “captured” telecomm national regulators. This requires stable leadership, shrewd advice and the political will of coalitions and elites to engage in productive negotiations. Commercial television and telephony accompanying a voracious digital capitalism constitute powerful threats to every society’s cultural autonomy. Extractive endeavors menace as well. We can avoid a NEW HUASIPUNGO.<sup>41</sup>

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41 Icaza, Jorge (1934). *Huasipungo*. Imprenta Nacional. Quito. 214 p.

## Postscript

Upon finishing the original Spanish version of this text, three recent events enhance my perspective on this set of issues: CEPAL proposes including digital access and training package akin to nutritional, education and health needs.<sup>42</sup> And secondly, a commissioned report prepared by Rhizomática and submitted to the InterAmerican Development Bank, clarifies the way forward linking a diagnosis of today's challenges to needed policy and regulatory reforms affecting native communities, their organizations and communication networks.<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, a clarion call for digital sovereignty is now an issue on the Urgent To Do Agenda.<sup>44</sup> A consensus is developing, it appears, that may produce a fair and critical review of telecommunications access and usage among native community leaderships and coalitions, as well inside national telecomm regulatory bodies. Recently, Mexico's Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) ruled that a rural telephony network anchored in Northern Oaxaca State (whose overall footprint is authorized to operate in a large swath of east central Mexico) need not pay for their license to operate nor for the spectrum employed in offering the low cost service in many native communities (as noted above). How this precedent is leveraged in the near future inside the web of activists and jurists who sustain precedent-setting cases in national and international tribunals and among telecomm regulators is a story yet to be told.



42 <https://www.forbes.com.mx/el-cepal-propone-una-canasta-basica-tecnologica-por-retos-digitales-en-la-region/>

43 RHIZOMATICA Guía para elaborar una política pública de conectividad para pueblos indígenas Consultoría BID 7000011134 15 de enero 2021

44 <https://al.internetsocialforum.net/2021/01/29/conversaciones-en-el-fsm21-la-soberania-digital-punto-central-de-debate-para-los-pueblos-de-america-latina-y-el-caribe>



# A PARALLEL HISTORY: BARBADOS AND THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT IN COLOMBIA

**Víctor Daniel Bonilla**



## **In search of liberation**

The Declaration “For the Liberation of the Indigenous People” (Grünberg, 1971:499) was original in that it clearly stated from the outset what was needed: a tool for action rather than a mere intellectual proclamation. What was needed at that time was political action rather than simply indicating the path for change required by Latin America.

Encouraged by Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, we thus met as a group of Latin American intellectuals and young Latin American politicians with a view to proposing a number of socio-political changes that were required on the subcontinent. These changes included the so-called “Indigenous issue”. It became clear at this meeting that there was an urgent need to distance this issue from the missionary context in which it had been debated for some time and place it in the context of its corresponding political struggle. Colombia was governed by the 1886 Constitution, reinforced in 1890 by two treaties with the Vatican State (the Concordat and the Convention of Missions) that had reopened the doors wide to the Catholic Church’s evangelisation, interrupted years previously, and establishing a policy of permanent economic and administrative cooperation with missionary work for the Indians, considered by Rome as infidels, idolaters or gentiles (Bonilla, 1968: 58). The legality of this revolved around Law 89 of 1890, which subjected Indigenous minorities to the corresponding “civilising” regime.

Changing that situation became a banner of struggle for the Colombian vanguard, mainly women, aimed at forcing the State to adjust its indigenist policy, and this was something that helped raise awareness of the rights of native and civil minorities. As a result, some changes were made to the 1973 Concordat, a new reform that came into force with President Alfonso López.

Anthropology changed from that point on and became political action, with young anthropologists turned left-wing politicians. The Declaration was a tool of the struggle, a call to action not to remain closeted in classrooms like their teachers, or in universities where the subject was read and studied.

## A PARALLEL HISTORY

We had been working in the Indian Defence Committee and La Rosca.<sup>1</sup> These organisations acted as a hub of support from which to project our concerns and analysis of the so-called “Indigenous issue”. Indigenous peoples by that time had been relegated to the status of benefit recipients and so work began to tease out their hidden and still timid aspirations. Our participation in Barbados I forced us in La Rosca to clarify precisely what our collaboration with the Indigenous struggle was to entail.<sup>2</sup>

It was clear to us that recovering the historical memory of Indigenous peoples meant giving political content to their long-standing demands in order to transform them into a movement before State and society, in which the Indigenous peoples were not victims but fighters.

It was about using history as a driver, as a tool of struggle. That is why Gonzalo Castillo’s participation was so important, with research related to the book *En Defensa de mi Raza*, by Manuel Quintín Lame,<sup>3</sup> which we published in August 1971.

This is why I happily took the first hundred copies of Lame’s book along to the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC),<sup>4</sup>

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1 We realised there was a need to promote the Indian Defence Committee following the publication of *Siervos...* and seek support from various intellectuals, including Gonzalo Castillo, Orlando Fals and Augusto Libreros, denouncing the genocides and ethnocides of Hato de La Rubiera (Arauca - 1968) and Planas (Meta- 1970), with the contribution of Indigenous communities from Putumayo (Ingas and Kamëntsá), Sierra Nevada (Arhuacos), Cauca (Paez, Guambiano and CRIC), Tolima (descendants of Pijaos); we then later founded “La Rosca Research and Social Action” (1970), where we planned to work with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Militant Research methods.

2 Castillo, Gonzalo (1971) “La Lucha del Indio por su Liberación”. *La situación del indígena en América del Sur*. Coordinator: Georg Grünberg; Biblioteca Científica; p. 109; Editorial Tierra Nueva; Uruguay.

3 He came from a peasant farming family (*terrajera*). During the long years of colonial rule, exercised by both the Spanish and early Colombians, the most common form of exploitation was to impose the payment of *terraje* on Indigenous communities whereby they had to provide free labour for three or six days a month in exchange for a plot of land on which to grow their own subsistence crops on the large estates. These estates had been formed of lands originally taken from the Indigenous people.

4 The struggles of the peasant farmers of the Chimán (Guambía - Cauca) and Credo estates (Tacueyó - Cauca), grabbed by the landowners, had begun long before the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC) was formed. At the beginning of 1971, 24 February to be precise, at an assembly in Toribio that Gustavo Mejía helped organise as president of the Social Agrarian Front of Corinto - Cauca (he understood the importance of the Indigenous sector) and with the presence of some staff members from the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (Incora), more than 2,000 peasants, Indigenous peoples from different *parcialidades* and different groups (cooperatives, Community Action Boards, Association of Peasant Users -ANUC- etc.) met to demand recovery of their land and an end to the payment of *terraje*. It was then that the CRIC was born. See CRIC

held at the La Susana estate (Toribio - Cauca) on 6 September 1971. There the organisation was reshaped and the programme expanded to seven points that reaffirmed their demands. Unfortunately, the controlling non-Indigenous council of the Executive Committee at that time demanded that the book be called in because they were still under the impression that Quintín Lame was some kind of *godo*<sup>5</sup> “faith healer” who only served the interests of the Conservative Party. They did not see the historical significance, in terms of ethnicity and liberation, that his thinking and struggle was bringing to Colombia’s nascent Indigenous movement.

At that time, Colombia’s Presidency was in the hands of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966 - 1970) who tried to turn around the previous failures of Law 135 of 1961, or the Social Agrarian Reform, by creating ANUC.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it was then that the so-called New Left emerged, with land as one of its focal demands. The agrarian problem thus began to gain sway, unlike in the 1930s when the Communist Party revolved around the idea of social classes and union politics, organising the industrial and supporting the rural workers. It was at this time that the political struggle against the *latifundia* was forged, although there was not yet a strict awareness of land recoveries. The New Left was influenced by the hegemony of the Communist Party of the USSR, which was to later try and adapt to a Latin American context.

ANUC held the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of its Board of Directors in Popayán in January 1974. The CRIC was present, demonstrating its support for peasant organisation and making itself known. National-level coordination was agreed upon here, through the Indigenous Secretariat. In August of the same year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ANUC Congress took place in Bogotá. We proposed a “National Indigenous Encounter” to its Executive Committee, which would function as a commission in line with the development of the Indigenous movement at that time,<sup>7</sup> and in line with the specific nature of the communities and their struggles. But people began to talk about “indigenism”, saying that it was isolating the Indigenous peoples and some of CRIC’s fellow collaborators took these criticisms on board.

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Primers No. 1 and No. 2: “Nuestras Luchas de Ayer y de Hoy”, February 1973; p.23 and “Como Nos Organizamos”, August 1974; p.2.

5 A Colombianism that designates a person of traditional spirit, attached to the past, belonging to the Conservative party, generally reactionary and linked to Catholicism.

6 In July 1972, the Association of Peasant Users held a congress at which it divided along the Sincelejo Line, which proposed that poor and landless peasants should take back the land throughout the country. The so-called Indigenous Secretariat was also formed at this Congress, as well as ANUC-Armenia, which continued with government support until it withered away. This Sincelejo Line was influenced by the Socialist Bloc formed of urban youth.

7 *Política de Unidad Indígena*. Primer: Letter to CRIC, No. 1; p. 8; Bogotá, September 1976.

### The struggle of all Indigenous nationalities<sup>8</sup>

The idea of having permanent communication between the Indigenous communities of the country arose out of this “National Indigenous Encounter”, by means of a newspaper that was yet to be established. This was *La Unidad Indígena*,<sup>9</sup> which sought to encourage all communities to get to know each other, informing them of each other’s problems and working from a perspective of reflecting on the need for proper Indigenous organisation. This Policy of Indigenous Unity<sup>10</sup> is beginning to be abandoned for unity with the exploited classes. It was a time when efforts to unite were made despite ethnic and civilisational differences. It was not an attempt to return to the past but to discover the engine of their own development, which was interrupted by the arrival of the European invaders.<sup>11</sup>

Two paths thus began to open up for the Indigenous movement in relation to ANUC-CRIC (Indigenous Secretariat). Some defended popular organisation, pointing out that it was a single struggle, “that we are all the proletariat”. For me, it was clear that there was only one popular organisation but that it comprised different sectors (peasants/Indigenous, Indigenous, workers, students and so on) and so we proposed working with the Indigenous peoples first, before placing them within this single unit. That is why they said of me: “He held a concept of cosmic and restorative indigenism and a clearly indigenist position that led us, over time, to serious confrontations with his solidarity groups.”<sup>12</sup>

There are ways of organising the struggle, defining a political position, working with the people and not with the apparatus, and that is why I did not participate in national ANUC because to begin with it was intended as a peasant organisation, an organisation of the people. I knew that these kinds of action were politically left-wing (not peasant); they were organisational structures. Starting in 1975, ANUC wanted to take over the Indigenous Secretariat, i.e., the coordination of the Indigenous movement. This was why I tried to make them understand that while peasants were working and fighting for individual plots, Indigenous peoples were doing so for their territories - co-ownership of the land and communal

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8 “Thus far we do not know of any serious studies on Indigenous nationalities in Colombia”; “We do not know of any Indigenous organisations that have taken advantage of this theoretical framework”. See: “Consejo regional indígena del Cauca – Cric, diez años de lucha, historia y documentos”. Controversia Series No. 91 - 92 CINEP; p. 189; 1981.

9 The Indigenous Secretariat - ANUC and CRIC - requested my collaboration. I was there for publication of the first nine issues of the newspaper due to my experience as editor-in-chief and contributor to the magazine “*Alternativa*” (1974-76).

10 *Hacia a Unidad Indígena*. Primer: Secretariat of Indigenous Affairs - ANUC; p. 7; October 1974.

11 *Política de Unidad Indígena*. Primer: Letter to CRIC, No. 1; p. 41; Bogotá, September 1976.

12 *Nuestra vida ha sido nuestra lucha. Resistencia y Memoria en el Cauca Indígena*. Report of the Historical Memory Centre; p. 287; Bogotá, September 2012.

work. This is how the local council explained it to us, in a message from Governor Luis Napoleón Torres<sup>13</sup> from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta:

*...Our struggle must not be the same because Indigenous Peoples are Indigenous and must fight for what they believe in, considering themselves Indigenous. And the Indigenous have their own customs, the Indigenous have their own beliefs, the Indigenous have their own culture within their traditional context. So we don't have to embrace another ideology to resolve it: We simply cannot do this. I agree that ANUC and CRIC are two different organisations. The CRIC is an organisation of the Paez or Guambiano community, as Indigenous, of Indigenous origin, it cannot simply be copied and so ANUC has arisen. Because it is essential to understand, and I want my companions to understand, that it is not a sin to say this. The reality is that each organisation, as Indigenous, must seek to increasingly assert itself for what is original. We are original. This is something else.<sup>14</sup>*

This alliance did not work out in the end and, at the 4<sup>th</sup> ANUC Congress in Tómalá (Sucre), February 1977, a rupture occurred that was “so strong that the Indigenous peoples withdrew from the Congress while the peasants shouted: ‘Down with the Indigenous people!’” (Vasco, 2017: 4).

The ideological differences that existed between the left-wing groups supporting the peasant struggles gave rise to verbal battles and public campaigns that were incomprehensible in practice, like when they shouted: “The land for those who work it.” Supporters of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and socialist opponents counterattacked with the slogan: “Land but no bosses”. They failed to understand the Indigenous issue, which went beyond these external ideologies. That is why a new *Solidaridad* was born.<sup>15</sup>

### **Let them find their own way**

The whole notion of social change (let them do what they want!) was a call to the Indigenous peoples to free themselves from domination by regaining their land and their economy.

What we intended with Barbados II (1977) was to help the Indigenous movement of the Americas seek wider solidarity with its cause, endeavouring to explain the

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13 Murdered and tortured, along with comrades Angel María Torres and Antonio Hunguis Chaparro, in 1990.

14 Message from the Local Council. Governor of Sierra Nevada. Primer: Letter to Cric No. 2; p. 12; 1976.

15 *Solidaridad* was formed in 1978, denouncing the murder by “hitmen” (hired killers) of the Casso brothers in Guayupe, Jambaló Reserve - Cauca. It was invited to participate, acknowledging the right of the Indigenous movement to have its own policy. There was therefore a need to understand their struggles in order to establish new relationships of coexistence born of respect and mutual support.

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issue to the general population in order to unblock the deep ideological blockage that prevented (and continues to prevent) acceptance of Indigenous peoples in the world today. The blockage that prevented the Indigenous movement's political content from having its own objectives, with allies from different sectors.

We therefore began to mark out the Indigenous struggle according to its own historical and cultural values, shedding light on their rights and making them the protagonists of their own struggle rather than simply a part of the class struggle. We began to recover their oral history and contrast it with colonial history. From La Susana Assembly, the CRIC pointed out in its programme "*La recuperación de nuestra historia*" (Recovering our history) that this was not only about gathering the feelings of the people, who respect their elders, but also about affirming a fundamental point in the development of political training for the Indigenous communities of Cauca. Some groups requested my help in reconstructing their history and actively participated in this work.

This resulted in the primer: "*Historia Política de los Paeces*" (Political History of the Paez).<sup>16</sup> Until that point, the experiences of the Indigenous Peoples had not constituted a story worth telling, far less a political one. Indigenous peoples were denied even the right to make their own mistakes. That is why the work we started with the grassroots was aimed at developing the idea that there was an Indigenous policy. It was suggested to the Indigenous leaders that they get back to basics with the aim of meeting their organisational training needs and allowing them to progress educationally in order to build collective and conscious Indigenous communities and peoples in search of their liberation. There was a lack of appropriate materials on their historical, social, economic and political development, something that would have helped overcome the incomplete - and sometimes harmful - visions imposed by institutional conceptions.

This primer was fraught with difficulties, as recalled by teacher and comrade Luis Guillermo Vasco, eyewitness (2017, 14):

*The primer was presented to the CRIC Executive Committee, whose members never used it and, a little later, in Picacho, to the elders of Jambaló; then at the 5<sup>th</sup> CRIC Congress, in Coconuco-Cauca, in 1978, the primer was handed out to the Indigenous participants; as a result, the CRIC leaders removed Víctor Daniel from the Congress "for not having requested authorization to distribute the document"; but the Indigenous peoples had already taken it away with them...*

One of the outcomes of that 5<sup>th</sup> Congress states: "The fundamental bases of CRIC's political position have consolidated around an historical analysis as descendants

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16 Bonilla, Víctor Daniel (1977). Primer: Letter to Cric N°4: "*Historia Política de los Paeces*"; p. 2; September 1977.

of ancestral peoples and as part of the oppressed majorities of Colombia”.<sup>17</sup> This conception ran into difficulties in practice because they used history to motivate and mobilise the Indigenous communities rather than to take a political direction, which was being formed with the weight of their concrete reality.<sup>18</sup>

At that time we set ourselves a challenge: “What policy are Indigenous peoples looking for?” (Bonfil Batalla, 1979: 325). It was a full-on criticism of the ANUC-CRIC alliance, stating that Indigenous peoples could be the agents of their own destiny, that by accepting their historicity as Indigenous Peoples they had a future.

The Indigenous communities of Cauca were determined to recover their reserves and we supported them, not because it was in line with the national agrarian reform policies but because they were the legitimate owners, as confirmed by their titles,<sup>19</sup> with which we expanded the recovery of history, territoriality and culture, projecting the dynamic nature of recovering their rights as Indigenous Peoples.<sup>20</sup>

Vasco (2017: 5) reminds us that: “In a week of solidarity with the Indigenous struggles that took place in Manizales in 1976, we said that the Indigenous Peoples were fighting not only for land but for territory.” This was because, years previously, in 1973, an Arhuaco delegate had already defined their concept of territory:<sup>21</sup>

*For we Indigenous Peoples, the land is not just a plot in the lowlands or highlands that provides us with food. It is how we live on it, how we work it, how we enjoy it or suffer from it, is for us the root of life. That's why we look at it and defend it as the root of our customs.*

This is how the nature and importance of territory is defined on the back cover of the primer “*La Política de los Paeces*”. I drew the map of the Paez country showing the historical formation of its territory. This became a key discovery for our Indigenous comrades because of the clarity this process gave to their history:

From then on, a combination of circumstances took place was to also enable the emergence of the “Talking Maps” tool, as it was known by the Indigenous

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17 Caminando la Palabra de los Congresos del Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca - CRIC; February 1971 to March 2009. p. 27. Editorial Coordination: Graciela Bolaños; General Coordination: UAIIN  
18 CRIC: *¿Frustración o Realidad?* Primer: Letter to Cric N°5; p. 33; May 1980.

19 *Títulos de los Cinco Pueblos*; Agreed by the Spanish Crown with Don Juan Tama de la Estrella; Deed 843 of 1881; this was transferred from the Notary Public of Popayan to the “José María Arboleda” Historical Archives.

20 *La Lucha Indígena en Jambaló*. Primer; p.14; Jambaló Reserve and Colombia Nuestra Foundation, 1978.

21 La posición del indígena: Nuestra lucha es tu lucha. Pensamiento indígena frente al proyecto de modificación de la legislación indígena, presentado por la Iglesia Misionera (ASCOIN), Primer from the Indigenous Secretariat - ANUC; p. 17; 12 October 1973, Medellín.



Talking Maps

people. We were developing an experience that defines territory according to the objectives for which it is used, thus enabling the continuous production and transmission of knowledge and research of their own reality and the surrounding world. These maps for a thematic and graphic series that have enabled the recovery of the political history of the Nasa people (between 1535 and 1971) and its collective use. They were produced between 1978 and 1983 in the reserves of Jambaló, Munchique, Caloto and Caldono. This is where they have been most constantly used, as well as in communities in the central and western part of the Cauca. By working with this method, we came to the conclusion that knowledge, for the Indigenous peoples, is a whole and can only be known, learnt, understood, transmitted and reproduced as such (Bonilla, 1987: 150).

And their use did not disappear. They are still used to this day in the reserves of Caldono (2004) and Jambaló (2006). Along with the Cauca organisation fighting for the Liberation of Mother Earth and the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN), these reserves invited us to a workshop on Talking Maps in 2018. The Association republished the primer in 2015 under a new title "*La Historia Política del Pueblo Nasa*" (Political History of the Nasa People) and included the Talking Maps.<sup>22</sup> The elders of the community, teachers and Indigenous leaders propose recovering and adapting this work to meet their organisational training

22 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (2015) "*Historia Política del Pueblo Nasa*"; Coordinación Hilo de Material Educativo; Tejido de Educación ACIN. ÇXHAB WALA KIVE.

needs, which will enable them to progress their own education. As a necessary complement, descriptive primers were developed to facilitate the task of leaders and communicators. Some of the maps have been updated:

### Recovering the past

In 1979, following the political decisions taken by the CRIC Executive Committee, including that of putting Indigenous politics to one side and turning their attention to the outside world, several members and advisors were detained, tortured and accused of belonging to the armed group the “19 April Movement”. We so-called “critical sectors” came out to defend the Indigenous movement in March of that same year, however, in Barondillo (Jambaló - Cauca). Some 400 delegates attended. The slogan was: “The CRIC is not dead, we are the organised communities in struggle!”<sup>23</sup> In spite of the repression, the recovery of land from periphery to centre increased, as did the work among the local councils to unite the *parcialidades* and *veredas*<sup>24</sup> that were not considered territories.<sup>25</sup>

The way forward at this time was not very clear. Some tried to form the Gustavo Mejía Movement,<sup>26</sup> others organised an armed group,<sup>27</sup> and yet others sought

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23 Primer: *Una masacre por detener, una lección en que pensar: La Violencia hegemónica en el seno del movimiento indígena del Cauca*. p. 6; Document prepared by the *Group of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples*. Cali, May 1984.

24 Territorial division of a municipality.

25 Primer: “CRIC 1980: *Comunidades en Lucha y Comité Ejecutivo*”. p. 6; *Gobernadores Indígenas en Marcha*; November 1980.

26 Personal communication with Jairo Gamboa, 15 August 2020, eyewitness to the birth of the CRIC: “Gustavo Mejía invited different entities such as ANUC, Incora contractors, and so on to the meeting of El Credo that he convened when he learned of the land problems that were occurring among peasants and Indigenous people. Among the interventions that took place, the one from Antonio Mestizo (an Indigenous person from the Tacueyo reserve) was one of the most enlightening: “You doctor [addressing the Incora sociologist], tell me, if you steal my hat, do I have to pay you to return it to me?” Another meeting therefore had to be scheduled, on 24 February 1971, in Toribio, a broader meeting to better understand the institutional policies and Indigenous realities, because the differences between the work being done by Incora and that being done by the Indigenous peoples was becoming evident. After Gustavo Mejía’s murder in March 1974, we wanted to continue his vision for the Indigenous movement. That is why, together with our colleagues from the northern part of the Cauca - Tacueyó and Corinto - we promoted the movement that bears his name. We did not agree that comrades who had been *terrajeros* and who had participated in the struggles for land recovery could not be considered candidates for the CRIC’s Executive Committee. With the land recovered, the reserves were being expanded and the local council then awarded them to the families who had participated. Many had to wait until the third recovery for their allocation and there were even some who were left with nothing, unlike union leaders such as Trino Morales and Juan Palechor, who were included despite not having participated directly in the recoveries.

27 Pablo Tattay *et al* (2013). *Movimiento Quintín Lame. Una Historia desde sus Protagonistas*. See book presentation: Pablo Tattay, political affairs officer of the Quintín Lame Armed Movement;

another way, following an invitation on 15 February 1980 to celebrate the recovery of land in Guayupe (Jambaló- Cauca) with the entire community. Twelve governors from the neighbouring reserves arrived, along with the solidarity group that had supported them. They wanted to discuss the draft Indigenous Statute that the then government of President Julio Cesar Turbay (1978-1982) was promoting. This was rejected unanimously. At that meeting, Indigenous comrades proposed a new path and we agreed that it was not enough to defend Law 89 but that we had to promote the recovery of territory and authority. For the first time, the cry of “*Long live the Indigenous Authority*” was heard, supported by the presence of the governors. It was then that we spoke for the first time of Customary Law<sup>28</sup> and the governors once again began to reconsider their rights. Meanwhile, sectors of the CRIC Executive Committee continued exclusively to defend Law 89 of 1890.<sup>29</sup>

### Opening a path for our rights

In addition, the Guambía Council, which going through a re-organisation, invited us to work with them. Over the course of several months, more than 50 meetings were held in the different *veredas* to analyse the problems and review the ways in which solutions had been sought (with missionaries and politicians trying to organise leagues, unions or cooperatives and so on), and recalling the struggles of their elders. The community thus forged a path to its right to be a complete people, recovering its territory, its Indigenous government, its customs, its community life, and its capacity to drive its own destiny. They organised the First Assembly of the Guambiano People (27-29 June 1980). Backed up by the title to their reserves, which the landowners did not know about, the community proclaimed this in a document entitled: “*Ibe Namuiguen and Ñimmereay Guchá*”.<sup>30</sup>

On Saturday 19 July 1980, the Guambiano Indigenous community took over the land to work it for themselves for the very first time. This involved some 600 community members from Las Mercedes estate, located in the heart of the traditional territory. These were lands that had been usurped by the family of Ernesto González Caicedo. The government sent in the police in their hundreds to protect the land. By the

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Fundación Sol y Tierra; Espacio Creativo Impresores S.A.S. and Pre-Prensa.

28 Recognised by international jurisprudence as “primary occupation of the land”, the inviolable right of the first occupant. The right by which the great *caciques* claimed their territories and governments from the kings of Spain. Primer: *El Derecho Mayor: Antiguo – Preexistente – y vigente de los Misak; Autoridad – Autonomía (Nu – Nakchak)*, p. 34; 2014.

29 Primer: “*Como recuperamos nuestro camino de lucha*”. *Gobernadores Indígenas en Marcha* Nº 2. p. 6. May 1981.

30 “This is ours and yours too.” Guambiano Manifiesto (1980). Guambía’s *Parcialidad* Council; because if each people fights for its rights, that fight supports the fight of others as well. One subject had come out of the discussions at the Indigenous Encounter - ANUC (1974): the need first to create and strengthen organisations in each community and at the regional level. See: “*Hacia la Unidad Indígena*”, p. 20.

21<sup>st</sup>, however, there were already 1,500 members, and by the next day 3,000, plus another 2,000 who went into Popayán to make themselves known.<sup>31</sup>

We continued disseminating the rights of the Guambiano people in Popayán by means of different activities. On 26 August 1980, they were recognised at a ceremony in the Casa Valencia,<sup>32</sup> organised by well-known democratic figures and popular and union organisations. On 12 October (while Latin America was still celebrating “Race Day”), we proclaimed: “We Indigenous peoples are not a race, we are a people.”<sup>33</sup> We also began to speak to the Colombian people so that, through their strength, they would perhaps one day be able to change the Colombian Constitution and recognise the rights of Indigenous Peoples to live as communities, because that was the direction the world had to go in, to live as a community.<sup>34</sup>

We had learnt from the Indigenous communities that already had internal democracy, and so all of the above gave us the strength to prepare and organise a March of Indigenous Cumbal, Guambiano and Paez Authorities. This commenced on 14 November 1980 and reached the Congress of the Republic on the day the government was defending the proposed Indigenous Statute. Thanks to the solidarity of approximately 600 people, who were willing to put in the work, its organisation was a success. We stopped in towns (Timbío, Puerto Tejada, Yumbo, Bugalagrande and Zipaquirá) and cities (Cali, Medellín and Pereira) where we enjoyed the support of the popular sectors (neighbourhoods, schools, universities -Nacional, Valle and Javerian - and factories) and the solidarity groups (students, teachers, black comrades, workers, academics). We wanted the Colombian people to know of the struggles, the rights, the way in which Indigenous comrades think, taking steps to build real alliances. Knowing the differences between landowners and bosses, for example, we also scheduled meetings to discuss “authority to authority” with the mayor of Cali and to denounce the government (Minister of the Interior). This latter was furious at our demands and called us subversive. Thirteen local councils arrived in Bogotá on 26 November.<sup>35</sup> We expected nothing from the government; what we were looking for was the solidarity of the Colombian people.

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31 *Reconocimiento al Derecho del Pueblo Guambiano* - Cali, 31 July 1980: Supporting document from the Movement of Solidarity with the Indigenous struggles and currently with the Guambiano people; p. 2; 26 August 1980; helped with the text and diagram of “*Otra Vuelta de Tuerca*”.

32 Valencia family house since colonial times. Words of welcome from teacher Álvaro Pío Valencia, brother of former Colombian president Guillermo León Valencia.

33 “*De Popayán a Bogotá: Abriendo paso a Nuestros Derechos*”. Primer. Despertar Guambiano No. 3: p. 15; November 1980.

34 “*De Popayán a Bogotá: Abriendo paso a Nuestros Derechos*”. Primer: Despertar Guambiano Nº 3: p. 5; November 1980.

35 Primer: “*Como Recuperamos Nuestro Camino de Lucha*”. Gobernadores Indígenas en Marcha Nº 2. p. 13. May 1981.

At the end of the March, we met again in January 1981 with the Indigenous governors to analyse what had been achieved, and several conclusions emerged that clarified the direction in which the Indigenous movement was going. They included: “We have to unite not only as people but in thought, we are fighting for Customary Law, we have to remove those individual land allocations made by Incora and its cooperatives that do not recognise the authority of the *cabildos* (local councils)”; “continue strengthening the internal unity of the reserves”; “improve the work of the local councils”; “prepare for new elections for the local councils”. The CRIC was also strengthened because we were all welcomed as the organisation’s fighters and many comrades continued to support it. With the new local councils, we analysed what we had done in 1980, and out of this came the idea of holding a meeting to celebrate the 10 years of struggle for recovery that had passed. The meeting took place on 21-22 February 1981 with the participation of communities, solidarity groups and some union representatives. The best way to celebrate was to give a final push and recover the “Las Mercedes”, now “Santiago”, estate once and for all. Two thousand Guambiano and 1,000 Paez entered the land to work it, led by the *cabildo* (Indigenous mayor) and forcing the Army to retreat.<sup>36</sup>

It was at this meeting that AISO (the Indigenous Authorities of the South-West) was created. There was also time to propose *Nuestro Pensamiento de Lucha* (Our Thoughts on Struggle) and we gathered together the words of Indigenous comrades and studied how we could come together to recover our rights and continue to seek the solidarity of the Colombian people. At the end of the meeting, we decided not to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> CRIC Congress in Toribio - Cauca:

*We are not going to the Congress because we communities want a clean fight and not revolt. A struggle without deceit and without cheating, without taking up things that do not help us but only help people’s policies; because we governors, united, want to defend what is ours. (One of the commission’s interventions<sup>37</sup>)*

### Colombian people - Indigenous Peoples

The content of the Indigenous movement had not yet been fully understood at this time. This content had been running through the most diverse communities over the last 10 years, leading them to renew their own thinking and reaffirm their political purpose: “To defend the right of our children to be Guambiano, Paez, Arhuaco, Kamëntsä...” The right to continue to be “legitimate Americans”.

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36 Primer: “*Como Recuperamos Nuestro Camino de Lucha*”. Gobernadores Indígenas en Marcha Nº 2. p. 42. May 1981.

37 Primer: “*Como Recuperamos Nuestro Camino de Lucha*”. Gobernadores Indígenas en Marcha Nº 2. p. 54. May 1981.

A political aim that was not incompatible with either progress or justice. We were claiming unity within diversity, offering new paths for the construction of a new Colombia.<sup>38</sup>

Taking up this thinking, we developed a legal concept in their defence which we called Customary Law, a right of “inalienable preference”, that is, the right to live as Indigenous peoples, according to their history, authorities, tradition and customs, in their territories; living alongside the rest of Colombian society. In other words, respectful coexistence that would bring peace, for which we had always fought.<sup>39</sup>

However, this concept of Customary Law was misinterpreted by the CRIC Executive Committee and its advisors. They distorted it as follows: “We cannot say we are going to claim the whole territory because we were here originally.” “We would have to clash with the rest of the Colombian people.”<sup>40</sup>

Between 9 and 11 November 1982, we organised the Third Meeting of Indigenous Authorities and the First Meeting of Indigenous and White Authorities with the participation of President Belisario Betancourt (1982 -1986), whom we had previously invited when he was a presidential candidate. He attended with his ministers and agreed to go to Santiago - Guambía without the usual presence of the security forces. At this meeting there were interventions from El Gran Cumbal, Guambía, Paez and the president of the Executive Committee of the CRIC. The following is a quote from the speech of the governor of Guambía, Abelino Dagua:

*Mr. President, our communities’ authorities demand that the rights of Indigenous Peoples be recognised as follows: authority, territory and the social and economic reconstruction of our peoples... Our peoples have to start recovering a territory that belongs to us. But we must be clear: many have distorted the Movement by saying we want to recover the whole country, no. We want to demarcate the Indigenous Peoples’ reserves.....<sup>41</sup>*

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38 Pueblo Colombiano, Pueblos Indígenas: Exterminio o Convivencia. Letter to the members of the Peace Commission, signed by the Indigenous Peoples’ Solidarity Groups, Cali, Yumbo, Popayán, Pasto and Bogotá. pp. 4 and 8. Published February 1982.

39 Pueblo Colombiano, Pueblos Indígenas: Exterminio o Convivencia. Letter to the members of the Peace Commission, signed by the Indigenous Peoples’ Solidarity Groups, Cali, Yumbo, Popayán, Pasto and Bogotá. pp. 4 and 8. Published in February 1982.

40 Por los caminos de la organización indígena y sus políticas. Open letter to the newspaper ANTROPOS, from: Luis Guillermo Vasco U. p. 21. Bogotá, 11 November 1981.

41 Third Meeting of Indigenous Authorities and First Meeting of Indigenous and White Authorities. p. 6; Guambía, 9-11 November 1982.

President Belisario Betancourt recognised and made a commitment to the Indigenous Peoples' right to land, cultural development, health, technology, justice and that of having a relationship "authority to authority" without intermediaries. We long awaited the time when he would put the commitments made at this meeting into practice but it proved difficult for him. His statement elicited surprise and discontent from the landowning class and the conservatives, and he had little opportunity for legislative change. Then came land policies in the south-western region of the country, through the Indigenous Affairs offices and Incora, together with the advisors to the CRIC Executive Committee. These were destructive and sought to weaken the Indigenous authority, inducing confrontations between communities, forcing them to sign purchase documents for the land recovered and stating that the real owners were the landlords.<sup>42</sup>

### **Occupation of the territory by armed groups and the experience of the Indigenous struggle**

The presence of armed political groups on the Indigenous territories of Cauca began cause them problems: the 19 April Movement (M-19), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the FARC Dissident Group (Ricardo Franco), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Quintín Lame Armed Group. This backdrop of violence was completed by the National Army and the gangs of *pájaros* (hired killers). These groups divided communities and families: they sowed mistrust, fear and confusion, playing on existing contradictions and clashes between them.

We were told: "You cannot remain outside of the armed struggle for revolution and change, focusing only on your Indigenous struggle." They were thus trying to ignore the history of more than 500 years of Indigenous struggle, which makes it more valid and just.<sup>43</sup>

Given these events, and with the solidarity of the intellectual, political, popular and working class sectors of Cali, the Indigenous Authorities of the Southwest publicised and organised a great March on 11 April 1984 at which the communities in struggle denounced the campaign to end the lives of leaders and fighters, wherever they came from, proclaiming, from that city: "We demand respect for our territories, our authorities, our peoples" and reminding everyone who would listen that: "We, the Indigenous Peoples, reject all the forces that are invading our lands."<sup>44</sup>

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42 This happened eight months later. In southwestern Colombia: *Ofensiva General Para Descabezar al Movimiento Indígena*, 4 Encuentro de Autoridades Indígenas. p. 6, September 1983.

43 *Nuestras ideas y los problemas de hoy*. Gobernadores Indígena en Marcha Nº 7. p. 19; July 1985.

44 *Nuestras ideas y los problemas de hoy*. Gobernadores Indígena en Marcha Nº 7. p. 15; July 1985.

## Human rights and Indigenous Peoples

Discrimination (legal and political denial) is one of the causes of the violence. In the case of Indigenous Peoples, its effect is to deny them the right to live and develop in accordance with their political and cultural interests and aspirations, and this is the highest manifestation of human rights. This situation was played out in the national context. The political-administrative organisation in place destroyed or supplanted Indigenous society's own mechanisms of organisation and social management by subordinating them to the State system, in addition to preventing any possibility of autonomous expression. They tried to implement plans based on assessments that did not correspond to their reality and ignored the eminently participatory nature of the community when formulating and executing decisions of relevance to them. They tried to give Indigenous Peoples "representation" on committees instead of promoting effective channels of participation, appointing already highly integrated (individualised) Indigenous peoples onto these committees. All of this ended up ensuring the participation of only some sectors of the communities and was aimed at preventing them from rebuilding themselves as societies capable of existing and contributing to the national context.<sup>45</sup>

### The necessary legal and institutional reforms

In order for the changes to which we aspired to have real legal and political effect on the actions of the Colombian nation as regards its Indigenous peoples, these changes needed to take the form of legal and political-administrative constitutional reforms, recognising the multi-ethnic reality and the reality of the "Indigenous territory" and establishing norms for the peoples' budgetary resource management, among other things.<sup>46</sup> These were legitimate rights that we sought to have recognised and that we set out in an annex to a letter that was sent (10 March 1988) to the Minister of the Interior by the Movement of Indigenous Authorities of the Southwest (MAISO) in order to make our voices heard, at a time when the State and the Colombian people were trying to come to an agreement that would enable the Constitution of the Republic to be updated.<sup>47</sup>

On 8 September 1990, in Guachucal (Nariño), the authorities and delegates of 16 reserves in the southwest undertook an initial study of the Constituent Assembly.

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45 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (1988). *Derechos Humanos y Pueblos Indígenas*. Colombia Nuestra Ediciones. p. 27; July 1988.

46 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (1988). *Derechos Humanos y Pueblos Indígenas*. Colombia Nuestra Ediciones. p. 31; July 1988.

47 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (1988). *Derechos Humanos y Pueblos Indígenas*. Colombia Nuestra Ediciones. Letter on p. 34; July 1988.

This resulted in a call to the towns and communities to inform us and participate actively. Fifteen days later, between 20 and 23 September, we again met in Santiago (Guambía) in a workshop-meeting to deepen our understanding of the situation. We met a further time in Panam (Nariño), on 5 and 6 October, to decide how to be involved.<sup>48</sup> Those participating elected Lorenzo Muelas to defend the rights of the people and we began a campaign to get him elected on 9 December. We sought the support of peasants, black communities, Indigenous peoples and the popular sectors. Our Guambiano and Paez comrades set up commissions to have a presence in other communities and cities and to make our thoughts known.

Ongoing work on the Constitution was organised through informational meetings in the communities. We published bulletins, such as MAICO's (Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia), on progress in the work on the Constitution. The February 1991 bulletin (p. 5) thus states: "The Movement's strength is going to be concentrated in the territorial planning committee. Committees 3, 4 and 5, which are Congress, Justice and Economic Affairs, will also be attended by a comrade from the Movement. We are also producing small primers on the work we are doing on land management and the Indigenous economy."<sup>49</sup> In addition, we participated in the mayoral elections over the 1992-1994 period, and the mayor's office of Silvia (Cauca) was won by Mario Restrepo from the *Movimiento Obrero Independiente Revolucionario* (AICO-MOIR) alliance, taking advantage of the margin achieved to expand and decentralise democracy in the country.<sup>50</sup>

In spite of the legal achievements obtained in the new Political Constitution, the Indigenous movement has not ended up in a stronger position.<sup>51</sup> Old enemies have prevented the implementation of laws that would regulate our newly-acquired rights. The movement's interest in developing and pressuring for change from within, from the territory, where problems of boundaries between reserves arise, has declined and this is preventing progress, for example, in the "Indigenous Mandates" of the large assemblies, which are expected to serve as standards for building the ETIs (Indigenous Territorial Entities)<sup>52</sup> of the future

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48 Primer: "Los Derechos Indígenas en la Reforma Constitucional". AISO, p. 2, 12 October 1990. Collaboration between Colombia Nuestra and CENCOA.

49 Trabajando alrededor de la Constituyente. Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia). March 1991

50 Pueblos Indígenas Y Reforma Municipal. Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas del Suroccidente. November 1987.

51 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (1993) "Itinerario de una Militancia Paralela: La Lucha por los Derechos Indígenas y la Lucha por la Democratización en Colombia". *Articulación de la Diversidad*. Tercera Reunión de barbados. Coord. Georg Grunberg. p. 344. Abya -Yala Library.

52 Indigenous Territorial Entities. See the Primer: "*En que Consiste el Ordenamiento Territorial Indígena*". *Aplicando la Constitución* 1; MAICO, February 1993.

“Nasa Nation”.<sup>53</sup> It is a unifying project that is also shared by the Misak people, who intend to adopt a new political organisation through the *Nu Nakchak*<sup>54</sup> (the great *tulpa* or hearth) that would achieve the unity of Misak authorities throughout the country. Notwithstanding the massive and frequent political demands made of the State, backed up by frequent career shots that have been easily controlled by this latter, they have also not been successful to date.

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53 Víctor Daniel Bonilla (2004). “Factores Históricos, Culturales y Políticos a tener en cuenta en la Construcción de la ETI en Caldoño”. p. 70. Document produced as part of the project: “Accompaniment and Advice to the Process of Conformation of the ETI in Caldoño”, GTZ.

54 Great Original Misak Nation. Mananasrøn Katik Misak Kømik (2012). Misak Safeguarding Plan. Nuk Nakchak Authorities - Ruling 004 Team. p. 25.



# VÍCTOR DE LA CRUZ AND *THE FLOWER OF THE WORD*<sup>1\*</sup>

By **Natalio Hernández**



<i>Dxi guyubilulu'</i>	The day you search for me with your eyes
<i>ma' que' zadxe' lu' naa</i>	you will no longer find me,
<i>ne ndaani' ladxidua' ya</i>	and in my heart
<i>ma' guiruti' guinni gabi lil</i>	there will be no one to tell you
<i>xi neza xiaañ</i>	which way I went
<i>ne lii paraa bisiaanda'</i>	nor where I forgot you.

*The power of the flower of the word*, Víctor de la Cruz,  
Anthology of Poetry, Juchitán City Hall, Oax. 2012.

## **Initial meetings and disagreements**

I first met Víctor de la Cruz in person in July 1977 while we were attending the Barbados II meeting on the Caribbean island of the same name. This meeting had a deep and profound effect on my life as a leader in the 1970s for two reasons:

First, because different leaders of the Indigenous movement in the Americas were able to meet and get to know each other, at continental level. Second, because we established a horizontal, respectful and enriching dialogue with anthropologists and thinkers allied to the Indigenous movement: Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, Darcy Riveiro, Nemesio Rodríguez, Miguel Bartolomé, and Esteban Mosonyi, to name but a few.

As is well known, the Declaration of Barbados II became one of the founding documents of the contemporary Indigenous movement. One section of the Declaration states:

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<sup>1\*</sup> Speech presented at the talk “Víctor de la Cruz in the Academy and Literature”, during the opening of the first Regional Víctor de la Cruz Book and Literature Fair. Juchitán, Oaxaca, 30 August 2019.

“In America, we Indians are subjected to a double-edged domination: both physical and cultural. Physical domination is expressed, firstly, in the dispossession of land. The land began to be plundered from the very moment the Europeans invaded and it continues to this day.

Cultural domination can be considered to have been achieved when the Indian has established in his mind that Western or dominant culture is the only and highest level of development, while their own culture is not culture at all but the lowest level of backwardness to be overcome...”

It was in this context that Víctor de la Cruz and I met for our first meetings and disagreements as thinkers and leaders of Mexico’s Indigenous movement. At that time, I was president of the National Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals (Anpibac) and Víctor was an activist with the Coalition of Workers, Farmers and Students of the Isthmus (COCEI) and also Director of the Cultural House in Juchitán, Oaxaca.

In my opinion, COCEI’s activism and radicalism could be clearly seen in the thinking and attitude of the Binnizá<sup>2</sup> poet, Víctor de la Cruz. Throughout the course of the Barbados meeting, both in the working sessions and elsewhere, he accused me of being a government lackey, someone who had sold out to the PRI, and so many other descriptives that, in the end, it became like a bad joke hanging over me. I don’t think our friendship really began to solidify until the end of the congress as it was then that we agreed on the various demands regarding the language rights and self-determination of our peoples.

### **Birth of the Flower of the Word**

A few years after the Barbados meeting, more specifically in 1983, Víctor published his book *Guie’ sti’ didxaza’ [The Flower of the Word]*, an anthology of Zapotec literature. I believe this book was the start of a new relationship between us: one of friendship and brotherhood based on poetry and, more generally, on literature in our own languages. In my case, in 1985, barely two years after the publication of the *Flower of the Word*, I published my own first book of poetry entitled *Xochicoscatl [Necklace of Flowers]*.

I should point out here that I was very much motivated by *Guie’ sti’ didxazá* as well as by the book *Trece poetas del mundo azteca [Thirteen Poets of the Aztec World]* by our distinguished teacher, Miguel León-Portilla. More specifically, Víctor’s book enabled me to get to know the pioneers of contemporary Zapotec literature: Andrés Henestrosa, Pancho Nacar, Enrique Liekens and Gabriel López

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2 Name given by the Zapotec people to their language.

Chiñas, to name but a few. I have dared to recite a fragment of this latter's emblematic poem *Didxazá* in bilingual form on several occasions:

<i>iAyi didxazá, didxazá,</i>	<i>iAyi, zapoteco, zapoteco,</i>
<i>diiidxa' rusibani naa,</i>	<i>language that gives me life,</i>
<i>naa nanna zanitilu',</i>	<i>I know you will die</i>
<i>dxi initi gubidxa ca.</i>	<i>the day the sun dies.</i>

Víctor de la Cruz undoubtedly managed to establish an important bridge between the generation of the founding poets of contemporary Zapotec literature and the new generation of poets using the *Didxaza* language. I must also mention here Enedino Jimenez and Macario Matus, both of whom I recall with great gratitude for having shared with me their friendship and the flowering of their words, that is, their literary work.

For his work as a Zapotec writer in the Binnizá language, the National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta) awarded Víctor the Nezahualcoyotl Prize for Literature in Indigenous Languages in October 1994, the very year that the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) launched its battle cry *Ya Basta!* [*Enough already!*] in southeast Mexico. At the Nezahualcoyotl Prize-giving ceremony, he said:

“It is not only I that should receive this beautiful flower that is given to me. Its scent should be spread among the generation of men who were saved from European colonization. Even if it is a corn flower, even if it is a pumpkin flower it is a worthy thing. But these flowers do not grow on rooftops, they do not grow on pavements, they do not grow on stone. They need the land and water to germinate and flourish. They need care, they need to be loved so that they can live and help us live.

We need to remember the people, the brothers who took up arms because they had nothing to eat, nowhere to rest. Their life was simply death, there was no place for love, only death. So we should not be surprised when, faced with nothing, they chose death...”

### **The thinking of the *Binnigula'sa***

Víctor de la Cruz published a wide and varied body of literary work. After the publication of *The Flower of the Word* (which has been published in at least two further editions by the Institute of Historical Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)), other works followed, such as *Las guerras entre aztecas y zapotecas* [*The wars between Aztec and Zapotec*] (1981), *El General Charis y la pacificación del México pos-revolucionario* [*General Charis and the pacification of post-revolutionary Mexico*] (1983), *Coyote va a la fiesta*

*de Chihuitán [Coyote goes to the Chihuitán Festival]* (bilingual Zapotec-Spanish version with illustrations by Francisco Toledo) (1983), and others. He was also editor of the magazine "Guchachi' Reza - Iguana Rajada".

I believe the literary work that best reflects the full maturity of his professional training as a researcher, writer and poet, however, is *El pensamiento de los binnigula 'sa': cosmovisión, religión y calendario [The thinking of the Binnigula 'sa': worldview, religion and calendar]*. In it, he notes:

"This work is the result of wide research into the thinking of the ancient Zapotec, conceptualized by the author as the *binigula'sa'*, based on archaeological, linguistic, ethno-historical and ethnographic information from the whole Zapotec family but focused mainly, for reasons of time and space, on the Zapotec of the Central Valleys and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, known as *Binniza*, the 'people of the clouds'".

### **The different faces of the poet**

Another of Víctor's many facets is that he was a joyful, extravagant and generous poet. I remember when, in 1995, along with Carlos Montemayor and Gerardo Can Pat, a Mayan poet from Yucatán, he attended a writers' congress in Paris, France. For some reason I couldn't participate. On his return, he stopped by to say hello to me at the General Directorate of Popular Cultures where I was working. He came into my office brimming with joy, dressed in jeans and a brown coat and carrying a coffee-coloured bag that had several pin badges of flags and other French symbols attached to it. At that moment, my thoughts turned to the extravagance of General Charis, a character he had researched and published on in recent years. Víctor, I said, give me one of the pin badges on your bag. His response: these are all memories collected at the congress, I can't gift you one.

A few years after this incident, I asked him to read *Papalocuatl [Ode to the Butterflies]*, a manuscript containing my poems in Nahuatl and Spanish. He did so with great pleasure and was not as critical as I expected. In the end, we went to celebrate the book's publication in a restaurant with good food and excellent wines. We spent happy moments together, thanks to *The Flower of the Word*, the book that provided the magic through which our friendship was strengthened and enriched.

At around the same time, my friend Mario Molina, a Zapotec poet from the Sierra Juárez, asked me to review his book of poems entitled *Volcán de pétalos [Explosion of Petals]*, which he had just completed. I told him: Mario, I cannot do what you ask, and this is for one reason: I am a lyrical poet and I do not have the technical background to judge your literary work with sufficient academic rigor. Besides, we are friends, and I might be too soft on you. "My advice," I said, "would be to ask Víctor de la Cruz to review your work."

“You’re sending me to that son of a bitch? He’ll destroy my work,” Mario replied. “That’s what’s you need,” I said, “Why don’t you go and see? His criticism will be really useful. And once he’s destroyed your work, you’ll be able to rebuild it and that’s when it will be published.”

And, indeed, this is what happened, and *Explosion of Petals* was published in 1996. Víctor and Mario even became friends: they celebrated their friendship and the publication of the poems with some good shots of mezcal and crisp grasshoppers from Oaxaca.

### **Goodbye to Víctor**

Víctor was a controversial man. He used words as a sharp and powerful weapon. He was often ruthless with his academic colleagues. I sometimes felt he would even go so far as to fight with his own shadow, his own tone. And yet a discussion with him was always so productive. He would passionately defend his views and convictions. In the speech he gave on entering the Mexican Academy of the Language in 2011, he convincingly stated among other things:

“My anthology of contemporary Zapotec literature, *Guie’ sti’ diidxazá*, was published at a bad political moment. In the year of its publication, 1983, the Congress of Oaxaca State was ignoring the Popular Council of Juchitán, the first municipal council taken by the Left. So its launch, scheduled to take place at the Museum of Popular Cultures in Coyoacán, was cancelled ‘by higher order’, an expression we all know and understand in Mexico. Fortunately, some photographer friends, members of the Mexican Council of Photography, showed solidarity with the Juchitec cause and offered their offices in Mexico City for the launch of the dangerous anthology. The media scandal was enormous but the silence of the literary critics no less so; and thus, the first anthology of Indigenous literature in Mexico was ignored by the whole Mexican literary establishment apart from two poets: one Mexican, Carlos Montemayor, and the other Guatemalan living in Mexico, Otto Raúl González, who in 1985 published two articles on the work in the cultural section of the newspaper *Excelsior*”.

Víctor de la Cruz, Binnizá poet, departed this earth in 2015. As a simple tribute to his rich and controversial career, I wish to conclude my contribution with an anecdote from Tabasco. On the occasion of the Bicentenary of Independence and the Centenary of the Revolution, we were invited by the State Congress to participate in a series of conferences, each of us with our own theme. In my case, the topic was Literature in Indigenous Languages, in Víctor’s it was Indigenous peoples’ right to autonomy and self-determination.

My talk was well received by the audience since my speech focused on linguistic rights and the role of writers as the bearers of the flowering words of their peoples.

When it came to Víctor's turn, being knowledgeable of the law, he began to question the Zapatista principles of autonomy and self-determination of the peoples. Well, the audience just exploded, and the room nearly descended into chaos. At the end of his presentation, moods now calmed, and with a very characteristic ironic smile, he turned to me and accused me of having been sent to sabotage his speech!

What happened in Tabasco was perhaps the culmination of a relationship between friends and colleagues; our friendship never waned in more than 40 years. Whenever we had the chance, we would talk and discuss, pleasantly but also heatedly, sometimes accompanied by the red wine that he enjoyed so much. And so, I have come here today to remember his life and work, alongside his fellow countrymen and friends who are gathered here, and so that his academic and literary work will continue to bear fruit, through the flowering of the word of new writers from this ancient and modern city of Juchitán, "Land of flowers/ Xochitlalpan".



## INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES ON BARBADOS I AND II:

An interview with Nahuatl poet Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin

**Aída Hernández Castillo**  
and **Patricia Torres Sandoval**



Throughout this text, we have woven the voices of three different generations of writers-activists involved in defending Indigenous cultures who, in one way or another, have been influenced by the two historical events of the first Barbados meeting, which took place in Bridgetown, at the University of the West Indies in Barbados, from 25 to 28 January 1971, and the second, held six years later, between 18 and 28 July 1977, in the same place. These meetings were supported by the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches in Geneva and represented a break with the integrationist Indigenous anthropology prevalent at that time.

These two events left their mark on generations of anthropologists, as well as on a new generation of Indigenous activists, formed under the influence of anti-colonial and anti-racist criticism, as documented in the two Barbados Declarations. While complementary, these texts, which have become fundamental to the theories of decolonization in Latin America, have very different demands and narrative styles.<sup>1</sup> The first was produced by a group of anthropologists who are now considered to be the standard bearers of Latin American critical anthropology: Pedro Agostinho da Silva (*Universidad Federal da Bahía*, Salvador), Nelly Arvelo Jiménez (*Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas*, Caracas), Miguel Alberto Bartolomé (*Universidad de Buenos Aires*), Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*), Víctor Daniel Bonilla (*Comité para la Defensa del Indígena*, Bogotá), Oscar Bolioli (World Council of Churches, Geneva), Gonzalo Castillo Cárdenas (*Comité para la Defensa del Indígena*, Bogotá), Miguel Chase Sardi (*Centro de Estudios Antropológicos del*

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1 For an analysis of the two Declarations, see Málaga Villegas 2019. The first declaration can be found at [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/0110\\_01Barbados.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/0110_01Barbados.pdf) and the second (in Spanish only) at [http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/100preguntas/pregunta.php?c\\_pre=76&tema=7](http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/100preguntas/pregunta.php?c_pre=76&tema=7)

(Viewed 11 September 2020)

*Ateneo Paraguayo*, Asunción), Georg Grünberg (Bern University), Carlos de Araujo Moreira Neto (*Universidade de Rio Claro*, Brazil), Esteban Emilio Mosonyi (*Universidad Central de Venezuela*, Caracas), Darcy Ribeiro (*Universidad de Chile*, Santiago de Chile), Scott S. Robinson (Whitman College, Walla Walla, USA), Sílvio Coelho dos Santos (*Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina*, Florianópolis), Stefano Varese (Amazonian Populations Division, Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture).<sup>2</sup>

The criticisms and demands made in that first document were aimed at three target audiences: Latin American nations, the churches and the anthropological community. Without going into detail, the content of this first Declaration of Barbados formed a denunciation of the colonial project that was continuing on the continent's Indigenous territories, and of the role that nations, churches and anthropologists were playing in continuing to reproduce the colonial structures that dispossessed these peoples of their territories, natural and cultural resources.

The second Declaration, however, was written by Indigenous activists and intellectuals who met with anthropologists at the July 1977 meeting. It was an anonymous document in which the main targets were the Indigenous peoples of the continent themselves. It was fundamentally a call to join forces in an anti-colonial struggle and to confront the "de-Indianization" being promoted by the Latin American states.

In contrast to Marxist analyses of the time, the Indigenous leaders who met in Barbados placed colonialism and racism at the heart of their analysis of domination and inequality, claiming their political identity as "Indians". To the criticism of physical domination - which they described as the dispossession of their natural resources - and economic domination, they added cultural domination, which they defined as that domination which is exercised "when it has become established in the Indian mentality that a Western or dominant culture is the only and highest level of development, while one's own culture is not culture but the lowest level of backwardness to be overcome" (Second Declaration of Barbados, 28 July 1977). According to the document, this cultural domination is achieved via three main strategies: an indigenist policy that promotes acculturation; the formal education system, which teaches the superiority of the white man and a disdain for Indigenous cultures, imposing Hispanicization; and the mass media as instruments for the dissemination of demeaning perspectives on Indigenous peoples (Ibidem 1977).

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2 Of the 15 participants at Barbados 1, there were four who did not sign the Declaration: Oscar Bolioli, who was an observer; and three Brazilians (or living in Brazil): Pedro Agostinho da Silva (born in Portugal), Sílvio Coelho dos Santos and Carlos de Araujo Moreira Neto. This was for security reasons due to the national political context.

This highly important challenge to epistemic colonialism was later further developed by critics of coloniality-modernity (see Quijano 1998) and other decolonial and anti-colonial theorists (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel 2007, De Sousa Santos 2009, Rivera Cusicanqui 2010). The names of those who drew up this document, however, have remained unknown to this day. It is noted by some that members of nearly 20 Indigenous organizations from 12 of the region's countries attended the conference (Zapata and Oliva 2019); others speak of 35 participants, 13 of whom were active leaders of the Indigenous movement. Nonetheless, the names of these leaders are not documented. The importance of the peoples' collective voice was argued to justify the anonymity of the authors of the second Declaration. Paradoxically, this silencing also echoes the strategies of epistemic colonialism, which has erased from history the names of thousands of Indigenous men and women who fought in wars of independence, social revolutions, and in struggles to defend their land and territory.

In the context of a postgraduate course at CIESAS on Epistemologies of Decolonization, in which we read several texts written by Indigenous intellectuals that preceded the so-called "decolonial turn" (and which are often not recognized as part of their intellectual genealogies), we discussed the implications of this silencing.<sup>3</sup> It was there that a curiosity arose with regard to revealing the names of those who had participated in this second meeting, preparing and discussing this historic document. As a lawyer-activist and P'urhépecha anthropologist, and as one of the *Mayoras*<sup>4</sup> of the National Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women (Conami) in Mexico, Patricia Torres Sandoval was especially interested in recovering this part of the Indigenous movement's Latin American history. Aída Hernández Castillo, an anthropologist-activist trained in critical anthropology, which grew in strength following the Barbados I Meeting, considered this history as also a part of her own political genealogy and felt that recovering the memory of the Barbados leaders was a necessity for those of us working for the epistemic decolonization of anthropology.

Through our anthropological colleagues, Miguel Bartolomé and Stefano Varese, and the Nahuatl poet and writer, Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin, who were present at the second meeting in Barbados, we were able to document the names of some of those who attended.

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3 The course programme is available (in Spanish) at <http://www.rosalvaaidahernandez.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Epistemologi%CC%81as-de-Desconolizacio%CC%81n-Identidad-y-Poder.pdf>

4 When Conami's national coordinators cease to hold this role, they are invited to form part of the Council of *Mayoras* ('Female Elders'), an opinion and consultation body for issues of interest to the current general coordination team.

For Argentina, the Kolla leader, Eulogio Frites, founder of the Indigenous Association of the Argentine Republic, was there. Eulogio was already an outstanding leader at the time of the Barbados meeting. In 1973, he formed part of the Coordinating Commission of Indigenous Institutions that organized the First Indigenous Parliament in Neuquén, where the Indigenous peoples of Argentina met for the first time to challenge the official discourse that there were no native peoples in the country. During the dictatorships, he suffered repression but continued to use the law as a weapon to defend the Indigenous territories. After Barbados II, he continued his defence of the territory and obtained the recognition of large areas of Indigenous territories such as the “Santiago Estate” in Salta, where thousands of hectares were titled in favour of the communities. He wrote much about Indigenous rights and published the book *Los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas en Argentina*, now a classic on the native peoples of that country. Known as the “Kolla”, he is considered the father of Indigenous law in Argentina. He died in July 2015.<sup>5</sup>

For Venezuela, the Wayuu (Guajiro) leader Arcadio Montiel participated, and he also became an important defender of Indigenous rights by choosing the electoral path in order to gain legislative power. As part of a coalition of political parties known as the Movement of Democratic Unity (MUD), he has been a critic of the so-called “Bolivarian Revolution” due to its policies toward native peoples. In 1999, he was one of three Indigenous legislators who achieved a constitutional reform recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples in the country. Until 2015, he was a member of the Permanent Commission of Indigenous Peoples of the Venezuelan Congress. He remains active in the struggle for the rights of his country’s Indigenous peoples.

For Bolivia, Ramiro Reinaga Burgoa, an Aymara leader, son of the prolific writer Fausto Reynaga, was in attendance. Like his father, he was a radical Indianist who emphasized the importance of rebuilding the Inca nation. His book *Tawantisuyo: Cinco Siglos de la Guerra Queswaymara contra España* (1978) is considered a classic of Bolivian Indianism, taking up the “*tawa*” (four) Quechua voices and “his” nation in order to demand the establishment of an Inca nation that would encompass the current countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. Unlike his father Ramiro, he wrote only one book and retired from public life some decades ago.

For Mexico, there was Víctor de la Cruz, a Zapotec intellectual and a member of the *Coalición Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil del Istmo* (COCEI) at that time,

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5 On the life of Eulogio Frites, see <http://pacarinadelsur.com/home/indoamerica/1525-aproximacion-a-los-senderos-historico-politicos-del-kolla-eulogio-frites-1935-2015-en-argentina> (in Spanish only)

which was the first opposition force to govern a municipality in Mexico by winning the elections in Juchitán, Oaxaca. With his critical radicalism and writing skills, which are reflected in his prolific work,<sup>6</sup> Víctor arrived in Barbados with a draft for discussion, and it was this that formed the basis for the collective document that was later to become known as the second Barbados Declaration. Following his participation in Barbados, Víctor de la Cruz completed his Master's and Doctoral studies to become one of the leading historians of Zapotec culture, a poet, writer, CIESAS colleague and staunch defender of the rights of Indigenous peoples. He died on 9 September 2015 (see a tribute to him by Natalio Hernández elsewhere in this book).

Cirila Sánchez Mendoza, bilingual teacher, activist and member of the Supreme Chatino Council, also participated for Mexico. Cirila's life took a very different turn from that of Víctor de la Cruz, becoming an outstanding activist in the governing party that held power for 70 years in Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). She was the first Indigenous woman to hold a seat on the local Oaxaca City Council, then nationally and, finally, became the first Indigenous woman to become a Senator of the Republic. Cirila died in 2013 at the age of 61 in her native Oaxaca.<sup>7</sup>

The third Mexican participant was Professor Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin, a Nahuatl poet and writer, who in 1977 already held a position within the Ministry of Public Education from where he defended the cultural and linguistic rights of Indigenous people. In addition to being a prolific poet in Nahuatl and Spanish, Prof. Natalio has promoted the creation of different spaces for the defence of Indigenous cultures and languages, such as the Association of Writers in Indigenous Languages, A.C. (ELIAC), *Casa de los Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas* (CELI) and the National Alliance of Indigenous Bilingual Professionals, A.C. (Anpibac). For several years now, Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin has had an office at CIESAS, a space from where he organized the First World Meeting of Indigenous Peoples' Poetry: *Voces de colores para la Madre Tierra*, an event that opened at the Palace of Fine Arts in October 2016. We were privileged to be able to contact him and ask for an interview in order to share his memories of Barbados, his political reflections on these past 50 years since the first meeting, and his dreams for the future of Mexico and its people.

As a participant in the second meeting in Barbados, his memoirs show the diversity of the Indigenous movement in the 1970s, where radical positions that rejected any link with the different nation states, such as that of Ramiro

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<sup>6</sup> Víctor de la Cruz was the author or co-author of 14 books on history, essays and poetry. His work can be found at <http://www.elem.mx/autor/obra/directa/15263/>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://ichan.ciesas.edu.mx/cirila-sanchez-mendoza/>

Reinaga, converged with the more moderate positions of Cirila Sánchez and Natalio Hernández himself, who were committed to working within the State and seeking transformations by influencing cultural policies or legislative reforms. As a Nahuatl poet and thinker, Natalio Hernández has claimed a place for Indigenous languages in Latin American literature and his poetry has been set to music by singers such as Lila Downs.<sup>8</sup>

### **Memories of the Barbados II Meeting**

To interview Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin is to be confronted by the history of the Mexican and continental Indigenous movement. His experiences are as a bilingual teacher, Indigenous activist, government official and Nahuatl poet: each of these identities and experiences has marked his historical memory and his sensitivity to reconstructing the past. Each event he talks about is accompanied by a nostalgia for friends who are no longer with us and from whom he learned, even in dissent (as he recounts in relation to the Zapotec poet and historian Víctor de la Cruz or the writer Carlos Montemayor!). He begins by telling us about his journey to the island of Barbados, where he met what he calls “the diaspora of Latin American Indigenous thought”<sup>9</sup>:

“I arrived in Barbados on the invitation of Don Guillermo Bonfil Batalla. I knew Don Guillermo by name but it was only after Barbados II that we began to talk greatly and became friends. We became not only friends but colleagues and, especially, allies of the Indigenous movement in Mexico from the 1970s until his death in 1992. I travelled with Miguel Bartolomé: we flew from Mexico to Caracas and stayed together in a small hotel in that city before flying on to Barbados. He is a burly bearded man and we became brothers on that journey. He is still very active; I don’t think we’ve met in 20 years now but we had some wonderful encounters in the past.

I remember now how intensely I experienced that trip. I was very impressed by the island of Barbados. I thought I would meet white, bearded men and what I found was a completely black population; it is an island very close to Venezuela, in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. There were many contrasts for me. This interview has given me an opportunity to relive some of the highlights of that meeting. There were moments of great tension. There were differences between the Indians themselves,

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8 For the work of Natalio Hernández, see <http://www.elem.mx/autor/datos/107673>. The poem *Incocuatl*, set to music by Lila Downs, can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RHUHEP\\_cyY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RHUHEP_cyY)

9 The texts in quotation marks from Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin’s reflections are extracts from two several-hour-long interviews conducted by the authors with the Nahuatl poet on 3 and 12 August 2020. Our deepest thanks for his time and inspiring words.

but also between us and the anthropologists. Most were Non-Indigenous (Criollos), as Nelly Arévalo de Jiménez from Venezuela said. On the Indigenous side, I remember Arcadio Montiel, a Wayuu from Venezuela. He came with Esteban Emilio Mosonyi, an anthropologist of Hungarian origin, also from Venezuela. Arcadio came from the Indigenous Wayuu region, one of the most combative groups. It has young leaders now but at that time Arcadio Montiel and Esteban Emilio Mosonyi were pioneers of the 1970s Indigenous movement, fighting for recognition of Indigenous rights in their country.

Ramiro Reinaga came from Bolivia. I think he came together with his father, Fausto Reinaga, a very important Indianist writer. We became friends, brothers, with Ramiro, who proposed the concept of *Tawantisuyu*. He visited Mexico many times. I think he's still alive but his word has been fading; he was very radical. Ramiro has also had a very unfortunate life in recent years but, well... it is just a part of the cost that the Indigenous movement in Latin America and the world has had to pay. Our leaders often end up unknown and unrecognized.

There were many differences among the participants. There was a very strong clash of ideas, which threw up very strong emotions. There were moments of great tension and confrontation over what the document should say. But, in the end, we managed to reach agreement. One such agreement was that it would be an anonymous document. Now that I have read it again, I generally like it a lot because, unlike the Declaration of Barbados I, which is a very dense document with a very anthropological, very Marxist vision, our Declaration of Barbados II is as soft as a breeze. The words flow like the sea air, permeating the inexorable Indigenous thought. Western thought is very harsh, it is very direct. And so when it is academic discourse, it becomes very dense, rational and orthodox.

The Declaration of Barbados II is a very important document but, at the time, we decided not to sign it because there was no consensus. I could give many explanations but the truth is simpler: there was no consensus. There were three blocs: there was a very radical wing among the Indians, led by Víctor de la Cruz (who had already arrived at the meeting a draft in hand), and a moderate wing, I don't say led but with sympathies for Natalio Hernández. I have always struggled with institutional, academic and political structures.

The third group was formed of anthropologists, the ones who produced the First Declaration. Actually, when we arrived in Barbados, I was unaware of that document but it did form background material for the discussion. We read it collectively and several of the authors were there to

clarify our questions. If we didn't understand something, we would ask Guillermo Bonfil, Miguel Bartolomé or Darcy Ribeyro.

When I arrived in Barbados, although I did not share the radicalism of colleagues such as Víctor de la Cruz or Ramiro Reinaga, I was a great critic of indigenism. I was a critic from within the State itself, within the institutional structure itself. When I went to Barbados, I was a leader but, at the same time, a bilingual teacher. Even in the 1970s, I was a supervisor, from 1970 to 1977, of bilingual teachers in different regions of the country and, in 1978, a year after Barbados, I was appointed Deputy Director for the Promotion of Bicultural Bilingual Education. At that time it was already an achievement to talk about bicultural bilingual education. It took us at least eight years for this demand to be recognized by the Mexican State.

I was relying then on being able to achieve some changes within the State apparatus itself. My position was in stark contrast to that of Víctor de la Cruz who, at that time, was leader of the *Coalición Obrera, Campesina, Estudiantil del Istmo* (COCEI). At that time, whenever you mentioned COCEI, everyone already knew what you were referring to because it was a well-known radical movement based in Juchitán, Oaxaca. It was a demanding and very radical movement that was shaping the Mexican State. He wanted to do away with the structures, while I remained critical from within.

I was highly critical of the acculturation of and paternalism towards Mexican Indians. Three years after Barbados, I started writing the book *In Tlaxtoli in Ohtli*, which was published in 1998. This sets out all my speeches from the 1970s through almost until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This anthology of small essays, many of them public speeches, sets out my demands and my critiques of indigenism. In 1980, I participated in an International Congress of Anthropology in Mérida organized by UNESCO and other institutions. There I developed an idea that was to be very important to me for several decades, and which I called "a re-encounter with our Indian education". At that time, for me there were Indians, *mestizos* and whites, three irreconcilable social sectors. You were either Indian, *mestizo* or white Creole. This conception of mine lasted until 2000. From 2000 on, I changed my vision of the Indigenous world and began to develop my ideas about interculturality and dialogue".

One poem that represents Natalio Hernández's Indianist stage is "*Yo Soy Indio*" written in Spanish and Nahuatl. We share here some fragments of it, which reflect its anti-colonial criticism and its concept of identity, so characteristic of the Barbados II meeting:

**Na ni indio**

*Na ni indio:  
ipampa ihquino nech tocatihque coyomeh  
burn asico ipan yancuic tlaltipactli.*

*Na ni indio:  
ipampa mocacahcayaqueh coyomeh  
queman asico campa tlanahuatiaya nocolhua*

*Na ni indio:  
ipampa ihquino nech manextihque coyomeh  
tlen ica huelqui nopan nenenqueh  
ihuan nech pinahtihque*

*Na ni indio:  
ipampa ihquino tech tocahtiqueh coyomeh  
nochi timasehualmeh tlen ni yancuic tlaltipactli.*

*Na ni indio:  
ihuan namah ica nimotlacanequi ni tlahtoli  
tlen yalhuaya ica nech pinatiyayah coyomeh.*

*Na ni indio:  
ihuan namah amo nipinahuia ma ihquino  
nechilica  
ipampa nihmati mocuapolohque coyomeh*

*Na ni indio:  
ihuan namah nihmati nipixtoc  
nonelhuayo ihuan no tlahlamiquilis.*

*Na ni indio:  
ihuan namah sampa nech nelhuayotia tlaltipactli  
tonantzi tlaltipactli.*

**I am Indian**

I am Indian:  
because I was named that way by the white men  
when they came to this new land.

I am Indian:  
because of their mistake  
when they came to the land that my  
grandparents ruled.

I am Indian:  
because that's how the white men labelled me  
so they could crush and discriminate.

I am Indian:  
because that's what the whites called us  
all the men of this continent.

I am Indian:  
and now I am proud of this name  
with which white men previously mocked me.

I am Indian:  
and I am no longer sorry for this  
because I know of its historical error.

I am Indian:  
and now I know I have my own roots  
and my own thinking.

**Women's demands before and after Barbados**

When we asked Prof. Natalio Hernández about the women's document that was being prepared during the second meeting in Barbados, he only vaguely recalls the text and how it came about. It has been almost completely erased from his memories of Barbados, probably because it was a process in which the male leaders did not participate. He tells us in this regard:

"I think women's voices were represented by Nelly Arévalo de Jiménez, who was married to an Indigenous leader from Venezuela. She acted as a mediator so that the women could have a voice because, in the whole

meeting, there were only around three or four women, in contrast to the 40 men, including whites, *criollos*, *mestizos* and Indigenous peoples, so her voice rang out like a bell. I remember it very clearly. I was very impressed because she was an extremely combative anthropologist, highly academic and married to an Indigenous brother. I'm talking about the 1970s. This idea of marriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples was still a bit strange for me. A conception of Indian, *mestizo* and white or Criollos as separate worlds was still prevalent in Latin American society. I was very impressed that an urban Non-Indigenous anthropologist, highly academic, was married to an Indigenous leader who was also very authentic. They came from two polarized worlds."

Of the three participating Indigenous women, only the name of Cirila Sánchez Mendoza lives on in the memories of Natalio Hernández and the other anthropologists interviewed. Given the impossibility of obtaining her testimony, we would now like to summarize some of the main proposals made in the stated document and, based on the experience of Patricia Torres Sandoval's activism in the Indigenous women's movement, reflect on the validity of its demands. The document referred to is a denunciation that was included as an annex to the Second Declaration of Barbados under the title "Other documents", with the name "Summary of the Discussion on Indigenous Women's Issues". It reflects the needs of Indigenous women as recognized at that time (1977). Issues such as the fact that Indigenous women accounted for more than half of the population and needed to participate in the struggle for liberation, taking on tasks not traditionally allocated to them. It is also noted that acculturation was a form of women's subjugation under a dual colonialism: once for being women and once for being Indigenous. The text highlights the different ways in which women and men are oppressed by the system, whereby Indigenous women are the most affected and oppressed, including by Indigenous men who attribute them with a second-class status. (Bonfil Batalla, Mosonyi, Aguirre Beltrán, Arizpe, Tagle, 1977, p.113)

Other complaints in the document refer to Latin American education policy, which takes the children of Indigenous mothers away "to educate them in boarding schools and transfer them into non-Indigenous families" (Ibid., p. 114), ignoring Indigenous women's ability to raise and educate their children themselves. It also denounces the labour exploitation of Indigenous women as domestic workers and in many other precarious roles, noting that when they demand their rights "they may be repressed and even killed by the authorities" (Ibid., p. 114). In this kind of acculturation, women's role ceases to be important to the processes of production and social coexistence. In addition, women have been the target of forced sterilizations "with the express purpose of blocking their historical survival and, thus, the liberation projects of the Amerindian

peoples” (Ibidem). It also recognized the contributions women have made to Indigenous resistance and demanded their right to occupy decision-making positions, and to continue the transmission of the historical identity, values and collective memory of their peoples.

With 50 years having passed since this document was written, it is still surprising how relevant the problems described are to the lives of the continent’s Indigenous women today. A colonial and patriarchal thinking has permeated the Indigenous communities and continues to permeate both these and the Indigenous movement’s joint organizations. Right now we can mention the issue of individual and collective violence, which the *National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women* (Conami) is seeking to raise awareness of and systematize through its digital activism tool, the “Community Gender Emergency” initiative, in which news stories are shared on the violence suffered by Indigenous women, given that these are invisible in Mexico’s statistical data.<sup>10</sup>

With respect to the reports of forced sterilization noted in the 1977 “Summary of the Discussion on the Problems of Indigenous Women”, reparation for these grievances is an ongoing demand to this day for the continent’s Indigenous women’s movement. Along the same lines of activism, Patricia Torres Sandoval also recalls that, in Peru, she began with a campaign to make the Peruvian government apologize for the forced sterilization policies used against Indigenous peoples by the Fujimori government. This campaign has been promoted by women from the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA), in which one of the main activists demanding reparation for damages is Tarcila Rivera Zea, a Quechua representative from Peru. During 2014, a number of lawyers from the ECMIA met in Lima and called for legislation on forced sterilization and for the Peruvian State to acknowledge its responsibility.

In other countries, studies have been conducted documenting the fact that campaigns in various media and in Indigenous community clinics continue to treat family planning as a veiled way of promoting forced sterilization. Studies into obstetric violence in Mexico have found that Indigenous women are often fitted with intrauterine devices without consultation (Muñoz García and Berrio Palomo 2020). Even in 2020, we have heard first-hand testimonies from women in Indigenous regions where this type of obstetric violence continues to be practised.

With respect to the demand to allow Indigenous women to occupy leadership positions, it has now become a search for spaces in which to build affirmative action so that women can access not only grassroots spaces or spaces within

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<sup>10</sup> Information on the initiative can be found in the CIESAS magazine at the following link: <https://ichan.ciesas.edu.mx/emergencia-comunitaria-de-genero-respuesta-de-las-mujeres-indigenas-a-las-multiples-violencias-y-el-despojo-del-territorio/>

organizations but also decision-making spaces within the State structures. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of disrupting the sphere of male power is that it has exacerbated the political violence against Indigenous women who aspire to public office. The Gender Community Emergency digital activism tool has reported that, during the last elections in Mexico (2018), Indigenous candidates and pre-candidates were murdered in municipalities in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Puebla.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, the “Summary of the Discussion on the Problems of Indigenous Women” produced in 1977 is still relevant, summing up many of the problems faced by Indigenous women, not only those who attended the historic meeting but with reference to recurrent problems in the daily lives of Indigenous women throughout the continent. From Alaska to Patagonia, Indigenous women continue to face issues such as human trafficking in and out of our territories, Indigenous femicides, dispossession of our territories and natural resources, structural racism, and discrimination based on a cultural worldview that continues to see Indigenous women as second-class citizens.

Not everything has been unfortunate, however, because the struggles of Indigenous women have been strengthened at continental level, and Indigenous women’s organizations have been consolidated locally, nationally and internationally. Routes to achieving substantive equality between women and men have opened up, and affirmative actions have been proposed to reduce the inequalities between Indigenous men and women.

The path opened up by Cirila Sánchez Mendoza, Nelly Arévalo de Jiménez, and their two anonymous comrades, whose names we have been unable to recover, has been continued through the struggle of thousands of Abya Yala’s Indigenous women, who have expanded the “diaspora of Indigenous thought” from the feeling-thinking of women.

### **Fifty years on from the Barbados Manifesto I**

The so-called Barbados Manifesto I entitled “Declaration of Barbados: For the Liberation of the Indians” begins by pointing out the continuation of colonial structures in Latin American societies: “The Indians of America remain dominated by a colonial situation which originated with the conquest and which persists today within many Latin American nations. The result of

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11 A note on the 2018 election process and its political violence is available at <http://www.cronica.com.mx/notas/2019/1109328.html> and at [https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/06/02/mexico/1527962598\\_145968.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/06/02/mexico/1527962598_145968.html) The ECG database notes 10 cases of women candidates killed during the election period. The notes shared here are included in the initiative’s archive and were consulted again on 13 September 2020.

this colonial structure is that lands inhabited by Indians are judged to be free and unoccupied territory open to conquest and colonization. Colonial domination of the aboriginal groups, however, is only a reflection of the more generalized system of the Latin American states' external dependence upon the imperialist metropolitan powers. The internal order of our dependent countries leads them to act as colonizing powers in their relations with the Indigenous peoples. This places the several nations in the dual role of the exploited and the exploiters, and this in turn projects not only a false image of Indian society and its historical development, but also a distorted vision of what constitutes the present national society." The influence of the analytical paradigms of dependency theory and internal colonialism can be seen throughout the text. Through a detailed critical analysis, the text sets out how Latin American nation states have occupied Indigenous territories, dispossessing them of their natural and cultural resources, with the complicity of the Church and anthropologists. The demands of the document can be summarized on three levels:

1. To Latin American states: recognition of the cultural and linguistic rights of Indigenous peoples, of their territorial rights and of their own internal political systems. These states are also called upon to provide economic, social, health, and educational support, as well as to address specific deficiencies resulting from the colonial structure, and to make reparations for the crimes and abuses that have resulted from increased occupation of their Indigenous territories.
2. To the churches: put an end to catechism as tool of colonization and respect Indigenous cultures, stop the division of communities and the exploitation and expropriation of their lands.
3. One very concrete demand was made of anthropologists: the anthropology required in Latin America today is not one that sees Indigenous populations as mere objects of study but one that sees them as colonized peoples and commits itself to their struggle for liberation.

Fifty years on, Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin takes stock of what has been achieved in the dialogue between Indigenous peoples and these three actors, from his experience as a poet and defender of Indigenous cultures, but also as a public official in various cultural and educational institutions:

"As regards the first statement, it seems to me that this is very important because it breaks with the traditional anthropology of the last century, of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was an anthropology closely linked to the indigenist politics of Mexico. Since Barbados I, that is, since 1971, Mexican anthropology has questioned its work, its practice as a profession linked

to the oppression of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and even of Latin America. It was a very important moment in the Indigenous movement's development in the 1970s. But it was also a time when an integrationist and acculturating indigenism was on the rise. The indigenism that originated in Latin America dates back to 1940, when the Inter-American Indigenist Institute was created and, from that point on, each Latin American country created a National Indigenist Institute. In Mexico, INI was created in 1948 and began operating in 1950-51. In other words, when we arrived at the Barbados II meeting, almost 30 years had already passed since the establishment of an indigenist policy by Latin America's nation states. Unfortunately, the vision had not changed in that time, this idea of assimilation, integration, incorporation. This was why anthropologists proposed a new relationship between the State and Indigenous peoples and a new role for anthropologists in this scenario. For anthropology, it was a moment of rupture. And Barbados II undoubtedly formed a diaspora of contemporary Indigenous thought in Latin America. This diaspora transcended each individual country; the Indigenous voices and their demands transcended borders and a particular dynamic has been followed in each country ever since, although there have been opportunities for interaction.

Mexico is the case of which I have direct experience, along with some of the anthropologists who were at Barbados I and II. Several of them have already passed away, they are no longer with us. Speaking from a Mexican context, I would say that many changes began to take place in the 1970s. I can't claim that everything started with the Barbados meeting, that would be to idealize the Barbados conferences too much. But we do see that this is an historic moment of strengthening of the Indigenous struggle. In Mexico, the Organization of Indigenous Nahua Professionals (Opinac) was created in 1973, and then the National Alliance of Indigenous Bilingual Professionals (Anpibac) in 1976, the National Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1975 and the Alliance of the Peoples of the Matlatzinca Valley in 1978. There was also the Manifesto of the Peoples of the Matlatzinca Valley, which was signed in blood drawn using an agave spine: this fact never ceases to amaze me.

This was in 1978. So we were seeing the emergence of a national Indigenous movement but also regional movements. In Chiapas in 1974, Don Samuel Ruiz, *Tatik Samuel* as he was known by the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, held a congress at which several of the participants spoke out to denounce the fact that neither the Conquest nor colonization had ended. In other words, colonization was still ongoing in Chiapas. I'm talking about 1974 and, after this, the whole movement began to push for changes in

Mexico's indigenist policies. The State began to allow for the more direct participation of Indigenous peoples in the State apparatus. Ignacio Valle Fernández was the director of the National Plan for Depressed Areas and Marginalized Groups (COPLAMAR), which included the National Indigenist Institute (INI) for the 1976-82 period. He invited me to write a short essay on the politics of participation, which became a core document in the transition from an indigenist policy without Indigenous peoples to a politics of participation. The period 1976 to 1982 was a very important one for Mexico, with Indigenous peoples or Indigenous thinkers, leaders, participating in the institutional structure of the Mexican State.

For example, Apolinar Loreto, President of the National Council of Indigenous Peoples and an Otomi from Temoaya, Mexico State, was a federal member of parliament. Later, Cirila Sánchez, who also participated in Barbados II, became a local member of parliament, a federal congresswoman and then a senator; she held all three roles in politics. She is no longer with us but what I am trying to say is that, when we look at the resurgence of national Indigenous movements in Mexico, there was a leap in the 1970s from an indigenist policy without Indigenous peoples' participation to a policy of participation, in which we began to occupy important spaces within the State.

This movement was of course an ongoing one and so we arrived at another important historical moment in 1992 when a Pan-Latin American movement emerged stretching from Canada and beyond to Patagonia. This was the *500 Years of Black and Popular Indigenous Resistance* movement; we are of course talking about 1992. This movement called on Latin American nation states to recognize the presence of Indigenous peoples in their national constitutions. Those who played an important role in getting this thought recognized in Mexico were members of the Guerrero 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance Council, with its motto: "A Mexico without us no more", a slogan that was taken up two years later by the Zapatista Movement. In the case of our country, the reform of Article 4 of the Constitution in 1992, which for the first time recognized Mexico as a multicultural nation, was a result of this continental movement as expressed through the Guerrero 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance Council. And yet it is not possible to understand these changes without taking into account the backdrop of Barbados I and Barbados II. These were historical events that resulted in a diaspora of Indigenous thought. They marked a turning point in Indigenous peoples' struggles. With them began a process that reached an historic pinnacle in the constitutional reforms for the recognition of Indigenous rights. For the first time in Mexico's contemporary history, Indigenous peoples were recognized in the Constitution.

Among our allies in achieving the constitutional reforms were anthropologists such as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and Arturo Warman. They helped us push through the recognition enshrined in Article 4 of the 1992 Constitution. I have said in my classes at the UNAM, on the subject of bilingual intercultural education, that what was written in Art. 4 of the 1992 reform is a poem: "Mexico is a multicultural nation sustained from its origins by its Indigenous peoples." It is a poem that continues to be a utopia because we need to work hard: Indigenous, *mestizo*, Creole, immigrant, in short, all sectors of Mexican society, to make this 1992 poem a reality.

I would say that the 1994 Zapatista uprising was the tail of the snake, which struck with greater force than in 1992. The Zapatista brothers and sisters of Chiapas and their allies, with weapons in hand, exclaimed: "The Mexican nation has forgotten us, marginalized us, humiliates us, discriminates against us, excludes us." It was a denunciatory cry that remains embodied in the San Andrés Larrainzar Accords.<sup>12</sup> It was in that document that our Indigenous brothers and sisters from Chiapas set out their demand for an intercultural-bilingual education for all Mexicans because, as they said, we Indigenous peoples do not appear in textbooks: our language, our culture, our history are all missing. They demanded that Mexican society as a whole should come to know our languages, our culture, our world vision.

Finally, to close this historical review of how the Mexican State has been transformed in the 50 years since the Barbados I Conference (1971), we can see that the content of Article 4 of the 1992 Constitution was reaffirmed in 2001 with the Constitutional Reform on Indigenous Rights and Culture. It took Comandante Marcos, Comandanta Ramona and others to come to Congress and once more repeat and reaffirm what was stated in Article 4 of the Constitution, which had already been forgotten because, in this country, much is agreed but little is obeyed or implemented: nothing becomes a reality. So our Zapatista brothers and sisters entered Congress and said, "We want our rights set out in the Constitution". The text in 2001 is therefore somewhat broader than that given in the 1992 Article 4, although there are shortcomings. Constitutional discussions on the issue of Indigenous peoples as subjects of law are still ongoing, and this part has not yet been consolidated. Because even a fourth level of government is being considered, meaning that the law - not its words but

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12 The San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture is a document that the Government of Mexico signed with the Zapatista National Liberation Army on 16 February 1996 and in which it committed to amending the National Constitution in order to grant rights, including autonomy, to the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and to address their demands of justice and equality for the country's poor.

its actions and its budget - should be located with the towns rather than held up at the municipal level. It was previously stuck at state level; now the budgets are bogged down in the municipalities and not filtering down to the towns. So I think there are different levels of autonomy and that's where we are, it's the big challenge we are facing.

I will conclude by saying that, along with the right to autonomy and self-determination, one of the most important rights set out in these reforms is the right to language. This is an area in which we have made a great deal of progress but where we have now come up against a wall, a very strong wall, in the education system. This system continues with the same paradigm, the same generic educational model designed in its day by Justo Sierra, José Vasconcelos, and Rafael Ramírez, among others: a unique education in Spanish for all Mexicans. This unique education system, this unique suit of just one colour, be it black, red or green, whatever, it doesn't matter, already has many alternative experiences, community, regional, institutional, NGO etc., of bilingual intercultural education. The new generation of Indigenous intellectuals are proficient in several languages, not all of them perhaps but we now have trilingual professionals who speak their local language, Spanish and English, or their local language, Spanish and French, etc. That didn't exist a few decades ago. In the 1970s, bilingual teachers were recruited from the primary level of education because there were no other educational levels in the villages.

As I weigh up the past 50 years, I do not want to be pessimistic, nor do I want to be overly optimistic: I always try to be a realist. There has been an institutional transformation, there is a new political discourse, there is progress, for example, the General Law on the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is the National Institute of Indigenous Languages, intercultural education is already part of the discourse within the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), including the latest change to Article 3<sup>13</sup> under this new administration, which is headed up by the President of the Republic, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the Minister for Public Education, Estebán Moctezuma Barragán.”

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13 On 15 May 2019, a decree reforming Article 3 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States was enacted as a result of the bill tabled in December 2018 by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador before the Chamber of Deputies. The reform of Article 3 will bring about changes in education policy in Mexico, especially in relation to the last two administrations - in which the search for improved quality was focused on actions to evaluate the different elements of the education system, especially the work of teachers - since it contains elements that are more aimed at strengthening the institutional support for initial and ongoing teacher training as well as the work of teaching itself.

In light of Prof. Natalio Hernández's analysis, we cannot but think about the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples to defend their territories in Mexico; how mining, and government projects such as the Mayan Train or the Morelos Integrated project continue to dispossess them of their lands in the name of progress and development. Legislative reforms that recognize their rights have not prevented the criminalization of their struggles, nor have they prevented the violence of drug trafficking from causing the forced displacement of entire communities, leaving their territories free to be appropriated by big business (see Hernández Castillo 2019). We cannot deny the achievements he sets out in his interview and yet this policy of cultural recognition has gone hand in hand with a policy of dispossession that does not recognize land and territory as the fundamental basis of the cultural rights they claim to recognize.

In terms of the ethnocidal policies of the Church, as denounced in the First Declaration of Barbados, Natalio Hernández also sees some transformation, especially as regards a progressive sector of the Catholic Church in which a process of inculturation<sup>14</sup> has taken place, recognizing the importance of Indigenous spirituality and the use of their language in places of worship. In this regard, he pointed out:

“I will be very brief on the Church because much of what I have said also relates to its transformation. The struggle continues in many regions, and the traditional ceremonial practices of Indigenous peoples are still being persecuted. However, it has to be acknowledged that there is a sector of the Catholic Church that has been willing to change. I am pleasantly surprised, for example, by the way they have incorporated Indigenous languages into the ritual space. I have attended some masses in Nahuatl. I know that in Papantla, not in the villages, but in Papantla which is a Totonac town, there are masses in Totonac, in the main church of the region, in the town. In Chihuahua it is the same thing, they take communion with a corn tortilla, that forms the Host and masses take place in Rarámuri.

I had another very interesting experience two years ago when I went to do some research on what had happened to the education proposed by our brothers and sisters in Acteal, Chiapas, through the organization of *Las Abejas*. It was a matter of their own education, not even intercultural-bilingual education. They say: ‘We want our own education, a Tsoztil education, we want to be Tsoztil always, we want to travel the world speaking Tsoztil, Spanish, English and be skilled in computing but we don’t want to stop being Tsoztil.’ It happened to be an anniversary during my visit.

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14 For a critical view of the concept of inculturation, see the article by Alicia Barabas elsewhere in this book [Ed. note]

The day they commemorate the indelible moment of the Acteal massacre on 22 December 1997. So there I was in this commemoration, in a ritual, a whole mass in Tsotzil, the priest speaking in Tsotzil, the priest of San Pedro Chenalhó which is the municipality in which Acteal is located. I believe that what Tatik Samuel Ruiz sowed is already flourishing; there are many catechists in the villages who can even officiate as priests, conduct certain ritual practices in the church, are responsible for their church. Sometimes things dawn on us late but they do dawn on us. Christ did not speak Spanish or Latin, he spoke Aramaic. You might think he spoke Greek, or Hebrew, or Latin but no, he spoke Aramaic, which was just like speaking Nahuatl, or Tsotzil, in its context.”

His perspective on the transformation in anthropological practice since the denunciation of the First Declaration of Barbados is also quite positive and is marked by his own experience of alliances and deep friendships with a number of Mexican anthropologists. In the interview, he described to us how he wove these feelings and exchanges of knowledge with anthropologists and historians such as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, Arturo Warman, Miguel Bartolomé, Salomón Nahmad, Miguel León-Portilla and with the writer Carlos Montemayor, with whom he worked intensely, into the development and dissemination of literature in Indigenous languages. He pays special recognition to the Nahuatl historian, Luis Reyes García, his fellow countryman whom he calls “teacher of teachers” and an outstanding researcher at CIESAS, who died in 2004.

However, in the context of the Barbados meetings, Natalio Hernández spoke up to confront one of the most influential indigenists of that time: Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, the great theoretician of integrationist indigenism and promoter of the *Acculturation Process*. He was one of the intellectuals who responded in the most disparaging way when the Declaration of Barbados II was released. When an annotated version of the Declaration was published by the *Revista Nueva Antropología* (1977), after first questioning whether the document was actually written by Indigenous leaders, Aguirre Beltrán went on to reaffirm once more that: “When we insist on the proletarianization of the Indian, we are not advocating the destruction of the symbols and values that make up their ethnicity; but neither are we urging them to turn them into a political banner. We have systematically opposed favouring, elevating, glorifying movements such as blackness, Indian power, Chicano, and others that display ethnic or racial symbols because they mask the real struggle, which is the class struggle. The Declaration of Barbados II, unfortunately, follows that path.” (Bonfil Batalla, Mosonyi, Aguirre Beltrán, Arizpe, Tagle, 1977:120).

Challenging these criticisms from Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Prof. Natalio Hernández shared with us his experiences of discussions within different public,

academic and political forums. The different antagonistic positions represented, on the one hand, official indigenism, focused on integration and acculturation and, on the other, a nascent Indianism that claimed the right to a culture of its own and to take public policy-making for Indigenous peoples into its own hands. In this regard, he points out:

“Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán represented the paradigm of denaturalized anthropological thought that served to nourish indigenism in its last phase, in its decadent phase, and which gave way to a new indigenism of participation and self-management that began to arise in the 1990s. I was a fierce critic of the process of acculturation because right now I better understand that it was leading to a process of proletarianization, as he put it, that is, that Indigenous peoples were ceasing to be Indigenous and becoming a *cosmic race*, a hybrid, a *mestizo* without roots but experiencing the benefits of society, modern, urban, proletarianized, etc. That was Aguirre Beltrán’s vision and that was, to a large extent, the indigenism that Barbados I and II criticized and debated [...] I believe that these two realities exist in all historical processes and in all social movements, the dominant thought and the dominated thought and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán represented the dominant thought in anthropology.

I was a critic of the acculturation process because I said: why should I stop being Nahuatl just so that I can be important or successful or distinguished, if that is where my strength lies? How can I deny all the cultural baggage of my grandfather, who was an excellent farmer, a healer, a *tlamatini* (wise man)? How can I bury all the values that my father, my mother, taught me from our culture, our language, when they told me: *Nopiltzin: xihmocuitlahui tlaltipactli, pampa yehuatl Tonantzin: tech yolchicahua; tech maca totlacualis, itlaquilol tech tlacayotia?* (“Son, you have to take care of the earth, the earth is our mother, it sustains us, it feeds us, for therein comes the fruit, the fruit of the earth that feeds us”). My own mother warned me also of the importance of every word we say, warning me: *xihmalhui motlahtol nopiltzin; tlahtoli malhuili, amo san quenhueli xitlahto* (“Take care with your words, son, take care of them; words are sacred, do not talk too much”). That is why I sometimes reassess when I say, for example, ‘it’s not as if we were going on the attack’. I reflect, and I think it better to say: ‘crowning moments’. When I write, I remember my mother because she spoke very delicately. It was she who did the invocations, at the end of her life. She died three years ago. Praying for all humankind, she said: *Tonantzin, Totlalnanzin, xiquin mocuitlahui moconehua: nochi tlen tichantih ipan tlaltipactli, ipan Semanahuac, nochi tiicnimeh; ihatza se tilitic, seyoc costic, seyoc chichilitic, seyoc istactic: nochi tiicnimeh* (‘Tonantzin, our mother, [Totatzin, our father], take care of

your children, all of us who live on earth, in *Semanahuac*, in the world, we are brothers and sisters, no matter whether black, yellow, red or white, we are all brothers and sisters.’) Her way of thinking was completely universal. She didn’t go to school, spoke little Spanish, and never spoke to us in Spanish; neither did my father. My father was fully bilingual because he was an authority. He died ten years ago. So, how am I going to throw away all that primary education - primary in the sense of basic education, community education, Nahuatl education, Nahuatl thought, understanding of the Nahuatl world. All this, Don Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, in the image of the enlightened anthropologist, wanted us to abandon.”

The integrationist perspective of Dr. (of medicine) Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán has now changed. A rhetoric of cultural recognition is now being used, with legislative reforms a sign of the State’s commitment to Indigenous peoples, although a development discourse continues to be used to impose mega-projects without consulting the people, in the name of economic progress.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of anthropological practice, it is true that the academic community has grown to demand collaborative research with and for Indigenous peoples but they still face great resistance from a positivist anthropology that discredits any kind of activist research as lacking in “objectivity”.<sup>16</sup> Committed anthropology, activist anthropology and decolonial anthropology have made many dialogues possible in the construction of these alternatives from a crosscutting approach. New spaces for dialogues of knowledge have been created with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women, recognizing the importance of their epistemologies and theorizations of the different worlds we inhabit.<sup>17</sup>

We cannot, however, deny that Indigenous peoples continue to be mere “objects of study” for hundreds of anthropologists who travel through Latin American

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15 An assessment of the policies of Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s government in relation to Indigenous peoples can be found in the book by Gilberto López y Rivas “*Pueblos Indígenas en tiempos de la Cuarta Transformación*” (2020), in which he reflects on the discontent of a large part of the Zapatista movement and the National Indigenous Congress. It is also important to recognize that there is a sector of the Indigenous population that supports the Fourth Transformation project, promoting mega-projects such as the Mayan Train from their spaces in the federal civil service.

<https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/En-la-consulta-sobre-el-Tren-Maya-92.3-voto-por-el-Si-y-7.4-por-el-No-20191216-0034.html> (Note from the daily *El Economista* dated 16 December 2019) Accessed on 14 September 2020.

16 On this subject, see elsewhere in this book the article by Miguel Alberto Bartolomé [Ed. note]

17 A collection that brings together a large part of contemporary critical thinking around activist and decolonial research is the collection *Prácticas Otras de Conocimiento. Entre Crisis, Entre Guerras* (2018). Consisting of three volumes, it is a compilation of authors from various Latin American countries.

communities documenting, analysing and publishing books that never reach the hands of the social actors with whom they work. This perception of being mere objects of study has been denounced in many ways by the new generations of Indigenous students, activists and intellectuals who have demanded their peoples' right to represent themselves<sup>18</sup> while at the same time demanding structural changes in higher education that will allow them to appropriate the tools of epistemological validity by following academic training processes to obtain external recognition.

Notwithstanding the manifest inequality that positivist anthropology demonstrates, together with discrimination and epistemic colonialism, Indigenous intellectuals are continuing to influence academic, artistic, professional and research spaces across the continent. And yet in all these spaces one can see a difference in the way a *mestizo* anthropologist, or a foreign anthropologist from the "Global North", is treated in comparison to that of a writer, academic or researcher from an Indigenous people. This internalized racism is often reproduced even by academics who are considered allies of Indigenous peoples, as can be seen in the testimony shared by Prof. Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin.

Many Indigenous communities have chosen to close the door to anthropological research, largely because it simply reproduces this epistemic extractivism which,<sup>19</sup> far from benefiting them, ends up negatively affecting them. Their experience of researchers who seek to appropriate knowledge for publications or to give to companies seeking to take ownership of the flora, fauna or territory or seeking to commercialize their cultural traditions forms part of the historical memory of the people, and many have therefore decided to close their territories to the academic community. Other communities have involved Indigenous intellectuals from their own territories in order to take advantage of academic training and strengthen training processes within the community space, either to defend collective rights or to prosecute them through State spaces. A number of Indigenous intellectuals and anthropologists have also been defending rights from within academia and others from within the State.

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18 For references on committed anthropology, see the following: [http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20180515110853/Practicas\\_Otras\\_2.pdf](http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20180515110853/Practicas_Otras_2.pdf)

See also the article by Rappaport, Joanna and Abelardo Ramos Pacho (2010) "*Una historia colaborativa: retos para el diálogo indígena-académico*". Available at: [ed.pucp.edu.pe/wpcontent/uploads/biblioteca/Rappaport\\_Ramos\\_Historia\\_colaborativa.pdf](http://ed.pucp.edu.pe/wpcontent/uploads/biblioteca/Rappaport_Ramos_Historia_colaborativa.pdf)

19 One initiative promoted by the new generation of Indigenous intellectuals and activists, who are demanding the right to self-representation and denouncing the persistence of the colonial project in anthropology, is the programme "Interviewing the Interviewer", promoted by the Colectivo Mixe [https://colmix.org/?page\\_id=221](https://colmix.org/?page_id=221)

The debate between Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin remains a valid one given an anthropological tradition that continues to help Latin American states propose homogenizing and integrationist policies which, in the name of progress and from a Eurocentric vision external to the community, are being used to justify their ethnocidal actions. Perhaps they are endeavouring to justify the good intentions of anthropologists, both then and now, with the argument that they are trying to achieve equality of treatment and full exercise of rights for the Indigenous population. The discourse around “equality” has, however, silenced one of the demands that Indigenous peoples have been making for years: precisely their right to be different, to be the subject of rights based on their differences, on recognition of their differences without racializing them.

Economic redistribution, recognizing the cultural and territorial rights of Indigenous peoples, is a fundamental requirement for achieving dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on an equal footing, thus vindicating the 21<sup>st</sup>-century humanism of which the poet Natalio Hernández speaks.<sup>20</sup>

### **Final considerations**

Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin’s voice has taken us on a journey through the last 50 years of relations between the Mexican State and Mexico’s Indigenous peoples. His assessment of the achievements is based on his own experience as a defender of linguistic rights and a promoter of Indigenous literature. Working within the State apparatus has involved a constant struggle to educate the bureaucrats with whom he shares that space, to combat everyday racism, but also to represent the State itself in many contexts. From this voice, he has relayed dissidence, resistance and proposals, whether from the space of the organizations or that of the State, always seeking respect for Indigenous peoples.

We learned a great deal from this interview and respect his positive perspectives on Mexico’s achievements in the 50 years that have passed since the first Barbados meeting, although we do not share his optimism regarding Indigenous peoples’ current situation. The self-proclaimed “Fourth Transformation” (4T) of the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-2023) represents continuity with the developmentalist paradigm in which Indigenous peoples are once more defined as “poor” people to be protected by the State and its social welfare programmes. The so-called Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture is not worth the paper it is written on when it comes to dispossessing peoples of their territories in order to build roads, railways or mining projects.

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<sup>20</sup> He develops his concept of 21<sup>st</sup>-century humanism in his book *De la Confrontación al diálogo intercultural con los pueblos indígenas* (2010)

We agree with Natalio Hernández that it is time to promote alliances based on respect for our differences, in order to build a more just society. Like him, we think that Indigenous knowledge (what academia calls its epistemologies and ontologies) has much to teach us with regard to learning to relate to nature and Mother Earth from a position of respect, as we are just one element in the cosmos and not the owners of this land. We would like to close this text by sharing the Nahuatl poet's concepts of what he calls "21<sup>st</sup>-century humanism" and with a poem in Nahuatl and Spanish that expresses this utopian aspiration of his current thinking:

"My call now is for the formation of a new national consciousness. This is what I have been proposing as an ideal, as a transition from the indigenism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to a new humanism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My call is to move from an indigenism that excludes the Indigenous world to an inclusive Mexican society; with this idea of humanism, I suggest we stop seeing the other as a beggar, poor and ignorant. Indigenous peoples are not beggars, the dominant society has made them so because the dominant society takes all the power, all the money, all the Western thought; that's why we need to review all the baggage of the last 500 years and unpackage it in order to build a new paradigm for Mexican society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where we are Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples - there is no other historical option - and this is what I call 21<sup>st</sup>-century humanism. We have to transcend the Eurocentric *mestizo* society, a product of José Vasconcelos' utopia that has already become worn out, and become a multilingual, multicultural, diverse society. Vasconcelos spoke and wrote about an ideal man, product of a cosmic race. Such thinking is no longer valid; we have to be able to move on. The past is still alive, the past is today and will be tomorrow, my vision of Indigenous society is that it transcends *mestizo* society, that which they call "the cosmic race" and which currently forms a majority in Mexican society. My call is to this sector of the people because I believe the Creole sector, with its Western thought, is not going to change any more. What has to change is the *populi*, the *masehual*, the people, and the people includes the Indigenous population, 50% of it I would say, although only a quarter recognizes itself with any pride as Mexica, Mixe or Mayan, and hence a middle layer comprising the population that has been made to believe it is *mestizo*, a hybrid population because it does not recognize itself as European, nor as Mexican, far less as Indigenous. It is as my teacher León-Portilla used to say: it is in *Nepantla*, that is, in the middle, neither here nor there. It is this *mestizo* population that needs to draw on its Mesoamerican roots to build this humanist society, a multilingual, multicultural Mexican society that recognizes its Mesoamerican ancestral roots and enriches them with the significance of the Conquest and colonization."

***Yancuic Anahuac cuicat!***<sup>21</sup>

*Mostla momiaquilis topialis  
chamanis toxochih  
huehca mocaquis in cuicat!*

*ilpan cualtzin xochicuahuatl  
cueponis toxochih  
xochiohuas in cuicat!*

**New song of Anahuac**

*(freely translated here from the Spanish)*

Tomorrow we will be rich  
our flowers will be reborn  
our songs will transcend.

From the blossomed tree  
our flowers will grow  
our songs will flourish

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<sup>21</sup> Natalio Hernández, *Queman tlachixqueh totlahtolhuan* / El despertar de nuestras lenguas, Editorial Diana, Mexico, 2002.

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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE BARBADOS DECLARATION 50 YEARS ON

**Alicia Barabas**



This book, compiled by Alberto Chirif, calls on the founders, participants in one or more of the Barbados Congresses, to assess the changes that have occurred in the situation of Indigenous peoples over the last 50 years. He asks those of us who were motivated by Barbados and who have played a role in defending the rights of Indigenous peoples to reflect on how this direction has influenced our vocation. Finally, he calls on others to discuss the current problems and how Indigenous organizations are addressing them. I form part of the first group since I participated in the third meeting held in Rio de Janeiro in 1993 but, more properly speaking, the second group because I have devoted my life since 1971 to getting to know and working with the Indigenous peoples of Latin America, convinced by the ideas of Barbados and participating in the spirit of the Group alongside Miguel Bartolomé, my husband and colleague, and dear friends that include Nelly Arvelo, a Barbadian friend from those days.

In Latin America in the 1970s, the Congress of Americanists in Lima (which I attended while still a student of anthropology) was establishing a new direction for anthropology, more pluralistic in nature. This direction was developed in the Meeting and Declaration of the *Barbados Group*, whose proposals were, and remain, well-known and accepted among indigenists and Indigenous peoples in South American countries. The *Declaration for Indigenous Liberation* was received with less enthusiasm in Mexico, particularly among anthropologists, largely because the Indigenous peoples were not recognized as such by the predominant Marxist current of the time. Something similar was happening in other Latin American countries as well, for example Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, where Indigenous rural and urban dwellers had become invisible, classified purely by their economic position in society. One of the most important achievements of the ideas of Barbados and its followers was precisely that it contributed to raising the visibility of Indigenous peoples and their rights within nation states.

While it might sometimes seem as though I believe all positive change ever achieved for original peoples stems from the influence of Barbados, I should like to clarify that this is not the case. Although it initially played an important role in the birth of the Indigenous movement in Mexico, both within anthropology

and the Church due to the actions of key individuals interested in promoting ethnic pluralism, the changes in other places resulted from multiple and indirect influences, from a spirit of renewal at that time in Latin America, and from the hope and lucidity of many Indigenous peoples who took advantage of the opportunity to embark on a more fruitful path.

For my part, I will try to present some of the most important milestones and to reflect, from my own experience of life in Mexico, on what has happened to the demands for responsibility made by the 1971 Declaration of Barbados: to the nation states, to anthropology and to the churches.

### **The influence of Barbados on nation state management**

The 1970s and 1980s were somewhat favourable to the ideas of Barbados, largely because a few Mexican anthropologists and even fewer foreigners, almost all of whom were already nationally and internationally recognized and critical of the anthropology and indigenism of the time, were promoting policies favourable to the recognition of ethnic plurality, to the formation of Indigenous organizations and to the rights of these peoples. They were doing so from within the State institutions to which they belonged, which they ran or created, from 1972 onwards. Under the direction of Guillermo Bonfil, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) was thus re-organized to expand the universe of research into Indigenous peoples to include other states around the country, promoting a gradual recognition of *de facto* cultural plurality nationally. The INAH's Centre for Higher Research began to conduct studies into Indigenous languages, bringing speakers of different languages together. This was to later lead to the establishment of a Master's degree in Amerindian Languages. Also important was the creation of the Directorate of Popular Cultures and the Museum of Popular Cultures and, as the crowning glory, the degree in Ethnolinguistics that was taught in Patzcuaro, Michoacán aimed at training pluralist Indigenous youth.

The Church was also at the vanguard of this approach and an initiative inspired by the ideas of Barbados came from the Bishop of Chiapas, Don Samuel Ruiz, a great enthusiast of pluralist anthropology, who accepted the criticisms of the official Church. He organized the First Congress of Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas in 1974.

The following year, the National Indigenous Institute (INI), the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) all organized the First National Indigenous Congress in Patzcuaro, which brought together individuals from most of the country's Indigenous peoples, chosen as "representatives" by the indigenists. It was there that the "cultural pluralism of ethnic groups" was first discussed, and it was there that the National Council of Indigenous

Peoples (CNPI) was created, led by INI's bilingual promoters and made up of the Supreme Councils of each ethnic group - entelechies created by the State and defined linguistically. It was thus that the Indigenous movement began to take shape from within the ranks of the State itself. In 1979, the creation of the Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals (Anpibac), people who were working in government institutions handling Indigenous issues, made it possible for the educational plans of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) to include a National Plan for Bilingual-Bicultural Education. Later, the growing Indigenous intelligentsia joined the SEP's General Directorate of Indigenous Education (DGEI) and it was proposed that any programme or institution related to Indigenous peoples should come under their direction, thus anticipating the "indigenism of participation" that was discussed at the Costa Rica Meeting on Ethnodevelopment (1980). This rise of the Indian movement from and within the State led Medina (1987) to note that the "decolonizing Indigenous pedagogy" was evidence of the impact of the ideas of the Barbados Group's ethnopopulists among Indigenous organizations and State institutions. He felt that the discourse of confrontation with the State, held by what he termed the ethnopopulists, had in fact become the State's own discourse.

This is not the place to consider in detail the Indigenous movement that emerged from within the State, and which gradually built up its own objectives and institutions, nor the protest movement that emerged in Mexico in the 1980s with the Independent Front of Indian Peoples (FIPI) in Chiapas. These movements, which Miguel Bartolomé termed ethnopolitical (1995), proliferated in the 1990s until the emergence in 1994 of the Zapatista rebellion. We know from our close contacts with teachers and other Indigenous intellectuals that the Declaration of Barbados was an inspiration to many of them.

In 1996, as a follow-up to the San Andrés Accords (which we shall consider later), the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) called on native peoples to participate in the National Forum on Indigenous Rights and Culture. A National Indigenous Council (CNI) was created during the closing ceremony and this council has since garnered increasing numbers of members from peoples all over the country. Based on Zapatista ideology, the national movement is governed by seven principles, one of which is known as "to command by obeying", its decisions hence being made by a General Assembly. Although it has had its ups and downs, the CNI has grown and, at its 5<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2016, it approved the creation of the Indigenous Governing Council (CIG), a body of mixed and pluriethnic composition organized collectively and fairly to take decisions on matters affecting its peoples. There are now numerous Indigenous organizations, from local to international, and a multiplicity of alliances, including many linked to the CNI, all of which have great tactical and strategic organizational power.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE BARBADOS

A very broad assessment would suggest that various aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives have improved since 1971 albeit not as much as would have been possible if the State had been less rhetorical and more willing to implement the favourable transformations to which it was committed in the National Constitution and in international agreements. From my perspective, the changes achieved are due more to the actions of the Indigenous peoples themselves, who have been able to influence and pressure the State to obtain these.

The area of bicultural-bilingual education was the first of the Indigenous peoples' conquests from the State along the path to recognition of their right to be educated in their own languages and cultures. Years later, the perspective changed to one of intercultural education. Public policies have become no more efficient since then, however, as bilingual education cannot be implemented in most cases largely due to the unions, as teachers and students do not speak the same language or the same dialect of a language. The intercultural aspect has suffered similar problems because adequate teaching materials are rarely available in the (rural) schools that belong to this system.

After long years of a decline in official indigenism, the indigenist apparatus represented by the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI) has, since 2019, been in the hands of Indigenous peoples themselves, although this is largely an empty achievement given that the institution's top officials lack recognition from the Indigenous movement and are considered "the government's people and not our people". Evidence of this can be seen in the consultations conducted in 2019 in relation to two mega-projects of great government interest that will affect Indigenous territories and cultures: the Mayan train in the Yucatán Peninsula and the Trans-Isthmian Corridor between Oaxaca and Veracruz. These were to be "free, prior and informed consultations, culturally appropriate and with prior consent". In both cases the Indigenous organizations considered the process implemented to be "a sham". It was not implemented in line with ILO Convention 169 and was criticized by both the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) for not having respected the existing protocol.

Once cultural plurality had become *de facto* manifested at national level, the need for the State to recognize pluralism by legal means, i.e. *de jure*, was raised. Recognition of the existence of Indigenous peoples in the 1992 National Constitution and of their rights to their mother tongue and culture, as well as the positive value of the plural make-up of the nation, is the most significant achievement of these past 50 years, and one of which Barbadians and supporters are well aware. And yet all the changes that could have improved the situation of Indigenous peoples are more rhetorical than factual since there are no regulatory laws allowing for the implementation of these rights.

A reform of Article 27 of the National Constitution, known as the “agrarian counter-reform”, also took place in 1992. As part of a planned neoliberal modernization of the rural sector, Indigenous land was legally incorporated into the market for private national and foreign investment. The new Agrarian Law came into force in 1993 and the “*Programa Procede*” (Programme for Certifying *Ejido* Rights and Urban Land Titling) was created with the purpose of “regularizing” land tenure in order to convert *ejidos* into private property and, if feasible, agrarian communities<sup>1</sup> as well. By 2006, 92% of the *ejidos* and many of the countries agrarian communities had been certified and titled as private property (FANAR, 2007).

The contradictory action of the State is evident, on the one hand recognizing the existence of the native peoples and undertaking to promote their languages and cultures and respect the lands they occupy and, on the other, transforming a land tenure system that had largely made the survival of the historical territories they occupied possible. What does it mean for an Indigenous peasant to sell their land under the new Agrarian Law? It means losing their only or main means of subsistence, leaving their children without any inheritance and forcing the family to migrate, almost always permanently, i.e., to uproot themselves. Even more serious, however, is the fact that selling the land means *losing their rights over the historical territory that identifies them as a native people*, losing the main basis of support for their worldview, ritual practices and construction of ethnic identities.

In the San Andrés Larráinzar Agreements, Chiapas, in 1996, the EZLN and the Commission for Understanding and Pacification (Cocopa) took up the well-known land-territory concept of ILO Convention 169, adding that governments should take measures to *determine* the lands that the peoples traditionally occupy and guarantee the effective protection of their rights to property and ownership. These are agreements that have never been fulfilled.

Faced with these demands, the Federal Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture, approved by Congress in 2001, was a step backwards in terms of the status granted to Indigenous peoples and the endorsement of their projects for autonomy since they were not recognized as entities of “public law”, with the capacity for integral self-management, but rather as entities of “public interest”, to be assisted by the State. This can be seen from paragraphs in Section B relating to the encouragement, support and improvements that the federation, the states and the municipalities must give Indigenous communities in relation

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1 *Ejidos* and agrarian communities are two forms of land ownership in Mexico. In the former, the land is shared out between the *ejido* members and, in the latter, the people from the community hold the lands jointly, under the system of Agrarian Communities.

to health, education, culture, housing, the economy, etc. This condition has not formally changed under the government of the Fourth Transformation<sup>2</sup> since there is no legal recognition of *people* as a collective subject with the right to autonomy.

As for the lands occupied by Indigenous peoples, the law refers to them under the terms of Article 27 of the 2001 constitutional reform. Depending on the form of land tenure, they may be *ejidal*, communal or private. Mexico still does not recognize the territories of the original peoples, nor does it mention possible territorial demarcations. On the contrary, the State is able to take action on the soil (water, forests) and subsoil resources found on the lands Indigenous peoples use, and although these latter are granted preferential use of these resources, the State reserves this for itself in “strategic areas” (Art.2, A.V.), i.e. those involving development projects of national interest (hydraulic, tourism, mining, etc.).

Another related area in which there has been no real or positive change for Indigenous peoples is that of the mega-projects, both so-called “development” projects and extractive ones. These are expanding and proliferating under the protection of laws passed both by neoliberal governments and those that claim not to be. However, while the Indigenous peoples affected by these mega-projects were steamrolled into them in the 1970s because they were not organized to protest or defend their communities and territories, the major difference now is that since the 1980s there has been a plethora of Indigenous organizations at all levels defending their territories, resources and cultures, often succeeding in stopping projects that are so harmful to their survival.

Finally, political and legal self-determination at the local (municipal) level has only been legally accepted by the Congress of Oaxaca State, in its 1995 Law on Habits and Customs, renamed Internal Regulatory Systems in 2001. This form of self-government also exists, *de facto* and without legal support, in other Indigenous regions of Chiapas (the Zapatista autonomous communities and other municipal governments), Guerrero and Michoacán. In all cases, the changes are largely the result of Indigenous initiatives and demands that the State has been powerless to stop. There is also a growing participation on the part of Indigenous women and men in politics, Congress, institutions and universities, particularly in the intercultural field.

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2 Name given by the current President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to his government, alluding to the profound changes they are going to bring in. The First Transformation was that of Independence, the Second was the Juarista Reforms of the 19th century and the Third was the Mexican Revolution.

## **Barbados' influence over Mexican anthropology**

During the 1970s and much of the 1980s, Mexican anthropology was largely a debate between two theoretical and political options: on the one hand, official integrationist indigenism and, on the other, Marxist-inspired anthropology - a theory with which I agree in several aspects but which in those years was so dogmatically sustained that it had become the enemy of those of us fighting for a place for Indigenous peoples. Although indigenism recognized the existence of native peoples and their cultures, the anthropology they practised was aimed at removing those differences, including their languages, and integrating the population into national society, which was Spanish-speaking and perceived as homogeneous. In contrast, although some Marxist anthropologists tried to position themselves in relation to the ethnic question, most did not see Indigenous peoples (they said that their age-old languages were "historical accidents") as anything more than members of the social classes, peasantry and proletariat, immersed in modes of production and who would soon obtain full class consciousness at the cost of the oblivion of their ethnicity. The meagre ethnographic production from those decades was the result of the Marxist paradigm that was ingested by anthropology, marked by a suppression of ethnic and cultural categories and the sole adoption of economic ones. Despite all the distance between them, both positions therefore coincided in anticipating the end of the ethnic identities and cultures of the original peoples. Fifty years on, these peoples and history itself have taken it upon themselves to disprove such predictions.

Although the concept of ethnic group was not unknown in Mexico when referring to Indigenous communities, at that time anthropologists were also reflecting on other related concepts such as inter-ethnic relations, inter-ethnic tensions, ethnic identity and ethnicity. Some did so from theories of power, which studied recent and established migrant ethnic minorities such as the Italians in the United States, transferring these concepts onto Indigenous ethnic groups whom they defined as minorities. In doing so, they considered only the instrumentalist aspect of ethnicity, underestimating other values that sustain Indigenous ethnic identities and which have historicity and much greater "density" than those of other ethnic groups.

Pluralist anthropologists were few and far between in Mexico and were labelled "Christian Democrats", "ethnicists", "ethnopolitists", "happy savage anthropologists", essentialists and allies of the Church, causing some concern in the Masonic and atheistic Mexico of the time. Most national anthropologists were unaware of the problems of South America's Indigenous peoples and, since few had read the book published in 1972 because it was not in circulation, they were only aware of the Declaration without the background that would

enable them to understand it. Marxist intellectuals looked down upon the Barbadians. Medina (1987) referred to “an elaborate and spectacular critical ethnopopulist current”, which he termed “romantic and reactionary, supported by the Barbados Group and by various organizations of Indians within the same nation state”. He referred to its members as “apostles” spreading “their Gospel”. Díaz Polanco (1992) considered the only obstacle to the development of the Indigenous movement in Latin America to be the “ethnicist Indianism” that had vast influence over it. Many colleagues who spoke of the Barbados members and supporters in this way began, however, to perceive of the existence of Mexico’s Indigenous peoples and very soon became their advocates and ideologues. It was initially the Zapatista insurrection of 1994 that changed the perspective of many intellectuals and anthropologists. They now saw the Indigenous peoples as peoples beyond their economic position with a capacity to convene and fight for their rights. Since then, everyone has become pluralistic and respectful of Indigenous rights.

Pluralistic anthropology, also called *committed* because of its militant and activist element, has criticized anthropologists who see only cultures and not the dramatic situations in which Indigenous peoples live or, if they do know them, only engage rhetorically with them. It is true that anthropology may once have made this judgement but I think that another of Barbados’ achievements is to have contributed to the fact that it is now the Indigenous peoples who judge the actions of the anthropologists and not vice versa. From my perspective, *commitment* can be exercised not only through activism in favour of their cause but also through academic activity, selecting the research topics that best lead to a re-evaluation and reproduction of their knowledge and to an assessment of their situations of vulnerability. I think that we also work for the Indigenous cause and for society by writing, publishing and teaching for various audiences: students and colleagues in academia, communities, Indigenous students in the classroom, as a way of promoting intercultural dialogue by breaking down racist prejudice based on ignorance and fear of cultural difference.

Conservative positions within anthropology have pointed out that it is irreconcilable to propose linking ethnographic research with the political vocation of a social reversal of information, something that tries to give the Indigenous peoples an option to search their own knowledge in order to manage the issues of interest to themselves. From my perspective, such a reconciliation is not only possible but desirable if ethnographic studies are to be made available to society, and this does not imply a loss in the academic quality of those studies. Let us look, as an example, at the legal value that symbolic geography can have when the Indigenous peoples use their own representations of space, worldview, the sacred narrative, ritual processes as references for the recognition and later demarcation of *ethnoterritories*. This is

a methodology that has arisen from the contemporary practice of Indigenous peoples in other Latin American countries (Arvelo, 1994). They would thus be drawing on their own cultural heritage to obtain legal recognition of their territories from the nation state. Making anthropological information available to users implies, albeit indirectly, entering into a debate on the plural State, ethnicity, autonomy and Indigenous rights, although I think that this debate is not only for politics and indigenism but also for academic anthropology committed to the future of Indigenous peoples.

Evidence of the service that pluralistic anthropology has provided and continues to provide to Indigenous peoples can be found in the appropriation and reworking of anthropological texts of interest to them in terms of their objectives, a process that became visible after Barbados and which continues to this day. Indigenous intellectuals, whether university graduates or not, are aware of anthropological production and frequently make severe criticism of texts they consider to be incorrect while using for themselves those they consider to be close to their “reality” and suitable for their causes. Likewise, ever more communities are asking anthropologists to carry out work of community interest, and there are also anthropologists who are looking for hot topics of interest to the communities, trying to collaborate with them in conflictive situations, even though it is increasingly common that such anthropologists themselves are threatened and persecuted as activists, alongside the Indigenous peoples, by government and private entities.

This is important to emphasize at a time when many anthropologists and students no longer want to work with Indigenous peoples because they consider it old-fashioned and reactionary, especially rural Indigenous people. Instead, they carry out urban anthropology with different social groups and ethnic minorities. Others do work with Indigenous cultures and recognize pluralism but are not interested in these peoples’ rights or the situation in which they live. As a colleague once said, “I am more interested in medicine than in the sick”. Others turn to new theories, e.g. neo-structuralism, immanentist, apolitical, which have all resorted to referring to Indigenous peoples as having a “wild mentality”. From my perspective, there is currently a prevailing anthropology that shows little commitment to the interests and rights of Indigenous peoples.

Without wishing to claim a leading role in the dissemination of Barbados’ pluralistic objectives in Mexican anthropology but rather with the aim of reviewing one case within its development over the past 50 years, I am going to present some of the work that Miguel Bartolomé and I have done to collaborate with the Indigenous cause, although I know for sure that there are better exponents of pluralistic anthropology in Mexico. A few months after our arrival in Mexico in 1972, we were hired as advisers to the Ministry of

Hydraulic Resources (SRH), in the Papaloapan Commission (CP) in Veracruz, to carry out ethnographic studies among the Chinantec and Mazatec Indigenous peoples who were going to be displaced by the hydraulic megaproject known as the Cerro de Oro Dam. After a year of field research and the delivery of a report with recommendations, we left the CP and, for various reasons, decided to publish an article in IWGIA's journal denouncing the ethnocide that the relocation was causing (Barabas and Bartolomé, 1973). A few years later, there was an outraged response to this by Aguirre Beltrán (1976), the father of indigenism at that time. If there is one thing I regret, it is finding out, through follow-up research carried out 17, 20 and 40 years later (Bartolomé and Barabas, 1990, 1997; Bartolomé, 2016) that vast sectors of those who were resettled did indeed fall victim to ethnocide.

In 1973, Guillermo Bonfil invited us to join the researchers at the INAH's recently created Yucatán Regional Centre, where we researched and published on the unequal inter-ethnic relations between the Maya and non-Indigenous regional society throughout history (Bartolomé and Barabas, 1977). Years later, now in Oaxaca, we researched and published *Etnicidad y Pluralismo Cultural. La dinámica étnica en Oaxaca [Ethnicity and Cultural Pluralism. The ethnic dynamic in Oaxaca]* (Barabas and Bartolomé, 1986), which was one of the first books published on this topic.

We have always tried to socially reverse the information obtained in each area of research. With that specific purpose, we worked on the book *La Pluralidad en Peligro [Plurality in Danger]* (Bartolomé and Barabas, 1996), which included ethnographic assessments and an analysis of the causes and consequences of the process of linguistic and cultural loss in four ethnolinguistic groups: Ixcatec, Chocholtec, Oaxaca Chontal and Chima (Zoque). Together with the communities, in particular the teachers, and using a participatory research methodology, we developed a project for linguistic and cultural recovery that was also aimed at developing teaching materials for reading and writing in their mother tongue. As a result, we produced written and illustrated booklets on the history of each group (*Historias Étnicas [Ethnic Histories]* series, 1990) and on their socially significant (bilingual and trilingual) narratives (*Narrativas Étnicas [Ethnic Narratives]* series, 1990), later included in the book *Historias y Palabras de los Antepasados [Stories and Words of the Ancestors]* (Barabas and Bartolomé, 2003). The Chinantec were included in both series, both those displaced by the dam and those who continued to live on their territory, since it was essential to provide this fragmented people with information on which they could base their memory. These materials were distributed free of charge in schools and libraries and in the municipal collections of various communities in each of the groups and, to this day, they circulate among residents and migrants, some of them already uploaded to the Internet.

In 1996, the INAH's National Coordinating Committee for Anthropology (CNA) asked us to embark on a collective ethnographic research project. This proposal was not entirely disconnected from the massive implications of the 1994 Zapatista insurrection for different sectors of society, including Indigenous peoples and anthropology. Interested in investigating the perspectives that ethnography could offer for considering the most sensitive forms of autonomous organization in the complex and pluralistic Oaxaca, we coordinated the involvement of more than 20 researchers, many of them Indigenous, in a project that encompassed all the state's ethnolinguistic groups and which resulted in the book *Autonomías étnicas y estados nacionales [Ethnic Autonomies and Nation States]* (Bartolomé and Barabas, 1998) and the three volumes of the book *Configuraciones étnicas en Oaxaca. Perspectivas Etnográficas para las Autonomías [Ethnic Configurations in Oaxaca. Ethnographic Perspectives for Autonomies]* (Barabas and Bartolomé, 1999). The first is a compilation of unpublished theoretical and monographic works on the construction of ethnic autonomies around the world together with the reflections of national anthropologists and Indigenous peoples as the protagonists of these autonomies. The second contains extensive ethnographic monographs organized around themes related to the potential for autonomy, accompanied by statistics and a mapping of each group and its territory in the Oaxacan context.

In 1999, and for more than a decade, we participated in the National Ethnography Project of the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico, under the auspices of the INAH's CNA. For my part, I did so convinced of the importance, for all of Mexico and for anthropology, of gaining a deep understanding of our Indigenous fellow countrymen and women in order to bring about intercultural coexistence and dialogue, and also to dedicate efforts to the formation of new generations of ethnographers committed to those peoples. So, together with some colleagues, we undertook the vast task of coordinating and supervising the field research and publications of 17 research teams nationally. Among several other lines of research that we carried out in the project, I coordinated one on symbolic territoriality (Barabas, 2003, 2006), seeking the cultural logics behind the historical and contemporary construction of the notions of territoriality, in the hope that it might be useful when considering territorial demarcations. Later on, I researched other related aspects such as mega-projects and their impacts on the environment and territories, land tenure issues and Indigenous territorial rights within nation states.

**What changes have taken place in the Catholic and Protestant churches since Barbados?**

*The new options of Catholicism*

During the Second Vatican Council (1969), the Church warned of the fragility of Catholicism and the advance of Protestantism in Latin America and pointed to the urgency of a new theological approach to evangelization that was more respectful of Indigenous religions. This ideological change in pastoral work as missionaries was the subject of discussion at church meetings and of criticism of the conservative positions of the official Church (meetings ranging from Iquitos in 1971 to Bogotá in 1985. Botasso, 1986). As we know, the Barbados Group was highly critical of the Catholic Church. Some clergymen accepted this criticism and took up their responsibilities with the Indigenous peoples, collaborating with them in various ways.

It was during this time that Liberation Theology became consolidated and, in 1985, meeting in Bogotá, the bishops declared themselves in favour of respecting Indigenous cultures and identities and supported the creation of “Indigenous churches” with their own theologies, liturgies, hierarchies and ways of organizing adapted to the particular cultural features of the groups. They postulated an holistic evangelization and the training of Indigenous evangelizers, in addition to stating a commitment on the part of missionaries to defend land, human rights and self-determination, and they denounced the ethnocidal aims of indigenist policies and national laws (CELAM, 1986). Since the 1970s, the transformative current within the Church has supported the nascent ethno-political organizations, helped promote local, national and international Indigenous meetings, organized training courses for leaders and promoters, territorial demarcation committees, human rights committees and addressed many other demands. The Indigenous peoples have recognized the transformation that has taken place within this sector of the Church although they still attribute this to neo-paternalism, to rhetoric rather than respectful practice of cultural differences, and with little attention to material needs. These are criticisms made by Indigenous organizations and Indigenous pastoral workers.

At the First Latin American Workshop of Indian Theology held in Mexico in 1990 under the auspices of CELAM, and with the support of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, the principles of a new current of Catholicism were announced. This included the 1985 manifestos, closely linked to Liberation Theology but with less commitment to the material life of the Indigenous peoples, and which became known as Indian Theology (López Hernández, 1990). One of its principles was religious *inculturation*, which they hoped to achieve through a synthesis in form

and substance between native religions and Catholicism. They defined this as ecclesiastical action aimed at *incarnating* the Gospel in the different cultures and transmitting its values: “taking up what is good in them and renewing them from within”. It seemed that this religious option was trying to purify the content and expressions of native religions and transform them from within by adapting them to the values of Christianity. Even so, the official Church warned of the danger of legitimizing such dreaded popular Catholicisms which, for centuries, had been considered paganism and idolatry. Their concern for a commitment to and participation in the struggles of the poor gave the new Indigenous pastoral ministry too radical a nuance for the official Church. It is possible that Pope Francis may now pay renewed attention to this current and its focus on the poor.

Perhaps at some point, anthropology - including the Barbadians - may have thought that this Church practice was more respectful of native cultures. The experience of the Mazatec of Oaxaca, however, forces me to consider it no different to an evangelizing enterprise that leads to ethnocide, albeit with more subtle, apparently participatory strategies. I will try to briefly justify this position.

Around 1970, a number of priests from the Josephite missionary order, active in what later became known as Indian Theology, began to evangelize the Mazatec by visiting each community. Later, the National Mission Centre (CENAMI) designed the Indigenous Pastoral Plan, which was implemented in the Prelature of Huautla in the heart of the Upper Mazatec. From 1986 on, priests organized courses and workshops called “missions”. These used to last a week and brought people together (100 to 150) from various communities. The participants included members from each village (people who held the most important positions in the municipal government), municipal authorities and young people selected to be catechists and promoters of the grassroots ecclesiastical groups. The missionaries and pastoral workers would give examples from pre-Hispanic Nahuatl or Mayan history and those present would answer “whether the Mazatec believed the same thing or something different”. The Gospels were read to compare them with Mazatec religion, looking for similarities, coincidences and differences, and they were asked questions about “their values, their myths, their beliefs, their legends, their rites, their dreams”. These would be answered by the *chjota chine* (shamans) and those “characterized”.<sup>3</sup> At the next meeting, the missionaries brought the answers that had been agreed in written form and “interpreted” and “adapted” the Mazatec worldview to the Catholic religion in order to “transform their worship”. One of the outcomes of this eight-year practice was the book *Elementos Rituales Mazatecos [Mazatec Ritual Elements]* (1998), written by missionaries and which summarizes the beliefs and ritual practices of the so-called “new Mazatec spirituality”, delivered and read at

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3 People who have held the most important positions in the municipal government.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE BARBADOS

assemblies in all the communities. Another effect, perhaps more serious, was the inculturation of the Gospel into the nuances of the Mazatec religion and the meticulous proselytizing conducted within each extended domestic unit, which normally includes a shaman since the Mazatec are a shamanic society. In fact, the priest in charge boasted that many of the *chjota chjine* were participants in the workshops and that many people returned to practising their rituals albeit inside the Church.

Proud to be moving from a “pastoral indigenist” to a “pastoral Indigenous” approach, they failed to point out that the Indigenous catechists were not only directed and supervised by the Catholic priests but that some of them had already entered the ranks of the Church where they were being prepared to soften and transform the religious practices and beliefs of their fellow countrymen and women.

The missionaries and catechists built a “native church” by reworking the Mazatec worldview and rituals to bring them closer to Catholicism. Let’s see some examples of what has been removed from their traditional worldview and rituality.

Like other groups of Mesoamerican origin, the Mazatec believe that people have spiritual entities that are their doubles or *alter egos*, generically called *tonas*, and these can take the form of animals, stars, atmospheric phenomena and anthropomorphic beings, which are their *nahuales*. In the new worldview, the *tonas* and *nahuales* are completely absent, as are the life cycle and therapeutic rituals related to them. This implies a fundamental alteration of the basic principles on which the Mazatec worldview is constructed.

The extra-human entities (*chikón*) that inhabit different natural spaces of the ethnoterritory and the ritual specialists (*chjota chjine*) have lost the characteristic ethical Mesoamerican duality; in other words, in the inculturated religion and in line with the circumstances of the sacred-human interaction, the dual powers of benefit and harm are only benevolent, incapable of harm. This thus omits the predatory element of the *chikones* who, by making weak people sick, feed on their spirit; or the vengeful element whereby they kidnap a person’s spirit and make them sick in order to punish breaches of the community’s regulatory system. As a consequence of their new, exclusively benevolent and therapeutic role, the separation between those who dedicate themselves to good, *chjota chjine* or wise men, and those who work for evil, witchcraft, called *tje’e*, generally clandestine and condemned by the Church, has become more acute.

The new worldview has reworked the traditional concept of the “*supramundo*” (“heavens”), giving it 13 levels like the Mayan, considered a “high” culture. They place the Eternal Father (represented as an old man with a white beard) on one

level and, next to him, the Mother God. Thunder/lightning, associated with rain and the figure of a large-breasted older woman called *Ch'iu majén*, who dwells in a cave in the Lower Mazatec and suckles the *milpas* [cornfields], is no longer present in the *supermundo*. They have made the main female deity disappear from the Mazatec pantheon: she is also the owner and caretaker of the earth, fire and *temazcal* (pre-Hispanic steam bath), guardian of the world of the dead and wife of the *Tokosho chikon*, the hill of worship, the most powerful extra-human entity for the Mazatec. Although the notion of a sacred female entity is not absent from the new spirituality, it has lost its physiognomy, its powers and its importance.

The annual ritual pilgrimage to ask for rain is accompanied by the priest who blesses the sacred hill and who celebrates mass there, thus eliminating the ritual specialists and the divination rites with bird's blood and water that are usually performed to forecast the wind and the rain. In fact, bird's blood has been eliminated from fright/shock healings, funerals and other rituals. In other words, they have erased references to characters or elements that, to the missionaries, seemed to be expressions of paganism or simply unpleasant in their prejudiced eyes.

Although the new religious ideas and the new liturgy are accepted and practised in the communities, the change is not the result of collective processes of cultural selection and appropriation or of the agency of the Indigenous community, taking aspects of the religion or culture of others upon itself. It has rather emerged from the project and the agency of the Indian Theology missionaries. This new form of evangelization was an action of directed acculturation in which the missionaries removed, innovated and syncretized beliefs and rituals; but what parts of the Indigenous religion were chosen or excluded in order to harmonize them with the message of the Gospel? A careful reading of *Elementos Rituales Mazatecos* enables us to confirm that the "new spirituality of the Indigenous Mazatec Church" is the result of the *exclusion of* central aspects of their worldview and rituality and the *reworking of* others considered more compatible with Catholicism, as well as the *implantation of* new theological concepts, new sacraments and new liturgy; all carried out by the Josephite missionaries and their novices. As Colajanni (2008) states with reference to a similar case in Ecuador, missionaries appear as reformers and agents of cultural change.

Indian Theology - like the official Church - still believes that the Indians have to be evangelized, and thus redeemed, by transforming their religion and rituality into something new, as close as possible to the Catholic religion and liturgy. Discrimination against native beliefs and rituals, and active attempts to change them in order to "civilize" them, i.e. to make them compatible with Catholicism, are contemporary forms of racism, more subtle but perhaps more perverse, and

they are being inserted among Indigenous peoples under the guise of respect and interculturality in order to re-Catholicize them. From my perspective, the modern inculturation of the Gospel into the culture and religion of the Indigenous peoples is a new act of ethnocidal Catholic evangelization which contradicts the aims of respect and collaboration that the Church announced in response to the criticism of Barbados.

### *Other religious alternatives*

At the opposite end of the “directed change” processes are colonial and post-colonial socio-religious movements and these demonstrate that the Indigenous peoples did not take long to differentiate the ecclesiastical institution and priestly practice from the content of the religion imposed on them. They often opposed the domination of the Church and its authorities but took up notions of the new religion, which they interwove with their own beliefs. In 1981, Bonfil wrote about the theory of cultural control. Taking up these ideas, I proposed that when it is a result of collective processes and responds to their own interests then the dynamic of appropriation and resignification of religious symbols and cultural resources that are “own” and “foreign” is legitimate because it is the product of the agency of that collective group (Barabas, 1987). Among the examples of the complex syncretic religious fabric built by the Indigenous peoples are the *native churches* that emerged from socio-religious movements, of which we know of cases in Mexico, Peru and Argentina today; the Catholic revival of ancient sacred places; and the apparitions of Christ, saints and virgins that founded new villages and new forms of worship. These religious creations that have emerged from the Indigenous communities are ignored, denied or persecuted by the official Church and are furthermore not recognized by the progressive current, despite statements made in support of the Indigenous churches.

It is not possible to conclude this work without dedicating a few lines to the Protestant religions. In Mexico, the expansion of Protestantism began during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coming in from the United States and, years after the Revolution, different denominations took hold whose main objective was the conversion of the Indigenous population. At the initiative of Cárdenas, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) began its proselytism among the Nahuatl people of Morelos, translating the Bible into Indigenous languages but promoting an Hispanicization. The most successful denominations currently among the Indigenous peoples and the popular classes are the Protestant dissidents, such as Pentecostals, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

In its Declaration on “The Colonialist Policy of SIL” (1979), the Second Meeting in Barbados was pioneering in pointing out that SIL’s style of evangelization merely accelerated deculturing and depoliticizing processes aimed at the irreversible

disintegration of Indo-American peoples and cultures. Although SIL was formally expelled from Mexico, many of its linguistic pastors continue to work in Indigenous areas. New ethnographic studies in recent years have revealed the multiple negative impacts of Christianity and independent churches, including: the factionalization of families and communities, destabilization of local political systems, a ban on religious practices linked to the Church and to religions of pre-Hispanic origin, and shamanic therapy. One of the most serious impacts are the expulsions of Indigenous converts conducted by Indigenous “Catholics” in defence of “traditional culture” (e.g. Tzotzil from Chiapas, Raramuri from Chihuahua, Mixe from Tlahuitoltepec, etc.). Barabas, 2010). Criticism from Barbados has not stopped the evangelical and independent churches. On the contrary, they are being increasingly accepted and growing day by day.

### **A closing paragraph**

In Latin America, the pluralist anthropology constructed by the Barbados Group in 1971 emerged onto the political arena with a commitment to Indigenous peoples’ right to difference and self-management and onto the anthropological arena through various theoretical proposals and ethnographic studies that highlighted not only ethnic plurality but also the situations of internal colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples and the construction of ethnic identities in contexts of inequality. Half a century later, nation states have - to some extent - been transformed, anthropology has internalized the existence of Indigenous peoples, the renewed Catholic Church has insisted on maintaining its hegemonic vocation, and the Protestant and independent churches seem to have ignored all demands. In my view, of all the changes that Barbados wished to bring about, the most significant is to have contributed directly and indirectly to enabling the Indigenous peoples to take the peaceful struggle for recognition and a re-evaluation of their cultures into their own hands, along with the self-determination of their existence.

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## PART 2

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# Contemporary and Beyond





# TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES<sup>1</sup>

**Pedro García Hierro**



When we talk of governance, or good governance, we are usually referring to the way in which political decisions are made and this tends to be defined on the basis of principles such as transparency, accountability, rule of law, consultation and participation, gender equity, efficiency and efficacy, non-discrimination and other qualities that enable citizens to influence and control the way in which the public sphere is managed. There are other definitions, however, that suggest that governance relates to the ideal conditions in which a society, nation or people is able to govern itself. And, in this sense, governance relies on a basic premise of the International Covenants: self-determination.

In workshops recently held in nine Indigenous communities of the Peruvian Amazon, discussions took place with regard to which of the assets inherited from their ancestors the current generation consider essential for the good governance of their territories. The answers revolved around six fundamental aspects: an integral, self-defined territory, guaranteed and respected by all other societies and nations; territorial knowledge effectively passed down and built on generation after generation; collective control of all territorial decisions; food sovereignty and security based on self-sufficiency; an own education system based on promoting the particular values and virtues identified as specific to their ethnic identity; and, lastly, the set of collective rights recognized in international agreements and treaties on the basis of the struggles of the world's Indigenous movement. Other peoples may add other necessary assumptions but this basic minimum gives us a good programme of work around which to focus the issue of the peoples' territorial governance.

Territorial governance is a concept that refers both to autonomy and to self-government, to territorial control, to freedom to decide one's own destiny in accordance with one's own aspirations, and to freedom to establish agreements and relationships with other societies on a basis of cooperation and coordination rather than subordination.

Recognizing that (in the same way and to the same extent as other peoples and nations) Indigenous peoples and nations are protected by the right to self-determination already enshrined in the UN International Covenants, the 2007

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1 This text was published at [www.servindi.org](http://www.servindi.org) on 14 May 2015.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples built on this foundation to facilitate the conditions for governance that Indigenous peoples are demanding. Article by article, the Declaration clearly and precisely sets out a whole programme of implementation for Indigenous peoples' territorial governance, covering everything from the obligations of actors to decision-making mechanisms to the financing of processes.

Self-determination in practice heralds a new situation in which, as collective political subjects, Indigenous peoples and nations are free to establish their own laws, govern themselves, pursue their own development on their traditional territories in line with their customs, and manage their resources in line with their own development priorities without external interference, as set out in Article 1(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In the case of the Indigenous peoples, however, successful territorial governance requires the ability to control decision-making on their territories on the basis of rights recognized and respected by a stable, impartial and respectful legal and political order. And this is not what many States around the world have been offering Indigenous peoples in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Quite the contrary, the modern demands of the global economy have engendered serious interest in the resources located on Indigenous lands and many governments have given legal prevalence to these interests over the recognized rights of the Indigenous peoples.

In this context, in just a few years, Indigenous peoples have gone from being models of sustainability to be imitated to obstacles to be eliminated in order to facilitate a supposed national economic development based on extractive concessions, large-scale road and energy projects and massive transnational investment. The destruction of vital resources and the aggressive nature of the current attack on the peoples' territories is creating devastating situations that are affecting fundamental aspects of their social life and family subsistence: their collective self-esteem, peace and tranquillity, their social and organizational integrity, food security, access to water or the right to a clean environment, to name just a few of the aspects that are key to their governance. The great Indigenous conquests of the modern day in terms of the rights recognized them have been repudiated by the reality of intrusions that are neither desired nor consented to, aimed at taking external, imposed and irrevocable decisions that are once more placing Indigenous societies in a position of colonial subordination.

To reinforce these processes, the resigned acceptance has been promoted of a set of welfare programmes with a clear and harmful ideological undertone. These programmes have managed to present just one aspect of the Indigenous peoples' lives: that they live in extreme poverty. And yet this situation is caused by

their inability to take advantage of their territorial heritage. This framing is based on a contemptuous and discriminatory view of certain ways of life that were previously presented as models to be imitated. Poverty thus becomes a tool of ideological domination that impoverishes self-esteem, promotes dependency, and encourages a regression towards relationships of tutelage and charity.

For their part, the extractive companies that have set up on Indigenous territories have, with the collusion of the State, created enclave economies in which basic services and the people's survival depend on the companies themselves, in many places thus entrenching an alienation of Indigenous territorial governance.

Lastly, it should be noted that States have been turning their backs on their commitment to implement Indigenous rights, enforcing ever more restrictive interpretations of the right to self-determination and employing a misguided application of the coordination and cooperation mechanisms designed to establish dialogue between equal societies, for example the consultation and consent processes. These have been distorted such that they are once again imposing irrevocable decisions that result in a development model increasingly far removed from Indigenous priorities.

So there is good news and bad news: the good news is the existence of universal recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to govern themselves and to enjoy their territories and resources without interference, by means of self-determination; the bad news is the all-too-often widespread perpetuation of colonial attitudes that reinforce subordinate relationships between States and Indigenous peoples. This is the challenge to be overcome and the way to do this is by focusing fearlessly on making self-determination an objective of the international community.

This path raises a number of critical issues that need to be overcome. In an analysis of the current political context conducted with representative organizations of the Amazonian peoples, the following 10 noteworthy points emerged, and these could serve as a starting point for the discussion:

1. Indigenous peoples' modern organizational models are not always adequate to the tasks of territorial governance: they were originally established to take up Indigenous rank-and-file demands. They are not always appropriate or sufficient for conducting the day-to-day tasks of territorial governance.
2. The Indigenous territories have either not been effectively recognized or guaranteed or, having been recognized, do not always reflect the actual territoriality of the peoples. They are limited to unconnected communal spaces, legally broken down into different systems (water, forests, subsoil, wildlife, etc.) and overlapping with other territories governed by other decision-making bodies (municipalities, protected areas, mining or oil or

logging concessions, etc.). They generally include a heterogeneous set of actors with their own spheres of decision-making, all competing with the necessary territorial control that good governance requires.

3. Immediate economic anxiety is currently the determining factor behind many irreversible decisions, made without thoughtful analysis of the long-term consequences.
4. The increasing uprooting of young people and the gradual breakdown of intergenerational bonds, with a consequent loss of knowledge as regards life in the territories, prevents new generations from enjoying and adequately appreciating the territorial resources.
5. Growing food insecurity and dependence and a general decline in living, education and health standards as people abandon an active role and delegate these services to the State.
6. Political invisibility of the increasingly decisive cultural support provided by women in terms of maintaining territorial and cultural links.
7. Inadequate implementation of the rights recognized to Indigenous peoples in international treaties and agreements, especially the rights to self-determination, prior informed consent, and to determine their own development priorities on their territories.
8. Prevalence of the rights of other economic agents in the State's discourse, policies and initiatives, including the deregulation of companies and a lack of effective control of their activities. This results in asymmetrical relationships that leave Indigenous peoples defenceless in the face of rights violations.
9. Weak and insufficient mechanisms for Indigenous peoples' political participation and a gradual criminalization of the protests that have arisen due to a lack of channels through which to access the State (look particularly at the massive process the Peruvian State is initiating against Indigenous individuals who suffered unjustified criminal aggression for demanding compliance with an international treaty).
10. Confusing location of Indigenous territories within the State's administrative districts. With few exceptions, these States decide not to restructure their country's territorial organization in order to comply with the requirements of self-determination.

As preliminary recommendations to the UN system as regards good governance for Indigenous peoples, and based on the perspective outlined at the beginning of this presentation, the Forum proposes the following:

1. Support the comprehensive recognition of Indigenous territories in accordance with consultation processes that meet each people's criteria for territoriality, proposing necessary measures that will make this recognition possible, ensuring their stability, and that there will be an effective reaction to external disturbances and respect for the determination of their own forms of governance.
2. Insist that States give constitutional recognition to Indigenous peoples as subjects of collective rights together with official validation of their governance procedures and institutions in all local, regional and national contexts.
3. Support public policies aimed at promoting education for life and not for flight, revitalizing specific territorial knowledge so that young generations can enjoy and take advantage of the territories inherited from their ancestors.
4. Use national and international resources to support the solidarity-based financing, as indicated in the Declaration, of long-term economic projects that prioritize and revalue self-sufficiency, particularly food security based on their own resources, and which avoid dependence on enclave economies and the pressures arising from a lack of monetary resources.
5. Promote processes and practices that encourage free and self-determined relationships between peoples and the market, society and the State, based on coordination and cooperation rather than subordination.

Governance implies control over decision-making. Unless this premise is respected, it is difficult to speak of territorial governance for Indigenous peoples. I suggest the members of this Forum propose that the competent bodies of the United Nations seek effective commitments from States aimed at developing concrete and properly budgeted plans for the effective implementation, article by article, of the Declaration to which they voluntarily committed in 2007. This needs to be in a programmatic, coordinated, consulted and consensual way, and will be the most effective way of facilitating the territorial governance of Indigenous peoples.

To conclude, it should be noted that recent voices, some of them high-profile, have suggested that the most reasonable path would be to support Indigenous peoples' negotiation, through good law firms, of what has become known as the "possible", so that they can at least be financially compensated for the inevitable tragedy of the violation of their rights. But if the rights of Indigenous peoples, as established in international treaties and agreements, are resignedly placed in the realm of the "impossible" then the political struggles and debates that Indigenous peoples' representatives have been waging for years in their

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countries and in international forums such as this will have been for nothing. I believe we should all be reasonable and focus on how to make the Declaration possible, along with the whole package of rights that the nations of the world have declared and committed themselves to protecting and developing.

Thank you very much, colleagues.



# INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS IN BOLIVIA: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

**Zulema Lehm** and **Kantuta Lara**



## **Introduction**

Autonomy and self-determination, based on recognition of and respect for their territories, have been key demands of the Indigenous peoples since the Conquest and colonisation.

In January 1971, 13 anthropologists all committed to the Indigenous cause amplified the demand for Indigenous peoples' liberation through the Declaration of Barbados. This declaration prepared the ground for two further meetings. It led to the birth of a movement aimed at encouraging States, the churches and academia to take a stance aimed at recognising Indigenous peoples' rights to their territories, self-determination, self-government and world vision, among other things. The result was that a series of political decisions were taken along with rules aimed at enforcing them.

Different social movements can be distinguished in Bolivia aimed at recognising the right to territory based on self-government and land as the basis for agricultural activity. The distinction between a long historical memory and a short one (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1984) helps us understand the differences between these Indigenous movements and why their approaches are not interchangeable. Although they do sometimes overlap at certain junctures, both organically and programmatically they are different. An initial difference can be seen between the Indigenous movements of the country's highlands and lowlands. Among the former we also have to distinguish between, on the one hand, the Indigenous movements calling for the restitution of "native lands", which emerged during the Conquest and colonisation and which, far from disappearing with Republican Independence, intensified, particularly at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Andean Oral History Workshop, 1984; Gotkowitz, 2011); and, on the other, the peasant union movements for land that provided the social base for the 1953 Agrarian Reform (Dandler, 1983).

While there are also nuances in the lowlands, the approach taken by the Indigenous federations, led by the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of

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Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB) has, since its inception, been to demand the legal recognition of Indigenous territories.<sup>1</sup>

Recognition of these long-standing social configurations helps explain the current issues facing Bolivia's Indigenous movements.

### **Autonomies and territories in the struggles of the Bolivian Indigenous movements**

#### *The Bolivian Indigenous movements to 1938: legal battles and uprisings*

The social movements for land and territory have been recognised above all for their most spectacular strategies, such as the “cercos” around cities in the *altiplano* and the valleys, the uprisings or rebellions and, more recently, the marches and roadblocks. In contrast, their legal strategies have gained less recognition, despite their constancy, complexity and potential for social and political accumulation.

The anti-colonial struggles of the Indigenous peoples of the Bolivian Amazon have also been given less consideration than those of the Andean region, a situation that began to be reversed with the research into and dissemination of the movements of the Mojos and Apolobamba Indigenous peoples. The statement made by Mojeño leader Pedro Ignacio Muiba during the 1803-1811 uprisings (Carvalho Urey, 2010; Roca, 1991; Lehm, 2016) is proof that the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon were not oblivious to the Indigenous anti-colonial struggles that were ongoing and that these meant defending their territories and exercising their freedom and autonomy:

*“The King of Spain is dead. We will be free on our own terms, the lands have been passed down to us by our ancestors, from whom the Spanish took them”* (Carvalho Urey, 2010, p. 41).

From 1842 to 1856, with the creation of Beni department in the Bolivian Amazon, the Republican State issued policies recognising rights of “equality, freedom and property” to the Indigenous peoples of the former Jesuit and Franciscan missions in the Mojos and Apolobamba regions, and promoted the individual distribution of lands, livestock and crops which, up to that point, had been considered of the “common”.<sup>2</sup> In the 1840s and 1850s, several

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1 The relationship between the *Ayllus* and *Marqas* system of representation through caciques in the highlands and the Indigenous peoples and their leaders in the lowlands has yet to be systematically studied. There is, however, documentary evidence of its existence, at least, since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2 During the period of colonial reservations, the Indigenous system of collective and open access to land and natural resources became more formal and organized on lands recognized as “common lands” or “mission lands” (Lehm, 1999).

Indigenous peoples, primarily from the elite, took advantage of these decrees to obtain deeds recognising their individual ownership of the land. During the second half of the century, however, these lands began to be “transferred”, via various forms of coercion and pillaging, to non-Indigenous who had arrived in the region, attracted by the quinine and rubber trade (Lehm Ardaya, 1987; Guiteras Mombiola, 2012). This process came to an end in 1905 with the enactment of the Law on Vacant Lands, the objective of which was to promote settlement of the country’s lowlands.

From 1868 to 1874, the expropriation of communal lands intensified in the highlands with the enactment of a series of laws known as the “*Leyes de Exvinculación*”, while decrees relating to Beni granted the Indians “absolute ownership of their respective possessions” and recognised their right to sell and undertake all acts that are an owner’s prerogative”. The communities’ own systems of government were thus side-lined, indicating that “*no individual or gathering of individuals may take the name of a community or association, or represent said community before any authority. The Indigenous peoples shall manage all their businesses themselves or through proxies*” (Andean Oral History Workshop, 1984). Recognition of individual ownership of the land was intended to dismantle the communities; it forced recourse to mediation through lawyers and Creole and *mestizo* “petifoggers” and legalised State and private coercion so that the lands were transferred to large landowners.

In response, the Indigenous peoples formed a resistance movement for the defence and return of communal lands and for a reaffirmation of their authorities based on the *Ayllus*’ network of “*caciques apoderados*”, which covered the mostly Andean departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Chuquisaca and Cochabamba (Andean Oral History Workshop, 1984; Gotkowitz, 2011). They prioritised the legal defence of their systems of government and land and gave content to more obvious actions such as the uprisings at the end of the 19th century led by Zarate Villca and, later, in Machaca in 1921 and Chayanta in 1927 (Condarco Morales, 1984; Choque, 2003).

In the lowlands, too, some Indigenous peoples were taking legal action to defend their lands and their own systems of government. In 1908, in light of the “Vacant Lands” Act, the Tacana people sent briefs to the authorities requesting that “vacant lands” on their territories should not be granted to “gentleman landowners” since the Indigenous population was already occupying them, not only for agriculture but also for palm oil and beeswax gathering, further reminding them that they too were State taxpayers (Soux Muñoz Reyes, 1991, p. 120; Chiovoloni, 1996, p. 137; Salinas, 2007, p. 95).

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Later, the Tacana people suffered the severe consequences of the Chaco War (1932-1935), as indeed did those living in the Andes (Arze Aguirre, 1987), driven by the actions of people taking advantage of the international conflict to humiliate and plunder the Indigenous peoples.<sup>3</sup> The substance and language of their demands was comparable to that of the Indigenous movement of “*caciques apoderados*”, and their actions were interpreted as a rebellion in 1933. This fact, apparently isolated and forgotten because of its remoteness in the jungle, coincided with the Indigenous uprisings being documented across the *altiplano*, in addition to the effects on their own front (Arze Aguirre, 1987, pp. 94-95; Mamani Condori, 1991).

Finally, a number of documents signed by Bonifacio Barrientos, High Captain of the Alto y Bajo Izozog and, later, founder of CIDOB demonstrate the existence of a relationship between the movement of “*caciques apoderados*” and the Indigenous movement of the lowlands.

### *State policies of 1938 and 1952: trade unions and traditional communal authorities*

Due to the repression during the Chaco War, the importance of the network of “*caciques apoderados*” diminished to make way for a more “unionised” form of organisation, more class-based and more permeable to the influence of emerging political parties in the post-war period (Lehm Ardaya & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1988).

Trade unionism as a form of social organisation was spread by the policies of the military socialists (1936-1938) who came to power as a result of the political crisis following the war. They attempted to establish a corporate model of social organisation, based on trade unions that were thus enshrined as the priority form of organisation and the legal and legitimate channel for making demands within the Bolivian political system (Gotkowitz, 2011 ). In this way, they thus reinforced the proscription of the traditional Indigenous authorities.

In the rural Andes, expansion and consolidation of *haciendas* at the expense of the communities was accompanied by increased abuses of the Indigenous labour force who, under the “*colonato*” system, had become the “subjects” of the land and their bosses. This was compounded by the economic crisis of 1929 and the human losses during the Chaco War. This deep crisis, in turn, created social movements demanding the elimination of the large estates once and for all, the return of the land to the peasants who were working it, financial reward for work done and reduced working hours, among other things. Through “sit-down strikes” and trade union-based walk-outs, the workers renewed the social unrest in the countryside during the 1940s (Gotkowitz, 2011 ).

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<sup>3</sup> We are indebted to Anna Guiteras Mombiola for identifying and transcribing documents in the La Paz Archive based on the Arze Aguirre references (1987, p. 53).

It was against this backdrop that the 1952 Revolution erupted, led by the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). A set of measures was implemented, including an Agrarian Reform Law considered at that time to be one of the most radical on the continent. It abolished the “*colonato*” and “*pongueaje*” systems, decreed the extinction of the “*latifundio*” by expropriating the lands,<sup>4</sup> established their re-distribution to the peasants on the condition that they work them personally, and provided for the return of lands to Indigenous communities who had been divested of them since 1900 (Republic of Bolivia, 1982, p. 35 Art 42). This did not include the return of the many lands that were expropriated under the “*Leyes de Exvinculación*” of the second half of the 19th century.

Due to their origin, this law distinguished between three different classes of “peasant” community: a) estate-based; b) peasant farmer; and c) Indigenous. None of these were permitted to form part of associations or federations or to make “class-based” demands. As established by the socialist military regime in the post-Chaco war period, such powers were recognised only to the unions. The concept of joint ownership was introduced, i.e. a unit of property that is “divided into as many plots as there are co-owners” (Republic of Bolivia, 1982, p. 38 Art. 52). One of the most notable results was the spread of the term “peasant” as a substitute for “Indigenous”. This was to have an impact not only on public policy but also on social reality.

As for the Indigenous peoples of the east of the country, the Agrarian Reform Law included a chapter on forest reservations, establishing that “*the forest groups of the tropical and subtropical plains, who are in a savage state with primitive organisation*” would be granted State protection, thus authorising schools or private institutions to “incorporate” them into national life, with sufficient land to establish families and turn them into farmers (Republic of Bolivia, 1982, pp. 66 – 67 Arts 129 and 130).

The Indigenous movement in place until the 1940s, based on networks of “*caciques apoderados*”, had built a programmatic agenda focused primarily on the defence and return of community lands of origin, and in which the *Ayllu* was considered the coordinator of different units through kinship systems and complex methods of accessing and using land and resources. This system

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4 The Agrarian Reform Law defined *latifundio* as: “Large rural properties, variable according to their geographic location, which remain unexploited or which are being exploited [...] in terms of the use of the land in the area by means of the concession of plots, *pegujales*, *sayañas*, sharecropping or other equivalent systems, in such a way that, due to the imbalance between the factors of production, their profitability depends fundamentally on the surplus value that the peasants yield as serfs or peons and which the landowner appropriates in the form of income-labour, thus establishing a system of feudal oppression that results in agricultural backwardness and a low standard of living and culture among the peasant population” (Republic of Bolivia, 1982, page 24 Art. 12).

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combined family and collective domains with control of different ecological steep gradients (Murra, 1972). While recognising these own systems of authority and government, the Agrarian Reform Law brought about a reduced and distorted recognition of such approaches and instead only deepened the communities' social, cultural and territorial fragmentation.

In addition, there were renewed policies of "colonisation" of the lowlands, for which incentives were established based on the provision of land to settlers. This colonisation was now being aimed at the Indigenous populations of the highlands, who were reproducing a form of trade union organisation from the lowlands. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples in the lowlands had been excluded from any recognition of their rights. The contradictions and conflicts between their own forms of organisation and those of the unions in the Bolivian lowlands were to become evident with the creation of the Indigenous federations from the 1980s onwards.

So far, this historical account has enabled us to identify at least three strands of Indigenous organisation, mobilisation and demands: one led by the traditional authorities of the Andean communities who sought the return of their lands of origin and respect for their traditional authorities; one in the country's lowlands, led especially by the Indigenous peoples of the former catholic missions who were also claiming land, albeit not only for agriculture but for other economic and cultural activities as well; and one that became dominant in the post-war period following the 1953 Agrarian Reform, that recognised Indigenous peoples as peasants who were demanding land either individually or collectively, with a strong emphasis on agriculture and organising in agrarian unions. It has also been observed that, at least up until the Chaco War, there was if not an organic relationship then a common anti-colonial discourse between the Indigenous movements of the traditional authorities in the highlands and the lowlands.

### *The Indigenous Confederation of Eastern and Amazonian Bolivia (CIDOB)*

From 1970 onwards, State policies promoted the occupation of Bolivia's lowlands and an intensification of extractive activities. New channels of communication were opened up which, in practice, ignored Indigenous peoples as legal subjects, facilitated by the absence of regulations recognising their rights. Together with the international challenges being made against the Bolivian State for non-compliance with agreements relating to the protection of Indigenous peoples, this situation was a factor that triggered a new process of organisation among the Indigenous peoples of the lowlands, who began to form Indigenous federations.

Between 1978 and 1981, at the initiative of the Guaraní Captaincy of Izozog and with the support of a group of anthropologists, a series of inter-ethnic meetings took place culminating, in 1982, in the creation of the "Central de Indígenas del Oriente

Boliviano”, now the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB). This initially comprised the Izoceño, Ayoreo, Guarayo and Chiquitano peoples (Apoyo para el Campesino - Indígena del Oriente Boliviano, 1994, p. 24; Riestler, 1997).

CIDOB’s creation was followed by an intense organisational process at regional, departmental and local levels. Between 1985 and 1989, organising committees and sub-committees were created among the Indigenous peoples of the north of Beni and Pando, and, in the 1990s, Cochabamba and the north of La Paz. Thirteen regional Indigenous organisations now form part of CIDOB (Lehm, 1999; Heijdra, 1997, pp. 52-53).

The Indigenous peoples’ main demands through CIDOB have been the same since its creation:

- 1. Recognition as peoples with their own identity and with rights derived from their historical and contemporary presence.*
- 2. Consolidation of Indigenous territories. Recognition of the special relationship that Indigenous peoples have with their territories in terms of their social, spiritual, cultural, economic and political existence. The right to own and possess traditionally occupied lands, as well as the right to access, use and administer the natural resources on their territories.*
- 3. The right to determine their own development priorities, including full participation in the formulation, administration and monitoring of development programmes. Participation in development policies nationally. CIDOB’s programmatic platforms are: Territory, Organisation, Economy, Education, Health and Women.*
- 4. The right to exercise and consolidate systems of self-government and local administration.*
- 5. Recognition of customary law and therefore the inclusion of effective measures to ensure the legal pluralism necessary to guarantee the human rights of Indigenous peoples as individuals and collectives.*
- 6. The right to promote their own cultural development through bilingual and multicultural education and to contribute to enriching the national culture. (Apoyo para el Campesino - Indígena del Oriente Boliviano, 1994, p. 26).*

*Indigenous marches: tactics, progress and challenges in the recognition of Indigenous peoples’ rights*

Between 1990 and 2019, Indigenous organisations from the lowlands of Bolivia staged ten marches. The first, in 1990, called the Indigenous March

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for Territory and Dignity, took place in response to encroachment onto the Indigenous territories, especially in Beni department, by loggers, Andean settlers and cattle ranchers, and was also aimed at confronting the government's attempts to ignore the traditional authorities (Indigenous Councils). It was an unprecedented protest action. Men, women and children left Trinidad, capital of Beni department, and walked for 34 days during which time they were joined by representatives from other Indigenous peoples around the country. By the time they arrived at the seat of government in La Paz, 650 km away, they numbered more than a thousand (Lehm, 1999).

The immediate outcome of this first march was that four supreme decrees were issued recognising four specific Indigenous territories and providing for the drafting of an Indigenous Peoples' Act (Lehm, 1999, p. 125). It was through this march that the Indigenous movement of the lowlands burst into the political arena and into the nation's imagination, enabling the recognition of new Indigenous territories and, importantly, ratification of Convention 169 as a Law of the Republic in 1991. Among the Indigenous peoples of the lowlands, the march became institutionalised as an expression of protest in contrast to the "blockade", the form of expression most frequently used by the unions and other sectors of society.

Over time, recognition of Indigenous territories by means of emergency supreme decrees began to demonstrate its weakness in terms of enforcing Indigenous peoples' territorial rights. The Indigenous movement in the lowlands gradually began to realise that the Political State Constitution had to be amended. In 1994, they used legal means to get recognition of Bolivia as a "multiethnic and pluricultural Republic" introduced into the Constitution, along with recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights to their territories under the name of Community Lands of Origin, and access to the renewable natural resources on those territories, among other things (Republic of Bolivia, 1994).

That same year, the Law on Popular Participation was approved which, theoretically, sought to link Indigenous peoples to the State through the municipalities. Although this law recognised Indigenous peoples as legal subjects and granted them legal personality, in practice it only recognised community organisations as "territorial grassroots organizations" (*OTB*). Federative organisations or those representing several communities were mentioned but their legal recognition derived only from civil legislation. The organisations representing a joint territorial area were thus deprived of the rights this law recognised individual communities.

Furthermore, recognition of the municipal jurisdiction as the first level of public policy management meant the fracture of those Indigenous territories that covered more than one municipality. A number of agreements resulted in the creation of Indigenous Municipal Districts or the possibility that, if an Indigenous territory covered the entirety of a municipal territory, it could be recognised as an Indigenous Municipality. Numerous malicious applications of this law, however, led to the creation of parallel government structures within the Indigenous communities (Republic of Bolivia, 1994 b, p. Art. 3).

Following the constitutional reforms, the Indigenous movement of the lowlands called for new agrarian legislation with amended content. This was because the unionised movements were not calling for recognition of Indigenous territories either in terms of the right to the natural resources therein or their own jurisdiction or self-government. Their approach referred to land as an agricultural support and emphasised the right inherited from 1953 of “land to the tiller”. This had serious implications in the lowlands since deforestation was one way of proving that the land was being worked. This approach coincided with that of other sectors, including the Bolivian Peasant Workers’ Union Confederation (CSUTCB), largely rooted in the highlands, and even with that of the business sectors. An intense process of trying to build common approaches was therefore initiated among the main representative bodies of Indigenous peoples and peasant farmers in the country, achieving a difficult but fragile consensus and later including private entrepreneurs as regards a new agrarian law. These agreements were broken by the government itself, which presented a bill to the national parliament that was different from the one agreed (CEJIS, 1996).

In this context, on 31 July 1996, CIDOB called for a second national march: the “March for Territory, Land, Political Rights and Development”, which began in Santa Cruz on 26 August that year. The most important proposals included the titling of Indigenous, peasant and settler territories, a legal definition of the concept of territory with the right to exclusive use of the natural resources contained therein, and participation in the regulation of other laws, such as on hydrocarbons and forestry (CIDOB, 1996).

This second Indigenous march was one of the most significant efforts aimed at unifying approaches between the country’s different Indigenous and peasant movements, and formed a platform for expressing the basic agreements they had reached. As time went on, however, substantive differences and specific demands eventually fractured the agreements. A new National Agrarian Reform Service Act (SNRA) was finally passed on 18 October 1996. This law formalised the procedure known as “regularisation” (*saneamiento*) of land by various methods, the aim of which was to bring order to land tenure. This regularisation

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was to lead, in the first instance, to fewer demands for territorial recognition of the property rights of “third parties”,<sup>5</sup> i.e. those who are not Indigenous peoples.

The third march, in the year 2000, came about because of further violations, this time in the northern Amazonian region of the country, where decrees were being implemented recognising commercial rubber and Brazilian nut harvesting areas as forest concessions for non-timber products over an area of more than three million hectares before the titling of the Indigenous territories had been completed or the lands of numerous peasant communities had been granted. Through this march, the Indigenous and peasant movement achieved the abolition of these decrees and the creation of a Vice-Ministry for Indigenous Affairs (Clavijo Santander, 2019).

In 2002, a fourth Indigenous march was convened in response to the erosion of a political system that was based on a devalued mechanism of representation through political parties. The central approach to this new mobilisation was to convene a Constituent Assembly and to recognise Indigenous peoples’ participation in this directly, without the mediation of political parties. With this march, the Indigenous movement in the lowlands obtained the enactment of a law on the need for constitutional reform and a commitment to implementing a Constituent Assembly (Clavijo Santander, 2019; Fundación UNIR, 2012).

Faced with problems in consolidating the Indigenous territories, a fifth march took place in 2006 with the central demand, once again, of approving an agrarian law. This movement took place against a different political backdrop now, however, given that a self-proclaimed Indigenous movement was now in government, presided over by the union leader, Evo Morales Ayma. As a result, Law No. 3545 on “Community Renewal” was approved which, in actual fact, was only a reform of the 1996 Law. It did, however, emphasise the expropriation or return of lands for distribution to Indigenous and peasant communities that had been left with no or insufficient land, an aspect that the previous law had considered only as a remote possibility. In order to dismantle the system of forest concessions, which were mostly in the hands of private companies or local social groups - as the institutions created by the Forest Law were called - it was decided that State lands should also be distributed to these communities. This aspect introduced a new element of conflict between the Indigenous organisations of the lowlands, who - living adjacent to forest concessions - had made progress

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5 Bolivian legislation and the discourse related to Indigenous rights recognises three fundamental subjects: Indigenous peoples as plaintiffs, the State as defendant and those natural or legal persons who claim rights that are superimposed on or adjacent to the areas claimed by Indigenous peoples as third parties. This term refers to people who, through various actions and mechanisms, are competing - usually negatively - with Indigenous peoples for access to land.

in the legal consolidation and management of their territories, and the new immigrant settlements that had begun to *de facto* occupy both the concessions and the Indigenous territories under consolidation.

The Constituent Assembly was established in 2006 and, through a complex and conflictive process, remained in place until 2008 with the aim of producing a new constitutional text. In spite of the active participation of Indigenous peoples, both from the lowlands and the highlands, given the risk that rights introduced into the preliminary text might be disregarded, CIDOB convened a sixth Indigenous march in 2007. This sought to ensure full recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples in a new “plurinational State”, with a system of direct representation of Indigenous peoples in the National Congress via special constituencies; a new design for the politico-administrative division of the country, including Indigenous autonomies with equal status to pre-existing ones; and the right to prior, free, informed and good-faith consultation prior to the exploitation of non-renewable resources on Indigenous territories, among other things. A constitutional text was presented at the end of 2008 and approved one year later by national referendum. The new Constitution also resulted in a new legal and juridical setting, with broad recognition of Indigenous peoples’ rights. However, the same text was eroded and conceptual content lost which, added to the lack of political will to implement them, created a significant gap between what was originally agreed and what was actually achieved in reality (Valencia García & Égido Zurita, 2010).

In order to make the constitutional requirements operational, the government enacted a Law on Autonomies and Administrative Decentralisation in 2010. However, the gradual erosion of content in terms of concepts of Indigenous autonomy led to a seventh march that sought to guarantee Indigenous peoples prompt access to autonomies. In fact, both the Constitution itself and the new Autonomies Act basically strengthened a number of elements of the Law on Peoples’ Participation, such as municipal jurisdictions and the fact that only Indigenous territories that overlapped entirely with these jurisdictions and which had a large population, as well as other requirements that were difficult to meet, would be recognised as autonomous. This march resulted in negotiations. It nonetheless proved impossible to make the definition of municipal jurisdictions more flexible, and to avoid the referendum as a mechanism for approving statutes of autonomy.

Two further marches took place in 2011 and 2012, both related to the intended construction of a highway across the Isiboro Sécure National Park Indigenous Territory. Since these eighth and ninth marches served to demonstrate the problematic relationship between the country’s Indigenous movements, as well as their tense interactions with the State, they will be analysed in the next section.

## INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS IN BOLIVIA

In 2019, a tenth march was organised to defend one of the most iconic forests nationally and globally: the Chiquitano dry forest. A set of State policies had led to an unprecedented wave of fires affecting both protected areas and Indigenous territories over an area of more than two million hectares. This march sought to overturn these policies, which were promoting the expansion of the agricultural frontier, and to draw attention to the fires so that they could be extinguished by means of declaring a National Disaster, something that never happened.

### *The complexities and tensions between Indigenous movements and their relationships with the State*

As noted, the eighth and ninth marches highlighted the contradictions between the Indigenous and peasant movements in the lowlands and highlands, especially given their different visions of development. While attempts to build a road linking the departments of Cochabamba and Beni date back even to colonial times, it was not until the government of Evo Morales that steps were actually taken to try and achieve this.

Isiboro Sécore National Park was created in the 1960s to protect this area from the Peruvian-Bolivian initiative to build a road known as the “*Marginal de la Selva*”. And yet, despite the creation of this park, there has been strong settlement expansion in this area since the 1980s, spurred on by the union federations of coca leaf producers. In the 1990s, one reason for the March for Territory and Dignity was precisely to counter this encroaching settlement, and dual recognition of the area was thus achieved: as an Indigenous Territory and as the Isiboro Sécore National Park (TIPNIS). In 2006, the final route of the road was declared of national necessity by law. Two years later, the Brazilian company OAS was hired to design and construct the road. In 2009, the Bolivian and Brazilian governments signed a financing agreement for its construction and work began in 2011. In response, the Indigenous peoples led by CIDOB and supported by the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo (Conamaq) began their eighth march, leaving Trinidad and headed for La Paz.

Along the way, CIDOB and CONAMAQ’s Indigenous march was blocked by Andean colonizers who supported their fellow settlers encroaching onto TIPNIS. As a result, the Indigenous March was harshly repressed. It did, however, manage to re-form later and reach the city of La Paz, attracting massive support from the urban population. The immediate result was the enactment of a law rejecting the construction of the section of the road that ran through the centre of TIPNIS (Guzmán, 2012; Fundación UNIR, 2012).

The government subsequently implemented a process that has been described as “delayed and bad-faith consultation” (International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature, 2019), creating deep divisions within the Indigenous territory. In this

process, which included a ninth march, significant differences could be seen in the development visions held by the different Indigenous movements in Bolivia (Fundación UNIR, 2012).

As in the past, an alliance was formed between Indigenous peoples' organisations in the lowlands and the Conamaq movement, highlighting the conflicts between the traditional Indigenous authorities and the agrarian unions, which were by then running the State. Finally, the "Plurinational" State fomented divisions within the Indigenous movements and their organisations, creating parallel entities some of which tried to maintain their autonomy from the government while others did not.

### **Conclusions: progress and challenges, an overview**

As a result of different historical processes, several Indigenous movements can be distinguished in Bolivia, each with their own approach and organisational form, as well as their own ways of expressing their demands. These differences can be seen in approaches to land and territories,<sup>6</sup> recognition and respect for traditional authorities as opposed to agrarian unions and, most notably in recent years, different visions of development or expectations as to ways of life.

Throughout history there have been times when the anti-colonial struggles of the Indigenous movements in the lowlands and the movements of traditional authorities in the *Ayllus* and *Marqas* of the highlands and valleys have coincided in both form and content, both with marked differences from the trade union movements. The attempts of the former to coordinate with the trade union movements were relatively short-lived, due to differences in substance. Attempts to proscribe the role of traditional authorities as the legitimate representatives of Indigenous peoples' demands have been a constant concern, particularly since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the Chaco War, however, the State has recognised only the unions as the legal, privileged and even "civilised" form of representing the communities' interests, to the detriment of the traditional authorities. With some nuances, this situation has in one way or another been reproduced to this day, and its analysis helps explain the complexities of the relationships between Indigenous movements and between these movements and the State.

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<sup>6</sup> The reason for the demand for collective titling lies in the historical experience of Indigenous peoples in both the lowlands and the highlands, whereby they first obtained individual plots and were then subsequently dispossessed of those plots by Creoles and *mestizos*. This is an imprescriptible, inalienable and unattachable demand, as a sensible way of maintaining the lands for future generations. Among the Indigenous peoples of the lowlands, this approach has even resulted in a marker of identity used to differentiate themselves from other Indigenous peasant movements for whom individual land titling is more important.

This historical review of the Indigenous marches, led largely by the Indigenous peoples of the lowlands, reveals certain features in the recognition of their rights: (a) it is a cumulative process that has experienced progress and setbacks, reaching various stages or milestones; (b) each of these stages has been preceded by Indigenous social mobilisation; (c) their formulation in legislation constantly demonstrates a conceptual impoverishment with respect to Indigenous approaches, reductions in their scope and even greater distortion in their application, often with perverse results. This explains the need for successive Indigenous marches with constant approaches over time, but also with different emphases or new elements according to the progress made, challenges faced and political contexts.

Persistent demands include:

1. The legal recognition of Indigenous territories, first through the filing of lawsuits, then through claims with regard to the land regularisation, titling and compensation process and, finally, through the expropriation and return of third party lands and the provision of State lands. The process of titling Indigenous Native Peasant Territories has slowed down since 2012. Up to that point, an estimated 22,201,175 ha had been titled in the country, of which 13,853,065 ha were in the lowlands and 8,348,110 ha in the highlands (Paye, Arteaga, Ramírez & Ormachea, 2013). In many cases, the submission of territorial demands to regularisation processes has meant that, in areas with a significant presence of “third parties”, the titled territories are relatively small and disjointed spaces, creating great challenges for their management.
2. Recognition of Indigenous forms of self-government and autonomy, with self-determination as a principle. In this process, the demand for autonomy has multiple and not always coinciding meanings ranging from State recognition of Indigenous territories as politico-administrative jurisdictions and recipients of public funds to political independence and the *de facto* exercise of self-government, often based on their own territorial management. The conditions imposed in terms of size, population concentration, not affecting the jurisdictional boundaries of the municipalities and political alignment with the government have all meant that, in the last 11 years, only two Indigenous territories, both coinciding with municipalities, have obtained recognition as Indigenous autonomies in the Bolivian lowlands: Charagua Iyambae and Kereimba Iyambae, both belonging to the Guaraní people.
3. Political participation: recognition of different means of political representation and positions in State bodies. In the first case, the tension between representation through political parties and the Indigenous peoples’ demands to be represented through their own representative

forms is notable, and it must be recognised that this has made significant gains in both legislation and political life. However, this demand is gradually being diluted by the fact that they are being co-opted into political parties. In fact, in 2004, electoral legislation recognised equal conditions to political parties, Indigenous peoples and citizen groups to participate in a number of electoral processes as representative entities. CIDOB thus participated in its own name. Nevertheless, electoral preferences, the dominance of political parties and citizen groups, and the co-opting of Indigenous leaders has all, in practice, made the option of Indigenous peoples' direct representation all but disappear. With regard to representative positions in the State, the presence of Indigenous men and women has increased significantly in recent years. At the same time, however, this participation has become a mechanism for co-opting and often alienating leaders from their Indigenous bases.

4. The exclusive right to conserve, manage and use the natural resources that form part of their territories, as opposed to the State tradition of managing natural resources sectorally and superimposing different forms of rights and subjects on the same geographical spaces, which has only been achieved for renewable natural resources. Through recognition in the Constitution and specific legislation, Indigenous peoples' right to exclusive access to and use of the renewable natural resources on their territories has been established.
5. Consolidation of the right to free, prior and informed good-faith consultation in national legislation. Despite its constitutional recognition and specific legislation in this regard, implementation of this right, as enshrined in ILO Convention 169 and expressed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, remains one of the greatest challenges. Externally-designed procedures and their malicious application have become a mechanism for internally dividing many Indigenous territories and communities. One of the greatest challenges relates to confusion over the definition of legal subjects. For example, the new Constitution recognises a unique category of subjects of rights known as "Indigenous Original Peasant People" (IPOC). This dilutes the clear distinction between each of these groups who, as we have seen, often have different and irreconcilable interests. This fact is particularly noticeable when exercising the right to free, prior and informed consultation on Indigenous territories with peasant settlers who are sometimes living adjacent to them and sometimes even settled among them. Being included as the same legal subject as the Indigenous peoples, as defined by the concept of IPOC, means these peasants end up imposing their will on that of the Indigenous peoples. The replacement of free, prior and informed consultation, recognised as a right of Indigenous peoples, with "public consultation", which recognises multiple social actors, often with conflicting interests, is becoming a mechanism for denying the will of Indigenous peoples and is a focus of conflict.

## INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS IN BOLIVIA

Other demands, for example, those relating to culture, conservation and the revival of Indigenous languages, are making significant progress with the establishment of an Institute of Language and Culture by each of the 36 Indigenous peoples recognised in the country. These institutions have, in many cases, become the true promoters of an appreciation of Indigenous cultures and languages.

Events such as those of the eighth march for the defence of TIPNIS show that one of the greatest challenges relates to the insufficient discussion and positioning of Indigenous peoples with regard to development models, their purpose and implications in their multiple economic, social and cultural dimensions.

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# BARBADOS AND BRAZILIAN ANTHROPOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

João Pacheco de Oliveira



## Introduction

The *Declaration of Barbados* criticised the way in which nation states, religious missions and anthropologists related to Indigenous peoples in Latin America. However, each country showed distinct characteristics in relation to these three dimensions, as well as in their interconnections. In Brazil, for example, in addition to an Indigenous agency that dates back more than seventy years, there was an ideology (Rondonian indigenism) with broad social support that attributed the function of humanitarian protection vis-à-vis Indigenous peoples to the state, which enabled the legitimisation of tutelary practices and the naturalisation of paternalistic domination. The Catholic church in general maintained a very hierarchical and conservative stance, where in large part the innovative initiatives of missionary work – Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI) and Operation Anchieta (OPAN) – were specifically associated with the Indigenous peoples and were based on the theology of liberation. Although the number of anthropologists in the country was small, they had been organised as a professional association since 1953 and were active in universities, including two postgraduate programmes in anthropology at the National Museum and the University of São Paulo. The 1964 military coup, which lasted 21 years, drastically redesigned these three areas of activity and their internal interconnections. A new approximation began between Brazil and Latin America, on the one hand resulting from the military dictatorships and the imposition of an economic and political alignment with the United States, and on the other, due to the national liberation movements and counter-hegemonic actions that occurred on a global level.

## Brazil in 1971

In 1971, Brazil was living under a military dictatorship. Trade unions, student guilds and cultural associations were prohibited or under intervention; newspapers and the media were under rigorous censorship. Political groups that opposed the regime were imprisoned, dead or missing, some were abroad. Student struggles

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1 Translated by Philip Badiz

and urban protests had been silenced through strong repression. The congress functioned as decoration, unable to legislate on budgetary or 'national security' issues. Civil rights issues, when they arose, were resolved by military courts. An apparent economic development, expressed in increased GDP, was presented by the media as 'the Brazilian miracle' and anaesthetised the middle class.

Indigenous politics consisted of the sedentarisation of Indigenous peoples under the administration of (often military) officials in small units, called Indigenous Posts, where they would remain separated from the expansion fronts and enter a process of acculturation considered to be slow and spontaneous. Such actions were described in a highly idealised manner through the saga of contacts made in the first decades of the century by Marshal Rondon, creator of the Indian Protection Service (SPI). The Indigenous Park of the Xingú, established in 1955 and maintained under the strict supervision of the Vilas-Boas brothers, was the showcase of indigenism, visited by ambassadors, artists, and documentarians.

Contrary to this romanticised national self-representation, in 1968, a parliamentary commission of inquiry reported hundreds of cases of officials involved in the sale of land, coercive forms of labour exploitation, and the imprisonment, torture and death of Indigenous people. This led to the extinction of the SPI and the creation of a new Indigenous agency, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), however, this would have a similar structure and purpose.

Universities continued to operate, but subject to rigid administrative control and deeply affected by the dismissal of leading researchers in different areas of knowledge. The climate was one of fear and insecurity. One relatively acceptable alternative of expansion was the implementation of specialisation courses of a technical nature, aimed at professional qualification. Proposals for the creation of postgraduate courses tried to occupy this space in the best manner possible, investing in a new standard of professionalisation inspired by bibliographies and themes from hegemonic centres in Europe and the United States. Anthropology was no exception, and followed this alternative, creating postgraduate programmes in Rio de Janeiro (1968), São Paulo (1968) and Brasilia (1972), associating teaching and research. These postgraduate students faced enormous administrative difficulties and suspicion from the military authorities.

Given this scenario, it was very difficult for Brazilian anthropologists to have a more active presence in the dissemination of the Barbados meeting or its developments and implications, either through debates in the classroom or by quoting the resulting document in their texts and research projects. The Indigenous issue, as well as the Amazon, were classified by security organisations as matters of military interest; the use of expressions like ethnocide and genocide led to the immediate classification of the document as 'subversive' and made it a subject of persecution for anyone who mentioned it or kept

copies. The impacts of Barbados on Brazil can in no way be measured according to citation management tools or bibliographic references. The *Declaration of Barbados* could not have an explicit, direct, and immediate repercussion among practitioners of anthropology at that juncture.

### **Darcy's unique position**

Darcy Ribeiro, the only Brazilian signatory to the Declaration, was bitterly living a long period of exile at the time, beginning with the 1964 military coup, during which he resided and worked in different Latin American countries. His eventual return to Brazil only happened in 1976, but even after this his activities and contacts continued to be monitored and severely restricted by information services.

Even in discussions and interviews which touched on the Indigenous issue, Darcy rarely referred to Barbados, and always expressed immense admiration for the former official Indigenous agency, the Indian Protection Service (SPI) and its creator, Marshal Rondon, to whom he dedicated one of his foremost books. He was an advocate and convinced disseminator of a tutelary and state indigenism, implemented by republican governments prior to the military coup. For the current reader, one passage from the Barbados document seems to explicitly contemplate a Brazilian specificity: 'The state must define the specific national public instance that will be responsible for relations with the surviving ethnic entities in its territory'.

With the gradual process of amnesty, his political rights were re-established and he began a trajectory linked to Leonel Brizola and the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), which led him to become a senator and deputy governor of Rio de Janeiro. Only decades later was Darcy Ribeiro reintegrated into the university faculty and immediately retired due to his age, without ever exercising the role of professor and without participating in postgraduate programmes, tutoring, or coordinating research in anthropology.

Although he was actively involved in the creation of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA) in 1953, at the time of his return to the country in the 1970s – after a decade without appearing at meetings due to the military regime – Darcy did not return to an active role within the entity. Even though his books circulated quite a bit among an unspecialised audience, they were not frequently read in the bibliographies of courses in masters or doctoral programmes.

### **Reaching Indigenous villages**

The impact of the *Declaration of Barbados* on Brazilian anthropology came indirectly through the action of the Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI). This body was linked to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), an

entity that, together with the others (including the Order of Brazilian Lawyers (OAB) and the Brazilian Press Association (ABI)), sought to defend individual freedoms against arbitrary actions by the executive branch. The CIMI, inspired by liberation theology and left-wing thinkers, held courses and seminars, edited books and magazines, and quickly identified with the Barbados document based on its criticism of the nefarious action of conservative churches. The first publication I was able to locate on the document in Portuguese was made in a book published in 1981 by the theologian Paulo Suess, who was general secretary of the CIMI.

Such discussions were not limited to the intellectual and university environment, rather they were based on a national structure of the Catholic Church and were expressed in elementary actions of the 'basic ecclesial communities'. Thus, the CIMI was at the root of the first mobilisations of Indigenous peoples in the country, acting through the organisation of dozens of Indigenous assemblies in different areas of Brazil. The first Indigenous assembly took place in Mato Grosso in 1974 and the last, at the end of military rule (1985). The Barbados ideals were present in initiatives that had as their theme: 'the liberation of Indigenous populations has to be accomplished by themselves, or it ceases to be liberation.'<sup>2</sup> (Barbados, 1971).

The tutelary regime imposed on villages a domination that was paternalistic and monopolising in nature, which avoided informing Indigenous peoples of anything beyond the interests of the administration. It exclusively used old chiefs as mediators, with whom officials maintained a relationship of tutelage and whom they certified as 'traditional authorities'.

In contrast, the Indigenous assemblies organised by the CIMI sought to mobilise the entire collective, informing the inhabitants about their rights and stimulating discussions on their needs with the broadest participation. The issue of land always played a central role, as did education and medical care. Such issues, which coincided with the recommendations of the Barbados document, and the way in which they were dealt with, without the intervention of officials or other white people, became commonplace in the political life of the villages, remaining a permanent inspiration for the current Indigenous movement.

### **Developments in anthropology**

Also present at the Barbados meeting were three young Brazilian anthropologists, who for reasons of personal security did not sign the Declaration. They were

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2 Here I use a translation of the original text of the document, written in Spanish. The translation that has been widely circulated from a book in English is different, and to me it seems less faithful to the strong tone of the *Declaration of Barbados*: 'That Indians organize and lead their own liberation movement is essential, or it ceases to be liberating' (Dostal, 1972).

Silvio Coelho dos Santos, from Florianópolis (Santa Catarina, SC), quite close to Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira with whom he trained in the specialisation course organised at the National Museum-UFRJ (1963), who was pursuing his doctorate at the University of Sao Paulo (1972); Pedro Agostinho da Silva, Portuguese by birth but based in Bahia, who completed his master's degree at the University of Brasilia (1968); and Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto, very close to Darcy Ribeiro, and who worked in the Indigenous agency, but who had little presence in the university. Following the trajectories of the first two can help us understand the indirect impacts that the document had on Brazilian anthropology, as well as showing how the discipline was structured in the country, while indicating regional specificities.

The first, Silvio Coelho dos Santos, always had ties to the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), which he entered in the 1960s and had a prominent presence, introducing the area of anthropology. Much later, in 1985, he was the coordinator of the postgraduate programme (master's degree) in Social Anthropology at UFSC. He conducted field research with the Xokleng Indians (SC), publishing several studies on them (Santos, 1973 and 1997). He also participated in applied projects oriented by environmental issues, particularly the impacts of dam construction on Indigenous people. In the 1980s, he organised two major meetings on Anthropology and Law at UFSC, which resulted in important compilations for the approximation of the two disciplines. He was very active in the ABA and was its president from 1992–1994.

The second, Pedro Agostinho da Silva, was professor of anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) from the 1970s onward. He was one of the creators of a commission to support Indigenous peoples (National Association for Indigenous Action, Bahia (ANAI-BA)) and with his students (and later professional colleagues), he organised a research centre (Research Programme on Indigenous Peoples of the Brazilian Northeast (PINEB)) on the Indigenous peoples of the state. He was the editor of the first compilation of articles on the Indigenous peoples of Bahia (Agostinho, 1988), though he conducted his initial research in Xingu Indigenous Park (1968) and then studied many aspects of Bahian popular culture. There he initiated a field investigation with the Pataxó Hã hã hãe, later continued by his main disciple and collaborator, Maria Rosário Gonçalves de Carvalho.

As early as the 1970s, the third, Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto, became the director of the Indian Museum, an organ linked to the FUNAI, where he created an Indigenous Documentation Centre, gathering materials related to the old SPI located in the scattered regional units. He produced a thesis on Indigenous administration and legislation in the Empire (nineteenth century) and published a book on the incorporation of Indigenous peoples into Amazonian society in the eighteenth century (Moreira Neto, 1988).

An approximation between the first two trajectories is of particular interest. Both were professors at public universities outside the Rio–São Paulo–Brasília axis, where the first graduate programmes were created<sup>3</sup>. They developed or stimulated research linked to the defence of the interests of Indigenous peoples in their states: Silvio Coelho through direct research with the Xokleng, Pedro Agostinho through a team of PINEB students and colleagues. Both shared an acute awareness of ethical commitments in the exercise of anthropology, a topic that – anticipating Barbados by two decades – was present in the discussions that led to the creation of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology, above all through the interventions of Darcy Ribeiro and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira.

The most active and influential Brazilian anthropologist of this period was Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, creator of the postgraduate programme in Social Anthropology (PPGAS) at the National Museum, coordinator of the PPGAS in Brasília for 15 years, and following his retirement, he was also a professor at Campinas (Sao Paulo, SP), at the University of São Paulo (USP) and CEPPAC-UNB<sup>4</sup>, and president of the ABA (1984-1986). He was not present in Barbados, although in his works it was possible to perceive (in addition to the ethical concerns mentioned above) many important aspects of convergence between the Barbados document and his own work.

Circumstantial reasons may have caused that absence: during this period, he was moving from Rio de Janeiro to Harvard, where in February 1971, he would begin a one-year postdoctoral fellowship with David Maybury-Lewis. At the time, the latter was a central figure in American anthropology, and was the founder of Cultural Survival, an entity constituted to call anthropologists to account concerning their social responsibilities with the studied populations. In 1976, Roberto Cardoso talked about a collaboration between anthropologists and the communities they studied through an ‘action anthropology’, as imagined in the frameworks developed by Sol Tax (1975).

In 1981, Roberto Cardoso participated in the meeting organised by UNESCO on the rights of Indigenous peoples, in which the Declaration of San José<sup>5</sup> was drawn up, which he signed together with some of the participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Barbados, including Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, Victor Daniel Bonilla

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3 As mentioned earlier, the master’s degree in Anthropology at UFSC was implemented in 1985, while at UFBA, the master’s degree in Social Sciences only began in 1990, and that of Anthropology in 2007.

4 CEPPAC: *Centro de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação sobre as Américas* [Research Centre and Postgraduate Programme on the Americas], now the Department of Latin American Studies (ELA), University of Brasília (UNB).

5 Declaration of San José, UNESCO, Digital Library. [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000049951\\_spa](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000049951_spa). Accessed on Aug. 30, 2020.

and Stefano Varese. Therein ethnocide, characterised as 'cultural genocide', is defined as a crime under international law and referred to in the United Nations Convention on Genocide (1948). In a written paper on indigenism (1972), he repeatedly refers to this document, to which he attaches special importance.

### **Seeds: new experiences in ethnography**

A younger generation of researchers, who began their studies in the aforementioned postgraduate programmes, had dilemmas and responses very similar to those advocated by the *Declaration of Barbados* in their careers. On the other hand, as a way of exercising anthropology, these young people shaped a new experience of long field research, establishing a strong awareness of and commitment to Indigenous people. A different horizon began to be drawn regarding research conducted with Indigenous peoples, mobilising graduate students not only on strictly academic issues, but also on initiatives that sought the well-being of these populations.

This is true in my case, since in 1971, I was still pursuing an undergraduate degree in Sociology at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Rio de Janeiro. In 1973, I entered the master's degree at the University of Brasilia (UNB) and the following year I started research with the Ticuna people (Amazonas, AM). For a short period of two years, FUNAI showed interest in collaborating with UNB anthropologists. Thus, intervention projects were developed by some of my teachers, all of them foreigners: David Price for the Nambikwara (Rondonia, RO), Peter Silverwood-Cope (Rio Negro) and Kenneth Taylor (Yanomami). Relying on these programmes, FUNAI's intention was to capture resources from the National Integration Programme (*Programa de Integração Nacional*, PIN) for its actuation in Indigenous areas that would be traversed by the Transamazonian and Northern Perimeter highways. Due to the international oil crisis, the construction of these roads made little progress and the budgets allocated to them were suspended; in fact, closure of these projects was demanded by sectors of the indigenist agency, uncomfortable with the objectives and methods they had established.

In my fieldwork, I was able to verify the heavy domination that Indigenous peoples suffered from merchants who claimed to be the owners of the lands inhabited by them since the eighteenth century, as well as hearing the dramatic stories of my interlocutors about the violence and terror of the rubber tappers. On the occasion of an extensive census of the Ticuna population, I was able to learn about the diversity of situations that they lived in<sup>6</sup>, which led to the outline of an alternative assistance programme that the Indigenous agency undertook

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6 This experience was also essential for proposing an ethnographic approach to historical situations, which in my master's dissertation (1977) was intended to combine the study of variations in culture with ecological contexts and interethnic domination.

to fulfil, the so-called Ticuna Project (1975-76) (Pacheco de Oliveira, 1987). Therein, almost all the recommendations of the Barbados document regarding the desirable form of action of the Brazilian State were included in the paper.

This project generated some important changes in the status of Indigenous peoples and created an immense programme which, despite being implemented slowly and in a disorderly manner, replaced the absence of administrative planning and made it difficult to exercise a misguided, tutelary posture. Due to the direct impact it had<sup>7</sup>, establishing a unit of assistance for Indigenous peoples within the most powerful and violent *seringal*<sup>8</sup> in the region, it instituted a strong bond of trust, collaboration, and friendship with leaders of many Indigenous villages. Many of them would later form the General Council of the Ticuna Tribe (*Conselho Geral da Tribo Ticuna*, CGTT) (1981), the first locally and ethnically based Indigenous organisation created in Brazil. This association was one that led to the struggle for land, eventually concluded in 1992 with the demarcation of almost one million hectares (Pacheco de Oliveira, 1987), the parallel development of education programmes in an Indigenous language, and the founding of the Maguta Museum<sup>9</sup>.

A short time later, a new demand arrived at the UNB. The government of the newly created state of Acre had asked the FUNAI for information and intervention in Indigenous affairs. The Indigenous agency, which had been almost completely absent in the state, became interested in supporting a preliminary investigation of the Indigenous populations. The study conducted on the Kaxinawá by Terri Vale de Aquino, a former colleague from PUC-RJ, who was also studying his master's degree at UNB, was essential for all the Indigenous actions realised in Acre, official or otherwise. The Acre Pro-Indian Commission (CPI-AC), founded in 1979 with his participation, began to develop important projects to support the Indigenous movement in the area of intercultural education, and more recently in the area of environmental management.

Terri de Aquino also had a great influence on the development of ethnographic works and research in collaboration with Indigenous peoples (Aquino, 1977), as well as through those who continued to consolidate a new pattern of Indigenous research and action<sup>10</sup>. He also put into practice a rather original narrative experience about the Indigenous peoples of Acre, as a result of chronicles and articles produced over almost two decades (Aquino, 2013).

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7 In addition to the academic products, see Pacheco de Oliveira, 1977 and 1987.

8 A *seringal* is an area of *jebe* (*Hevea Brasiliensis*) extraction, named after of the most extracted species in Brazil, *seringa*. Footnote added by Spanish translator María Rossi.

9 Maguta were the first men, fished from the Evare creek by cultural hero Dyoi. During the mobilisations of the 1980s, the term was assumed as a self-denomination, and later used to name the museum created in 1991. For a story of this museum, see Pacheco de Oliveira, 2012.

10 Both works, conducted as part of the PPGAS-MN, were oriented by João Pacheco de Oliveira.

Seeking to resolve administrative problems that were being outlined in other regions, the FUNAI contacted the USP. A few of Professor Lux Vidal's<sup>11</sup> students were encouraged to conduct research in regions where the Indigenous administration was faced with some new challenges.

In one case it was the tenacious insistence of Guarani families from Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), relocated by the FUNAI to existing Indigenous reserves, to return to their former lands, now under the control of farmers who claimed to have property titles. Rubem Thomaz of Almeida ('Rubinho') was initially visiting the Guarani of Paraguay and got to know the Paí-Taviter Project (PPT). There he established strong bonds of friendship with George and Paz Grunberg, thus making contact with the principles of Barbados.

Interrupting his studies, Thomaz de Almeida established himself in Mato Grosso do Sul, where he created a non-governmental organisation (NGO), known as the Kaiowá-Ñandevá project (PKÑ), which supported agricultural activities developed by Indigenous peoples through the distribution of seeds and subsidies, and contributed to making the stabilisation of local groups ('tekoha') viable. He later entered the master's degree of the PPGAS-National Museum and his dissertation consisted of a dense analytical recovery of that experience (Almeida, 2001). His research continued through the work of Fabio Mura (Mura, 2019), Alexandra Barbosa and, in particular, Indigenous anthropologist Tonico Benites (2012), all professors/teachers and PhDs by the PPGAS-National Museum, under the academic supervisor João Pacheco de Oliveira. Rubinho died in 2018 and, in fulfilment of his wishes, was buried in the Indigenous land of the Kaiowá (Barbosa da Silva, 2018).

In another case, the issue that initially prompted the approximation of the FUNAI was the passage of railways and electric transmission lines, derived from the extraction of minerals in the Grande Carajás region, through Indigenous areas of Maranhão (MA) and Pará (PA). In these types of circumstance there were resources for FUNAI and for Indigenous peoples, from the compensation paid by Vale do Rio Doce, a state-owned company responsible for the Carajás steel project. The young students involved were Gilberto Azanha, Maria Elisa Ladeira and Lara Ferraz, who conducted research and indigenist action, respectively, the first two among the Krahô (MA) and the third among the Gavião (PA).

Similarly, in this case an NGO was created, the Indigenous Work Centre (*Centro de Trabalho Indígena*, CTI), transferring resources for small projects developed with these and other peoples<sup>12</sup>. Gilberto Azanha defended his master's dissertation

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11 For a profile of the activities of Lux Vidal's activities and his students, see Tilkin Gallois, 2010.

12 Other than students, Maria Inês Ladeira, Virginia Valadão and the photographer Vincent Carelli, among others, also participated in the CTI at different times. Consequently, the CTI

at the USP on the Krahô (MA) (Azanha, 1984) and María Elisa Ladeira defended her doctoral thesis in Sociolinguistics on aspects of Terena education (Ladeira, 2001). Iara Ferraz, also oriented by João Pacheco de Oliveira, continued her work on her PhD at the PPGAS-National Museum (Ferraz, 1998)<sup>13</sup>.

In 1978, an initiative by the Interior Minister of General Geisel's government proposed by decree the 'emancipation of the Indians' (in fact he intended to withdraw their rights of access to collective lands). The political context was already very different from that of the beginning of the decade, with greater freedom of expression and association, and relative strengthening of political parties and electoral processes. The text of the decree provoked extensive public reactions, especially among university students, journalists, and lawyers, all concerned with the protection of civil rights against an authoritarian and repressive government.

In the following years, several Brazilian cities strengthened or formed permanent Indigenous support groups and commissions, which assumed the most diverse forms. Some of these, over time, became the main Indigenous NGOs (ANAI-RS, CTI-SP, ISA, ANAI-BA, CPI-Acre). The CIMI was a fundamental part of this mobilisation, together with other associations linked to the Catholic, Lutheran and Ecumenical Churches, as was the case with Operation Anchieta (OPAN, more recently renamed Operation Native Amazon), the Ecumenical Centre for Documentation and Information (CEDI, whose Indigenous group created the ISA, Socio-Environmental Institute) and the Mission Council among Indigenous Peoples (COMIN).

Due to the negative reactions it aroused at the national and international level, the emancipation decree was suspended and was never approved or implemented by the government. However, the responses it generated created an important political banner – the demarcation of Indigenous lands – that was very well received by public opinion, becoming a collective and unquestionable right of these populations. Likewise, the young students of anthropology and social sciences no longer aligned themselves with the principles of indigenism defended by the former SPI and disseminated by Darcy Ribeiro, much less with those put into practice by the FUNAI.

### **Post '88**

The new generation of those interested in Indigenous issues began to create alternatives to official indigenism through NGOs and research related to

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developed Indigenous activities among other peoples in Mato Grosso do Sul, the Amazon, and in the southeast. Among these, it is worth highlighting in particular Maria Inês Ladeira, who conducted extensive research with the Mbiá-Guarani on the Atlantic coast.

13 There were other rich experiences that articulated research and intervention that, in a report like this, by nature a synthesis, there is no room to include and for which I apologize in advance.

Indigenous demands. The so-called 'democratic transition' (1980 – 1984) ended in 1985 with the establishment of the first civilian government. A period of reorganisation of democratic institutions followed, with the convocation of a national constituent assembly. The 1988 Constitution inaugurated a new judicial order that would impact the establishment of complementary legislation and progressive adequation of administrative norms and procedures.

In the following two decades (1990s and 2000s), new forces came to act in defence of Indigenous demands. The Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (*Procuradoria-Geral da República*, PGR), now transformed into a monitoring body for law enforcement (and of the executive itself), began to closely monitor compliance with Indigenous legislation, especially demanding from the FUNAI commitment and adjustment in the realisation of constitutional precepts.

In parallel, European environmentalism put increasing pressure on environmental protection for the Amazon, which led to the establishment of international cooperation programmes for the demarcation and protection of Indigenous lands (including within FUNAI itself). Indigenous peoples and organisations, recognised as full subjects of rights, began to appear in large numbers and become eligible for funding in projects by international cooperation agencies.

Non-governmental organisations became the potential mediators in these articulations, allowing them to compete with state agencies. To adapt to new financing demands, which were no longer focused on the protection of human rights, but on the defence of environmental resources and ethnodevelopment, NGOs were encouraged to gradually professionalise their key staff and to frequent international arenas of debate.

Obviously such social and political change had consequences for universities, research, and the teaching of anthropology. During the military regime, field research with Indigenous peoples was difficult to conduct: it was expensive, involved field work, and there were no funding channels specifically for social science research<sup>14</sup>. At the end of the 1980s and continuing into the following decade, specific sources for the financing of more ambitious, collective scientific projects emerged. This happened at the National Museum (Ford Foundation, FINEP and CNPq) and at USP (FAPESP)<sup>15</sup>.

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14 A reflection of this was that the area with the highest concentration of dissertations in the PPGAS-National Museum was that of urban anthropology, which used the very city of Rio de Janeiro as a laboratory.

15 The Funding Authority for Studies and Projects (FINEP), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP). All of these are public agencies.

However, the paths frequented by the newly formed research teams were highly distinct. Some anthropologists returned to strictly academic guidelines, in dialogue particularly with French structuralism, seeking the insertion of the new Brazilian production (preferentially classified as 'ethnological' in an effort to differentiate it from other lines of research in Brazilian anthropology) within the international circuit of 'Americanism'. In most cases, such works had little or no interference in the public sphere, did not bring about any changes in the work of anthropology, and had no implications in the construction of new themes, objects, or research methods, which continued to be dictated by the orientations and agendas of the metropolitan anthropologies.

Others, in contrast, stimulated by Barbados, by various movements within world anthropology (outside the circuit of Americanist studies), by national thinkers, and naturally by the Brazilian experiences of the 1970s and 80s, developed an historical approach and maintained an acute sympathy with the political situation. For a generation of anthropologists that began their academic life in the 1980s, a new continent for scientific research opened up, as a result of political and intellectual challenges, completely different from the culturalist approaches realised in the past or put into practice in arbitrary, superficial research dictated exclusively by international agendas and idioms.

### **An anthropology inspired by the challenges of its time**

A passage from the Barbados document goes so far as to postulate just that: 'It is up to the anthropologist [...] to turn to the local reality and theorise from this, in order to overcome the subordinate condition of mere verifiers of alien theories'<sup>16</sup>. This is an issue that was frequently addressed by Darcy Ribeiro in interviews and debates<sup>17</sup>.

It is important to emphasise, however, that studies such as those he then demanded were in fact conducted within universities, in a dialogue with other thematic areas of world anthropology (political anthropology, ethnicity,

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16 Here too, I preferred, for reasons already mentioned above, to follow a direct translation from the original Spanish. The version circulating in English reads: 'anthropologists have an obligation [...] to generate new concepts and explanatory categories from the local and national social reality in order to overcome the subordinate situation of the anthropologist regarded as the mere "verifier" of alien theories' (Dostal, 1972).

17 In a recent article entitled 'Protegendo os índios e descolonizando a pesquisa' [Protecting Indians and decolonising research] (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2020) I return to the heated debate established in the early 1980s between Darcy Ribeiro and Roberto da Matta, then coordinator of the PPGAS-National Museum. For the former, a portion of anthropologists were mechanically transplanting the production conditions of their metropolitan colleagues, trying to repeat scientific patterns and theories that did not provide answers to Brazilian dilemmas.

anthropology of colonialism, history of science, and critical thinking). In this text, it is worth remembering some of the new objects and research topics developed by this second group to which, naturally, I belong.

The most encompassing issue was the disputes and social processes that involved the formation of ethnic territories. At the National Museum, from 1986 to 1994, with the support of the Ford Foundation and the CNPq, a project to monitor Indigenous lands (*Projeto de Estudo sobre Terras Indígenas*, PETI) was conducted, which involved a broad survey of all the documentation related to the matter that was in the archives of the FUNAI, the SPI, the National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), other public entities, and newspapers. Books and journals were published, four atlases and a dozen dissertations and theses were conceived within this broad research movement.

The general focus was on territorialisation processes, that is, how Indigenous families and groups relate to the territory, transforming it based on a political community, a cultural identity, and shared resources (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2016). This instituted a new field of study within Brazilian anthropology, as opposed to a synchronous, objectifying approach strictly related to the isolated study of cultures.

As was evident in a recent dossier that contains studies on ten Indigenous peoples throughout the country (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2018), investigations conducted based on the context of the struggle to establish ethnic territories reveal aspects that are completely absent in Americanist studies. Therein, culture and social organisation no longer appear as manifestations of the sheer resilience of an ancestral tradition, but rather as complex processes of updating memories in transformed social contexts. In other words, as dynamic phenomena that require referral to conflicts that have occurred on multiple scales, as well as the study of strategies and political-identity projects elaborated by these collectivities.

Considering that the important process of ethnogenesis of Indigenous populations in various regions of the country helped radically alter the representation of Indigenous peoples in Brazil, which can no longer be confined to small, isolated populations in the Amazon rainforest, but rather requires encompassing peasant populations that reassume cultural identities and become political subjects of great importance to the current Indigenous movement (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2004).

A second point was the emergence of another genre of academic production, so-called 'reports' and 'anthropological expertise'. The demand for these studies arose from the administrative processes for the recognition of Indigenous lands, which required that the proposed delimitation of a parcel of national territory was carefully justified in anthropological studies that unequivocally demonstrated the right of an Indigenous community to the claimed area.

Since such studies sought to subsidise decisions of executive or judicial power, they were made public and discussed extensively by lawyers and specialists hired by those who opposed these demands. Frequently, the so-called 'Indigenous land identification reports' were pieces containing very strong ethnographic data and analyses of extreme relevance about the social organisation and culture of that population. Because of their length, ethnographic consistency, and compiled documentation, such works were similar to or greater than master's dissertations.

In the majority of cases, the ABA had some involvement in these processes, recommending the most qualified anthropologists to provide such expertise, as well as organising debates in universities, symposia, and congresses, from which various publications resulted (Pacheco de Oliveira, Mura and Silva, 2015). Similar studies were also conducted for the definition of areas belonging to *quilombola* communities<sup>18</sup> and traditional populations.

The third focus of study sought in-depth understanding of the relations of domination. The ties of economic and political dependency forged between the Indigenous communities and the Indigenous agency were considered through the notion of 'tutelary regime' (Pacheco de Oliveira, 1988), whose specificity resulted from a benevolent rhetoric of 'protection and assistance', referring to supposedly fraternal and humanitarian principles. If its apparent legitimacy was derived from this, its power derived from a radical division of humanity into 'contemporary' and 'primitive', between national and tribal subjects, which assured the former the exercise of an autocratic, arbitrary mandate conceived as natural.

The uniqueness of the 'tutelary regime' derived from a constitutive paradox, in which indigenists sometimes protected, sometimes repressed, sometimes defended the interests of the ward, or those of third parties, such that for any of these alternatives, they were immune to the reactions of those who they allegedly represented.

Reflections on tutelage also inspired numerous ethnographic works and analyses on various aspects of Brazilian public administration. The notion of 'tutelary power', initially applied to the study of the SPI by Antonio Carlos de

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18 These are Afro-Brazilian communities that, according to Article 2 of Federal Decree 4887 of 2003, are considered to be remnants of the *quilombos*: 'ethnic-racial groups, according to self-attribution criteria, with their own historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with the presumption of black ancestry associated with resistance to the historical oppression suffered'. Said decree 'regulates the procedure for the identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation and titling of lands occupied by remnants of quilombo communities'. Footnote added by Spanish translator María Rossi.

Souza Lima (Souza Lima, 1994), was later applied by students he supervised in various studies on government institutions self-represented as philanthropic (to protect minors, women, and peripheral populations), and even international cooperation agencies. An anthropological understanding of the past and a dynamic awareness of the present are the marks of a Brazilian anthropology that is thought to be necessarily historical.

A fourth aspect to highlight is that the history of Brazil itself is being rethought based on studies on Indigenous peoples. A recent book clearly formulates that national formation can only be understood beginning with the relationship with Indigenous peoples, in a long chain of frontier situations that shape the institutions and practices that have come to characterise the country at present. The perplexities of the theories on Brazil, elaborated by historians and sociologists, can only be surmounted when Indigenous peoples are no longer the blind spot of these interpretations (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2019).

Transforming national self-representations is not something that can be achieved by a book or a theoretical approach. An inter-institutional and interdisciplinary project proposes re-examining, as a great collective task, what other support we can uncover concerning the national memory<sup>19</sup>. This is an activity that unites anthropologists, historians, writers, and educators, but that is being vastly potentiated with the incorporation of Indigenous intellectuals, teachers, and students.

Today, the number of Indigenous peoples who participate in teaching in university institutions already exceeds 50,000 (corresponding to around 6% of the Indigenous population). We already have some Indigenous anthropologists who have completed their doctorates and there are many more walking this path. For anthropology and science produced in the country, this provides an immense possibility for seeking original scientific development.

### **Two distinct repercussions of Barbados in Brazilian anthropology**

The *Declaration of Barbados* strongly opposed state policies and missionary actions that directly or indirectly caused the genocide or ethnocide of the Indigenous peoples of Latin America. It indicated guidance on how to move towards more just and democratic forms of coexistence, which would allow for changes in the status of Indigenous peoples within national states marked by structural racism and intolerance towards ethnic diversity. Today Indigenous peoples are much stronger and have more robust legal instruments for the protection of their rights<sup>20</sup>.

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19 See: [www.osbrasisesuasmemorias.com.br](http://www.osbrasisesuasmemorias.com.br) for more than two hundred Indigenous biographies available online.

20 However, the political and economic situation which we are entering in the third decade of the

The document also contained harsh criticism of a culturalist, conservative anthropology, which ignored the drama specifically experienced by Indigenous people. It defines scientism as that 'which negates any link between academic research and the fate of those peoples who constitute the object of this very investigation, thus evading the political responsibility that this knowledge entails'<sup>21</sup>. This critique goes far beyond the dominant attitude in some universities and museums that existed during the South and Central American dictatorships, and also applies to hegemonic centres of anthropology production, established in ancient or new colonial empires.

The Brazilian experience provides certain aspects upon which we can reflect with some benefit. The emergence of anthropology in the 1950s, materialised in an articulation between researchers that resulted in the founding of the ABA (1953), had already clarified the dimension of the responsibility of scientists and the ethical concern that should guide their work<sup>22</sup>. The most overt evidence of this was the suspension of ABA activities after the 1964 military coup; ABA congresses were only initiated again 12 years later (1976).

Despite persecution and restrictions within the same universities, teaching and research in anthropology continued as individual, isolated activities. In some places, at the National Museum, at USP, and in Brasilia, a new flourish occurred with the opening of postgraduate courses. Links with hegemonic anthropologies were activated, providing many benefits in the training of anthropologists, and stimulating new research. In contrast, the originality of the experience of the 1950s was left behind, its pioneering character rarely highlighted in terms of contemporary metropolitan anthropologies.

It is urgent that the development of the discipline in Brazil revisits its creative project, and that it does not disregard rich experiences, like those of action research from the 1970s and 80s – too often dismissed as extracurricular – that can indicate distinct ways of doing ethnography and producing anthropology.

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new millennium, unfortunately brings back many threats similar to those of the 1970s. Perhaps that is why the document continues to impact us to such an extent and should serve as reading for the generation of students who seek anthropology.

21 Here again, a direct translation from Spanish was inserted in the text. The translation circulating in English reads: 'which negates any relationship between academic research and the future of those peoples who form the object of such investigation, thus eschewing political responsibility which the relation contains and implies'. By changing the term '*destino*' (fate) to 'future', this translation really seems to weaken the sentence.

22 See Pacheco de Oliveira (2016) for an analysis of the ethical component present in the interventions of Darcy Ribeiro, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, and Eduardo Galvão, on the occasion of the first meetings of the ABA, and the subsequent social commitment that would become a constant brand of this entity, which always functioned as the place of creation of a collective subject and of the political voice of anthropologists as citizens.

Incorporating these heritages, in parallel with the practice of anthropology as a university discipline, only contributes to enriching it as a process of knowledge and transformation.

In some parts of Brazil where participants of the 1st Barbados meeting settled, the practice of the discipline acquired distinct marks. This is the case in the UFSC, which even today, with the diversification of objects and research topics, continues to reaffirm its ethical and political commitment to research as a feature of its programme. That of the UFBA, which continues to value the collective nature of the research and the social and political repercussions that arise from it, much like that which occurred in the ethnographic studies conducted at PINEB or the Centre for Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO).

Experiences that associated anthropological research with indigenist action, conducted by young graduates of the first postgraduate courses (1970s/80s), enabled the emergence of alternatives to the tutelary regime, instituting NGOs that had a long life and strong local roots, such as the Pro-Indian Commission in Acre, the PKÑ and the CTI.

However, repercussions at the academic level were limited, with difficulties in establishing a dialogue between their rich field experiences and the most critical debates held in metropolitan anthropologies or Brazilian postgraduate courses. Some work continued without direct communication with the anthropology practiced in postgraduate studies and did not become absorbed by public universities, nor even regional institutions. The exercise of an 'activist' stance (as it is called in the United States) continued to be translated in the teaching of the discipline as 'militant', 'committed' or 'practical anthropology' and was seen as less important than that for strictly academic purposes<sup>23</sup>.

One exception to this was the National Museum, where a research laboratory (PETI, then called the LACED, Research Laboratory on Ethnicity, Culture and Development) led to a favourable niche for the transmission of this knowledge, allowing the emergence of successive generations of researchers who inherited traditions and a common history (in the cases of the Guarani, Kaxinawá, Ticuna and Pataxó). In some cases, these lineages have already crossed the ethnic barrier and have incorporated Indigenous researchers.

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23 Today there is a curious association between research that defines itself as strictly academic and local support for highly professionalised NGOs, which establish practical mediations between researchers and Indigenous communities. The ethnographic encounter is thus doubly distilled from its political dimension, because of restrictions on the agenda imposed by the NGOs, which Ferguson (1995) describes as 'anti-political machines', and the alternatives of an academic nature.

## Final remarks

Anthropology has changed a great deal over the past five decades and there has been tremendous progress in how we conceive and talk about the other. These days, the exercise of the discipline allows for an active effort to incorporate and provide density to the voice of the other, making it possible to create more respectful, polyphonic texts.

Far from being intended as an exclusive exercise of reason, capable of inferring laws and making predictions, anthropology can also be thought of as an instrument of cultural criticism and the decolonisation of knowledge practices.

Criticism of the scientism of the discipline, contained in the Barbados document, was materialised by several authors in the same metropolitan, Indian, and African contexts, which thus forced the discipline to incorporate in its knowledge process subjects like colonised peoples, subalterns, and those who were different. It is not possible to list them here, but it is worth remembering that the processes of concealing the other, of annulling their history, and the many forms of objectification that accompanied the institutionalisation of anthropology were made evident.

To what extent can the criticism of scientism made in the Barbados document inspire us today? Despite the broad changes and new paths indicated for anthropology, the conditions for exercising the discipline in the first world sometimes lead to the re-editing of old attitudes camouflaged in the pragmatism of everyday expressions and in sophisticated theoretical elaborations. In congresses and debates, it is common for metropolitan anthropologies to continue to be described as 'mainstream', navigating in practices and institutions based on an unequal division of intellectual labour, and imagining their own transmutations (the 'turns') as universal tendencies. Some authors, like zealous guardians of time, still insist on asking: is an 'anthropology at home' possible?<sup>24</sup>

The processes of objectification of the other do not occur exclusively in the metropolitan universe, they are also expressed in Latin America and in Brazil and possess specificities that should be highlighted. Research in Brazil that focuses on so-called 'radical alterity' often results in 'radical othering', in which Indigenous peoples are stripped of their political and existential protagonism, becoming mere objects of academic admiration.

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24 There are many conservative assumptions within the discussion concerning an 'anthropology at home' (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2019), even more if we take into account that current anthropology deals with a broad range of phenomena and objects frequently located within the researcher's society. This doubt looms threateningly over Indigenous anthropologists and members of many other subordinate and discriminated social groups.

Conversely, it is important to discover the political within the most academic of debates. The challenge for the future is to seek to construct an anthropology that is conceived as a radically dialogical experience and that is in fact aware of its historical, situated character. May it begin to view world history more globally and to rethink the Eurocentric foundations of anthropology itself.

Even the important changes of recent decades in anthropology seem timid in light of the challenge set out in 1971. 'The anthropology now required in Latin America is not that which considers Indigenous populations as mere objects of study, but rather that perceives them as colonised peoples and commits to their struggle for liberation'<sup>25</sup>. The category of 'liberation', common in the political and philosophical lexicon of the 1960s and 70s, sounds powerful and seductive. It reminds us that anthropology requires not only an openness to the other, but also a transformation of the act of knowledge itself, departing from an objectifying stance towards one that is autonomist and libertarian.

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25 Once again, the translation was made directly from the original in Spanish. The circulating English version of the Barbados document reads: 'The anthropology now required in Latin America is not that which relates to Indians as objects of study, but rather that which perceives the colonial situation and commits itself to the struggle for liberation'. Again, the translation seems to diminish the impact of the Spanish text, which clearly speaks of 'colonised peoples' and commitment to the struggles of these peoples.

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# THE CONGRESS OF AMUESHA COMMUNITIES (1969-1981): A COLLECTIVE DREAM OF SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE SELVA CENTRAL OF PERU

**Richard Chase Smith**



## **Introduction: The Sources, Both Oral and Scarce**

During the past five decades, a lot has been written and filmed regarding the exotic nature of Amazonian Indigenous peoples, about their contribution to biodiversity conservation, and about their precarious future. Without doubt, these efforts have been important to remind the modern and urban world that small societies that are different from our own continue to exist. But the growing networks of hundreds, even thousands, of new organizations created by these same Indigenous peoples during the same period to protect their world and defend themselves from acts of aggressive invasion and ideological proselytizing have not been well documented nor have they gained much attention. The academic fields of anthropology, sociology and history have not considered these developments legitimate foci for researchers and their students; only recently have the political sciences given them a few moments of legitimacy (Brysk 2000; Larsen 2015).

The lack of documentation of this aspect of Indigenous peoples in the recent decades is now a hindrance for the construction of a critical history of these widespread political movements. But it is still possible to recover information and observations from the memory of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and observers who have been close to these movements, as well as from their collections of documents produced along the way and hopefully filed away. This article looks closely at how the first such organization in Peru, the Congress of Amuesha Communities, came to life in the Selva Central in 1969 along with a dream of some form of self-government to help them deal with the new challenges for their communities. This was the first modern Indigenous organization in Peru, and it opened an important pathway towards the founding of dozens more and towards official recognition of collective rights for Indigenous peoples.

To reconstruct this history and an analysis of the complicated context that was so challenging for developing the first Indigenous organizations, I will rely on two primary sources: my own memory as a participant in this process from its

beginning, and the documentation that I have accumulated during the course of the events that I write about here; this includes letters I wrote to colleagues and family members, entries in my personal diary, and copies of a texts that were produced, and in some cases published along the way. My interest here is to demonstrate and analyze the conditions and positive influences, both internal and external, that made it possible for the Yánesha to dream about having their own Congress, and then later, the dark and contrary forces that in the end were successful in transforming that utopian dream into a nightmare.

## Part 1

### Looking for Justice for the Yánesha People

In 1966, when I first came to know the Amuesha people (today known as the Yánesha people), approximately 4000 speakers of a language from the Arawak linguistic family, they lived in small groups dispersed over the eastern forest-covered flanks of the central Andes mountains of Peru, between the Oxapampa and Chanchamayo provinces, in the region known as the Selva Central. Three decades later and continuing an ancient and gradual migratory pathway towards the northeast, the majority of the Yánesha population had moved into the lower areas along the Palcazu and Pachitea rivers.

They still identified themselves as *Yánesha'* (we the people with a common identity, culture and idioma) and as *yamo'tsesha'* (we the people that belong to the same extended family). The political authority among these small groups was diffuse and shared among the older men, with a tendency to come together under a strong leader in times of crisis. Until the decade of the 1960s, there were two important types of traditional authorities among them. One was the *kornesha'* or high priest, whose word was deeply respected and whose activities were linked to rituals of ancestral adoration that on occasion brought together many people who lived up to 2 or 3 days walk away. With the death of the *kornesha' Mekllatarreñ* in 1975 in the community of Alto Churumazú, this cultural institution and fraternity of religious leaders came to an end.

Quite separate from and parallel to these high priests, there were also powerful tobacco-consuming shamans, called *pa'ller*, who were dedicated to advising and taking care of their followers to avoid sickness, bad luck or death caused by diabolical creatures that inhabit waters, air and the forests, or as the result of witchcraft carried out by mortals like themselves. These shamans were highly respected, even feared, because of their great knowledge and power, product of years of learning and preparation to achieve dominion over the power inherent in the tobacco plant as well as the ancestral jaguars that own the tobacco plant. As recently as the decade of 2000, there still existed 2 or 3 shamans living within Yánesha communities; today, without any of their own shamans, the tendency

is to consult those of the neighboring Asháninka people or the ayahuasca-consuming Shipibo-Conibo shamans.

The Yánesha people had their first encounters with the Spanish invaders around 1555, when a catholic priest of the Order of La Merced entered their territory and established a church-school among six Yánesha high-priests and their followers in the valley of Huancabamba<sup>1</sup> (Smith 1999, 2011). This catholic priest served as an evangelizer for the nine resettlements established by mandate of the Spanish crown among highland Indians living around the Junín Lake, within the limits of the Chinchaycocha Grant given in 1549 to the Captain Juan Tello de Sotomayor.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1635, and after 1715 with an administrative base in the Colegio de Propaganda Fide in the Andean town of Ocopa, missionary priests from the Franciscan Order began a process of resettlement of the Yánesha people around mission centers strictly controlled by the Catholic priests. In 1742, under the leadership of an Andean Indian, who called himself Juan Santos Atahuallpa and claimed rights to the ‘Inca crown’, the Yánesha people rose up together with their neighbors the Asháninka and other peoples against the Spanish. Within less than one year, they were able to expel completely the Franciscan missionaries and all the other Spanish settlers from the region (Jones 2018; Lehnertz 1974; Smith 2011).

It was not until more than a century later that Peruvian and foreign colonists and missionaries were able to enter this region again and slowly extend their dominion over the lands and natural resources of the Chanchamayo, Oxapampa, Huancabamba and Pozuzo valleys of the Selva Central. Due to this colonization process, the Yánesha began to abandon their settlements and lands, moving towards the northeast and less accessible valleys and mountaintops. In the decade of the 1950s, a massive movement of Andean and coastal colonizers, with support from the government, began to put tremendous pressure on the Yánesha. Other than a little-known Supreme Decree in 1957<sup>3</sup>, there were no other laws that clearly protected the lands, territories, and natural resources of the Indigenous peoples from this kind of massive aggression. Both the government officials and the colonists considered all lands inhabited by the Yánesha to be “government lands open for settlement”, available to any other person who presented a claim. Most of the officials working in different local government agencies, raised under racist attitudes of the dominant criollo

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1 Huancabamba is today a District within the Province of Oxapampa, Pasco Region.

2 These grants or *encomiendas* were awarded to the Spanish invaders for their services to the Crown of Spain in the conquest of Peru. The grant entitled the receiver to collect the annual tribute from the Indian families living under a specific headman. At the same time, the grant required that the receiver finance the Catholic church-schools and the costs of evangelization for these same families.

3 Supreme Decree #03, Land Reserves for Jungle Tribes, 1957, Lima.

society, closed their doors to local Indigenous families looking for protection for their lands and crops, claiming that these 'chunchos'<sup>4</sup> were not Peruvian citizens and, consequently, had no rights or guarantees under the Constitution of the Peruvian republic.

In the decade of the 1960s, the Yánesha began to group themselves in larger settlements of anywhere from 15 to 50 families with the aim to establish a mutual protection among themselves as well as to have access to bilingual primary education in the new schools established by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)<sup>5</sup>. When I first knew the Yánesha in 1966, they seemed to me to be a people overcome with fear and a sense of being vanquished, trapped between their own cultural norms to share their resources with the newcomers and a desperation caused by the reduction in the resources available for their livelihood. They still considered themselves to be Yánesha, different from the 'Peruvians' whom they considered doubtfully human given their avarice and aggressively abusive behavior vis-à-vis the Yánesha. Faced with ever more invasions and discrimination, many families made the difficult decision to abandon their homes and move deeper into the tranquility of the forests to the northeast, only to be forced by the rapid expansion of the frontier to move again five years later.

Between 1966 and 1969 I worked as a volunteer in the office of the Agrarian Reform Program in the small German colony of Oxapampa. This period coincided with the last part of the Belaunde government and the beginning of the military government of General Velasco. That situation put me in the middle of many conflicts over land as well as the process for recognizing and titling property rights for land. I was a firsthand witness to all those steps that were resulting in the "conquest of Peru by the Peruvians", as Belaunde baptized the invasion. Shortly before I arrived there, the Agrarian Reform office in Oxapampa had taken on, as a special case for resolution, a conflict that had been escalating between four Yánesha settlements and the Franciscan Mission at Quillazú, about seven kilometers north of Oxapampa. This mission was founded in 1881, after the new reopening of the Selva Central to settlers. The mission followed the colonial model of resettling the Yánesha families, who were living throughout the valley bottom, around the mission center; this permitted the Franciscan missionaries to uphold their agreement with the Austrian-German colonists to open the valley bottom lands for their settlement. In 1905, the Franciscan Order received

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4 *Chuncho* is a term from the Quechua language that refers in a derogative manner to the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazonian region of Peru.

5 The SIL is the 'academic' face of another organization of evangelical missionaries called the Wycliffe Bible Translators, with headquarters in the USA. The SIL/WBT established itself in Peru in the mid-1940s under a formal agreement with the Ministry of Education; shortly after that they began to work among the Yánesha (Smith 1981a).

a property title “in name of the missionaries of the Colegio in Ocopa and of the Indian neophytes who occupy these lands” for a 1226-hectare tract of land with a dense forest cover that surrounded the mission (Smith 1974a, 1974b, 1980).

In 1960, after using and exploiting this huge land grant during more than half a century and selling off most of the timber as if it were their private estate, the Franciscans announced the sale of the entire property and informed the Yánesha families living there that, if they wished to continue using their small garden plots, they would also have to buy them. The Yánesha, under the advice of a progressive lawyer, asked for the intervention of the government. With this conflict still heating up, my first assignment for the Agrarian Reform was to visit these four Yánesha settlements, listen to their proposals and conduct a census of their population and the lands that they occupied. It was for me a ‘5-star’ initiation into the conflictive situation of the Yánesha and their lack of rights to their lands, territories and natural resources. It was also a ‘5-star’ opportunity to get to know this fascinating culture and society.

With the support from the Agrarian Reform office as well as from my new Yánesha friends, I began to explore other Yánesha settlements, in some cases walking up to 2 days to get to the most distant ones. In many of them, I was able to meet the bilingual teachers at the local primary schools, and to build up a relationship of trust with them as well as with the elders of each settlement. We spoke openly of their precarious situation and the threats that they felt for their lands and resources. I talked to them about the concept of “community” as a political strategy to unite themselves in defense of their rights to land, their territories, and natural resources. These were particularly important times for learning, both for me and for the Yánesha. And I was careful during that time to keep other interested parties abreast of my activities and to assure their continued support for this work. One of the important parties was the US Peace Corps under whose banner I was working with the Agrarian Reform Program in Peru:

*Much must be done in organizing the tribe before they can effectively confront the Agrarian Reform Office. <sup>6</sup> The tribe is extremely divided and, for that reason, weak. They must regain the sense of community, realize that all groups are suffering the same problems and abuses, and go to the Agrarian Reform Office as one united tribe. As a small group of 10 or 20 families, they cannot possibly defend themselves. As one tribe of 8,000 they can. (Letter from*

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<sup>6</sup> Both the personal and published texts in Spanish have been translated to English by the author. The information between brackets within the cited texts has been added by the author to help the reader to understand the text. The ellipsis marks a place where some text has been left out.

Richard Chase Smith to William Chiappini, Regional Representative  
U.S. Peace Corps, 5 May 1968; See Larsen 2015: 52)

While I was not comfortable about the missionary work carried out by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, I understood that they had an important political relationship with the Peruvian government as well as a 15 year-long relationship of trust with the Yánesha people. So I kept them updated as well.

[Mr. Del Águila, Director of the Sub-Region of the Agrarian Reform Program] *...agrees that titles should be given to groups of natives, also that reserves could be established, but wants to start with 10 ha. per person older than 5. This seems like very little to me and maybe later I can convince him so. As for Omais, he at first thought it better to do the 2 groups separate, but I convinced him that we should avoid creating anymore division among the groups than was necessary. He said they needn't present another petition, but that a census was needed of the groups. I told him that I was going to Omais soon and would take a census. He said fine, that using it as a base, he would decide how much land to mark off and the topog. could begin at once...If it works than I'll continue with the other groups...I think it much more advisable in Omais to create one single large land tract rather than divide it in two...there won't be any political problems among the jefes as the land afterward can be divided into village sections...(Letter from Richard Chase Smith to Jerry Elder, National Director of the SIL/WBT in Peru, 20 June 1968; See Larsen 2015: 54)*

At the beginning of 1969, twenty Yánesha settlements, together with a similar number of Asháninka settlements in the upper Perene River valley, self-proclaimed their settlements as “Communities”, establishing a new leadership structure and territorial boundaries for each one, and by doing so, creating a collective argument for a new demand for community land titles and in some cases their right to expel abusive colonists. The next step was to join hands among the communities:

*The idea of a conference among representatives of the Amuesha communities was the result of many conversations and interchanges among the Amuesha, the members of the Peace Corps<sup>7</sup> and the SubDirection of Rural Settlement in San Ramon. The idea originated from a conversation with an Amuesha bilingual teacher [Pedro López] from the area of Omais (Tsopis) who expressed his interest*

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7 By this time, I was accompanied by a husband-wife team of Peace Corps volunteers, Jeff and Cathy Speigle, who lived in the town of Villa Rica.

*in bringing together their whole tribe. In later conversations with other Amuesha leaders, it became clear that there was a general interest for this kind of a meeting. We talked many times about the advantages of coordinating the efforts of all the groups that were so dispersed to be able to work together on projects or on collective formalities with the government. (Smith 1969: 6)*

After two years of careful preparation, the 20 self-proclaimed Yánesha communities delegated representatives, in general, elder men and bilingual schoolteachers, to participate in a 3 day “conference” (1-3 July 1969) in the community of Miraflores<sup>8</sup> near Oxapampa (Chirif 1969; Larson 2015: 56-58; Smith 1969). It was quite clear that the novelty of an event like this one caught the attention of all the participants, but it was equally clear that they all came with the hope that the officials of the Agrarian Reform Program would listen to their situation and respond positively to their proposals for the territorial security of their communities. The discussions that took place during the three days of the meeting focused on different problems, from education and healthcare to the abuses committed by the coffee and cattle estate owners. But without doubt, the issue that was on everybody’s mind, the one that came out in every conversation, was the lack of security and guarantees for their lands, territories, and natural resources: how to protect them from the incessant invasion of colonists and other outsiders.

*The meeting was important because it brought together delegates from 20 Amuesha communities that represented approximately 75% of the entire tribe. And, above all, it was important because it was the first global attempt by the Amuesha to confront the problem that deeply affects them all: the lack of lands in the face of an invasion by Peruvian colonists and large landowners. (Chirif 1969:7)<sup>9</sup>*

The community delegates meeting there helped to write up a Declaration directed to the country’s president, General Velasco, to the Minister of Agriculture and to the Minister of Internal Affairs requesting that the government pay more attention to their precarious situation.

*Those who subscribe to this Declaration, representatives of twenty communities (510 families) of the Amuesha Tribe, gathered here in the community of Miraflores (Oxapampa) during the first 3 days*

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8 Miraflores is one of the four Yánesha settlements that were, at that time, in serious conflicts over land with the Franciscan misión in Quillazú.

9 I invited the anthropologist Stefano Varese to the Conference; I had the opportunity to meet him in mid-1968. He was unable to come at that time, and sent in his place a student of his at the San Marcos University, Alberto Chirif, who has been a close friend of mine ever since.

*of July... have reached the following agreements during the course of the meeting: 1. Demand that the Government comply with its obligation to grant property titles for the lands in which we now work because we are the people who have 'de facto' possession of them since time immemorial... 2. Ask that you recognize larger tracts of land, the size of which should correspond with the number of our people who will live on them... 3. Let you know that it is our wish that these lands be recognized as Community Reserves, and not as individual parcels... This Declaration is a collective effort by the Amuesha Tribe to lay out the problematic situation we face and to ask for the attention of the Government... (Tribu Amuesha 1969:13-14)*

These representatives of the twenty communities agreed to meet again the following year in the community of Alto Yurinaki and each year after that in a different community to assure the broadest participation possible. And to that end, they named a small committee to organize the next meeting. It was clear to me that this coming together offered its participants a new hope of better times and the sensation that, together, they were stronger and could improve the quality of life in their communities. Many began to boast that now they were going to have their own 'congress', just like the Peruvians have in Lima! The conference came to an end with a long night of celebration for their ancestors, with ancestral songs accompanied by drums, panpipes, and ritual dancing; it was a profoundly emotional experience for all. It even brought tears of nostalgia to the eyes of many elders and a sensation of surprise and shame vis-à-vis their grandchildren who had never heard or seen these manifestations of their cultural heritage.

## **Part 2**

### **The Iroquois Confederation: Our Introduction to Indigenous Self-Government**

Two weeks after the conclusion of this historic gathering among the twenty Yánesha communities, I returned to the USA to begin postgraduate studies in anthropology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. At the beginning of 1971, while I was engaged in my studies, I joined a protest organized by the Indigenous peoples of the Onondaga nation, a member of the Iroquois Confederacy of the Six Nations. The object of this protest was to stop the intentions of the state of New York to expand an interstate highway on lands of the Onondaga Reservation, without any agreement on their part (Onondaga 2015). To this day, the lands of the Onondaga are subject to Treaties and Agreements signed between the Iroquois with Great Britain in the eighteenth century and with the United States of America in the nineteenth century. After several years of stalemate between the State of New York and the Onondaga, a federal court ruled that the state of

New York had no jurisdiction over lands subject to treaties carried out with and recognized by the federal government.

It was during my participation in this prolonged protest that I met and began a friendship with Oren Lyons, an Onondaga/Seneca spokesperson for the Iroquois Confederacy, living on the Onondaga Reservation. It was from him that I first heard the incredible story of the visit of an Iroquois leader named Descaheh to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. It was another '5-star' induction for me to the Indigenous demand for and practice of the right to autonomy, self-government, and self-determination. The Iroquois Confederacy of the Six Nations, called Haudenosaunee in their language, was created in the 1660s through a negotiated treaty among the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora peoples who occupied large contiguous territories in what today is the northeast of the United States and the southeast of the Dominion of Canada. With this treaty, the six nations established a declared peace among themselves, a new collective form of governing the large territory they shared, and a political alliance to manage together the relations and the threats created by the recent Dutch, English, and French invaders of their territories. This Confederacy still exists today and has played an important role during the past four centuries (Iroquois Confederacy 1978).

The League of Nations was an attempt to establish a global confederation of nations initiated in 1919 under the leadership of Great Britain, the United States, Italy, Japan, and France. It was constituted by 42 member nations from all the continents, who signed the Convention of the League of Nations and at the same time the Treaty of Versailles, both as part of a process to establish world peace at the end of the First World War.<sup>10</sup> The League of Nations was the first global and modern international organization that attempted to establish world peace and promote human rights.

In 1923, Descaheh, recognized as the leader of the Iroquois Confederacy, traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, to ask Sir James E. Drummond, Secretary General of the League of Nations, to open a space for contemplating the rights to self-government on the part of Indigenous peoples. When Descaheh was denied access to all bureaucratic parties of the League, he presented to the Secretary General a long declaration-letter titled *To the League of Nations: The Redman's Appeal for Justice*. In this document, the Confederacy put forward their arguments that justified their request:

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<sup>10</sup> Despite the important leadership role in the establishment of the League played by the then President Woodrow Wilson, the government of the United States of America never signed the Convention nor the Treaty.

*3. The constituent members of the State of the Six Nations of the Iroquois, that is to say, the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca and the Tuscarora, now are, and have been for many centuries, organized and self-governing peoples, respectively, within domains of their own, and united in the oldest League of Nations, the League of the Iroquois, for the maintenance of mutual peace; and that status has been recognized by Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, being European States which established colonies in North America; by the States successor to the British Colonies therein, being the United States of America, and by the Dominion of Canada, with whom the Six Nations have in turn treated, they being justly entitled to the same recognition by all other peoples. (Descaheh 1923 pp. 1-2)*

The main body of the letter and the central argument is based on a complaint lodged against the government of Canada regarding a series of actions and abuses committed against the territories and the people, and, at the bottom of it, against the autonomy of several of the six Iroquois nations. According to the Confederacy's letter, *"The Six Nations have at all times enjoyed recognition by the Imperial Government of Great Britain of their right to independence in home-rule, and to protection therein by the British Crown"* (Ibid. p. 3) Because of this, they argued, the actions taken by the government of Canada constituted specific violations of the Treaties and agreements signed by the Confederacy and its members with Great Britain and the Dominion of Canada.

Confident of his status as a representative of autonomous nations, both Descaheh and his fellow members of the Iroquois Confederacy viewed this approach to the new League of Nations as an encounter among equals. In those times of splendor within the British Empire and with a majority of the world's population subject to colonial arrangements imposed by a few European nations, we can imagine that the reaction of the dignitaries in charge of the League was probably one of indignation at the insolence of a 'colonial subject'. Nonetheless, this historic encounter has had an important and positive influence for the success of the negotiations of the Iroquois Confederacy and its allies with the United Nations that began in 1982 y finished in 2007 with the approval by the UN Assembly of the first UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Smith 2021).

Oren Lyons has been a well-respected activist and spokesperson of the Iroquois Confederacy ever since I met him in 1971. He later became a professor and Emeritus of American Studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo. Through him and others I knew at Onondaga, I also befriended John Mokawk, the Editor of Akwesasne Notes, an Indigenous newspaper with a sizeable circulation in the 1970s and 1980s among Indigenous peoples and activists. He followed Chief Lyons' pathway to become a professor of American Studies at

SUNY Buffalo as well. During the 1970s, while living with the Yánesha in the Selva Central, we had an active exchange of letters, articles, and information regarding the situation of Indigenous peoples in Peru and in the world at large. Beginning in 1982, as members of the Iroquois Confederacy delegation and together with their legal advisor<sup>11</sup>, both Lyons and Mohawk played a highly active and important role in the negotiations within the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to establish a declaration on the fundamental collective rights of Indigenous peoples, later approved by the UN Assembly. This long period of interchange and learning I had with these two extraordinary people also had an important influence on the aspirations of the Congress of Amuesha Communities as part of a broader dream of self-government.

### **Part 3**

#### **1969-1981: The Dream of Yánesha Self-Government Proceeds**

I returned to Peru during the two months of summer vacation in 1970 and 1971 to visit the Yánesha communities, participate in the sessions of the Congress, and decide on the research theme that I would focus on for my doctoral dissertation. At the end of 1972, I returned to the Selva Central with a plan to stay for a couple of years dedicated to research on the ritualized music and celebration devoted by the Yánesha to their ancestors. Without planning to do so, I stayed in the Selva Central until mid-1981, living among the Yánesha in two communities: Miraflores some 7 kilometers from Oxapampa, and Union de la Selva Cacazu, located in the upper Palcazu river basin, about a full day's walk from the town of Villa Rica.

On the first day of July 1970, twenty-seven Yánesha communities sent representatives and schoolteachers to the community of Alto Yurinaki for the second conference of leaders.<sup>12</sup> It was in this meeting that the participants decided to call their new organization-in-construction the “Congress of Amuesha Communities”, and to formalize it institutionally by establishing a permanent committee to organize the annual events and to carry out the agreements taken at each session. They also agreed that each community should formalize

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11 Both John Mohawk and Oren Lyons had told me about the work that the lawyer Howard Berman had been carrying out regarding Iroquois rights within the framework of international law. In 1981 I began a 3-year post-doctorate at the Anthropology Department of Harvard University. That same year, Howard Berman began teaching at the Harvard Law School. We became good friends with many discussions regarding Indigenous collective rights. Berman played an important role with both the Iroquois Confederacy and the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) within the context of the UN Working Group for Indigenous Populations (See Smith 2021).

12 The information regarding the different sessions of the Amuesha Congress is based on my memory, my diaries, and accumulated documentation.

## THE CONGRESS OF AMUESHA COMMUNITIES (1969-1981)

the selection process for naming a more permanent representative for future meetings of the Congress, reasoning that in this way, each participant would have greater legitimacy to speak in name of his or her community within the Congress, as well as to official from the government.

Two years later, in July of 1972, the fourth session of the Congress took new steps toward the consolidation of their organization: they agreed that, in addition to the representative elected for the Congress, each community should name in their community assembly a more permanent community leader that would be called the *amcha'tareth* (a person worthy of respect), and at his side, an *akëllkañ* (he who can write) to take down notes of agreements reached and to write letters. Within the Congress, it was decided that the committee that organized each session would become a more permanent Board of Directors, and the head of that committee would be elevated to the level of 'chief-of-chiefs' and given the title of *kornesha'*. A year later, they decided that the *kornesha'*, given the hierarchy that this figure always had in society, would not be part of the Board of Directors, but rather he would be an independent 'chief of chiefs' above the Board, and they established a position that they called the President as chief of the Board. This structure for governing the Congress lasted until 1981.

It was not by accident or chance that the participants of these first sessions decided to call this new political space for self-governance a 'congress'. Beginning even before the first conference in 1969, the tone of many of those discussions with schoolteachers and leaders was that the Yánesha should have their own space to exchange information, put proposals on the table and discuss them, and come to agreements about their common problems and how to confront them. The teachers knew that a congress or parliament was the branch of an autonomous government that brought together representatives of local jurisdictions to establish a legal framework for governing all the people. Ever since the session in 1971, I began to share with the Yánesha elders and schoolteachers my experience with the Iroquois Confederacy. They were fascinated by what these Indigenous peoples had accomplished, each with its own language and history: not only did each of the six nations have its own governing body, like the Amuesha Congress, but they were able to come together and establish a larger confederation of the local governments.

During my initial conversations with bilingual teacher Pedro López and later with other teachers and leaders, this dream of self-government came up frequently, often expressed by them with the question: "If the Peruvians can have their own government, then why can't we have our own government?" Yánesha oral history tells us in detail the life and feats of the ancient *kornesha'*, leaders of social ethics, each one with a council of wise disciples, each one relying on

the ancient codes left by powerful ancestors to establish and take care of the sociopolitical relations of their people. It was not an accident or chance that they decided to name a 'chief of chiefs' with the title *kornesha*'. In those times, some of the Yánesha dreamed of themselves as a people with the autonomy to make their own decisions regarding their development and their future.

By 1974, five years after the founding Conference, the Amuesha Congress had established a strategic action plan that included most of the problematic issues facing its members. From the beginning, the need for official recognition and titling of their community territories was item number one on the list of priorities of that plan. It was that same year that the Peruvian government, now under the 'left-leaning' military government of Velasco, brought forward the law No 20653 for Native Communities and the Promotion of Agriculture in the Amazonian Region of the country. This law established the right of Amazonian Indigenous peoples to collective ownership of their lands, territories, and natural resources. Due to the previous pressure applied by the Yánesha Congress and the work carried out since 1968 by the Agrarian Reform Office in Oxapampa to register and take census of most of the Yánesha communities and many Asháninka communities, it took less than two years for all the 26 Yánesha communities to be officially recognized, and 24 of them to be demarcated and titled.

With the pressure to resolve the problems of community territories relieved, the Yánesha Congress began to open its focus to other issues and complaints of its members. In 1974, faced with a threat of invasion by the timber industry of Oxapampa into the Yanachaga-Chemellen mountain range, a widely recognized sacred area for the Yánesha people, the Yánesha Congress decided to openly support a campaign that I had begun to protect this mountain range from logging activities (Smith 1977, 1981b). I had already drawn up a proposal to recognize some 200 thousand hectares of rugged mountain forests as a National Park, and a contiguous area of 35,000 hectares as a forest reserve for the Yánesha communities that was presented to the head of the Forest and Parks Bureau in Lima. Despite many attempts by two of the lumber companies to threaten me and the leaders of the Amuesha Congress, and then to buy off the counter-support of an entire community, both the Yanachaga-Chemellen National Park and the Yánesha Communal Reserve were established by the government in 1986 and 1988 respectively.

In 1976, the Amuesha Congress agreed to establish a committee and a project focused on the recovery of important cultural expressions like their incredible oral history and music. This was organized among some 15 young men and women who had a special interest in the cultural identity of their people. By 1978, this team of young researchers and artists were working in a large three-story circular building similar in style to the traditional temple of the *kornesha*';

this was built in the community of Union de la Selva Cacazu. In 1977 the Congress established a committee to oversee a program called AgroYánesha dedicated to improving agricultural production and its sale in local markets; this work was carried out in six communities in the Palcazu River basin from its base in the community of Shiringamazu. In 1979 the Congress established a committee among bilingual primary schoolteachers to promote the use of their language in the school, to improve primary school education in the communities and to produce new didactic materials in their language. That same year, a committee of community health workers was established under the Congress to improve the coordination of the services offered by the government through small clinics in the communities.

By the end of the decade of the 1970s, the Congress enjoyed widespread respect and support among the growing number of communities that were members, and it could boast that it was a governing body for all the Yánesha people. It had established some important relationships with numerous government programs and officials as well as private institutions in Lima. After participating in a series of meetings in Lima beginning in 1977, the Amuesha Congress, together with the more recently founded Aguaruna Huambisa Council, the Center for Native Communities of the Selva Central (Ceconsec) and the Federation of the Native Communities of the Ucayali (Feconau), established the first national organization of Indigenous peoples of Peru's Amazonian region, the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (Aidesep).

### **Part 4**

#### **Dark Forces conspire against Yánesha Self-Government**

The new organizations and movements of Indigenous peoples around the Amazon Basin began to consolidate themselves during the period between 1979 and 1984. These times were heavily influenced by the global "Cold War" between the liberal and democratic block of capitalist countries led by the United States of America and the European Economic Community (EEC) and the socialist-communist block led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) of Breshnev, the Republic of China of Mao Zedong and Cuba of Castro. This global polarization had an overwhelming impact on national politics in every Latin-American country expressed in a continuous and often violent rivalry between the "Right" and the "Left". It was exceedingly difficult for the emerging political movements of Amazonian Indigenous peoples to remain on the margins of this deep polarization. The Left and Right did, however, agree on one proposal vis-à-vis the Amazonian scenario: both competing political poles agreed that the main tasks at hand there were, in their often repeated terminology, the conquest of the Amazon's vast 'emptiness' and the civilizing of its 'primitive and backward' Indian

population. And both poles agreed that, to a great extent, both missionaries and colonist-settlers were important actors for carrying out these two tasks. Beyond that strategic agreement, the details of how to go about these two tasks usually got lost in the confusing confrontations among ideological tendencies of the different fragments of each pole, and in the confusing discourses of correctness espoused by the charismatic leaders of each fragment.

By 1973, after four years of 'revolutionary' Left-leaning military government in Peru, there was a notable change in the cultural and sociopolitical context within which the Amuesha Congress was attempting to develop its own pathway. On the one hand, there was a new type of organization, the non-governmental organization (NGO), beginning to appear in the Selva Central of Peru. Some of these new actors represented, or worked together with, the different ideological fragments of the 'Left'. Some of them represented the different sectors, Right to Left, of the Catholic Church, also polarized by Cold War politics, or of the new and growing Christian protestant sects, without exception each a carrier of a very strong anti-communist sentiment.

At the same time, the military government had turned up the volume of its messaging regarding bringing 'civilization' to the rural areas, many of these populated with peoples speaking one of many varieties of Quechua or another Indigenous language like Yánesha. An important part of the messaging was that in Peru, there could only be one national identity, the Peruvian, and that the government would reach this goal by massively integrating the Andean and Amazonian peoples into the new Peru now transformed by the military revolution. The quasi-governmental ministry called the National System for Social Mobilization (Sinamos) was put in charge of this integrationist campaign with newly hired teams of young college graduates, largely from Lima, who were sent to the countryside to spread the word.

From the beginning of this campaign, Sinamos intervened and attempted to use the Amuesha Congress for this purpose, which became over time a major difficulty for the Congress' chosen pathway of autonomous self-government. During the fifth session of the Congress, in July of 1973, the interference by young officials from Sinamos, their attitude of urban superiority, their lack of respect for the Yánesha representatives with their own agenda, and the conflicts caused by power games among these government officials caused confusion and resentment within the communities represented in the Amuesha Congress. Here are some of my personal observations during that event:

*The last afternoon of the Conference was a disaster. It began by Magda [a higher ranking Sinamos official] taking control of the meeting and spouting off about the importance of her work. At*

*one point, Mr. Cueva [also a Sinamos official] interrupted her to ask exactly what work her department had done. She started screaming even louder, with more anger, but kept a hollow smile on her face. Then another guy [also a Sinamos official from the local office] got up and really tore into Magda, he was incredibly angry with her. (A fourth Sinamos official told me afterwards that this was ideological in-fighting between the regional and the local office of Sinamos.) Then a fifth young Sinamos official got up and said that nobody was fighting, there were no hard feelings, and what everyone had just seen was simply an expression of how anxious Sinamos people were to work hard for “the natives”. (Smith Diario N° 1, p 167)*

As we see from this and the following text, Sinamos officials used the Amuesha Congress as a platform to promote themselves and as a conduit for their own pro-government agenda. Without a single consultation with the Yánesha, Sinamos invited Asháninka communities from the Pichis valley to participate in the session of the following year's Amuesha Congress in an attempt to form a single organization. The following are some of my observations written during the sixth session of the Congress in 1974:

*This year Sinamos did some publicity posters for the Conference... which they hung all around the area and they also printed up a ‘program’. In both cases, the title used was “NATIVE CONGRESS (Campa and Amuesha) Pichis y Palcazu” and at the bottom ORAMS IV [Regional Office # 4 of Sinamos in large letters.] In other words, 1) it is a publicity stunt for Sinamos; 2) It is being billed as ‘congress of natives’, no longer the Amuesha Congress. For Sinamos it is all the same thing – Amuesha, Campa, Shipibo...they are all just natives!! So when it came time to name the site for the next year's Congress, a small lobby group—the Catholic priest from Puerto Bermudez [in Pichis valley], and a group of university students [brought from Lima by Sinamos] began shouting “Santa Rosa de Chivis! Santa Rosa de Chivis!!” So next year's Native Congress will be held in the Pichis Valley!! ...The Yánesha, stunned by what was happening, kept quiet!!! (Smith Diary N° 1, p 261)*

The reaction of the Yánesha representatives observing this kind of abusive treatment by ‘the Peruvians’ was both understandable and exasperating. On the one hand, they felt a profound indignation and anger; and on the other, they remained in silence, in part as an expression of respect for those perceived as in a higher status, but at the same time that was an expression of deep fear. The following text reports some of my conversations with and observations of the Yánesha in that same Conference:

*What could the Yánesha and the Campa be thinking???* One [Yánesha] woman said to me: “I don’t want any more congresses. There are too many white people [Peruvians-nonIndigenous] here. It’s like before when they got us all together and then they killed us!!!” Others complained too, but very quietly. They complained that they were given no time to talk, no time to relay the messages from their communities – but every white person had the opportunity to talk, and some took an hour to say absolutely nothing...None of the outsiders came here with an interest in seeing the Amuesha or Campa for who they are or hearing their ideas. The outsiders all came with their own ideas of how the meeting should be run and did everything possible to run the meeting in their way. (Smith Diary N° 1, p 260)

A year after the military coup that brought down the government of General Velasco in 1975, members of the military who had worked with Velasco and civilian officials of his government founded their own political party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR). This new party entered the political scene in competition with other Leftist parties that, in spite of the obstacles established by the government, had maintained political control over important social movements; for example, the Revolutionary Vanguard Party still had political control over the Peasant Confederation of Peru (CCP), and the Communist Party of Peru (PCP Unity aligned with the USSR) also continued to exercise control over the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP). The PSR easily exercised political control over the National Agrarian Confederation (CNA), a new guild of agrarian workers and peasants established by the Velasco government among beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform Program.

By the beginning of the 1980s, one of the factors that most directly affected the attempts by Indigenous Amazonians to organize themselves were the rivalries among these different and competing factions of the Left; each worked hard to bring under its control the largest number of peasant-Indigenous peoples and their organizations. By then it was becoming more common for these parties to work through allied NGOs that offered services to the communities or played a role of advisors to these new organizations. It was known then that, behind this eagerness to recruit new party members, there was an important economic incentive: access to support funds from foreign private sources. The more success the party had in demonstrating growing membership, the easier it was to raise funds for their political work.

This competition brought about a political atmosphere that was extremely sectarian, close-minded, and full of suspicion among all the actors, and full of encounters with violence through words and occasionally with weapons of war.

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It also produced a lot of conceptual confusion among the actors themselves and with other observers. The rural population, a specific object of this competition, was quite diverse, including farmers who were mestizos, others with roots and different degrees of identity as Indigenous and still others who were residents of officially recognized Indigenous communities, both Andean and Amazonian. Some had their own individual parcels of land; others were agricultural workers on large rural estates under a wide variety of exploitative contractual or labor arrangements. All these differences led over time to a wide range of different economic situations among these rural populations. Because of these obvious differences, one of the polemic issues argued among the different parties on the Left was how to conceptualize and classify the rural 'masses' and what would be their eventual role in a revolutionary society.

One of the common results of these polemics over ideology was an atmosphere of exaggerated dogmatism. According to the spokesmen for each position, usually a male member of the urban criollo society, his vision was not only more correct than the interpretation of his neighbor, but, because it was based on the reading and interpretation of the sacred texts of this or that guiding light, it was the immutable truth. One of the curious truths of these ideological debates was that no one ever consulted with the rural population, the object of these debates. Sadly, at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, the Amuesha Congress was dealt an extremely hard blow by an alliance of interests among a group of young Yánesha and a Leftist political party. From that point on, the dream of self-government began to fall apart. Up to that time, even without external funding, the Congress was able to maintain a reasonable degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the State agencies, the missionaries and the political parties.

This conflicted context that became an important part of the world of young Yánesha men brought with it new messages; for example, now as part of Peruvian society, it wasn't necessary to make sacrifices to become a leader within Yanesha society, or that the elected representatives of the organization had the possibility to receive 'special incentives' from the government, or from an NGO or a political party just by voting a certain way. A new dream was establishing itself among some young Yánesha men of this generation: a monthly salary, funds for projects, travel to exotic places, contacts with powerful people with lots of money, and behind all that, the possibility of having a lucrative political career. With these new messages and dreams in their minds, this young generation began to go after positions of leadership in the Congress and to pay more attention to the words of mestizos from Lima linked to political parties of the Left. Some of these young men had already lived outside their communities in more urban contexts, where they assimilated the pressure to imitate the lifestyle and language of the dominant criollo culture. These young Yánesha were in many ways the product

of the Sinamos campaign to integrate the Indigenous peoples into a single national identity.

In 1978 during its tenth session, the Amuesha Congress elected as the new *kornesha'*, a member of the younger generation who, while living outside of his community, had been recruited to the ranks of the PCP Unity party. Little by little, with a mix of criollo cunning and deception, he brought together around him a group of men from the new generation. Early on, the leaders and representatives of the Congress had no idea nor comprehension of his connection with the PCP Unity, even though one of his first activities as *kornesha'* was to take a delegation of 20 community leaders to Lima to march in the streets during the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the PCP Unity party in Peru.

Several months afterwards, the new *kornesha'* organized a clandestine meeting of his circle of followers with representatives of the party from Lima. This group decided to create a new organization, the Federation of Native Communities Yánesha (Feconaya) and to affiliate it with the newly formed General Confederation of Peasants of Peru (CGCP), recently established by the PCP Unity as the peasant wing of the CGTP, the workers union under PCP Unity political control. The new Yánesha political organization, under the leadership of the *kornesha'* (now playing a dual role) and his circle of collaborators, declared war on the Amuesha Congress, producing tremendous confusion and dismay in the local communities. Once again with cunning and deception, both the *kornesha'* and his collaborators denied any relationship between the new organization and either the PCP Unity or the CGCP. This deception was uncovered in mid-1980 when a copy of an interview with the Secretary General of Feconaya published in the PCP Unity newspaper circulated throughout the communities; in this interview, the young Secretary General openly and proudly declared that Feconaya was affiliated to the CGCP by acclaim of all the Yánesha communities.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, this public falsehood was part of the political behavioral mode of the leaders of Feconaya. With the support of the PCP party, they began to subvert the legitimacy of the Amuesha Congress, by attacking the leaders of the Congress as well as the bilingual teachers, by inventing false and conspiratorial charges against the different programs of the Congress and by spreading the rumor that the very name 'congress' was not a legitimate name for an organization of Indigenous peoples. This war-like campaign displayed many common characteristics with the coercive and criollo tactics used by the splintered political parties of the left to win and maintain control over other social organizations and movements.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A few year later, the PCP Unity party gave this young Secretary General of Feconaya a scholarship to study in La Habana where he has remained to this day.

<sup>14</sup> More detailed information about the final years of the Amuesha Congress can be found in an article published in the *Boletín COPAL*, Año 1 (8): 1980.

This *kornesha'* and his young supporters declared war on me as well, even though they never confronted me directly. In this more personal battle, they also used falsehood and conspiratorial charges as a weapon, spreading fantastic stories about me to plant seeds of doubt in the communities. The following text is part of a field report written by a young university student from Lima who carried out, several year later, a research project on social conflicts among the Yánesha.

*...I took advantage of this opportunity [to raise the subject] with Cristobal Sebastián, the current amuesha "Cornesha" [He was kornesha' between 1978-87 and 1992-97]. As soon as I mentioned Smith's name, he opened wide his eyes. Smith was accused by those of the Feconaya of manipulating institutions like AIDSESEP and of trying to adapt and impose the western democratic model to the native organizational format, at the beginning of the so-called Amuesha Congress... And he told me this 'epic' story... in which he [Sebastian] appeared accompanied by several of his followers, all in pseudo-military get-up and armed with bows and arrows. Cristobal told me that one day, tired of the "abuses of Smith", he and the others circled him when he [Smith] and other "gringos" (read in here, surely these were researchers) were walking towards a community. Quickly deciding to force him to return by the same trail, Cristobal didn't hesitate a second to give orders to the others to point their raised arrows at the bodies of Smith and the scared "gringos" to force them to go back. Smith and those who accompanied him calculated that things could go badly for them, and turned around to flee. For Cristobal who was telling this story, this was a great triumph, and over time it became for the Yánesha a heroic feat and the factual story of the expulsion of Smith from the amuesha native communities. (Molina 1995)*

During this same period, there was another curious process developing in Lima that quickly played an important role in this story. A group of mestizo university professors, who had established a small organization called the Indian Movement of Peru, collaborated with some academics and activists in Europe and with the recently established World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Canada to organize an international conference outside of Cuzco, Peru (MIP 1981). According to a report of the event published afterwards by one of the supporters, many of the participants had dubious credentials as leaders, or even as Indians. This report also denounced the MIP organizers of the event for acts of fraud and mismanagement. Nonetheless, the organizers were able to legitimize their goal of creating a new "Indigenous" organization, the Indian Council of South America (CISA), as the only and exclusive voice of Indian peoples of South America on the international stage.

Just like the underlying motivation for pulling the Feconaya into a relationship of affiliation with the CGCP, CISA also needed to demonstrate to their funding sources that they legitimately represented important local organizations of Indians in South America. And Feconaya became an easy target. Unbeknownst to both the leaders of the Amuesha Congress and the Feconaya, two young Yánesha from the inner circle of Feconaya participated in the Cuzco event. Surprised by the quantity of financial resources that were behind the organizers of this event, these two young Yánesha became avid supporters and promoters of CISA within the Feconaya.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1980, there was evidence of an open competition for the loyalty of Feconaya between the PCP Unity/CGCP and CISA (CISA 1982). Each one began to offer gifts and incentives to the young leaders in Feconaya: while the political party offered scholarships to study in Moscow and in La Habana, CISA offered participation on trips and events in Europe, Canada and Australia.

The war against the Amuesha Congress declared by Feconaya reached a critical point in its 13th session, in July of 1981<sup>16</sup>. Unaccustomed to the tactics of aggressive confrontation used by the sponsors of Feconaya (CISA and PCP Unity/CGCP) and their participants in the session, the elected delegates gave in to the pressure and agreed to dissolve the Amuesha Congress in favor of the Feconaya. Nonetheless the assembly expressed their wish to defend the political autonomy of the organization. By the end of 1981, CISA was able to convince most of the young leaders of Feconaya to abandon their membership in both the CGCP and in Aidesep and to commit to an exclusive relationship with CISA. Six years later, in 1987, at the side of CISA, the same two Yánesha men who promoted CISA and were now leaders in the Feconaya played a key role in establishing the Confederation of Amazon Nationalities of Peru (CONAP), a second Indigenous organization at the national level in open competition with Aidesep.<sup>17</sup>

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15 The two young Yánesha who participated in the Cuzco meeting in which CISA was founded were Aníbal Francisco Coñivo and Juan López Bautista (See note 17). Two of the ironies of this story are 1. Juan López is the son of the bilingual schoolteacher Pedro López who played a key role in the founding of the Amuesha Congress; and 2. today Juan López is a specialist on Yánesha culture at the NOPOKI University, run by the same Franciscan Order through the same bishopric that carried out a 25-year battle against the Yánesha over land around their Quillazú mission. This new university operates in Atalaya, Perú.

16 I did not participate in this final session of the Congress. But I received detailed information regarding what transpired there from several participants. For family reasons, I returned to the USA in June of 1981.

17 According to their web site, the founding of CONAP was as follows: *“The constitution of the Confederation of Amazonian Nationalities of Peru CONAP was the dream of a group of male and female Indigenous leaders from different regions of the Peruvian Amazon, this group of impetuous Indians was under the leadership of Aníbal Francisco Coñivo and Juan López Bautista both from the Yaneshas people, the same two who made history in the first congress of the CONAP in May of 1987, a meeting in which the guiding principles and institutional bases that, since that day,*

The outcome of this story of power games among external forces to capture and control the Yánesha organization was disastrous for the dream of self-government and eventually for the unity among all the Yánesha communities. By 1988, CISA lost its funding from the Norwegian government over issues of corruption and mismanagement: shortly after that, CISA disappeared from the scene (NORAD 1988). At the same time, Feconaya had also earned among other funders a reputation for corruption and constant internal conflict. Many Yánesha, both individuals and communities, opted to leave the organization rather than confront the gang of now middle-aged Yánesha men who hung on to power within Feconaya until 1997. And the dream of self-government for the Yánesha continued as just that, a dream.

### **Epilogue written in 1992**

*The cornesha' or prophet-priest of the Amuesha, blows across a gourd bowl of specially brewed manioc beer and raises it toward the early morning sun. Sitting on an elaborate wooden bench, surrounded by his "brother's sons" inside the round, palm-thatched temple, he initiates the morning prayers to the Sun god and all the other powerful forces in the Amuesha cosmos. The macaw feathers in his wicker crown flutter, in play with the shimmering of the silver plugs in his earlobes and the gold disk hanging from his nose septum. He speaks of the approaching mellapo, or sacred time, and reminds his followers of the moral codes of their ancestors, exhorting them to put those codes into practice. He is the spiritual and moral guide of his people.*

*Since Meclatareñ died in 1975, abandoned by his "brother's sons", his temple in ruins, no prophet-priest has arisen to speak of the Sun's word and provide moral guidance. Some Amuesha have joined the Seventh Day Adventists or the Evangelical church, both of which condemn the spiritual and moral basis of the traditional culture. Others have gone to the city to try on new professions as servants, house guards, and prostitutes.*

*For moral and spiritual leadership, most Amuesha now look to FECONAYA ... which brings together 30 Amuesha communities in a common search for a future. The head of the organization, elected every two years, is called the "cornesha'", an unfortunate malapropism. During the past decade, foreign donations have*

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*have continued to open a national pathway that represents the Indigenous federations and organizations that are the bases to this day of our glorious CONAP." <http://www.conap.org.pe/historia>*

become available to FECONAYA. And some of its leaders have been involved in fraud, scams, and outright appropriation of community funds. A recent cornesha' used a scholarship fund to finance high living in Lima, leaving students to fend for themselves.

"We are in a moral crisis," one Amuesha confides. "If our leaders behave this way, we are lost. We need a real cornesha' to guide us." The cultural and moral foundations are still there for the Amuesha, but they need to be rediscovered, as they have before in times of crisis (Smith 1993:239-240).

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# THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN PARAGUAY

Rodrigo Villagra



## Initial considerations

In tribute to the 1971 Declaration of Barbados and its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the following is an account of the situation of Paraguay's Indigenous peoples. It is largely a paraphrased and narrowed down version of the title with which Georg Grünberg opened the first of three volumes following the three declarations of the so-called Barbados Group. In some ways, formulating a problem, situation or social process in such synthetic and apparently atavistic terms - or, at least, immune to half a century of dizzying changes - might seem to be reinforcing the idea that the revolutionary impulse that gave birth to an "anthropology committed to the liberation of Indigenous peoples" has since run out of steam. This could be a "natural" consequence of the decreasing political and academic performance of this paradigm or, alternatively, it could simply have given way to other theoretical and political paradigms that evolved from (or broke with) the Barbados agenda, whether an ontological and/or decolonizing turn, reverse anthropology or properly Indigenous, not indigenist, agendas and paradigms for the 21st century, such as "good living", to name but the most well-known.

Indeed, there have been many changes in the regional, international and even national context, and in the realities and historical paths of Indigenous peoples, without of course ignoring those that have taken place in the field of indigenism, anthropology and Indigenous movements. We hope here to provide a selection of data and events which, despite their brevity, idiosyncratic selection or inadequacy, may nevertheless facilitate an analysis of the strength of such changes. We consider ourselves, in this regard, as forming part of a tradition that emerged in Paraguay with the Declaration of Barbados - although its birth, origin and practice may date back several decades earlier - and which has been baptized in its most recent manifestations as "critical indigenism" (Blaser, 2013), in the hope that such a qualification may also offer an intrinsic capacity for self-criticism, which is something we try to reflect in this work.

## Background and path so far

In order to talk about the current circumstances of the Indigenous peoples and the Indigenous movement in Paraguay, we need to take a look at the background and historical events that have punctuated their path to the present day. Let us start with the socio-geographic demarcation consciously established by the Barbados Group, limiting itself initially to “studying the groups of the forest, savannah and Chaco” (Grünberg, 2019 [1971]:13), i.e., the peoples of the South American lowlands.<sup>1</sup> This broadly includes the 19 (self-)identified Indigenous peoples of Paraguay, broken down into five linguistic families. In the Western or Chaco region we find the Western Guaraní, Guaraní Ñandeva (Guaraní linguistic family), Ayoreo, Yshir Ebidoso, Yshir Tomarâho (Zamuco linguistic family), Nivaclé, Manjuy, Maká (Mataco-Mataguayo linguistic family), Enlhet, Enxet, Angaité, Sanapaná, Enenlhet, Guaná (Enlhet-Enenlhet linguistic family) and the Qom (Guaykuru linguistic family) peoples. In the Eastern Region are the Mbya Guaraní, Ava Guaraní, Pa’i Tavyterá and Aché (also part of the Guaraní linguistic family).

It is also relevant to recall the agenda and contribution of each statement of the Barbados Group in order to identify its possible marks and influences on the Indigenous and indigenist path in Paraguay. The first Declaration of Barbados of 1971:

“...demanded a moratorium on missionary work, a radical review of indigenist discourse and of the relationship between the State and Indigenous peoples, and an ethical and political commitment from non-Indigenous social scientists to support the self-determination and autonomy of Indigenous peoples. The central message of the declaration was that the liberation of the Indigenous peoples could only be achieved by these peoples themselves” (Grünberg and Varese in Grünber, 2019 [1971]: III).

Several Indigenous leaders participated in the second meeting in Barbados in 1977 and, in addition to anthropological and reflective considerations of the role of this social science, the volume that followed, *Indianidad y descolonización en América Latina: documentos de la Segunda Reunión de Barbados [Indigeness and decolonization in Latin America: documents from the Second Meeting in Barbados]*, coordinated by Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, also featured documents from Indigenous leaders and organizations. Addressing their “Indian brothers and sisters”, the Declaration thus states that through

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1 This does not deny the multiple and complex historical, political, theoretical and legal correlations and interactions between lowland peoples and the Andean Indigenous movements, nor with other Indigenous movements in the Americas and globally (cf. Alwyn O., 2002).

“integration, education and development policies, Western religious systems, economic classifications and nation-state borders” there is a “...situation of cultural and physical domination...” “that must be overcome on the basis of a common objective of Indian unity, as well as strategies and instruments of their own such as organization, historical analysis and unity under their own culture and ethnic awareness” (Bonfil Batalla, 1979).

Horst points out that the dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner (1954-1989) involved a first phase of Indigenous integrationist policies (1958-1966), under the influence of the inter-American Indigenous movement established by the 1941 Pazcuaro Congress, and then a subsequent phase of exclusion, from 1967 to 1976, as a result of the intensification of various conflicts with Indigenous peoples and communities (Horst, 2007). Blaser notes that the cause of this change in Indigenous policy was the greater international visibility of such conflicts (Blaser Review, 2009). For his part, Paraguayan anthropologist Miguel Chase Sardi, a leading figure in the first Declaration of Barbados, gives an historical account of the “*Influencias de la orientación de Barbados*” [Influences of the Barbados Direction] (Chase Sardi & Susnik, 1995: 325-326), which fell on the fertile ground of the second phase indicated by Horst, with escalating conflict between the Stroessner dictatorship and the Indigenous peoples. One of the first influences was the creation of the Marandu Project in the early 1970s, which “led to the first truly Indigenous organization, the Association of Indigenous Groupings [API]” (ibid.). Such an initiative was to later provoke a “backlash from the dictatorship” that involved imprisonment and torture for Chase Sardi and other members of the project. Other initiatives were to follow in the same decade, such as the Paĩ-Tavyterã/Guaraní Project, the Guaraní Ñandeva Project, the Nivaklé Project and the Ayoreo Project. In this and the following decade of the 1980s, the Indigenous territorial claims made within the above projects and API’s work to promote, train and organize Indigenous leaders along with the support of various Indigenous institutions such as the Centre for Anthropological Studies of the Catholic University, the Indigenous Association of Paraguay, the Friendship Mission and the National Mission Team of the Catholic Church, all resulted in lands claimed or alternative lands being purchased for various peoples of the Chaco and the Eastern Region of Paraguay (ibid.).

As part of the coinciding influences and effects (alongside other factors) of the programmatic proposals of those two declarations, the following events among others are noteworthy: i) the previous campaign against and then the denunciation of the Aché genocide in 1978 before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Clavero *et al*, 2008); ii) the subsequent process leading to the adoption of Law No. 904 of 1981, the “Indigenous Communities Statute”, which established the Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Affairs (INDI), which is still in force; iii) the Ava Chiripá (Guaraní) Settlement Project, which

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was requested from the Itaipu binational entity following Paraguay and Brazil's construction of the hydroelectric dam of the same name on the Paraná River; (iv) the Caazapá Area Development Project, which affected the Mbya Guaraní people, culminating in the enactment of Law No. 43 of 1989 by virtue of which any change in use of disputed lands being claimed by Indigenous peoples was prohibited; and v) the struggles of the Enenlhet or Toba Maskoy peoples and the Maskoy of Riacho Mosquito to regain some 30,000 hectares of expropriated land within the estate of Carlos Casado S.A.

The fall of the Stroessner dictatorship in Paraguay in 1989 and Paraguay's subsequent commencement down the winding path of democratic transition were to determine the second socio-political and temporal framework in which the possible implications of the Barbados Declaration can be found. In addition to bringing about the restoration of public freedoms - of organization, political participation, freedom of the press, etc. - and institutional and administrative reforms, this transition ushered in a new constitution for the Republic of Paraguay. The Indigenous and indigenist movement coordinated expressly to achieve the approval of specific rights in this new charter:

"In May 1991, two regional meetings of leaders and representatives of the Indigenous communities were held: those from the Eastern Region met in Coronel Oviedo, and those from the Western Region in Itauguá. The aim of these meetings was to ascertain the true meaning of the Constitution and to try to produce proposals for it. These would then be taken to the different communities to discuss, approve or reform them, with the responses brought back to the next meeting to be held in (...) Coronel Oviedo. In addition to proposals for the new constitution, this meeting sent a note to Senators and Deputies and to the President of the Republic himself requesting Indigenous peoples' direct participation in the drafting of the new Constitution. The request was rejected (...) As a result, representatives of various Indigenous peoples held an historic protest march from the Cathedral esplanade to the seat of Congress (...) Indigenous peoples from all over the country resolved to call for the direct participation of four representatives, two from each region, in that same National Convention. In January 1992, the Convention granted a space with a voice but no vote to the Indigenous representatives." (Melià & Telesca, 1997: 104).

A Chapter V on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was thus included in the new Constitution, recognizing the principle of their existence prior to the formation and organization of the Paraguayan State (Art. 62); the right to ethnic identity in their respective habitat and to apply their own systems of social, economic, cultural and religious organization and norms of customary law when not in

violation of fundamental rights (Art. 63); the right to communal ownership of their lands in sufficient quantity and quality, with guarantees of their unseizability, indivisibility, inalienability and imprescriptibility, and a prohibition on their use to guarantee contractual obligations or for leasing (Art. 64); the right to participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country (Art. 65); the right to education and assistance and defence against, among other things, the looting of their habitat, environmental pollution and economic exploitation (Art. 66); and, finally, the exoneration of Indigenous peoples from civil or military service and public office (Art. 67).

The following year, on 10 August 1993, the Paraguayan State ratified ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries by means of Law No. 234. Shortly thereafter, from 6 to 10 December, the third and last meeting of the Barbados Group took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Declaration recognized the progress made in processes of ethnic reaffirmation but also the difficulties with regard to racism and the increasing violence being suffered in Latin America, which was severely affecting Indigenous peoples. It called on Latin American states and their then (and even now) “fragile democracies” and “militaristic” tendencies to respect the autonomy, cultural and territorial self-determination and rights of Indigenous peoples. The Declaration also called on international financial institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to generate policies and projects respectful of these rights. It also recognized that while many NGOs were strengthening civil society and acting as strategic allies in the Indigenous peoples’ struggle against homogenizing globalization, others were acting heedlessly without real knowledge of the specific cultural realities, mediating projects as a way of life and for their own benefit. It also criticized Indigenous policies that only contemplated territorial control without the political organization and conception of each people, highlighting the value of Indigenous organizations but warning at the same time of the danger and problem of autocratic Indigenous leaderships. Its criticism extended to sectors of the Left that were closed to perspectives of ethnic affirmation, to self-focused or instrumentalist social sciences and to the ethnocidal practices of some churches, and called for improved contributions in the fields of education and intercultural health, the transformation of Church practices and alternative economic proposals to neoliberalism. Finally, it reaffirmed an integral concept of the peoples with all their organizational, ethnic, cultural and territorial components, this latter being “a sphere defined by the full set and structure of ecological, social and symbolic relationships between a society and the continuous or discontinuous geographical space in which it acts” (Barabas *et al*, 1995:19-27). We reproduce here the list of exhortations and criticisms because, being the last issued by the Barbados Group, several of them are relevant to areas of the Indigenous and indigenist Paraguayan process.

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With the strengthening of the legal and regulatory framework in favour of Indigenous peoples, and the beginnings of a democratic opening, the Indigenous movement began to gain power, visibility and influence in national public life, highlighting the State's responsibility to meet its obligations to return the territories claimed in multiple demands made mostly by communities, led by leaders, and in turn united in regional and ethnically-defined Indigenous organizations. Simultaneously, in the same month and year of the third meeting in Barbados, more than 100 leaders and community members from the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná peoples in Presidente Hayes department of the Paraguayan Chaco thus travelled to the Paraguayan Parliament to demand the return of some 160,000 hectares of their traditional territory, corresponding to 14 different communities in defined but mostly discontinuous areas that were at that time in the hands of cattle ranchers and large landowners (Kidd, 1995). One of the leaders addressed the Chamber of Deputies in his own language, pointing out that: "The Chaco is ours and we know this because of the stories told to us by our grandfathers. It is as if the Paraguayans stole the land from us. Our culture is now in danger as are the trees, the animals, the fish and the plants. We need the land to survive and we are the best people to take care of it." (ibid: 61). The Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná campaign, supported initially by the Anglican Church and, later, from another perspective by the NGO Tierraviva, was also to extend its actions to obtaining international political support and lobbying multilateral organizations such as the European Union, which was financing projects in Paraguay such as the Chaco Development Project (Prodechaco). It was precisely a Sanapaná Indigenous leader from the Xakmok Kásek community, Marcelino López, who travelled to Europe with anthropologist Stephen Kidd in 1995 to lobby and demand that the start of this project be conditional upon agreeing to pre-existing Indigenous territorial claims (Ayala *et al.*, 2019). Other Indigenous mobilizations were to follow later:

"Again in 1995, more than 300 leaders from the Enxet, Sanapaná, Angaité, Guaraní and Nivaclé peoples came to Parliament to demand approval of the budget presented by the Forum of Private Indigenist Entities (FEPI), which was endorsed by INDI. There were also other demonstrations outside INDI in 1996 and the Ministry of Finance in 1997 by the Cora'i community of the Angaité people, demanding approval of and payment for the lands they claimed. 'The March for Indigenous Dignity', which took place in 1998, was a protest organized by 16 communities of the Enxet and Toba Qom peoples in which more than 2,500 Indigenous peoples descended on Asunción to demand compliance with laws, constitutional articles and international treaties enshrining their rights to land, health and food. In 1999, some 250 Enxet and Sanapaná Indians camped in Asunción to demand the expropriation of claimed lands" (Villalba, undated).

The emergence or greater visibility of the organized Indigenous movement in its contemporary form (given that there have always been different specific and/or own forms of organization in the community and intercommunity sphere, such as the *Tekoha guazú* and *Tekoha* among the Guaraní of the Eastern Region<sup>2</sup>) has occurred in various forms, as exemplified above. These have sometimes been at the level of associations of community leaders from a specific geographical area or ethnic group, as was the case of the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Yshir Nation (UCINY) founded in 1999, and sometimes inter-ethnic groupings such as the Coordinating Committee of Leaders of the Lower Chaco, founded in 1994 and which includes the Enxet, Angaité and Sanapaná peoples as well as the Qom and some Nivaclé.

The Coordinating Committee for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples (CAPI) was set up at the turn of the 21st century and comprised various Indigenous organizations from the Chaco and Eastern Region. Its aim was to respond to the government's attempts to repeal Law No. 904/81, without prior consultation or Indigenous participation, by means of a bill introduced in 2000 which would have curtailed the basic standards and acquired rights already more widely enshrined in the new Constitution. Following a broad consultation and discussion in communities of both regions, culminating in a congress in October 2003, the Indigenous movement stated its desire for inter-ethnic unity throughout the country and a draft alternative bill was prepared to counteract, if necessary, the one that was submitted and later withdrawn due to Indigenous pressure and mobilization (Ramírez, 2003: 372-373).

At the turn of the 21st century, the Mbya Guaraní community of Ypa'u Señorita, part of the Association of Mbya Guaraní Ñogueroi Pavei Communities of Caaguazú department, also managed to obtain State support to evict the peasant sectors that had invaded its lands. The Indigenous people's method of applying pressure included numerous families setting up camp for several months at a time outside the National Congress, a method that has since been used by other communities and peoples in the Eastern Region. Also at the start of the 21st century, Indigenous movements of a purely electoral nature began to emerge for the first time with the intention of standing candidates and proving their own electoral base and strength. This is how the 19 April Movement came about in the Lower Chaco, along with the 11 October Movement in the Central Chaco, both in the year

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2 "The **Tekoha** is formed of an Extended Family that is an autonomous socio-political, economic and territorial entity, the basic structure of Guaraní society. Each person is part of an extended family and identifies with it" and "Kinship relations weave a network of personal and historical relationships among the *tekoha*, a network that is strengthened by marriage between members of different *tekoha* and the periodic breakup of extended families. An alliance of several *tekoha* closely related by kinship ties is thus formed within a defined geographical space: The **Tekoha Guasu**" [Emphasis in bold my own] (Lehner, 2005: 29, 33).

2000 (Villalba, op. cit. undated). There had, however, previously been individual Indigenous candidates standing on behalf of traditional non-Indigenous political parties. Such was the case of Maskoy leader, René Ramírez, elected as a member of the Constituent Assembly for the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA) in 1991, and leader Tina Alvarenga, of the Western Guaraní people, elected as a councillor for the Central department by the National Encounter Party (PEN) in 1993. Individual candidacies continued after the inauguration of the above movements; for example, the Enxet Elvio Cabañas ran for the Chamber of Deputies on the ticket of the Workers' Party, Aché Margarita Mbywangi ran for the Senate under the banner of the Tekojoja Party in the 2008 elections, and Jorgelina Chepe from the Enlhet people was elected a municipal councillor in Teniente Irala Fernández municipality on behalf of the PEN in 2010 (Agüero *et. al.*, 2013: 32-34). During the 2015 municipal elections, in the prior stage of party primaries, the Enlhet Anuncio Giesbrecht was elected as mayoral candidate for the Colorado Party in Loma Plata municipality but the party's electoral commission finally granted the official candidacy to his Mennonite opponent. This action was denounced as electoral fraud.<sup>3</sup> In the general elections of that same year, Enlhet Rudy Ferh was elected as a PLRA councillor for Irala Fernández municipality (*ibidem*: 34). Similarly, at the last elections in 2018, a number of Indigenous individuals stood as candidates for different parties, with the majority Indigenous grouping of the Plurinational Indigenous Political Movement (MPIP) also being noteworthy. This stood Indigenous candidates from different peoples on its lists (alongside non-Indigenous candidates), the first on its list for the Chamber of Senators being the Mbya architect Gerónimo Ayala.<sup>4</sup>

This general pressure, alongside different specific struggles, had a positive impact in terms of an increased and consolidated Indigenous presence and organization, in terms of the training and political experience of their leaders (as well as generational and gender processes of leadership renewal), and in terms of the possibility of dialogue between different organizations, platforms and political and public spaces. Consultation became instituted as a practice, strategy, claim and right argued for and demanded of different State bodies and authorities responsible for Indigenous or other policies and actions. Progress was achieved in some aspects of public policy and legislation, such as: i) the realization of a widely participatory Indigenous Census in 2002 and again in 2012 (DGEEC, 2003; DGEEC, 2014); ii) the Paraguayan State's signing, in that same year, of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which, unfortunately but quite predictably, has not thus far resulted in greater compliance with or

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3 ABC Color. 17.08.2015. Available at <https://archivo.abc.com.py/nacionales/candidato-indigena-de-loma-plata-perdio-1398992.html> accessed on 15.08.2020

4 IP Paraguayan Information Agency. 18.03.2018. Available at <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/arquitecto-indigena-suena-con-convertirse-en-senador/> accessed on 15.09.2020.

enforcement of these rights (Cerna Villagra, 2012); iii) the Law establishing the General Directorate of Indigenous School Education No. 3,231 of 2007; iv) the Language Act No. 4,251 of 2011; and v) the Indigenous Health Act No. 5,469 of 2015.

These last three legislative developments have been accompanied by official consultations and/or participatory bodies. Since the government of President Nicanor Duarte (2003-2008), and consolidated under that of President Fernando Lugo (2008-2012), the Indigenous population has also gradually been included in the implementation of social protection programmes (Tekoporá and Older Adults, among others) and plans to mitigate the effects of road construction in various areas of the country. In 2008, at the start of his term in office, President Lugo appointed the Aché leader Margarita Mbywangi to be President of INDI.<sup>5</sup> Like so many Aché children, she had been stolen from her parents as a child and enslaved during the genocide they suffered in the 1960s and 1970s. Margarita had been included as a candidate for Senator by a party that supported the alliance promoting Lugo's presidency. Unfortunately, she did not receive sufficient support from the government to carry out the necessary institutional changes within INDI, which was a State organization with limited resources and space, co-opted in part by officials at the service of the clientelist interests of the Colorado Party and other power sectors and, in addition, tainted by cases of corruption. Although civil society generally felt this was an appropriate appointment, as it was in keeping with a spirit of historical reparation for the violations committed by the dictatorship against Indigenous peoples, as revealed by the Truth and Justice Commission, the Aché case being particularly noteworthy: "...leaders of other ethnic groups met and expressed their disagreement with the appointment, alleging a lack of representation, coming from one of the least densely populated peoples, and a candidate unsuitable for the position" (Barrios Cáceres, 2008: 545). She was therefore dismissed in December of that same year. Much later, on 11 October 2019, a large Indigenous protest and demonstration led to the dismissal of INDI President Ana María Allen, for lack of dialogue.<sup>6</sup> She had been appointed by President Mario Abdo, elected for the period 2018-2023. The mobilization, which was also calling for food and housing, had been organized by the Lower Chaco Mainumby Organization, which blocked the Remanso Bridge linking the Eastern Region with the Chaco<sup>7</sup>.

5 Presenza International press agency. 28.11.2019. Margaret Mbywangi: de esclava a lideresa [Margaret Mbywangi: from slave to leader]. Available at <https://www.presenza.com/es/2019/11/margarita-mbywangi-de-esclava-a-lidereza/> accessed on 15.09.2019

6 Última Hora. 11.10.2019. Available at <https://www.ultimahora.com/presidenta-indi-renuncia-medio-incidentado-bloqueo-del-puente-remanso-n2848801.html> accessed on 15.09.2020.

7 On December 9, 2020, this organization carried out another protest and blockade of the Transchaco road in the town of Rio Verde to demand that the Government, through the responsible agencies, fulfill its promises to build homes and provide electricity for their communities. ABC.

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It should be noted, as already anticipated with regard to the context and effects of the Barbados Declaration and the actions and projects inspired by it, that international pressure has been the great ally of contemporary Indigenous and indigenist organizations when forcing the State to comply with Indigenous rights. In this sense, it is worth noting the claims and demands, mainly territorial but also for violations of other basic human rights, submitted to the Inter-American Human Rights System once domestic recourse has been exhausted within the Paraguayan State. In addition to the Aché case, other Indigenous petitions have been filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In 1998, for example, the case of the Sanapaná communities of Lamexay and Kaylyephapopyet was submitted, whose territorial claim to 21,884 hectares was met through an amicable agreement with the State, mediated by the Commission. Other cases were to follow later, taken to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights following a rejection of requests made to Parliament for the expropriation of lands within the territories they claimed. Having verified the violation of the claimant communities' rights - within the context of a structural denial of rights - the Court repeatedly sanctioned the Paraguayan State with rulings in favour of the return of territory to and recognition of other rights claimed by the communities of Yakye Axa (2005), Sawhoyamaxa (2006) and Xakmok Kásek (2010).

Although this set of judgements and the case of the previous friendly agreement generated a positive impact at the institutional level, with the Executive Branch creating an Inter-institutional Commission for the Enforcement of International Rulings (CICSI) in 2009, the path of territorial restitution has been a long and tortuous one: Yakye Axa's proposed land expropriation project was rejected by the Executive that same year. Only in 2012 did the State acquire alternative lands to the original claim, some 12,134 hectares located in another part of its larger traditional territory. However, to date the community has not been able to access or settle there due to the lack of a passable road, which the State, although it has expropriated the lands almost nine years ago, began to build it only at the end of last year.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Sawhoyamaxa recovered the 14,404 hectares it was claiming in 2014 by means of an expropriation law, having reoccupied this land as a first step to forcing the government to speed up its return.<sup>9</sup> Finally,

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9.12.2020. Indígenas cierran la Transchaco en la zona de río Verde [Indigenous peoples close the Transchaco in the Rio Verde area] Available at <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2020/12/09/indigenas-cierran-la-transchaco-en-la-zona-de-río-verde/> Accessed on 26.01.2021

8 ABC. 24.09.2020. Available at: <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2020/09/24/luego-de-una-larga-espera-la-comunidad-yakye-axa-tendra-un-camino-para-acceder-a-sus-tierras/> Accessed 26.01.2021

9 BBC. 21.06.2014. Available at: [https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/06/140618\\_paraguay\\_indigenas\\_sawhoyamaxa\\_vs](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/06/140618_paraguay_indigenas_sawhoyamaxa_vs) Accessed 15.09.2020.

Xakmok Kásek recovered some 7,700 hectares of its traditional territory in 2016 through direct purchase by the government, which backed down in part due to the pressure the community put on it by actually reoccupying the land since 2008.<sup>10</sup>

This lack of compliance with the rulings in terms of legislative and public policy changes is reflected in the fact that other communities have also turned to the IACHR for reasons and causes very similar to the above requesting, in the first place, precautionary measures for their protection. Having suffered a violent eviction at the hands of a cattle rancher, the Enxet Kelyenmagategma community thus requested precautionary measures from the IACHR on the basis of which an amicable agreement was subsequently reached with the State for the return of 8,000 hectares of their traditional lands in 2011. The Mby'a Guaraní community of Makutinga also requested precautionary measures from the IACHR due to the criminalization of its leaders and members who were resisting attempts to evict and dispossess them of their lands by farmers dedicated largely to mechanized soybean cultivation (IACHR, 2015: 19-21). Finally, the Forest Ayoreo-Totobiegoso (a group in voluntary isolation) requested precautionary measures from the IACHR in 2013 and then, through Petition No. 850 of 2015, a final guarantee over part of the ancestral Totobiegoso Territory included in the Ayoreo Totobiegoso Natural and Cultural Heritage Area (PNCAT), located in the Upper Paraguay, Chaco region. The IACHR granted the precautionary measures in 2016.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that, in the judgement in favour of Xakmok Kásek, the IACHR pointed out that:

“In light of the conclusions reached by the Court in Chapter VI of this Judgement, the Court considers it necessary for the [Paraguayan] State to guarantee effective enjoyment of the rights recognized by the American Convention, by its National Constitution and by its legislation. For the Court, the State’s international responsibility in this case has arisen because legislation is inadequate to guarantee the Indigenous communities’ their right to ownership of their traditional territory, and because institutional practices are limiting or not fully guaranteeing the effective application of the rules that are formally established to guarantee the rights of Indigenous community members. In the Court’s view, the

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10 Tierraviva. 21.04.2016. Available at <http://www.tierraviva.org.py/xakmok-kasek-hacienda-anuncia-primer-pago-por-tierras-en-junio-y-comunidad-decidexakmok-kasek-hacienda-anuncia-primer-pago-por-tierras-en-junio-y-comunidad-decide-levantar-medida-de-fuerza/> accessed on 15.09.2020

11 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Available at <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/decisiones/cautelares.asp> accessed on 18.09.2020

social interest of the property as it relates to Indigenous communities means the Indigenous ancestral lands must be taken into account, and this must be reflected both substantively and procedurally” (IDH Court, 2010: 78).

Despite the fact that all three judgements have included a requirement to adapt legislation - and that other similar cases have since been submitted to the Inter-American Human Rights System - the State has not made any progress in this regard, however. On the contrary, instead of making efforts to provide regulations to update Law No. 904/81 and other related laws that guarantee the “substantive and procedural” level of territorial restitution for Indigenous peoples, proposals in violation of these rights, and even of this outdated law, have proliferated. As in 2001, there were repeated proposals for legislative reforms that would negatively affect Indigenous rights in both 2004<sup>12</sup> and 2015.<sup>13</sup>

Other proposals, such as a strengthening of the administrative and executive capacity of the diminished INDI by creating a Ministry for Indigenous Peoples<sup>14</sup> (or alternatively of including this institution in a “super-ministry” covering social issues) have not taken into account the proposals made by the former CAPI in 2009 (CAPI, 2009: 19-20), almost at the start of the Lugo government. CAPI has since become the Federation for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples (FAPI), comprising 13 Indigenous organizations from both regions of the country. Nor has the initiative to conduct a discussion and broad consultation process on the planned ministry been considered, as demanded of the bill’s proponents in 2019 by a large number of Indigenous organizations.<sup>15</sup> FAPI did, however, manage to get President Mario Abdo Benítez to issue Decree No. 1039 of 2018, “By which the ‘protocol for the process of consultation and free, prior and informed consent with the Indigenous peoples living in Paraguay’ is approved”.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, its implementation depends on the weakened and bureaucratic INDI, and the decree’s implementing regulations give more initiative to third parties who want to carry out projects or actions in communities than to the Indigenous communities and organizations themselves.

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12 Legislative Information System. Available at: <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/2074>  
Accessed 15.09.2020.

13 E’a. 28.02.2015. Available at <http://ea.com.py/modificacion-del-estatuto-indigena-que-pretende-wiens-es-totalmente-ilegal/> accessed on 15.02.2020. Legislative Information System. Available at: <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/103912>  
Accessed 15.09.2020.

14 Legislative Information System. Available at: <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/116559>  
Accessed 15.09.2020.

15 Ibid. (See Note of 6 August 2019 among the “background” documents to the bill)

16 FAPI. Available at [https://www.fapi.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/DECRETO1039\\_sy0ie1ke.pdf](https://www.fapi.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/DECRETO1039_sy0ie1ke.pdf) accessed 15.02.20.

## Indigenous health during a pandemic

Food assistance from the Ministry for National Emergencies (SEN), INDI and the departmental governments and urban municipalities of the Chaco and the Eastern Region was long virtually the only direct State response to the situation of extreme poverty affecting a large number of rural and urban Indigenous communities. They are regularly affected by the impact of climatic, biological and environmental crises - deforestation, droughts, floods, fires, water pollution by agrochemicals, and so on -, and these are becoming increasingly severe. Even so, such assistance has been far from universal or sufficient. At the same time, the State has slowly increased the health services offered to Indigenous peoples, mainly through the creation of Family Health Units (USF) in 2009, and the National Directorate for the Health of Indigenous Peoples (DINASAPI) under the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (MSPBS), also during the Lugo government, as well as regional care centres in each department, i.e., hospitals and health centres.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the health measures imposed by Mario Adbo's government, together with the State's admission of its inability and the impending collapse of the public health system in the face of the large-scale emergency, have exposed the shortcomings of these bodies and services once and for all. Indigenous peoples themselves have called the situation the "hunger pandemic".<sup>17</sup> The indigenist bodies have demanded an Emergency Plan for Indigenous Peoples and Communities in the face of COVID-19 which includes, among other things, the adoption of a Health Protocol for Indigenous Peoples,<sup>18</sup> which was finally approved by the MSPBS and DINASAPI in November 2020.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, given the slow and limited State health system, the Indigenous organizations themselves - together with some Indigenous NGOs - have commenced humanitarian programmes to deliver food and health kits to communities and have also begun to monitor cases of COVID-19 through a digital map on the Indigenous lands platform. According to the Data Bulletin for this map, as of 26 January 2021, 15 Indigenous peoples had been affected,

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17 FAPI, July. Available at <https://www.fapi.org.py/comunidades-indigenas-enfrentan-la-pandemia-en-medio-de-una-realidad-golpeada-por-el-hambre-la-discriminacion-y-la-falta-de-agua/> accessed 15.09.2020

Conamuri. 16.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.conamuri.org.py/la-emergencia-se-llama-hambre/> accessed 15.09.2020

18 Tierraviva. 3.09.2020. Available at <http://www.tierraviva.org.py/comunicado-de-tierraviva-a-la-opinion-publica-y-al-ministerio-de-salud/> accessed 15.09.2020

19 MSPBS. Available at: <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/porta/adjunto/c8b5a4-2020111PueblosIndigenas.pdf> Accessed on 26.01.2021

with 73 communities at risk, and a total of 259 positive cases and 26 deaths,<sup>20</sup> which possible vast undercounted cases due to the distance of most Indigenous communities and their population to health facilities.

### **Lands and territories**

The following is a summary, based on slightly modified and updated data and conclusions from a previous study (Villagra, 2018), of the lands and territories returned and/or claimed by Indigenous peoples since the adoption of Law No. 904/81, bearing in mind that, despite improved registration at the State and private levels, there is still no fully consolidated information.

The first official census conducted in 1981 gave a figure of 38,703 people. It was estimated that 20% of the Paĩ-Tavyterã population, 80% of the Mbya Guaraní and 30% of the Ava Guaraní - the three main peoples in the Eastern Region - had nowhere to settle (Brunn *et. al.*, 1992: 14). Some 10 years later, with a population now totalling 49,487 Indigenous peoples (Melià, 1997), some 471,655 hectares had been registered for 254 listed communities throughout the country (Brunn *et. al.*, *op. cit.*). In 2002, the Indigenous population was estimated at some 87,099 individuals. This was because a more comprehensive count of the population had now been achieved through a participatory methodology. Data on land tenure and conflicts were included (DGEEC, 2003). Thus, 414 communities were registered (568 if villages and neighbourhoods are included as internal community divisions). Of these, some 185 had no land of their own (44.7%) and 120 communities (29%) were affected by deforestation (Kretschmer & Rehnfeldt, 2005: 44-46). In 2006, Indigenous organizations estimated that a total of 717,952 hectares were now guaranteed across the whole country (Ayala & Cabello, 2006: 362-363).

The 2012 census records 493 communities, 711 if villages and districts are included (DGEEC, 2015). Of the total number of communities recorded by this census, some 357 had their own land (72.8%) and 134 did not (27.1%); two communities did not report data. According to our estimates from this census, and according to the respective atlases of linguistic families and other sources (Balbuena, *et. al.*, 2019), there are currently some 521 communities, plus 272 villages and neighbourhoods and 47 family groupings across Asunción and the Metropolitan Area of the Central Department, that is, 840 groups or collective units.

Taking into account this growth and the most recent data from the 2012 census (increasing it to obtain an estimate for 2020), corrected and updated on the basis of this report and study with information from other sources (such as the

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20 Tierras Indígenas [Indigenous lands]. Available at: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/2a1e7ad30b3549d18b298f51f911b524> Accessed on 26.01.2021

initiative of the Indigenous Lands digital platform, sponsored by FAPI<sup>21</sup>), we can see the differences deriving from a more precise count and systematization of the platform with respect to the census.

**Table 1.**  
**Indigenous population, guaranteed land, average per family at regional level and total population and total land of Indigenous communities plus percentage of land rented nationally.**

Year	Eastern Region population	Hectares guaranteed in the Chaco	Hectares per family	Indigenous population in the Chaco or Western Region	Hectares guaranteed in the Chaco	Hectares per family	Total indigenous population in the country	Total indigenous lands guaranteed in the country	Total indigenous communities in the country	Total number of communities renting	Percentage rental out of the total
1.981	12.706	S/D	S/D	25.997	S/D	S/D	38.703	S/D	S/D	S/D	S/D
1.992	21.872	78.165	18	27.615	393.490	71	49.487	471.655	254	S/D	S/D
2.002	44.135	78.254	9	42.964	639.698	74	87.099	717.952	415	120	29%
2.012	61.126	276.654	23	50.246	687.299	68	117.150	963.953	493	182	37%
2.020	65.340	245.761	19	59.887	898.184	75	125.227	1.143.945	521	192	37%

**Sources:** Own elaboration and estimation based on data from the 2012 Indigenous Census and other sources: (Brunn et. al., 1992) (Ayala & Cabello, 2006), (Bogado et. al, 2016), (Balbuena, et. al., 2019) (Tierras Indígenas, 2020).

Lands in community ownership currently titled or guaranteed to Indigenous peoples (i.e., returned for possession and occupation and in the process of being titled but still in the name of another entity) total 1,143,495 hectares. They are insufficient, even taking as a baseline the minimum established by the now outdated Law No. 904/81. On average, the communities in the Eastern Region just about reach that minimum, but not those in the Chaco. Of all this land, the State has returned only around 50%. In addition to this, there are now claims that transcend individual communities and refer to peoples as a whole who are seeking to recover and manage their own contiguous territories. Such are the cases, for example, of the Ayoreo Totobiegosode people, mentioned above, and the Tekoha Guazú of the Mbya Guaraní people, in the departments of Itapúa and Caazapá. And yet the Executive has just reduced the 2021 budget for land purchases by 381%<sup>22</sup> in relation to 2020.

Taking into account all the above, it can be seen that the actions taken for territorial restitution, environmental protection and inclusion, as well as other critical aspects of the vulnerable living conditions of Indigenous peoples (defence and

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> Victor Imas, personal communication and also see Decidamos-CODEHUPY. 18.08.2020. Available at <https://www.decidamos.org.py/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Posicionamiento-Comunidades-Ind%C3%ADgenas-en-doble-emergencia.pdf> accessed on 18.09.2020.

dignity in the workplace, the situation of education itself and intercultural health) have in practice been insufficient or non-existent in relation to the required and necessary demands (Barrios Cáceres, 2019). The lack of enforcement of human rights due to discrimination and violations committed by third parties has been the most negative and critical aspect in recent times, bearing in mind the recent, successive and unconstitutional violent evictions of Indigenous communities: the Y'apo in 2014, Tekoha Sauce and Jejytimiri in 2016 (Cabello & Mendieta, 2016), and the Guarypaju<sup>23</sup> and Loma Piro'y<sup>24</sup> in 2020. There are also the racist crimes, some of them drawn directly from hatred, perpetrated in previous years and in recent months.<sup>25</sup> Not to mention the lack of State protection from drug trafficking violence in the northern zone of the Eastern Region and the very recent co-opting of Indigenous youth into the ranks of the Paraguayan People's Army<sup>26</sup> to form an Indigenous Brigade, which was blamed for the kidnapping of a former vice-president of the Republic. This latter situation took a relatively positive turn in the end due to the Indigenous organizations' refusal to accept the proceeds this armed group obtained from the relatives of the kidnapped person by way of a ransom. The organizations have thus demonstrated their rejection of violence and their desire for autonomy in the face of these groups and the government and State itself.

Despite this negative picture, the proliferation and strengthening of Indigenous organizations, the increasing professionalization of its young population, the occupation of space and the legal and territorial conquests obtained from time to time all point to the fact that the direction that Barbados took towards the "liberation of Indigenous peoples" remains a fully valid and necessary principle for our era, and for many eras to come.

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23 Ultima Hora. 08.08.2020. Available at <https://www.ultimahora.com/repudian-violento-desalojo-y-atropello-comunidad-indigena-caaguazu-n2898895.html> accessed on 15.09.2020.

24 BASE IS. 18-20-2020. Matones de sojeros arremeten contra comunidad indígena en Caaguazú [Soybean thugs attack Indigenous community in Caaguazú]. Available at <https://www.baseis.org.py/matones-de-sojeros-arremeten-contra-comunidad-indigena-en-caaguazu/> Accessed on 26.01.2021

25 CONAMURI. 03-05-2020. Available at <https://www.conamuri.org.py/comunicado-ore-avei-yvypora-peeicha-anive-ore-juka/> accessed on 15.09.2020

26 ABC Color. EPP ofrece dinero para reclutar indígenas, afirma titular del INDI [EPP offers money to recruit Indigenous peoples, says INDI's head]. Available at <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2020/09/14/epp-ofrece-dinero-para-reclutar-a-indigenas-afirma-titular-del-indi/> accessed on 15.9.2020.

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# ETHNOCIDE AND ETHNOGENESIS IN MADRE DE DIOS, PERU: THE FENAMAD EXPERIENCE

Thomas Moore<sup>1</sup>



In January 1971, when the first Barbados Conference was held, I was still a graduate student in anthropology at the New School for Social Research, New York. The documentation of that initiative (Grupo de Barbados, 1971; Dostal, ed., 1972) was of great importance in my background and orientation as an anthropologist. That same year, in New York, I met Helge Kleivan of the International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and both Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Stephen Corry of Survival International, with whom I held extended conversations on issues related to the Indigenous rights movement, ethnocide, and the Barbados Conference. I had already been inspired by *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Warman *et al.*, 1970) and *La Paix Blanche* (Jaulin, 1970), and I was committed to a critical anthropology perspective under the guidance of my professor, Stanley Diamond.

The Barbados Group denounced the situation of colonial domination of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and called upon governments, religious missions, and anthropologists to act against those aggressions and to contribute toward Indigenous peoples' liberation. In particular it called upon anthropologists to denounce all cases of genocide and practices that led to ethnocide. Jaulin (1970) documented the experience of the Bari on the border between Venezuela and Colombia and acts that deny their ways of life by Capuchin missionaries. He denounced colonial ethnology that supported these processes and defined ethnocide (1976:9) as the complete modification contributed to and imposed upon the everyday way of life of peoples, their relations of production, of consumption, and of residence, as points of departure for colonial values to which they are condemned.

Norman Whitten (1976:281-285) defined ethnogenesis as the adaptive processes in a people's forms of life and relationships that allow them to survive in a

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1 This English language version is more than a simple translation of the Spanish language version (Moore, 2021). I have sought to improve the text with clearer explanations of some of the original points, and I have cited sources more precisely. I would like to thank Adela Reátegui and Alfredo García for their critical comments on previous Spanish-language drafts of this contribution, as well as Alberto Chirif for his helpful editorial suggestions on both the Spanish and the English drafts. Of course, responsibility for the content is exclusively mine.

colonial intercultural context. He described this process for the Canelos Quichua in eastern Ecuador, a people who had sustained relationships of contact and interaction with the colonial and national society of Ecuador for more than four centuries.

For my field work as an anthropologist I selected the Harakbut<sup>2</sup>, of the southeastern Peruvian Amazon, because the Arakbut subgroup, then called Amaraakeri, had come out of isolation from the national society in the 1950s, and I knew from information provided by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) missionary who worked with them that there were survivors of the initial contacts, who had reached adulthood and lived within their culture during the pre-contact period. These conditions allowed me to get to know, document, and interpret that experience, including the ethnocide and ethnogenesis processes that they had experienced, based on interviews with them in their language.

When I arrived in Peru in August 1971 to plan for my field work, 1973-1975, I met Stéfano Varese, one of the participants in the Barbados conferences, and he provided me with important information to orient those plans. During this initial fieldwork, I lived among the most isolated Arakbut at Puerto Alegre on the upper Karene (Colorado) River for two years and was able to obtain numerous testimonies from the elders who had experienced pre-contact life and also get to know the external aggressions the Harakbut were experiencing in all of their local communities.

### **Experiences prior to Indigenous organization in Madre de Dios**

In 1974, representatives of the then US-based oil company, Cities Service and its sub-contractor for seismic exploration, Geophysical Services, Inc. (GSI), arrived in Puerto Alegre, later called Puerto Luz, to plan for extension of an airstrip built there by the SIL. These companies had obtained a contract to explore and develop oil and gas in an area of more than one million hectares of traditional Harakbut territory without asking permission from anyone except the Peruvian Government. GSI employees installed a storage facility at the edge of the air strip adjacent to the school and many of the homes in the community, to distribute food supplies, equipment, combustibles, explosives, and other materials used in seismic exploration. They used this air strip for numerous flights of helicopters and small airplanes every day for more than a year. That situation created chaos in the community, where the precarious school, set up that same year by the SIL,

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2 I use Harakbut for the language and also as the name for the larger ethnolinguistically related people or nation, and Arakbut for what is now the largest subgroup of this people or nation reflecting differences of dialect among the various subgroups. The Arakbut and Kisabaeri pronounce the name with an initial glottal stop, while the other five subgroups (Wachiperi, Arasaeri, Sapieri, Pukirieri, and Toyeri) pronounce it with initial aspiration.

could not function and noise from the intense activity disrupted daily life in the community.

The oil company workers were sexually aggressive toward Indigenous women, made use of a ring of company-sponsored prostitutes within the community settlement, abused alcoholic beverages, and stole produce from community gardens when their own supplies were short. They also contracted transportation services using community canoes, and garden produce without paying the negotiated prices.

Elsewhere (Moore, 1979:122-123; 1981:140-141), I describe this situation in greater detail in the context of SIL's role in the ethnocide process. I concluded that external aggressions were often mitigated by actions of the SIL missionary, who lived simply, adapted to the Arakbut lifestyle, learned and used their language, and sought to avoid social tension and conflict, unlike the situation in the Spanish Dominican missions, which were located on the main rivers, incorporated different peoples, often historical enemies, in the same mission, and refused to learn Indigenous languages or allow them to be spoken in the Spanish language schools established by the missions with State support. The SIL missionary was not in the community during most of the time the oil workers were there; he was working on bilingual publications at the SIL base at Yarinacocha.

At this time all of the Arakbut at Puerto Alegre, except the bilingual teacher, were monolingual in their language. So, the oil company staff often asked me to intervene as interpreter between the Harakbut language and Spanish, or English in the case of the Australian national managers. Those oil company representatives with greater responsibility were arrogant, stating that the Peruvian Government had given them a contract that they had to fulfill, that the Indigenous peoples had no legal rights, since they were illiterate, and that they had to accept whatever the company needed to do to find oil or gas for the country.

Following several nights of lengthy discussion in a community assembly, the Arakbut selected a man to accompany me to Lima to protest the abuses by the oil company and demand respect for their rights before key governmental agencies. That same year, 1974, the government of Juan Velasco Alvarado approved the first Law of Native Communities and Agricultural Promotion in the Selva and High Selva (Decree Law 20653), which recognized "native communities" as legal persons and provided for the demarcation and titling of the lands that they occupy. That Law was the fruit of the work of a team in the National System for Social Mobilization (Sinamos), in which the principal protagonists were Stéfano Varese and Alberto Chirif. Varese (2017) describes the process and the difficulties of getting this Law approved in the Velasco government.

Once in Lima, with help from Stéfano, we attended a birthday party for a female official of Sinamos, which coordinated Government interventions in the provinces. That party was attended by the most important Sinamos officials and by ministers and other high-ranking Government officials. Everyone present was fascinated by Sonkewe<sup>3</sup>, the Arakbut man who accompanied me – barefoot, since his new sneakers were uncomfortable— and listened attentively as we detailed the complaints against the oil company. We presented a formal document that I had drafted in Spanish, detailing the abuses that most affected the community and that they had expressed in their assembly. A few days after our arrival back in the community, a helicopter landed with the Cities Service manager, who apologized to the community for the “inconveniences” that they had experienced and handed out cash to most of the community members, in compensation. That convinced them that it was possible to make known their problems and demand respect for their rights from “the government”.

Then, in 1978, on a visit to Madre de Dios, I arrived at the Arakbut community of Boca del Inambari, where I found more than 200 Harakbut from all of their communities and subgroups that I had known in their communities. They were supporting their kinsmen in Boca del Inambari, whose lands, demarcated but not yet titled, had been invaded by two groups of gold miners, who had obtained mining claims for gold within the community’s demarcated lands. Following a long discussion in the presence of a Sinamos representative<sup>4</sup> and the Madre de Dios Director of the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM), who requested my assistance as interpreter, the miners and the MINEM Director reached a reluctant agreement with the community to withdraw from gold mining on community lands within a given time frame; the miners later did not comply with that time frame, but only left once they had exhausted the accessible gold and remaining in the community was no longer economically feasible<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, after repeated confrontations with these and other gold miners who continued to appear in the community and were forced out by physical resistance, the Boca del Inambari community is now free of external gold miners who reluctantly consider their territory off limits. As a result of the 1978 experience, the different Harakbut communities and their leaders repeatedly

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3 A pseudonym. Out of respect for the Harakbut prohibition on pronouncing the names of the deceased, I do not use the true names of the Harakbut referred to, with the exception of the publicly known Spanish names of Harakbut and Fenamad leaders.

4 Sinamos was discontinued by the Morales Bermúdez government in 1978. This intervention was one of their last in Madre de Dios.

5 I describe this experience in greater detail in Moore, 1983:421-425 and Moore, 1985:170-171, with comments on the impact of gold mining in the community. See also Gray, 1986, for more detail on conflicts with gold miners in the San José de Karene community.

insisted that I return to Madre de Dios to help them confront outside aggressions that disrupted their lifestyles.

Also, in 1978, the Morales Bermúdez government, which succeeded that of Velasco Alvarado, opened the Peruvian Amazon to investment by transnational capital by repealing and replacing the Native Communities Law with a new, Decree Law 22175. This new Law, which is still in force, in its Article 70 allowed for concessions of unlimited extensions of land in the Peruvian Amazon to be granted to international investors for the purpose of developing cattle ranches or agro-industrial projects. Taking advantage of this Law, Central American Services (CAS), ostensibly a cattle ranching company with a presence in Nicaragua during the Somoza regime and capital from the Banco Ambrosiano, led by Vatican banker Roberto Calvi, obtained a reserve of 305,000 hectares from the Peruvian Government, purportedly for a beef cattle project. The area included in this reserve included most of the gold mining area along the Madre de Dios River, and that may have been its ultimate purpose. It also included the not yet titled lands of two native communities, San José de Karene and Shiringayoc, as well as lands and forestry contracts of numerous non-Indigenous local farmers, loggers, and Brazil nut harvesters with no recognition of their rights (Sur, 1979; Moore, 1980:457-460).

Also in May 1978, the Morales Bermudez Government approved the Law for the Promotion of Gold Mining (Decree Law 22178) that authorized gold mining claims in Madre de Dios and elsewhere in Peru. This law was published in the official daily, *El Peruano*, in Lima on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of a 30-day period established in the Law to allow small-scale placer gold miners, including Indigenous communities that had been authorized by the Peruvian Mining Bank to produce gold that they sold to the Bank, which then had a monopsony on gold purchases and sales, to exercise preferential rights to claims. Thus, most of the small-scale goldminers in Madre de Dios, including those in native communities, lost their potential rights to mining claims to national and transnational companies affiliated with the National Society for Mining and Petroleum in Lima, who filed claims on the day after publication of the Law, in which they had had a major role preparing. The areas where gold mining claims were allowed included areas of Indigenous communities, whether or not they had land titles at that time (Moore, 1983; Pacuri and Moore, 1992).

### **Organization of the Native Federation**

In 1980 I returned to Peru to stay on as a permanent resident. I joined an NGO, Copal: Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and found work for a time with another NGO, the Center for Amazon Research and Rights Promotion (CIPA), which allowed me to renew my relationship with the Harakbut and encourage their organization.

With modest financial support from Oxfam (United Kingdom), in 1981, we were able to send Harakbut delegations to Lima to attend two assemblies of the Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (Aidesepe), the national-level Amazon Indigenous peoples' organization, which also had funding from Oxfam. Those exchanges allowed the Harakbut delegates to get to know the organizational experiences of the other Amazon Indigenous members of Aidesepe and to give thought to their own options. Also, that same year Aidesepe sent its Secretary to accompany me to all of the then existing Harakbut communities, where we held assemblies and explained the purpose of Aidesepe and encouraged their own organization and affiliation.

On that basis, with the agreement of all of the Harakbut communities in Q'osñipata, Cusco, and Madre de Dios, the call went out for the first Congress of the Madre de Dios Native Federation (Fenamad) to be held at the site of Boca del Karene, a recent Arakbut settlement, on January 18-20, 1982. This Congress was organized with the assistance, from San José de Karene, of anthropologist Andrew Gray and his wife, educator Sheila Aikman, and financial support for transportation and meals from Oxfam (Guillén, 1982; Moore, 2015:65-67).

My intention had been to promote the organization of the Harakbut people to help consolidate their identity and defend themselves as a people or nation. However, the Harakbut delegates from many of their communities insisted on the need to invite the Yine from the neighboring Diamante community, considered allies. Their vision was more of Indigenous unity than of strengthening their own identity. So, Fenamad began as a multiethnic organization of eight communities, seven of which were Harakbut and one Yine, with Matsigenka members in Santa Rosa de Huacaria, as well as Diamante. That Congress debated its priorities over three days and elected its first leadership council.

The principal Fenamad demands were around territorial defense from outside incursions by mining companies and others, among which were some with close ties to the government of Acción Popular, led by Fernando Belaúnde Terry; others were transnational corporations. These companies were operating in the lands of Harakbut communities that had been demarcated by the work of CIPA, but had not yet received land titles. Indeed, land titles were among the principal demands. Other demands by communities near the Manu National Park included lifting of the prohibition by the Park of fishing with barbasco root (*Lonchocarpus utilis*), a longstanding traditional activity. Additionally, the Congress demanded an end to abuses by Navy personnel, who were extorting gold and money from Indigenous peoples whose canoes lacked formal registration with the port captain in Puerto Maldonado, some regulatory safety measures, and the Peruvian flag flying at 30 centimeters above the prow.

The first Fenamad leadership council was led by Pedro Quique, an Arakbut leader from San José de Karene. The secretary elected was Manuel Trigoso, a Yine leader from Diamante. The other members were all from Harakbut communities, including Ezequiel Moqui, the former bilingual teacher at Puerto Luz, who spoke better Spanish and was elected as spokesperson. Ezequiel led a delegation to Puerto Maldonado to make public the creation of Fenamad. He was interviewed on Radio Madre de Dios, with assistance from a Dominican priest, Adolfo Torralba, then in charge of that radio station. He then went on to Lima with me to make public the organization of Fenamad at the first Symposium on Native Communities at the National University of San Marcos, January 26-30, 1982. His presentation at that event (Moqui Mio, 1982) was published by *Sur*, the bulletin of the Bartolomé de Las Casas Center in Cuzco. While in Lima he also presented formal demands for land titles and other matters before some of the principal government agencies.

### **The First Years of Fenamad**

The second Fenamad Congress was held in the Boca del Inambari community in September 1982 for the purpose of defining a strategy and clear action plan, as agreed upon in the first Congress. The second Congress defined a wider range of demands, focusing on land titles and confronting mining companies and others that had occupied not yet titled lands or simply invaded them. There were also demands for a health program in the communities, and a solution to allow Indigenous students to gain access to secondary education after they completed primary education in their communities, where there were no secondary schools and no relatives in urban centers like Puerto Maldonado to provide for them for studies there. That second Congress also decided to replace the federation president and elected an Harakbut man of the Wachiperi subgroup from the Shintuya community, Alejandro Corisepa, to that position, replacing Pedro Quique. Alejandro was a riverine trader (*regatón*) who regularly visited the communities in the course of that activity and could share news and obtain information on the current situation of each of the communities to help consolidate the organization.

During all of the second presidency of Perú of Fernando Belaúnde Terry, 1980-1985, the procedures for titling of the recognized native communities were blocked. Although the Ministry of Agriculture staffs in Puerto Maldonado and Cuzco were helpful in advancing the paperwork and procedures locally, once the documentation reached Lima, the authorities there found all manner of excuses for not completing the process, and the portfolios containing the documentation were frequently, and mysteriously, lost. It became clear that the priority of that government was to grant access to Amazon region lands to friends of the regime and not respect for the rights of native communities.

In 1982, following protests from Fenamad, lacking political support in Madre de Dios, and with an international scandal involving Vatican bankers, and the suicide in London of Roberto Calvi, Central American Services abandoned its cattle ranching project in Madre de Dios. This occurred in the context of increasing organization and demands from grass roots movements and pressures for government decentralization (Moore, 1985), all of which were ignored by the Belaúnde government.

Moreover, a number of situations that occurred during the Belaúnde government limited progress on demands from Peruvian Amazon Indigenous organizations like Fenamad. First, in 1980, CIPA brought the case of the Ashaninka of the Ene River, whose lands and forests were being massively invaded by Government-encouraged colonists from the highlands of Ayacucho, before the Bertrand Russell Tribunal in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Later on, it was revealed that some of the invading colonists were advance columns of Sendero Luminoso insurgents who sought to ensure access for the transportation of coca derivatives along the Ene River northward to the principal waterways of the Amazon. This case received extensive international press attention that led to protests against the Belaúnde government by other countries and civil society organizations.

Moreover, CIPA, founded and led by former officials of the Native Communities Office of Sinamos when that organization was terminated, conducted a large project to train Indigenous community leaders and defend their legal rights with funding from the Ford Foundation. Following a hostile reaction from the Belaúnde Government over the protests around the Ashaninka case and the Amazon Indigenous movement generally, the Ford Foundation cancelled the CIPA legal project and left CIPA without the financial resources needed to defend Indigenous communities' rights in the Peruvian Amazon.

The protest from Fenamad and its demands for land titling in Madre de Dios also offended the Belaúnde government, which labeled as terrorists the sponsors of Indigenous organization in the Peruvian Amazon, specifically Oxfam, which decided to discontinue funding of Amazon Indigenous organizations, including Fenamad.

Finally, in 1983-1984, President Belaúnde proposed a road and interfluvial canal across the Isthmus of Fitzcarrald and through the Manu National Park. He traveled to the area in January 1984, and in preparations for his visit to the Manu Park, isolated Indigenous peoples, most likely those now called Mashko Piro, wounded in the hip with an arrow a trail blazer, who was clearing a heliport to receive President Belaúnde. That situation resulted in extensive press coverage. Less press coverage was given to the isolated Indigenous attackers, among whom a number of deaths from Navy gunshot wounds were reported by Matsigenka informants (Moore, 1984). Most of the conservation organizations active in

the Peruvian Amazon, with support from Fenamad, conducted a national press campaign against these projects, which had to be discontinued.

During this period, with no financial support from Oxfam, Fenamad had to sustain itself as best it could. Its president, Alejandro Corisepa, kept it alive by distributing in the communities Aidesep communications and Copal bulletins that I sent him from Lima or Cuzco. He also arranged for Fenamad delegates to attend Aidesep assemblies in Lima, with transportation costs covered by Aidesep budgets.

For a few years, with modest support from the International Organization for Migrations, a German medical doctor, Dorothea Hück, attempted to organize community health promoters in several Arakbut communities, a Fenamad project that could not continue after she left. Also, Fenamad took advantage of scholarships, channeled by Aidesep, that allowed four Arakbut students to pursue secondary education studies in a Puerto Maldonado high school while their lodging and meals were contracted with a local mestizo family and their school uniforms and supplies were covered by the scholarships. Finally, with help from some opposition members of the Peruvian Congress, a land title was issued to the Santa Rosa de Huacaria native community, a Fenamad founder in the Q'osñipata Valley of Cuzco (García Altamirano 2003:277-281; Moore, 2015:65-67).

### **The first Fenamad reorganization**

In July of 1985, Alan García assumed the presidency of Peru, and international cooperation agencies were able to resume their support to the Indigenous organizations of the Peruvian Amazon. Beginning with an initiative of Oxfam America, a joint project with Oxfam UK was approved to support the organization and operations of Fenamad through the Eori Center for Regional Research and Development Promotion<sup>6</sup>, which I had co-founded and led.

With this support, we were able to field three professionals, including myself, and cover the costs of the third congress of Fenamad communities held at the Arakbut community of Boca del Inambari in December 1985. To that Congress three Ese Eja communities and one Kichwa Runa<sup>7</sup> community were invited, as

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6 Eori is the name for the Madre de Dios River in the Harakbut language, not an abbreviation.

7 The Kichwa Runa in Madre de Dios were brought there from the Napo River in Ecuador during the rubber boom as slaves (Rummenhöller, 2003, 2020a). They originated from the same Canelos Quichua studied in Ecuador by Whitten (1976). With the collapse of the rubber boom they were settled at Alerta, Tahuamanu province, near the Bolivian border of Madre de Dios, under the control of the Valdés brothers. Some Kichwa Runa remain at Alerta, among highland colonists. The Kichwa Runa of Puerto Arturo broke off from Alerta in 1954-1955 and established their own autonomous community, now formally a native community with a land title, at the mouth of the Las Piedras River (Rummenhöller, 2003:161).

they had requested. Thus, the multi-ethnic character of Fenamad was expanded. The Madre de Dios Development Corporation (Cordemad) and the Regional Direction of Agriculture were also invited and sent delegations. And the mayor of Tambopata Province sent a letter of greeting and solidarity. So, unlike the situation during the previous government, there was an opening and attention on the part of government agencies for the first time.

Reports and debates went on over three days and a wide range of programmatic initiatives was approved and made public. Moreover, Fenamad was reorganized with an Ese Eja president, Roberto Masías, and other positions occupied by Harakbut and Yine delegates (Wahl 1985, Moore 2015). With the assistance of the Eori Center lawyer, Felipe Pacuri, both Fenamad and the Eori Center were formally established as civil associations with legal personality.

During the period from 1985 through 1994, funding to support and strengthen Fenamad and its member communities' programs was channeled through the Eori Center. Successive Fenamad congresses, held in different communities, incorporated delegates from Shipibo, Amahuaca, and Matsigenka communities, in addition to the Harakbut, Yine, and Ese Eja communities, thereby covering all of the Indigenous peoples of the Madre de Dios watershed in Peru. Succeeding Roberto Masías as president, were Felix Manuel Kuakibehue and then Miguel Pesha, both Ese Eja, with support from the Harakbut and the other Indigenous peoples' delegates. For eight years there were no overt inter-ethnic tensions in Fenamad, which obtained new land titles for 12 of its communities, including the two in Cusco.

Also, in 1992, with support from the Inka Regional Government, Fenamad advanced its technical proposal for the establishment of the Amaraeri Communal Reserve (RCA). At that time, following article 60 of the still existing Forestry and Wildlife Law (Decree Law 21147), communal reserves were considered hunting reserves to benefit adjacent rural communities, whether Indigenous or not. Later, in 1997, the National Protected Areas Law (Law 26834) incorporated communal reserves within the category of natural protected areas, without consulting the proponents of the pending request for communal reserves awaiting approval, which, in the case of the RCA finally occurred in 2002. Thus, the surrounding communities, affiliated with Fenamad were surprised when it was approved not as an autonomous Indigenous territory as they had requested, but as a natural protected area under the control of the Natural Protected Areas Service (Sernanp).

Other accomplishments during this period included the implementation of a program to promote traditional Indigenous medicine, Ametra-2000, oriented by traditional medicine advocate Didier Lacaze and anthropologist Miguel

Alexiades. Among other activities, that program included the use of ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) with Shipibo shamans. Ayahuasca is a hallucinogenic vine is an important component in Shipibo curing practices, but it is absent in Harakbut and Ese Eja traditional medicine. As a result, tensions arose among the different Indigenous peoples and their communities.

Also, during this period Fenamad obtained financial support from Cordemad for more than 40 scholarships to allow students who had completed their primary education in their communities to continue with secondary education in Puerto Maldonado. Cordemad hired a Peruvian anthropologist, María Lazarte, to oversee that program, and she worked closely with Fenamad and the Eori Center. Finally, with help from Andrew Gray in IWGIA, Fenamad obtained funding from the Norwegian government for six scholarships that allowed Indigenous secondary school graduates to pursue pre-university and university studies in Lima, since, at that time there was no university in Madre de Dios.

Additionally, with assistance from the National Institute for Statistics and Informatics (INEI), Fenamad implemented civil registries of births and deaths in most of its affiliated communities. The civil registries allowed community members to obtain legal identity documents from the Peruvian government. Also, with support from the Eori Center, Fenamad obtained legal mining claims in the names of eight different communities, as a defense mechanism to prevent outsiders from obtaining gold mining claims within titled native communities lands. Moreover, the Eori Center assisted Fenamad in the numerous legal cases to defend community territories against gold miners and other invaders, and obtained the removal of a judge who had issued an illegal sentence favoring gold miners who claimed rights within community lands (García Altamirano, 2003: 281-288; Moore, 2015: 70-73).

Between 1985 and 1991, Fenamad operated from a space offered by the Eori Center within its rented office, with no budget of its own, but with technical assistance, training, and logistical support from the Eori Center. Progressively, Fenamad leaders began to call for their own office and budget. Fenamad lacked its own administrative and accounting system and was fully dependent on the Eori Center for those services. So, in 1991, the Eori Center obtained a donation directly to Fenamad from a Peruvian NGO that allowed them to purchase and occupy their own headquarters half a block from the Eori Center's rented house. Then, in 1993, Oxfam America and Oxfam UK agreed to provide Fenamad with its own budget, which allowed them to acquire greater administrative and accounting skills and a degree of independence from the Eori Center. In 1996, both agencies concluded their support to the Eori Center, and since then Fenamad has operated independently, with a diversity of outside funding, while the Eori Center remains supportive as an ally.

### **The first internal crisis**

The Harakbut communities had voluntarily ceded the Fenamad presidency to Ese Eja leaders since 1985, while their leaders occupied lesser roles within the Federation. Over time, they began to resent this arrangement and to organize in 1992 in the context of a program called Plan Karene provided by the Scandinavian governments with encouragement from Andrew Gray. In March of 1992, the principal Arakbut communities held a meeting in Puerto Luz, attended by the Fenamad leadership, Andrew Gray, and me. Key issues that concerned the Arakbut, including their self-identification as Arakbut, not Amarakaeri<sup>8</sup> were decided (Gray, 1997:140-145).

Moreover, in that meeting there were complaints against the mayor of the Madre de Dios District of Manu Province, who had promised in his election campaign to provide materials for the construction of schools in Puerto Luz and San José de Karene. The communities decided to notify the mayor that they would come to the municipality office in Boca Colorado on March 30th to collect the materials. When they arrived, the mayor was absent and his staff were unwilling to turn over the construction materials as demanded by the allied Arakbut communities; so, the community members located the materials in a warehouse and seized them by force, returning to their communities with them, leaving a receipt for the municipality. That action strengthened their sense of their collective possibilities, and they began to claim greater political space for themselves (Gray, 1997:55-59).

In August 1993, Fenamad held its eighth Congress in the El Pilar community, comprised of the Shipibo, Ese Eja, and Matsigenka families that had been brought into the El Pilar Dominican Mission, which had been abandoned a few years earlier. Fenamad, with assistance from the Eori Center, had demanded and obtained legal recognition and a land title for this community, which became a strong organization supporter. During this Congress, tensions arose around a separatist position proposed by an Harakbut faction that was determined to set up its own organization, called the Harakbut Council (COHAR). Following a long and emotionally charged discussion, the Fenamad delegates unanimously agreed to a motion to constitute COHAR as an intermediate organization affiliated with Fenamad with the purpose of advancing Harakbut identity. COHAR never established its own legal recognition as such, but the Harakbut delegates accepted that arrangement (Gray, 1997:208-210; García Altamirano, 2003:288-291, 2019:231-236).

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<sup>8</sup> In that discussion the Arakbut recognized that the term Amarakaeri was not derogatory, but they did not consider it their own, but rather externally applied and disseminated principally by the SIL.

During that debate, there was much discussion of the need for organization around ethnic groups, as opposed to the concept of Fenamad as a multi-ethnic organization, as decided in the first Congress. Most of the complaints referred to lack of attention by Fenamad from its office in Puerto Maldonado to the communities of the upper Madre de Dios watershed that were four to five days travel by river from Puerto Maldonado. Ethnic demands were not prominent in that discussion.

Fenamad's ninth Congress was held at the Santa Rosa de Huacaria community, in the upper watershed. There the discussion of the nature and role of COHAR was continued, and it was definitively decided that COHAR, as the intermediate organization of Fenamad for the upper watershed, would now become multi-ethnic, including the mostly Yine and Matsigenka communities of that area, its name changed to the Harakbut, Yine, and Matsigenka Council (Coharyima). So, it was no longer considered an ethnically-based organization of Harakbut communities, some of which were downstream. That Congress also elected Antonio Iviche, an Arakbut leader from San José de Karene, as its President; so, the Harakbut recovered the principal leadership role in Fenamad and no longer called for a separate organization. Antonio Iviche was re-elected in 1998 and 2000 and remained in the presidency until 2002, with the active participation of the other Indigenous groups in other roles within the Federation.

### **Successive Fenamad leadership**

During this period, Fenamad, under Harakbut leadership, had as the principal source of funding for its activities, Plan Karene, sponsored by IWGIA, which allowed it to promote the value and recovery of Harakbut culture. At the same time, Fenamad administered its own financial resources, and gained experience on the basis of mistakes committed and corrected, thus acquiring skills that they had previously lacked (García Altamirano, 1993:291). Another important project allowed them to monitor a new oil and gas exploration program within their ancestral territory conducted by Mobil Oil Company<sup>9</sup>. There was also significant progress in the recognition of native communities and approval of their land titles.

Finally, in 2002, following the withdrawal of Mobil Oil from its exploration program in the area after drilling one well that did not yield economically feasible oil or gas, the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve was formally established by the Peruvian Government, under the authority of the National Protected Areas Service (Sernanp), as a natural protected area, not a hunting territory of the surrounding communities, as conceived in the Article 60 of the 1975 Forestry

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<sup>9</sup> This experience, although not without problems, avoided the most egregious abuses of the Cities Service exploration two decades earlier (Moore, 1981:140-142, 1996:72-76).

and Wildlife Law, the basis of Fenamad's original proposal. The Harakbut communities that had originally proposed the RCA as recovered ancestral territory under their autonomous governance. Moreover, an important area on its eastern side, where the Government had approved gold mining claims, was excluded from it. The heads of the RCA, with one brief exception when that role was assumed by an Arakbut sociologist, were and are biologists or foresters designated by Sernanp.

Also, during those years, the Peruvian Government established as natural protected areas the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park and the Tambopata National Reserve over important areas of ancestral Ese Eja territory. The Ese Eja communities were invited to a Forum, sponsored by Conservation International to discuss the protected areas proposal and demarcation, but since their titled community lands did not include these, the protected areas were not considered Ese Eja territory by that Forum.

At Fenamad's twelfth Congress, in 2002, Víctor Pasha, from the Ese Eja community of Infierno, was elected president, and Julio Cusurichi, a Shipibo from El Pilar, was elected Vice-President, although an Harakbut leader was also part of that leadership council. Similarly, at the thirteenth Congress, in 2004, Jorge Payaba, a Shipibo from the Tres Islas community assumed the presidency, although Jorge Tayori, an Arakbut from Puerto Luz was elected Secretary.

During the period of Jorge Payaba's presidency, Fenamad assumed an important role in the protection of isolated "Mashko Piro" Indians who were appearing along the Las Piedras and Upper Madre de Dios Rivers, and also within the Manu National Park. This activity was included in a project sponsored by the Norwegian Government and led initially by Aidesep through the Rainforest Foundation, Norway, although after a short time, Fenamad assumed this responsibility directly in Madre de Dios. Also, during this period a number of additional native communities were recognized and land titles granted by the Peruvian Government.

In another important development in this time of increased social conflict and grass roots mobilization around regional strikes, Fenamad helped organize the Alliance of Federations that included the Madre de Dios Agrarian Federation (Fademad) and, briefly, the Madre de Dios Mining Federation (Fedemin). This alliance brought together Indigenous communities, colonist farmers, and local gold miners in a common front around shared objectives for land use planning that obtained some productive policy changes from the Government. The three federations enjoyed high profile political presence in Madre de Dios during this period. It was a time of participatory land use planning in the framework of the ecological, economic zoning (ZEE) exercises carried out under the Amazon

Cooperation Treaty among the countries of the Amazon Basin and led in Peru by the Research Institute of the Peruvian Amazon (IIAP).

The ZEE plan for Madre de Dios, with support from the Alliance of Federations and civil society in the region was approved by the Madre de Dios Regional Government, but subsequently rejected by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, which claimed that the Regional Government lacked the authority to define areas for mining claims. Within the Alliance, Fedemin agreed to respect titled native community lands and not pursue mining claims within them (García Altamirano, 2019:277-278). Four years later, the Alliance unraveled as differences with the gold miners' objectives became clearer, although the alliance between Fenamad and Fademad continues to this day.

At Fenamad's 14th Congress, held in February of 2007, Antonio Iviche was newly elected president, allowing the Harakbut to recover its leadership. During this and two subsequent administrations led by other Harakbut presidents, the Ese Eja, Shipibo, Amahuaca, and Kichwa Runa peoples of the lower watershed, no longer in power, organized in parallel fashion to Coharyima, the Indigenous Council of the Lower Madre de Dios (Coinbamad), initially presided over by Wilber Inuma, an Amahuaca leader from the Boca Pariamanu community. However, for six years, Fenamad, under Harakbut leadership, did not incorporate Coharyima organically into the organizational structure and did not provide it with an office in their headquarters in Puerto Maldonado.

In 2007, Julio Cusurichi, who was charge with leading Fenamad's program to protect isolated Indigenous peoples, was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize honoring Indigenous leaders who demonstrated exceptional ability to defend the natural environment. Fenamad's president, Antonio Iviche, wanted that prize, which included a cash payment of US\$25,000, to go to Fenamad as the institution responsible for the program, but the prize was awarded to individual leaders of environmental initiatives. That discrepancy provoked tension between Iviche and Cusurichi and their factions within Fenamad (García Altamirano, 2019:244-245).

During this period, Fenamad prioritized its programs for monitoring and protecting isolated Indigenous peoples and also the consolidation of the RCA. In an attempt to placate tensions with Fenamad over the governance of the RCA, Sernanp, which organized participatory administration units to manage communal reserves, agreed to establish the Implementing Contractor for the Administration of the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve, ECA-RCA, with leadership selected by the surrounding "beneficiary" communities.

A crisis arose when the Peruvian Government awarded yet another oil and gas exploration contract to Hunt Oil Company, a privately-operated Texas-based

company, over Block 76, which covered most of the RCA, over Fenamad opposition<sup>10</sup>. During this time, Hunt Oil was offering benefits to some community leaders and the initial ECA-RCA leadership to support its exploration program, leading to divisions among the Indigenous communities and leaders. The Fenamad leadership demanded modifications in Hunt Oil's environmental impact assessment, rejected Hunt Oil's proposals, and filed an injunction (*acción de amparo*) in the courts to block oil and gas exploration in the RCA. That case remains active while it awaits a decision from Peru's Constitutional Tribunal, although Hunt Oil abandoned Block 76 in July 2017 for reasons of *force majeure* when it could not complete drilling of its first well within the contracted time frame.

In Fenamad's 15th and 16th Congresses in 2010 and 2012, Jaime Corisepa, an Harakbut man from Puerto Azul community, was elected president, continuing policies of Antonio Iviche. However, his second election was severely questioned by the communities affiliated with Coinbamad, whose delegates refused to participate in the Congress held in San José de Karene, perceived as favorable to the Harakbut-led faction. So, under pressure from its international funding sources, Fenamad decided to hold new elections in January 2013. To avoid this conflict, Jaime Corisepa opted against candidacy in this election, and the Harakbut faction presented as its candidate Klaus Quicque, from San José de Karene, who up until that time had served as Vice-President. Klaus Quicque won that election by one vote (Murtagh, 2016:100-113; García Altamirano, 2019:246). In a conciliatory move, he formalized the relationship with Coinbamad as an intermediary organization affiliated with Fenamad, and made office space available to it.

Then, at the 18th Congress of Fenamad in 2016, Julio Cusurichi was elected President, with Eusebio Ríos, an Arakbut man from San José de Karene as Vice-President, and Ese Eja, Yine and Harakbut delegates in other leadership roles. For a time, inter-ethnic tensions continued, but Cusurichi's careful attention to the needs of all of the Fenamad communities during his term helped overcome them, and in January 2019, he was re-elected this time to a four-year term, with some changes in other leadership roles. Initially, during his first term, the tension was mainly between the Fenamad leadership and the Harakbut faction that had lost the election, and whose leaders had major roles within ECA-RCA, which had its own legal status and budget, as well as support from Sernanp.

However, Fenamad made important overtures to them and to Coharyima and Coinbamad, inviting them to planning sessions and to coordination meetings with government agencies and civil society organizations, and negotiating

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<sup>10</sup> Since Hunt Oil was and is not publicly traded, it is not held accountable for its environmental policies and actions beyond host government requirements.

agreements that were satisfactory to all. As a result, internal tensions in Fenamad have abated substantially, although the Harakbut faction continues to want to recover Fenamad leadership and will likely do so before long.

### **Harakbut ethnicity and ethnic claims of the other Indigenous peoples in Fenamad**

The Harakbut refer to themselves as a single people or nation with seven sub-groups that have had a long history in the Madre de Dios watershed. The Arakbut sub-group was the most isolated one from the deep interior of Harakbut territory, and now it is the most numerous one. There are still a number of families comprising the much smaller other sub-groups, but because of their limited populations they have become much more inter-married with highland colonists and other Indigenous groups. Traditional Harakbut subsistence combined cultivation of a wide range of useful plants in small, dispersed forest gardens with hunting of once abundant wild game, fishing, and foraging (Moore 2016).

Harakbut social organization is oriented by seven patrilineal, totemic clans that continue to structure the productive relationships, even in work groups for placer gold mining. Their spiritual world revolves around a series of foundational myths, of which the central one explains their origins and culture around the *wanamei*, a large tree from which they and their culture sprang. All Harakbut are children of the *wanamei* (Califano, 1983; Gray 1996:25-51; Helberg Chávez, 1996:54-80; 2003; 2020: 197-202; Moore, 2003:76-77).

Harakbut ethnicity is strongly tied to their ancestral territory of life or *wadari*, which historically extended over nearly three million hectares in the south of Madre de Dios and the north of Puno and Cusco (Califano, 1982:37-38, 44; Moore, 2020:143-146). Over centuries parts of this territory have been shared with neighboring peoples, the Ese Eja between the Inambari and Tambopata Rivers, and the Yine and Matsigenka in the Q'osñipata Valley and the Upper Madre de Dios and Manu Rivers (Moore 2020). The Arakbut *wadari* includes the spatial kingdoms of the forest, the rivers, and the sky, while the souls of their ancestors inhabit specific animals of each of these kingdoms during their voyage after death toward the *serö'we*, an underground river and place of eternal happiness, which is their final destination (Moore, 2003:78; Tayori, Quicque y Quillahuamán, 2018:37). According to my own research, these concepts are shared by the other Harakbut sub-groups, which with reduced populations are more integrated into national society, including highland migrants and the other Amazonian Indigenous peoples.

Some Arakbut entered the Dominican missions at Palotoa, then Shintuya during the 1950s. They began to re-establish independent settlements, beginning in

1968, thus constituting their contemporary native communities. Thus, they sustained greater autonomy from the regional society and economy than their neighbors, although beginning in the 1980s their local community territories suffered massive invasions by gold miners and many other outsiders.

In my interpretation it is for that reason that Arakbut interactions with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are more charged with doubt, fear, and jealousy, and those inhibitions are reflected in intercultural tensions even within Fenamad, although they were the first to insist that Fenamad be a multi-ethnic organization.

For the other Indigenous peoples of Madre de Dios, particularly the Ese Eja, Shipibo, Amahuaca, and Kichwa Runa, who have a longer history of interaction with the outside world and have experienced domination from rubber tappers, missionaries, and colonists throughout the 20th Century, intercultural relationships come more easily.

The local Ese Eja sub-groups offered different strategies of isolation and resistance to the rubber tappers, colonists, and Dominican missionaries but also contact and incorporation into the Lago Valencia Mission (Alexiades and Peluso, 2003:97-104; Chavarría, 2020:237-243). A notable Ese Eja leader, Shajaó, after killing a Dominican priest in 1926, led a major resistance movement among the different local Ese Eja settlements against colonists in their ancestral territory until he was captured in 1942 (Fernández Moro, 1952:642-645; Soria Heredia, 1998:526-538).

The Shipibo, Amahuaca, and Kichwa Runa, brought to Madre de Dios as slaves by the rubber extractors, remained under the domination of colonist *patrones* and Dominican missionaries until the mid-20th Century, when they began their lives as independent rural communities (Rummenhüller 2003a, 2003b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Some Yine and Ashaninka leaders collaborated with the rubber tappers, while the related, once numerous Iñapari were brought to near extinction by rubber tappers under the control of Nicolás Suárez from Bolivia (Moore 2020:138).

The principal demand of all of the Indigenous peoples of the Madre de Dios watershed in Peru has been territorial recovery and consolidation, beginning with land titles for their local communities, but including spaces for autonomous governance within natural protected areas, including the RCA, the Manu and Bahuaja-Sonene National Parks, the Tambopata National Reserve, and the Madre de Dios Territorial Reserve for isolated Indigenous peoples, as well as the defense of their territories against incursions of oil and gas companies, placer gold miners, illegal timber harvesters, among others. On another level, but still of great importance to them have been improvements in health and education services, identity documents, and basic human rights.

## **Indigenous Nations and Peoples in Madre de Dios**

In recent years, responding to the ethnic identities and claims of the diverse peoples whose communities have been incorporated into Fenamad, the Federation has been supporting initiatives for re-organization along ethnic lines as nations or peoples to overcome the limitations of the fractionalized local communities that have been recognized by the Peruvian Government as native communities. This process began in Madre de Dios in 2013 when three Ese Eja communities bordering the Tambopata National Reserve and the Bahuaja-Sonene National Park formed the Ese Eja Nation. They joined forces on the basis of their Ese Eja identity to claim their rights, especially with regard to restrictions from Sernanp on their hunting and fishing trips into areas of their ancestral territory within the two natural protected areas (Ponce Mariños, ed., 2016).

The Ese Eja Nation reorganized in 2016 and again in 2019, with legal and organizational assistance from Fenamad. It is currently led by Víctor Pesha, and it seeks to incorporate the Ese Eja populations from two more communities in Peru and, eventually all of the Ese Eja communities in Bolivia in a cross-border federation.

In similar fashion, in 2016, a majority of the Harakbut communities organized as the Harakbut Nation for the purpose of consolidating a common front against external aggressors of their communities and the RCA. It is led by Miguel Visse from the Shintuya community and coordinates its activities closely with Fenamad and Coharyima.

Then, in 2018, numerous Yine communities in Madre de Dios, Cusco, and Ucayali met in the Diamante community of Madre de Dios to form the Yine Nation. They met again in 2019 in the Miaría community in Cusco, this time attracting additional community representatives, including some from Brazil and Bolivia. Plans for a third meeting on the Acre River between Brazil and Bolivia were frustrated by COVID-19 restrictions. The Yine Nation is led by Segundo Laureano, who is also Fenamad's Vice-President. It intends to consolidate as a multi-national confederation with a greater role in the governance of the vast ancestral Yine territory.

Fenamad has been working with the four Matsigenka communities inside the Manu National Park and has assisted all four of them in obtaining recognition by the Peruvian Government as native communities, the last two, Tsiririshi and Saregimeniki, in 2019, the other two, Tayakome and Yomibato, earlier. Now they have united as the Matsigenka People to address tensions with Sernanp and the Park management over restrictions that forbid their raising of chickens to feed guests at their joint tourist lodge, Casa Matsigenka, among other restrictions of their movements and activities by Park authorities.

The representatives of these three nations and the Matsigenka People have participated in assemblies of Aidesep, the ICCA Consortium, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with recognition through Fenamad. They are well aware of the experiences of the Wampis Nation; the Achuar People; the Matsés Native Community, which obtained a single land title over the collective territory of 15 local communities; and the Shipibo-Konibo-Xetebo Council (Coshikox), which seeks to integrate the Shipibo and closely related peoples through the articulation of markets for their products with support from their network of radio and television programs in their language. They are advancing in the elaboration of their statutes to formalize their organizations.

### Conclusions

There are numerous historical experiences of Amazonian Indigenous peoples in Madre de Dios and elsewhere uniting among otherwise rival groups or factions to confront and resist external, ethnocidal forces and demand respect for their ways of life. Indigenous federations have little in common with their traditional cultural forms of organization, but their structures must conform to civil codes and other legal requirements if they are to gain recognition by governments and other colonial forces and gain public political space for their demands, claims, and rights.

As their response to continuous external aggressions and displacements in the Peruvian Madre de Dios watershed, Fenamad was organized and consolidated as a multi-ethnic organization in representation of all of the Amazonian Indigenous peoples present in the region before governments, private companies, missionaries, civil society, anthropologists, and others, to defend the rights and territories of the peoples and the 38 communities that they represent. It has also assumed the defense of the isolated Indigenous peoples present in the Peruvian Madre de Dios watershed.

Fenamad is the only Indigenous organization in the Peruvian Amazon that has consolidated its representation over an entire Amazon watershed or region<sup>11</sup>. In the rest of the Peruvian Amazon, the original Indigenous peoples' organizations have fragmented into numerous smaller local organizations, so that Aidesep, on

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11 In 2019, a group of Awajún from the upper Marañón in northern Peru settled on the lower Inambari River in Madre de Dios and, the following year, requested affiliation with Fenamad. Thus, Fenamad now represents 38 communities comprised of Harakbut, Yine, Matsigenka, Ese Eja, Shipibo, Amahuaca, Kichwa Runa, Ashaninka, and now Awajún peoples. The three surviving Iñapari individuals in Madre de Dios are fully integrated into the non-Indigenous rural population on the Las Piedras River, and the remaining Kichwa Runa at Alerta have not sought recognition as Indigenous communities nor representation by Fenamad. Otherwise, all of the existing Amazon Indigenous peoples in the Madre de Dios watershed are represented formally by Fenamad.

the national level, has had to organize regional instances of its organization in most of the other regions and recognize Fenamad as one of its regional units, with Coharyima and Coinbamad recognized as intermediate-level organizations between the communities and the regional federation.

For several decades now, Fenamad has had an international presence with active participation in instances of the United Nations, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It is now affiliated with global institutions including the ICCA Consortium, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. That international presence provides them with greater political leverage in Madre de Dios and nationally.

Internally, in addition to Coharyima and Coinbamad, Fenamad has supported the organization of technical units, including the ECA-RCA, the Madre de Dios Indigenous Forestry Association (AFIMAD), and most recently, the Covid-19 Command, as well as the Indigenous Youth and Students Organization of Madre de Dios (OJEIMAD). They have also actively encouraged the organization of ethnically-based representations as nations or peoples. These internal spaces have allowed Fenamad to more effectively address internal tensions and consolidate its representation.

What is interesting in this experience is that Fenamad has remained united and has expanded its political projection from the local to the global in response to all of the external aggressions and efforts by the protagonists of those forces that seek to alienate Indigenous peoples from their territories and cultures, plunder their natural resources and environment, and negate the identities of the peoples and communities that it represents. Fenamad has been able to overcome its internal tensions with adjustments to its structure and organization over time and to allow its member communities and peoples greater spaces for the expression of their ethnic identities and adaptations.

These achievements have become possible through the alternation in leadership positions and the inclusion of representations of the different peoples in their successive leadership councils. Additionally, by actively encouraging the organization of ethnically-based nations or peoples, as partners, not rivals, it has effectively managed and substantially diminished potentially divisive threats to its integrity. As a result of its unity and strength, Fenamad is now recognized and respected by both regional and national authorities as a legitimate political force that must be considered in their planning and programs.

This process constitutes a legitimate Indigenous response of ethnogenesis, with adaptations to the increasing global economic, social, and political pressures that threaten the survival of Indigenous peoples and cultures. The aggressions of the forces of ethnocide continue and are increasing, but Fenamad now manages

a complex network of spaces for interaction with its member communities and peoples, along with solid support from national and international allies, along with greater institutional capacity to combat those external forces.

Few anthropologists have had the privilege of accompanying the subjects of their research over a half century of intense changes in the relationships of Indigenous peoples with their increasingly globalized political economic environment that I have been honored to share with them. I consider my modest contributions to the organization and consolidation of Fenamad to be the most important accomplishment of my career as an anthropologist. However, the credit for its success belongs to its successive members and diverse leaderships that have had the wisdom to adapt to the conditions they have faced as a multi-ethnic federation and sustain the unity of so many and so diverse peoples in response to the aggressive threats that they have faced over their long organizational history.

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# THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF GUATEMALA AND ECHOES OF THE BARBADOS DECLARATIONS

Sivel Elías



## Introduction

At the same time as the Declaration of Barbados I appeared, a transformation was taking place in Guatemala in terms of explaining and addressing the “Indigenous problem”, which was understood as the “lagging behind” of Indigenous peoples with respect to the rest of society. Until that point, the dominant indigenist thought had held that the Indigenous peoples were hindering the country’s advance towards progress because they persisted in their ancestral customs, and it proposed education, citizenship and religion as mechanisms for their assimilation and integration into an ideal of modern society, culturally uniform, Ladinized, and on which Guatemalan identity should be based. A debate was emerging between academics, politicians and Indigenous leaders that explained the Indigenous problem as a product of current internal colonialism and the capitalist system, and whose solution was not found in integration, as the indigenists proposed, but in the struggle for liberation.<sup>1</sup>

The Barbados Declaration I and the decline of indigenist thought were not a simple coincidence. Although there are no concrete references as to its influence,<sup>2</sup> in reality indigenism was disappearing as the main approach to Indigenous affairs in Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, giving way to the emergence of an Indigenous movement with its own voice and protagonism, as subjects. Politicians fighting for their decolonization<sup>3</sup> and demanding recognition of their collective rights in their respective States, including the right to their own culture and identity, to communal lands, ancestral territories, their own forms of organization and self-government, self-determination and their ways of life. It is therefore reasonable to assume that these debates around a paradigm shift in the Indigenous issue embraced the proposals of the Barbados declarations.

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1 The author is grateful for the guidance provided by Georg Grünberg, Santiago Bastos, Máximo Bá, Pablo Ceto and Virgilio Reyes in the preparation of this article.

2 Virgilio Reyes, Santiago Bastos, interview, August 2020.

3 Máximo Ba’, interview, August 2020.

This article analyses the situation of the country's Indigenous peoples based on information from official statistics, the proposals to transform unequal ethnic relations, the impacts of neocolonialism and the recent struggles for the recognition of their rights on the premise of the desired refounding of the State.

### **The Indigenous peoples in current colonialism**

The Indigenous peoples of Guatemala live within a racist society that discriminates against them and in a State that renders them invisible and excludes them. Information on their presence and living conditions is still incipient and weak, despite the fact that the inclusion of an ethnic focus in official statistics has been suggested internationally for a long time (Schkolnick, 2009; FAO, 2015). Population censuses have shown a decrease in the Indigenous population as a proportion of the whole: 64.5% in 1921, 55% in 1940, 43.25% in 1964, 43.8% in 1973, 41.89% in 1981, 41.7% in 1994 and 39.26% in 2002. This can be explained as a result of the "Ladinization" pursued by the State (Adams, 1994), a process that occurred with more force during the Liberal regime and then stabilized around 40% during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also possible that Indigenous peoples prefer not to identify themselves in order to avoid racism and government repression (Elías, 2020a) or that statistics intentionally render them invisible to justify the scarce public investment for Indigenous peoples and endorse the penetration of extractive projects. (ICEFI, 2017)

Nonetheless, the 2018 Population Census (carried out 18 years after the previous one) provides surprising data: the decline in the Indigenous population has stopped for the very first time. Of 14.9 million inhabitants, 6.5 million (43.75%) self-identify as Indigenous (INE, 2019), data similar to that of the 1964 census. Indigenous organizations continue to consider this an underestimate, however, as they calculate it should stand at around 60%. The departments with the highest percentage of Indigenous population in the 1973 census (Vidal, 1977) continued to be the same in 2018, even with a slight percentage increase: Totonicapán increased its Indigenous population from 97.1% to 98%, Sololá from 94.5% to 97%, Alta Verapaz from 91.1% to 93% and Quiché from 85.9% to 89%, while Chimaltenango remained at 79%. Some departments in the eastern part of the country, which were long considered fully Ladinized, showed a significant rebound in their Indigenous identification: the department of Guatemala, where the capital city is located, maintained the same proportion of 14%, while Jutiapa went from 5.8% to 21%, and Santa Rosa from 6.1% to 16%. These changes are due to the struggle for reaffirmation of identity, mainly in the case of the Xinca and Ch'orti peoples (Elías, 2020b). The data also prove the "failure of the Ladinization policy" (Taracena, nd), which did not achieve the dimensions sought by the National State - a country without Indians.

Indigenous peoples' living conditions continue to lag behind compared to their non-Indigenous peers due to the State's lack of commitment to ethnic-cultural diversity and to the recognition and exercise of rights. This lag is also explained by the link between racism and the class structure, which leads to Indigenous peoples being denied as well as exploited and excluded (UNDP, 2005). For 2016, the Human Development Index for Indigenous peoples was 0.397, while for non-Indigenous peoples it was 0.546. Poverty affects 75% of Indigenous and 36% of non-Indigenous persons,<sup>4</sup> chronic malnutrition 58% of Indigenous and 38% of non-Indigenous,<sup>5</sup> and illiteracy 22% of Indigenous and 11% of non-Indigenous, while the total public spending for Indigenous peoples in 2015 was USD 1.4 billion and for non-Indigenous peoples it was USD 4.3 billion (ICEFI, 2017).

In Articles 66 and 67 of the Political Constitution, approved in 1985, the country recognizes its multi-ethnic makeup and guarantees the rights of different ethnic groups, respect for and promotion of their ways of life, social organization and historical possession of their lands, although it does not speak of Indigenous peoples or recognition of their rights. These concepts only appeared in the 1996 Peace Accords and with the ratification of ILO Convention 169, declared of constitutional status in 2010, by which the State undertakes to recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples, including the right to prior consultation. The country has accepted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, as well as many other international conventions. In practice, however, the exclusion and poor participation of Indigenous peoples in political life prevail: the Presidency of the Republic has never been held by an Indigenous person, although in the last electoral contest in 2019 there were five Indigenous candidates; there are no more than 20 Indigenous individuals out of a total of 168 congressmen and women in the Congress of the Republic, and the Courts of Justice are made up mostly of non-Indigenous judges and magistrates. On the other hand, there is a greater balance in local government, since the number of Indigenous municipal mayors has been increasing in recent decades.

No substantial changes have been seen in recent years in terms of public investment for Indigenous peoples in health, education, infrastructure or productive investment. Only 45% of public investment goes to areas inhabited by Indigenous peoples, which does not tally with the fact that they constitute 60% of the country's population.<sup>6</sup> In the same sense, the National Human

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4 <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/multimedia/2016/guatemala/guatemala.html>

5 <http://www.sesan.gob.gt/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Situacion-SAN-Guatemala-dia-1.pdf>

6 [http://icefi.org/sites/default/files/inversion\\_en\\_pueblos\\_indigenas\\_0.pdf](http://icefi.org/sites/default/files/inversion_en_pueblos_indigenas_0.pdf)[http://icefi.org/sites/default/files/inversion\\_en\\_pueblos\\_indigenas\\_0.pdf](http://icefi.org/sites/default/files/inversion_en_pueblos_indigenas_0.pdf)

Development Report for 2015-2016, "*Beyond the conflict, struggles for well-being*" indicates that the neoliberal development model promoted since 1990 has only increased inequality and exclusion, in addition to exacerbating environmental deterioration and social conflict.

### **Indigenous peoples as a problem and an object of study**

By the beginning of the 1970s, the indigenist approach to the debate on the "Indigenous problem", in which Indigenous peoples are seen as an obstacle to progress, was already in crisis in Guatemala. This approach appeared at the end of the colonial period, was normalized in discourse during the Liberal coffee-growing period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and became consolidated with developmental ideas in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It sees Indigenous peoples as a brake on modernity and reinforces prejudices that are still held about them in the social imagination: lazy, unintelligent, foolish, dirty, bad mannered, disloyal and with little interest in their own improvement; all due to their inferior racial status. The Conservatives therefore proposed maintaining the Church and government's protectionist tutelage of Indigenous peoples although, deep down, what they really wanted was to continue taking advantage of their servitude.

The Liberals, for their part, proposed indigenist policies of assimilation and integration, with miscegenation and eugenics used to force the process of Ladinization; uprooting from their ancestral lands to induce their forced incorporation into the world of work - albeit at the same time keeping them in their communities and forcing them to work on the farms -; a ban on native languages and traditional attire; the formation of mixed municipal governments; and the promotion of citizenship. According to Adams (1996), indigenism emerged as a solution to the Indigenous problem by accepting that Indigenous peoples had certain innate defects that made it difficult for them to be linked to progress. It was therefore the State's duty to bring them civilization through their integration into society and their Ladinization, all the while keeping them colonized, an effort in which politicians and intellectuals were engaged from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1970.

During that time, the integration process was theoretically and methodologically pushed by the National Indigenous Institute (IIN), created in 1945 during the Revolutionary Government and then by the Guatemalan Social Integration Seminar (SISG), created in 1956, the latter dominated by North American culturalist anthropology, described by some authors as "occupation anthropology". It is the latter that has thus far published the largest number of studies on the life of Indigenous communities, consolidating the dichotomous

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7 <http://www.gt.undp.org/content/guatemala/es/home/library/poverty/informes-nacionales-de-desarrollo-humano.html>

vision of Indigenous-Ladino but which basically forms a part of anti-communist strategies (López, Celigueta, & Mariano, 2015). According to the anthropologist Máximo Bá', a renewed version of indigenism arose with multiculturalism, focused on cultural symbolism, intercultural bilingual education and inclusion, but which was still a strategy for the co-option of Indigenous leadership into the institutional framework of the State (Bá, 2020), in which the "permitted Indians" could be participants in the design of public policies and even high-level public officials, as long as they remained within the status quo.

### **Breaking with colonialism: the emphasis of Indigenous struggles**

In the face of criticism of indigenism arising in various countries of the region (Landa, nd), anti-colonial movements began to emerge. In Guatemala, Indigenous intellectuals such as Andrés Inés Chávez, a K'iché linguist who in 1945 proposed a system to standardize the study of native languages, and Antonio Pop, a Q'eqchí lawyer, were the first to initiate the debate on the decolonization and liberation of Indigenous peoples, as the "Barbadians"<sup>8</sup> also proposed. However, the real debate, which gradually became known as the class versus ethnic issue, began with a confrontation between the historian, Severo Martínez Peláez, author of the famous *Patria del Criollo*, and the lawyer and sociologist, Carlos Guzmán Böckler, author, together with Jean-Loup Herbert, of *Guatemala; una interpretación histórico-social*.<sup>9</sup>

From a Marxist perspective, Severo Martínez placed the Indigenous problem within the class structure that had generated, among other social inequalities, the phenomenon of the *latifundio-minifundio* (large commercial estates and subsistence farms) system while Guzmán Böckler, who accepted the proposals of the Declaration of Barbados I,<sup>10</sup> emphasized the ethnic inequalities underpinning Guatemalan society and which are manifested in the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and racism. Both approaches moved on from indigenism and positioned the debate between the class struggle and ethnic demands although, at that time, studies deriving from the first aspect were more abundant, for example: *El proletariado rural en el agro guatemalteco [The rural proletariat in Guatemalan farming]* by Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, or *Las clases sociales en Guatemala [The Social Classes in Guatemala]* by Santiago López Aguilar, which for a long time

8 Term used by Georg Grünberg to refer to those who participated in the encounters that led to the Barbados declarations.

9 According to Georg Grünberg, although Carlos Guzmán Böckler was not at Barbados I, he did have some influence over Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, a Mexican anthropologist who did participate in the meeting. He also indicates that the Guatemalan Indigenous economist and social worker, Benjamin Son Turnil, participated in Barbados II in 1977.

10 Bastos, Santiago. Personal interview, August 2020.

were essential texts. Pablo Ceto<sup>11</sup> indicates that these approaches also shaped the discourse of the insurgent factions during the armed conflict, the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA) being the one that most welcomed Indianism, assuming that ethnicity and class were not exclusive dimensions. This approach explained that the basis of large landowners' accumulation was labour exploitation and the dispossession of Indigenous lands. At the beginning of the 1990s, coinciding with the Fifth Centennial and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchú, Indigenous peoples began to demand greater participation, giving rise to the emergence of the so-called Mayan Movement, which was vital in the negotiation of the Peace Accords that ended the armed conflict in 1996 (Bastos & Camus, 2003).

One of the achievements of these agreements was the approval of the *Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (AIDPI), which reflects aspects of both the Barbados Declarations and ILO Convention 169 and the Convention against Racism. It recognizes that: "Indigenous peoples have been particularly subjected to levels of de facto discrimination, exploitation and injustice due to their origin, culture and language, and that [...] they suffer unequal and unfair treatment due to their economic and social conditions" and adds that matters of interest to Indigenous peoples " must be dealt with by and with them".

The Peace Accords created many expectations that pointed to a reform of the State and the construction of a more inclusive society to overcome the burdens of colonialism, exclusion and racism. In 1999, a referendum was held to approve or reject the constitutional changes of the State reform, in which only 18% of the electorate participated. The reforms were not approved, and the racism of those who opposed the reforms was evident in the campaign. In 2017, a new attempt at constitutional reform, with an emphasis on the justice sector, also made no progress despite the fact that Indigenous organizations sacrificed the jurisdictional component of Indigenous justice, which was believed to be the greatest obstacle to its approval.

A study prepared by the United Nations Development Programme on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peace Accords concludes that there has been progress in soft aspects, such as the formation of the Commission against Discrimination and Racism (Codisra), intercultural bilingual education and the Mayan Languages Law. Substantive commitments, however, such as rights to lands and territories and fairer political representation for Indigenous peoples in government structures, remain unfulfilled. Nor are there policies to change the economic and social structures that perpetuate racism against Indigenous

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11 Pablo Ceto. Personal interview, August 2020.

peoples.<sup>12</sup> The Indigenous institutions of the State, formed to address Indigenous issues in government agencies, are actually small offices with few staff, and without resources or decision-making power to intervene in official agendas in favour of Indigenous peoples.

### **With their own voice**

Since the beginning of the Indigenous mobilization at the end of the 20th century, new approaches have emerged that contribute to the understanding of ethnic relations, raising the debate on critical issues - such as miscegenation, racism, citizenship, civilization, identities, nationalism and multiculturalism - with the aim of understanding how the nation and ethnicity have been built, without losing sight of the struggle against the thinking and practices of current colonialism. (Taracena et.al, 2004; Bastos & Cumes, 2007) The research project "*Why we are as we are*", which included a traveling exhibition, opened up several areas of discussion on ethnic relations between broad sectors of society, especially among youth and urban residents.

In more recent times, leaving behind the mirage of multiculturalism, the debate has gone beyond the pursuit of Mayanization and now focuses more on the rights of Indigenous peoples, including the Xinka and Garífuna.<sup>13</sup> Indigenous becomes a broader political concept that advocates autonomy, self-determination, the fight against poverty, exclusion and inequality. It does not rely on multiculturalism but on plurinationalism, integrating the demand for land and territory and a strengthening of their worldview (Bá, 2020).

The territorial dynamics generated by extractive neocolonialism and the processes of recovering rights over ancestral lands and territories has given more strength to the voices of Indigenous peoples, who are now speaking and positioning themselves in national and international spaces and who are finding echo in similar regional and world realities and struggles. Indigenous peoples are currently fighting for their formation as political and legal subjects, capable of fighting for their liberation on their own.<sup>14</sup>

On the academic side, important epistemological and ontological transformations are also beginning to emerge. It is no longer a matter of studying Indigenous peoples from a neutral and folkloric perspective, or by imposing concepts and categories that reproduce frameworks of domination. This transformation is now

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12 Santiago Bastos, interview, September 2020.

13 This is an ethnic group descended from Africans and Carib and Arawak aborigines who were expelled by the English from the island of San Vicente in 1797 and settled on the coasts of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In Guatemala they live mainly in Livingston, Izabal.

14 Máximo Bá, interview, August 2020.

being advocated by committed academics and is being reflected in ethical and political action to accompany the struggles for emancipation. An example of this commitment can be found in Georg Grünberg, coordinator of the first meeting in Barbados, whose work has not been to study the Indians but to accompany them in their struggles, work which is reflected in initiatives of mapping and seeking title to ancestral territories in Brazil, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

### **Neocolonialism and Indigenous territories**

Colonialism has a continuing presence. “The Indians of America remain dominated by a colonial situation which originated with the conquest and which persists today within many Latin American nations.”<sup>15</sup> Now Indigenous peoples face a new colonial form, reflected in the incursion of large extractive investments and large plantations of agricultural monocultures onto their ancestral territories, endorsed by States that fail to comply with the prior consultation established by national laws and regulations and international conventions. Between 2018 and 2020, the Constitutional Court ordered the suspension of three large mining projects and two hydroelectric plants, and ordered the government to hold consultations in accordance with the standards of Convention 169.

Neocolonialism replicates many of the practices of the old colonialism, in the sense that it uses the same mechanisms of deception, legal fraud and coercion to dispossess people of their lands, nullify rights, cause divisions among community members, exploit the workforce, change cultural practices, co-opt local leaders, promote corruption and impunity and, above all, repress community resistance, as can be seen from the 327 attacks and 39 murders committed in 2019 against Indigenous peoples who were defending their rights.

### **Perspectives: refounding the State, restituting rights and good living**

Aware of their colonial situation in a State that excludes them, reproaches them and denies their rights, Indigenous peoples have put forward their views on what they consider to be their liberation and autonomy within the framework of a necessary refounding of the State. Some of the proposals noted in the study carried out by Máximo Bá (Bá, 2020) refer mainly to the political agendas, proposals and plans of Indigenous organizations for their inclusion - with self-determination and autonomy - in a reformed democratic State. However, these proposals have never been taken into account by the State in the design of public policies or in government agendas, which continue to perpetuate a development-oriented, centralist and exclusive model.

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<sup>15</sup> First Declaration of Barbados, 1971.

Even so, Indigenous communities continue to practice, as far as possible, the Utz Kaslemaj (“Good Living”) model, which harmonizes the satisfaction of human needs with care for Mother Earth, an alternative model that prioritises the protagonism of social actors, territory, local institutions, collective action and the worldview of the Indigenous peoples.

In terms of recovery of rights, some Indigenous peoples have maintained a permanent claim to the ancestral lands of which they were dispossessed and usurped by legal fraud. The Mesa de Tierras Comunales, a body made up of ancestral authorities, has prosecuted a number of lawsuits, recovering around 315,000 hectares in a total of 25 cases, with another 30 still in process for the potential recovery of approximately three million hectares more. In June 2020, the Constitutional Court issued a final favourable ruling in the appeal presented by four Indigenous communities (two from the Ixil people and two from the Ch’ortí people) and ordered the restitution of their lands.<sup>16</sup> This is just the beginning of a long road to reverse the fraudulent and illegal dispossession of communal properties through strategic litigation (Pelález, 2017).

In addition, faced with the official model of exclusive and culturally-irrelevant education, Indigenous peoples have begun to build their own mechanisms such as the Ixil University, the Kaqchikel University and various study and research centres which, in the future, will form the think tanks needed to lead the struggle for emancipation.

## Conclusion

Despite the enthusiasm that the Peace Accords generated, the Indigenous agenda has been abandoned in the last four presidential terms since 2008. The political crisis in which the country has been immersed since 2015 as a result of the war on corruption and impunity has further reduced the State’s commitments to Indigenous peoples. While there is progress in recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples in the matter of their ancestral communal lands, in reality, recent governments have been busy dismantling the limited institutional framework that deals with Indigenous affairs, and their actions continue to show a deep-rooted racism by denying recognition and protection of these rights, as seen in the persistent dispossession of lands and natural assets.

The government decisions in favour, without consultation, of the installation of extractive investments on Indigenous territories, and the repression and repeated use of force to stifle territorial defence, show the persistence of

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing this article, news of the death of Bonerge Mejia, magistrate of the Constitutional Court, one of the main proponents of *amparos* (protection) in favour of Indigenous communities, was reported.

## THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF GUATEMALA

internal colonialism. Fighting these mechanisms of oppression, denial and dispossession continues to set the course for the Indigenous struggle, just as the First Declaration of Barbados did 50 years ago.

In summary, to overcome the colonial model in Guatemala, Indigenous peoples are proposing the construction of a new State in which they can live with dignity, without exclusion or social or economic inequalities, where they are recognized as political and legal subjects, free to exercise their identity and worldview, capable of self-governing and building their aspirations for good living. It is a commitment to autonomy, still distant but possible.

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## BARBADOS: FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

**Frederica Barclay**



I remember only too well the copies of the Declaration of Barbados we had mimeographed on crude paper that we students called *bulky* at that time. We were a group of students from the Social Sciences Faculty of the Catholic University of Peru who were enrolled on the anthropology undergraduate programme. Some of us had already done field work, others were about to. It was 1976.

With few exceptions, our training as anthropologists at the Catholic University had thus far been very conventional in terms of the curriculum and the openness of lecturers to discussing the reality and the concerns of the students. Outside, great social changes had taken place in Peruvian society, above all since the Agrarian Reform, but these had not been reflected in the content of our anthropology programme.

The main thrust of the programme was in the Andean tradition, although some time earlier a course entitled “Tropical Forest” had been added to the curriculum, along with one on Amazonian ethnology a little later. This made it easier for a significant group of us, given the limited number of students on the course, to take an interest in the “jungle”, even though we had little resources to draw on.

It is true that Stefano Varese’s *La Sal de los Cerros* had offered us a perspective that stood in contrast to the static nature of ethnographic courses and it had a great impact on us. Alongside this, assessments on the situation of Indigenous communities were produced by the State, first by Varese himself and then by various professionals from Sinamos, a State agency promoting the State’s social participation. This body had played an important role in drafting the 1974 Law on Native Communities and in promoting its implementation, until it was shut down in 1978.

As I recall, however, the Law on Native Communities, its background and its impact, was not an issue addressed in our programme. The main source documents for understanding the reality of these peoples were to be found in academic theses and articles written - in the case of Peru - mainly by North

American authors, and reports on the situation of Indigenous peoples from around the world that were beginning to be published by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). And, of course, then there was our field work with the Amazonian peoples, which left a strong mark on each of us. The Marxist works that filtered into our extracurricular readings did not seem to offer us many clues for anthropological work with Indigenous peoples, although we did test out our first interpretations of reality in the light of these concepts and categories. We wanted, for example, to establish whether or not the Amazonian Indigenous peoples could be considered similar to other groups categorised as peasants.

The academic environment offered us little in terms of an approach to working as Peruvian anthropologists other than in the classic tradition. I think it was the arrival of a number of students from San Marcos University that opened our eyes to other perspectives and readings that turned our world upside down and possibly influenced the spirit with which we approached our first fieldwork.

As I recall, someone first brought in a critical and recently published anthropological text by Kathleen Gough on anthropology and imperialism. The only thing we knew about her up until then were her studies on kinship in Malabar. The second text, even older in its Spanish translation, was Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, written for a radically different context and which I believe created in us an illusion that we could be part of a process of change that these peoples - whom we were beginning to get to know through readings and semester-long field work - could take forward from their own perspective.

The third reading that dazzled us was the *1971 Declaration of Barbados*, which offered us a virtual programme of action via mimeograph. That same year, I was lucky enough to receive a gift from Fernando Santos-Granero: the Spanish compilation from the symposium that gave rise to the Declaration, *The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in South America*, which he had picked up in Montevideo and, as I am only now learning, after most copies had apparently already been burned. Even without knowing this, though, it was still highly prestigious to own a book that no one else had, not even the university libraries. For my generation, the *Declaration of Barbados* gave meaning to our interest in doing anthropological work in the Amazon.

With the Declaration of Barbados in hand, we anthropology students now faced our first responsibility. The continuation of the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a body in charge of implementing bilingual education in Peru since 1952, had come up for discussion. Its relations with the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon were of a civilising nature. Their contract was about

to expire and we knew they had requested an extension, something that was widely favoured, including by many of our lecturers. Those of us who had already done fieldwork in villages in the Amazon were aware of the impact of the struggles between evangelical and Catholic factions, which was beginning to give rise to communities of one or other religious affiliation clashing within the same village. Following K. Gough, we saw in SIL's omnipresence the risk of imperialist interference in the reforms that were beginning to be implemented in the country. By then we had taken up the mandate passed down to us by the Declaration of Barbados of denouncing "cases of genocide, and practices leading to ethnocide, by any means".

It did not take long to form a group of activists from among the anthropology students, who began to write posters with markers headed "Anthropology Denounces". A disparate group of students participated in this collective, not all with an Amazonian vocation and some of them activists from left-wing parties. The continued existence of SIL was not the only focus of the group's work, since we also advocated the need for significant changes in the academic curriculum. But the campaign "Anthropology Denounces" against missionary work disguised as scientific research seemed to us to be our most consequential activity. Thanks to this campaign, we also had a chance to meet Stefano Varese one afternoon when he was visiting Peru, as he had already moved to Mexico by that time.

In retrospect, I believe the main influence the Declaration of Barbados had on those of us who were inclined towards Amazonian anthropology came about through an invitation from a number of professional anthropologists with a history of research in the field or working for the State to meet them in Lima for further discussions. This was in 1978, shortly after the Declaration of Barbados II had been made public. From that moment, we again began discussing the meaning of the 1971 Declaration, which we had all taken up as our own. The next step was the most important, however, and consisted of inviting a number of leaders from local newly-created Indigenous organisations with whom these professionals had already made contact to participate in two or three sessions. These meetings were to later have a fundamental impact on the founding of the first national Indigenous Amazonian organisation in Peru.

Some of the students and recent graduates had had an opportunity to experience some of the areas where the young leaders participating in these meetings were from. During the first meetings, under an approach of "Indigenous peoples being the protagonists of their own destiny" and of anthropologists committed to the cause, the participants exchanged information on the situation of the peoples and the regions in order to build what we thought would be a joint working agenda.

I think that, for these young leaders: Aguaruna (Awajun), Amuesha (Yanesha) and Shipibo (although at some point delegates from other villages also arrived), it must have been revealing to discover that they were all facing very similar situations, all of them at that time determined to stop the land invasions and obtain titles for their communities. They were already aware, by different means, of the new legal instruments at their disposal and were using them, so it was not this dialogue space that provided them with their initial access to the tools with which their territories had already begun to be titled. But I do believe that this exchange of experiences between new organisations was an opportunity for them in the wake of the void left by the closure of Sinamos, and it was one they took advantage of.

Sinamos had promoted meetings between communities from the same people or administrative jurisdiction in order to facilitate the channelling of demands to officials from - primarily - the ministries of agriculture, education or health, although not in all Indigenous regions. They had taken the term “Congress” from the Amuesha experience in the central forest as a name for these new organisations. But Sinamos’ way of acting was tremendously interventionist and was ultimately rejected. In some areas, Sinamos encouraged the new communities to forge closer ties with the National Agrarian Confederation (CNA), founded by the government in 1974. Sinamos was closed down in 1978, however, and the CNA not only lost its government protection but found itself in conflict with this latter. At that time, the Amazonian peoples had resumed their own attempts at organisation.

The SIL facility in Yarinacocha, where teachers came together each year for training, had been a space for interethnic contact for several years but these interactions had been governed by the approach of the evangelical missionaries and linguists. The freer context of the meetings in Lima thus allowed for a wider exchange of experiences and created new conditions for relationships between leaders of different peoples and traditions.

A short time earlier, Oxfam UK’s local office had begun funding small initiatives with Amazonian villages, including the Centre for Amazonian Research and Promotion (CIPA), run by Alberto Chirif following his departure from Sinamos. Other small initiatives were a Shipibo handicrafts cooperative being advised by Carolyn Heath and activities run with the Amuesha by the anthropologist Richard Ch. Smith.

These initiatives, which we would today term “projects”, were the framework that made possible the 1978 and 1979 meetings attended by Indigenous leaders, students and professionals working on Amazonian issues. Not long after, Oxfam began to support the Aguaruna and Huambisa Council which,

in turn, rented a house in the Santa Beatriz district and renamed it the "*Casa Nativa*". In addition to meetings of leaders, sometimes together with students and professionals, Indigenous delegates travelling to Lima for activities on behalf of their communities were able to take rooms there. It was an alternative to the accommodation provided by SIL. The "*Casa Nativa*" later also became home to a first group of Indigenous students pursuing their studies at universities in Lima.

Memory can be notoriously unreliable but it is the only thing we have to reconstruct this history since there are no records of these events. Others will be able to add to or correct these recollections. I recall many meetings at the "*Casa Nativa*" with an increasing number of leaders who were travelling to Lima for a few days. They were usually financed by the communities' families themselves, who contributed what they could to cover the cost of these trips aimed at negotiating titles and agreements with State institutions or filing complaints. Sometimes we facilitated those negotiations, accompanying them to different offices, or we would take them on a trip to Callao to see the sea for the first time. We also undertook some specific tasks. It was around this time that a new constitution was being drafted. We therefore thought it important to work on a proposal for including Indigenous rights into the new constitution, which would thus become the first such text to give an account of the existence and rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon. The document was signed by a number of Indigenous organisations and communities and supported by many big names. The term advocacy had not yet been invented and we did most of our activities on a voluntary basis. The Constitution was finally promulgated in 1979 but very few of the proposals from our document found their way into it.

I remember one afternoon very clearly when the relationship between "anthropologists" and organisational leaders that had emerged within this collaborative space were radically altered. The "anthropologists" were summoned by the Indigenous peoples to the "*Casa Nativa*". In the inner courtyard on the first floor, a few chairs and benches had been set out in front of a wall on which a small blackboard was hanging. We had no idea what was about to happen in terms of the Amazonian Indigenous organisational process, nor of the change in our role in this new scenario. It was 1979.

Next to a small board, hung in front of a small audience, stood Evaristo Nugkuag, first president of the Aguaruna and Huambisa Council (and later of Aidesep and COICA), who had attended these meetings from the outset. Evaristo explained that they intended to establish a Coordinating Committee for the peoples of the Peruvian Amazon, which would formally be called the Coordinating Body of Native Communities of the Peruvian Forest (Coconasep). He made it clear that this would be a space for Indigenous coordination. That was precisely what we wanted, for them to take the lead in their own destiny.

Evaristo continued his explanation, in the presence of other leaders, telling us that from now on they would be the ones who would access the funding to work with the communities.

In reality, many of us were unaware of the funding implications and had not considered this issue to be one of power relations. Indigenous leaders, in contrast, had seen it as such because they had long been at odds with the Catholic missions, primarily around the use of funds obtained on behalf of or for the benefit of Indigenous peoples. I did not know if these leaders had had any discussions or conflict with those who had access to these funds that might have led them to the conclusion that if they formally set themselves up as a Coordinating Body it would be they themselves who would manage the funds for implementing their collective agendas. The decision was similar to something which, years later, Greene (2009) clearly analysed under the polysemous concept of habituation, which is of particular relevance for the Awajun traditional peoples.

The unthinkable consequence of this notification was that we “anthropologists” were, to say the least, left out in the cold. We were not invited to collaborate in this new space called Coconasep, which was never actually formally established. Those whom we had considered our comrades had laid a table at which there were no places set for us! The Declarations of Barbados I and II had borne fruit although we anthropologists felt that we had been “divorced” without warning. We took note of their decision, without fully understanding why or henceforward how we should continue our work as anthropologists.

We had left behind the option of being anthropologists who owned their “objects of study”, so there was no going back to a style that had never been ours. We believed that we had much to contribute given all that we had learned during our stays in communities and through social readings about what needed to change in order to eradicate colonial rule and guarantee the territories and the continuity of these societies. But we were left for a while not knowing where or how to do this.

That same original group of students, anthropologists, activists and professionals from other branches began to meet to reflect on our future work. We were not all of the same view but we did agree, after several meetings, to establish a semi-institutional arrangement. After long etymological and symbolist discussions, we agreed to call ourselves “Copal-Solidarity with native groups”. This group produced newsletters that we handed out to the communities and organisations with whom we were in contact, providing information on the situations we were observing. Increasingly aggressive processes of Amazonian occupation were looming on the horizon. Almost immediately, we began to produce a magazine that appeared for many years (1980-1992) under the name of *Amazonía*

*Indígena*. It was more analytical in style but served above all to take a stand on the processes of expropriation of Indigenous territories and cultural assimilation.

I was lucky that Richard Ch. Smith invited me, along with Fernando Santos-Granero, to support his work at the Amuesha Cultural House, which operated under the supervision of the Amuesha Congress. I was thus able to maintain my friendly and committed connection with these people for several years. Others did the same in the areas in which they had originally carried out fieldwork or were able to join processes to support the titling of communities. It should be remembered that, by then, there were only two “indigenist” institutions in operation, in contrast to the myriad of institutions in existence today.

In 1980, the founding organisations of Coconasep and others agreed to create the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Forest (Aidesep), which was then formally registered a few years later. From the outset, Aidesep claimed the right to speak directly to the Peruvian State on an agenda that sought to ensure that rights were respected. At that time, the only thing protecting Indigenous peoples was a new *Law on Native Communities*, enacted in 1978, and its regulations the following year, which diminished their right to land in comparison to that enacted in 1974.

We were invited to collaborate with Aidesep on this new endeavour under terms that may not have been explicit but, given the path we had taken, seemed natural to us. If, as anthropologists, we wanted to carry out any activities in the villages or were invited to participate as professionals, this had to be with their explicit authorisation. Our intentions should also be explicit if we were interested in exploring a cultural interest.

In retrospect, the Declaration of Barbados created a unique set of conditions that paved the way for the organisation of Indigenous peoples and for a positive reversal in the roles of the anthropologists who had borne witness to this process.

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## LAND TITLING, SLAVERY AND DEMOCRACY.

### The process of Indigenous liberation in Gran Pajonal and Upper Ucayali, Peru<sup>1</sup>

Søren Hvalkof

During the Americanist Congresses in Stuttgart in 1968 and in Lima in 1970, appalling documentation and denunciations of outrageous abuses, ethnocide and genocide against Indigenous peoples were presented by a group of Latin American anthropologists who wanted to let the world know what was unfolding in the Amazon and other lowland areas of South America. The documentation prompted concerned colleagues to organize a symposium in Barbados in January 1971<sup>2</sup> resulting in the “*Declaration of Barbados – For the liberation of the Indians*” and an accompanying volume of cases (Dostal 1972). The denunciations also led to the founding of IWGIA in 1968, and similar Indigenous rights support organizations in Europe and the US (cf. Dahl 2009). The process alerted anthropology students and young scholars to take a rights-based approach to ethnographic fieldwork in the Amazon, including this author.

Simultaneously, in the central Peruvian Amazon, an expanding frontier of colonization was creating a situation of gross exploitation and encroachment, threatening the Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. The complexities of this situation called for investigation, documentation and solutions to the conflicts it produced. The legalization of Indigenous territorial rights through communal land titling was the means to avert a violent escalation of the conflicts.

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1 At the request of the editor of this volume, this article is an edited and abbreviated version of two other articles covering the same theme: “*From Slavery to Democracy: The Indigenous Process of Upper Ucayali and Gran Pajonal*”, published by IWGIA in *Liberation through Land Rights in the Peruvian Amazon*, pp. 83-162, eds. Parellada and Hvalkof 1989, and “*Victoria Ashéninka: espacio, territorio y economía en el Gran Pajonal de la Amazonía peruana*”, pp. 191-229 in: *Selva Viva. De la destrucción de la Amazonía al paradigma de la regeneración*, eds. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, Roger Rummill, Stefano Varese, IWGIA, Lima and Copenhagen 2013.

2 The Barbados Symposium was sponsored jointly by the Programme to Combat Racism and the Churches Commission on International Affairs, together with the Ethnology Department of the University of Bern, Switzerland.

This article is about the process of generating Indigenous territorial control in the Gran Pajonal and the Upper Ucayali in the central Peruvian Amazon. It gives an account of how the Indigenous land titling process came along in the 1980s and profoundly changed the social relations of power in a region where the Indigenous inhabitants hitherto had been subject to a regime of debt bondage and exploitation. This was the tangible manifestation of a colonial worldview still governing social relations in the area, where the Indigenous population was objectified as cheap labour with no legal rights, and for the majority not even registered citizens of Peru.

In response to this intolerable situation, a large-scale demarcation and land titling process was undertaken. This meant territorial security for the Indigenous communities. The result was a metamorphosis of the status of the Indigenous peoples in the area, changing from subhuman objects of servitude to registered Peruvian citizens with landownership and the power to vote and to participate in the development of civil society.

The process was facilitated by a number of persons and institutions who, in various ways, had been connected through the developing network of concerned scholars and advocacy organizations on Indigenous rights, both nationally in Peru, regionally in Latin America and globally and, most importantly, which was being pushed onwards by the rise of the Indigenous movement. Without the first Barbados meeting in 1971 and the publication of probably the first policy statement on Indigenous rights, the "*Declaration of Barbados*", this development would hardly have taken place. It was also this process in the making that motivated the present author, as a young anthropology student in Copenhagen, to go to Peru in 1975 to see for himself, to learn and to act. Through a series of linked events, which all relate to the Barbados meeting and the people involved, he ended up in Gran Pajonal with the Ashéninka and their settler neighbours (cf. Annex 1: Biographical note for a detailed account). Many more fieldwork trips and visits followed.<sup>3</sup>

This article is a tribute to the Declaration of Barbados, the organizations and the people behind it.

### **The Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal**

The Gran Pajonal is an interfluvial plateau of approximately 360,000 hectares situated in the eastern part of the central Peruvian Amazon where the Andean foothills stretch into the lower Amazon Basin. It rises like a rocky block from the

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<sup>3</sup> This article is based on experience and information gained during extensive fieldwork in 1975, 1984-87 and 1994, and with many shorter visits in 1988-93, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002 and finally in 2005-2006.

surrounding landscape, forming a friendly plateau with average elevations of 1,200 – 1,500 m, criss-crossed by numerous streams and smaller rivers cutting deep ravines into the landscape of rolling hills and a few higher ridges. To the west and south it borders on the Perené - Tambo rivers flowing east and joining the Urubamba River to form the Ucayali River by the town of Atalaya. To the northwest it borders the Pichis – Pachitea rivers, flowing north into the Ucayali River; and to the east it borders the floodplains of the Grand Ucayali River. In this geographical scenario, the Gran Pajonal is squeezed between the Andean colonization frontier in the west and the extractive frontier of the lower Amazon Basin to the east.

The area is covered by lush forest vegetation classified as Humid and Very Humid Montane subtropical forest (ONERN 1968:72-73). However, the most distinctive feature in this landscape is the *pajonales* – open, grass-covered areas that are scattered all over the inhabited inner zone of the Gran Pajonal numbering hundreds of larger and smaller patches of grassland, ranging from small glades the size of a backyard to large savannahs covering hundreds of hectares.

Two different populations inhabit the Gran Pajonal today: The Ashéninka and a colony of mestizo settlers - *colonos* - with mixed backgrounds in Andean peasant society. The Indigenous population living in the Gran Pajonal are the Ashéninka, a subgroup of a larger conglomerate of Arawakan-speaking groups in eastern Peru totalling 120,000-150,000, including the Asháninka, Yánesha, Matsigenka and Nomatsigenka, Yíne and Kakinte. The Gran Pajonal Ashéninka number 10,000-11,000 persons today (2018 estimate), distributed across some 43 Indigenous communities (*comunidades nativas*), all demarcated and titled. The *colono* population is concentrated in the centre of the area in and around the old mission and settler colony of *Oventeni* with 1,500-1,800 inhabitants today. Access was only possible by small airplanes to a primitive airstrip in the colony, or by foot or beast on small trails until 2003, when logging companies pushed a dirt road through, connecting Oventeni to the provincial town of Satipo to the west and the town of Atalaya in the east.

The core of the Ashéninka production system and economy is a traditional Amazonian shifting horticulture, which has proven very efficient, productive and sustainable (Hvalkof and Veber 2005; Hvalkof 2006, 2013a, 2013b). Over the last three decades since their community lands were titled, the Indigenous producers have adopted coffee as a favourite cash crop and have succeeded in adapting it to their integrated rotational cultivation system. As an integral part of their subsistence cultivation system, their coffee production costs are quite low compared to those of neighbouring mestizo coffee producers, making the Ashéninka quite competitive and far less vulnerable to market fluctuations. The income from coffee production is growing, and organic certification is in process (Hvalkof 2013a).

# SELVA CENTRAL, GRAN PAJONAL AND UPPER UCAYALI



The settler economy of Oventeni is primarily based on cattle raising. Tropical forest is cleared and pasture suited to cattle grazing is planted instead. Most of the heavy work of clearing forest, planting pasture and maintaining it has been done by cheap Ashéninka labour. Indigenous labour was, up to the 1990s, secured through feudal exploitation systems, characterized by patron-peon debt bondage relations. The productivity of cattle rearing is very low and the *colono* economy is vulnerable to market fluctuations and access to cheap Ashéninka labour. Moreover it has proven to be a prime driver of deforestation and soil impoverishment (Hvalkof 2013a. 2013b). In recent years, coffee production has been steadily growing as an alternative among the settlers too. Since the 1980s, the Ashéninka communities in the Gran Pajonal have been organized in the OAGP - *Organización Ashéninka del Gran Pajonal*, a well-functioning Indigenous organization with a strong and persistent leadership. The *colonos*, on the other hand, are not organized in any association. The colony includes many poor peasants and a few dominating and relatively wealthy cattle ranchers.

As it appears, the current situation of interethnic co-existence in the Gran Pajonal seems to be working and in reasonable balance. However, this peaceful situation has not been the reality through most of the history of the area, and it did not come by itself. It is the result of a long and dramatic Indigenous struggle for autonomy and territorial integrity, which started with the initial attempt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to colonize and subdue the Indigenous peoples, a struggle that basically lasted until the mid-1990s. The catalyst of this fundamental change was the process of demarcation and titling of Indigenous community territories that took place in the late 1980s and 90s, a process which spread to the Ucayali region, radically altering the interethnic power relations and the social situation in the province. In the following, we will summarize the history behind and the process that led up to this.

### **Conquest, missionaries and rebellion**

The central Peruvian Amazon was colonized relative early in the colonial period, with the establishment of a Spanish mission among the Ashéninka in the Chanchamayo in 1635 (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998:18-31). It eventually evolved into a complex quest for agricultural development and search for overland access to the main Amazon River system, accompanied by social and economic control of the increasingly rebellious Indigenous societies. The irksome chore of penetrating, concentrating, pacifying and colonizing the obstinate “Campa<sup>4</sup> Indians” was taken on by the Franciscan mission. Rumours of the “Great Grassland” (i.e. the Gran Pajonal) fostered their dreams of establishing a centre

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4 The name Campa, commonly used until the 1980s, is today considered derogatory and has been replaced by the autodenomination Ashéninka or Asháninka according to the specific subgroup.

of cattle ranching, European settlements and modern development, converting the area into a civilizing dynamo in this part of the upper Amazon. This dream that has been kept alive in settler society until today, despite the fact that the areas with natural grass, the *pajonales*, only constitute 10,000 hectares - or less than 4% of the area - and that the natural grass is unsuited for cattle grazing due to its low nutritional value (Denevan and Chrostowski 1970; Scott 1979; ONERN 1968; Hvalkof 2013:195-197).

The missionary venture, however, came to a sudden halt with the outbreak of a large-scale Indigenous insurrection in 1742 headed by the charismatic and legendary Juan Santos Atahualpa, an Andean mestizo claiming to be of Inka descent and schooled by the Jesuits. The rebellion, which soon embraced all Indigenous groups in the central Peruvian Amazon, cleared the central forest of Franciscan missions and Spanish colonies. An active Indigenous *ad hoc* militia was maintained for more than 15 years (1742 - 1757) with far-reaching effects on the development of the entire region, which remained largely uncolonized until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> In the Gran Pajonal, the effect lasted much longer, and a recolonizing effort was not initiated until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, another pressure was approaching from the east. The rubber boom at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the expansion of the extractive frontier had a devastating effect on the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal. The area did not hold any rubber but it was rich in another resource, native labour. Extensive slave raids into the Gran Pajonal and neighbouring zones, so-called *correrías*, were organized by the European rubber barons along the neighbouring Ucayali River, and large areas of the Gran Pajonal were devastated and depopulated during the peak period of slave hunts (cf. Sala 1897). The terror of the *correrías* was accompanied by recurrent measles epidemics, resulting in a drastic population decline, continuing through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the collapse of the rubber economy around 1915, the *correrías* continued at a slower pace well beyond World War II, and incidents of this practice were apparently occurring up until the 1960s in certain areas.<sup>6</sup>

### **Recolonization and modern development**

In 1934, the Franciscan mission resumed its development and colonization project, aborted nearly 200 years earlier. They founded the mission and

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5 The intricacies of the 1742 rebellion of Juan Santos and its historical context have been analysed by several scholars (e.g., Castro-Arenas 1973; Cohn 1991; Hvalkof 2008; Lehnertz 1972; Loyaza 1942; Metraux 1944; Santos-Granero 1987, 1992; Tibesar 1952; Varese 1973; Veber 2001; Zarzar 1989)

6 Slavery and slave trade continued in the neighbouring area of Upper Ucayali until around 1988 (García 1998; Gray 1997, 1998; Gray and Hvalkof 1990; Hvalkof 1998; Hvalkof and Veber 2005; Veber 2009, 2014, 2017; Renard-Casevitz 1980)

colony of *Oventeni*, right in the centre of the Gran Pajonal. In the 1950s, the Franciscan mission succeeded in attracting investors, who established a large-scale cattle ranch in *Shumahuani*, in the interior of the Gran Pajonal, covering all major savannah areas and contracting labour from the outside. Despite all the efforts, the cattle scheme never proved profitable, and the project gradually deteriorated. The fatal blow was dealt in early 1966 by the leftish MIR guerrillas, led by the legendary figure of Guillermo Lobatón. Fleeing counterinsurgency forces in the highlands, Lobatón's guerrillas passed through Oventeni and the Gran Pajonal where they rested for a while taking control of the mission and intending to kill the manager of the cattle *hacienda* in *Shumahuani*. They did not find him and settled on eating the best breeding bulls (cf. Hvalkof and Veber 2005). US lead special counterinsurgency forces subsequently caught up with the fleeing guerrillas in a last brutal encounter near the community of *Mapitziviari* in the interior of the Gran Pajonal (cf. Brown and Fernández 1991).<sup>7</sup> The guerrilla incident shook the colony, and the Oventeni mission was evacuated, never to be opened again. Neither did the cattle venture, which eventually dismissed all its workers and finally closed down in 1968. For the second time in history, the dream of the great development had disintegrated.

After the collapse of the mission and the cattle ranching scheme, many of the farmworkers left the area while others stayed and tried to establish themselves as individual settlers. Meanwhile, the Ashéninka, who had fled the devastating measles epidemics, gradually moved back into their old territories. But soon a new colonization pressure from the west began to build up. During the 1980s, large infrastructure and colonization schemes financed by international development agencies such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), nurturing the colonization frontier in the west, brought new influxes of *colonos* to Oventeni. All production in the area was based on the conventional feudal exploitation model from the Andes known as *enganche*, basically securing Ashéninka labour through debt bondage and chattel slavery. New methods of planting pasture for grazing on cleared forestland accelerated the exploitation of the Indigenous labour. All work was done by the Ashéninka and compliance with labour "contracts" was secured through institutionalized violence measured out by the civil authorities in Oventeni. Punishments included imprisonment without food or water for several days and flogging with a dried bull's penis (a so-called *chicote*) on Sunday mornings in Oventeni, in addition to regular beatings and

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7 The Ashéninka claim that both Lobatón and his second-in-command Jaime Martínez were captured and executed. I spoke with two people who were present at the execution and who pointed out to me where the corpses were buried. Brown and Fernández have another version of the events in their *War of Shadows* volume (1991). Apart from a couple of immediate neighbours of the ranch who were upset at the behaviour of the *hacienda* administrator, the Ashéninka were not supportive of the guerrillas, and no major punitive action was taken against them.

punitive farm labour for the colonist authorities (e.g., Hvalkof 1986, 1987, 1998, 2008; Hvalkof and Veber 2005; Schäfer 1988).<sup>8</sup>

The overexploitation of Indigenous labour eventually threatened the social reproduction of the Ashéninka. Their subsistence production declined rapidly as an increasing number of people were being contracted to clear forest and plant pasture instead of tending their own garden plots. Shortages of basic foods thus also affected the settler household economy, which depended on the acquisition of cheap Ashéninka garden produce. The Ashéninka increasingly refused to work for the settlers and frictions grew rapidly through the 1980s.

### **The return of the Indigenous resistance**

Ashéninka society underwent profound structural changes throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Evangelical missions operating in the area since the 1960s (e.g. the Adventist Mission and the Summer Institute of Linguistics/Wickliffe Bible Translators) had launched vaccination campaigns during the 1960s and 70s and repeated them in the 1980s. The immunization against viral killers, especially measles, had a noticeable effect and the Ashéninka population increased rapidly. This demographic change became a crucial factor in the reorganizational process that was about to begin. It affected land occupancy, production, labour relations and political potency. Had it not been for the consistent immunization programmes, primarily organized by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (ILV) (cf. Hvalkof and Aaby 1981), it would have been impossible for the Ashéninka to resettle their old territories in the interior after the collapse of the cattle ranching scheme. They simply would not have been numerous enough to occupy the physical space, which otherwise would have been taken over by *colonos*. Now the Indigenous population was growing fast, which was an absolute prerequisite for Indigenous territorial success and autonomy.

At the same time, a new system of bilingual schools was being established by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, forming new social foci that increased the organizational capacity of the Indigenous population, regardless of the ideological motive and proselytizing effort of the missionaries (Veber 1991, 1998, 2001). Indigenous organizations had been established elsewhere in the Amazon since the late 1960s and, in Peru, a whole new institutional structure of Indigenous Amazonian organizations was taking shape. The first national umbrella organization AIDSESP (*Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva*

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<sup>8</sup> In 1985 an entire Ashéninka family of 14 persons resorted to collective suicide by drinking fish poison (*barbasco*) because of such humiliating treatment in Oventeni. Nine died, most of them children.

*Peruana*) was founded in 1980. Inspired by such organizations, the Ashéninka began organizing themselves in the 1980s, holding yearly assemblies supported by a few sympathetic SIL missionaries in the interior of Gran Pajonal.<sup>9</sup> Following the process of organization, the Indigenous quest to establish legally recognized “Native Communités” grew, as did the need to having their community territories demarcated and titled to halt further expansion of cattle rearing by the settlers. In a lightning action in 1984, the SIL mission rushed in a team of land surveyors from the Ministry of Agriculture in Pucallpa, who carried out the demarcation relatively rapidly. The technical quality of the work was questionable, but a first step had been taken in the re-conquest of lost territories. Out of this process emerged a real and independent Indigenous organization: the *Organización Ashéninka de Gran Pajonal* – OAGP, with leadership posts, statutes and a general assembly. This consolidated over the following years, to eventually become a significant political factor in the region (cf. Hvalkof 1998; Hvalkof and Veber 2005; Veber 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2014).

### **The concept of “native community”**

It may be useful here to sketch the background of the “native community” concept. The Peruvian idea of “*comunidad*” is derived from the peasant societies of the Andes, where “Indigenous communities” were established during the colonial period as a measure to control labour and regulate land tenure (Plant and Hvalkof 2001, Hvalkof 2012). During the agrarian reform period of the 1960s and 1970s, the term “Indigenous” was eliminated, in keeping with the development policy aimed at creating a modern and ethnically uniform mestizo nation and state. Terms like *Indian* and *Indigenous* were replaced by *peasant* in the official idiom. New agrarian legislation favoured establishing collectively titled areas for peasant communities, irrespective of ethnic composition. Privately-owned estates and *haciendas* were expropriated, not for redistribution to the Indigenous peasant population, however but to be nationalized and converted into state cooperatives of various kinds, a process that after a few years of public enthusiasm turned into a complete economic disaster (cf. Hvalkof 2012). The legalization of collective land tenure through community titles was thus not an attempt to recognize Indigenous territories but to secure land as a means of production, as part of a nationalist, populist and integrationist political discourse aiming at modernizing and streamlining the Peruvian society (cf. Plant and Hvalkof 2001, Hvalkof 1998, 2012).

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9 The SIL missionaries invited officials from the educational sector and other selected friends, mostly with the aim of promoting their Ashéninka initiatives and establishing an evangelical organization or even a native church. They did not succeed in the latter but definitely helped to make the problems and interests of the Pajonal Ashéninka known to wider sectors of the public administration. See also Veber 2009)

Special legislation granting rights to community titles to the Indigenous populations of the Amazon region soon followed with the Law of Native Communities from 1978.<sup>10</sup> The legal and technical model for establishing *comunidades nativas* (“native communities”) in the Peruvian Amazon was copied from the Andean peasant community model, understood as a corporate peasant community with a high degree of structural and economic integration and a residence pattern characterized by territorial centres of hamlets and villages. Ashéninka society in no way conforms to this organizational model, its social organization being characterized by a loosely knit network of scattered residential groups with high flexibility and individual mobility. In spite of whatever expectations official Peru may have had as to the social functioning of “a community” in the Amazon, the Ashéninka redefined the concept to be synonymous with a demarcated land area, a piece of guaranteed territory, with certain benefits attached to it, such as a bilingual school and possibly a landing strip. A community and its boundaries were defined by the local territorial group, often organized around a local headman or charismatic leader, thus adapting a managerial concept born out of the discourse of national integration and development to conventional Ashéninka patterns of organization and settlement.<sup>11</sup> Still, the whole idea of establishing bounded territorial units with formal status in the non-Indigenous world was utterly alien and dubious to many Ashéninka in the initial phase of this development.

The first four “communities” demarcated and titled in 1984 were adjacent and covered most of the old concession area of the cattle *hacienda* in the *Shumahuani* area, and the symbolic value in demarcating and titling precisely these areas was important. When the colonists realized what had happened, they did everything possible to reverse or halt the process, including threats to the emerging Indigenous leadership. The threats, ironically, helped to define and politicize the role of the new leaders and their organization.

### **Titling the rest**

The initial titling of Ashéninka territories did not stop the expansion of the colonist cattle raising in other parts of the Gran Pajonal. On the contrary, it seemed to accelerate, and conflicts between *colonos* and Ashéninka grew as local Ashéninka realized they had the legal right to form communities, define their borders and have them demarcated. A general request for land titling emerged (Hvalkof 1986).

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10 Decreto Ley N° 22175, Ley de Comunidades Nativas y de Desarrollo Agrario de las Regiones de Selva y Ceja de Selva.

11 See Veber 2017 for an examination of Indigenous concepts and traditional practices of leadership.

In 1985, the up-and-coming Indigenous leaders of the OAGP saw a chance to organize a general land titling process in the Gran Pajonal to counteract the developing colonist cattle frenzy. All resources and networks were mobilized. Sympathetic anthropologists, such as the author and his wife, began lobbying the authorities and international development programmes to support a demarcation and titling process. We handed in demographic, spatial, ecological, historical and ethnographic data, targeting the administration of the World Bank's special development and colonization programme operating in neighbouring areas to the west, the *Chanchamayo-Satipo Special Project*. The Ashéninka leaders travelled on foot or with borrowed money to the provincial capital and to Lima to follow up the case. A special report was drawn up on the situation, with descriptions, analysis and recommendations, and was immediately sent to the World Bank in Washington D.C. (Hvalkof 1986a), thus succeeding in making the World Bank acknowledge its responsibility for the colonist expansion and escalating conflict in the Gran Pajonal. To our great surprise, the World Bank reacted rapidly and positively. Based on the report, they sent an external consultant from Washington D.C. to look into the situation and he confirmed its analysis and recommended the demarcation of the native communities of Gran Pajonal as a possible solution. Their Peruvian counterpart, the *Special Project*, was urged by the World Bank to carry out a demarcation and land titling process for all the Indigenous communities in the Gran Pajonal (cf. Hvalkof 1998:104-112 for a detailed account).<sup>12</sup> Despite fierce resistance from the colonists and their allies in the regional administration, the Indigenous *Organización Ashéninka de Gran Pajonal* (OAGP), and the international development programme completed the land titling process in the following years. The new organization, the OAGP, was greatly strengthened through this process and the person responsible for the community demarcation in the organization, its president Miguel Camaiteri, carried out exceptional work in spite of the massive opposition and threats he was constantly facing (see the autobiographical accounts of Miguel Camaiteri, his brother Pascual Camaiteri, and the late Miqueas Mishari in Veber 2009).

By 1988, as many as 27 new adjacent Indigenous communities (*comunidades nativas* - CC.NN.) had been demarcated and titled, forming an almost continuous Indigenous territory, one that circumscribed the settler zone. Today, the Indigenous organization of Gran Pajonal, the OAGP, embraces 43 associated communities, and several of the communities first titled have subsequently had their land bases extended. The previously marginalized Ashéninka had managed to organize and regain territorial control, thus curbing further colonist

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12 The counterpart Peruvian institution was the Chanchamayo-Satipo Special Project (Subsidiary to the *Proyecto Especial Pichis-Palcazu* – PEPP), accountable to the Ministry of the Presidency of the Republic.

expansion.<sup>13</sup> The colonists were still in possession of vast areas of land for their cattle ventures but their expansion and the influx of new settlers came to a halt, and the conflict was thus brought under control.

The new community structure did not alter their internal function in any significant way at this point but the adaptation of the concept of “community” to the Ashéninka context had created a new organizational platform for the Indigenous population, who enthusiastically participated in civic decision-making processes and political initiatives regarding the Gran Pajonal.<sup>14</sup> The Ashéninka were no longer just a cheap commoditized labour resource. They were owners of land and had become a political factor as newly registered citizens with the right to vote. A new democratic reality was forming.

### **Slavery in the Ucayali**

Throughout history, the Indigenous inhabitants of the Gran Pajonal have had close relations with the Ucayali River region. Traditional trading routes from the Andes and foothills of the *Chanchamayo* region in the west, connecting to the Ucayali and the wider Amazon River system in the east, pass through the Gran Pajonal, an interfluvial zone that lacks navigable rivers and has very limited fishing. The Indigenous menu in the dry season is basically vegetarian, occasionally supplemented by insects, snails, fry and other similar “*animalitos*”, and so the Ucayali River stands as a true fishing paradise for the Indigenous Pajonal dwellers. The preferred contacts of the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal, outside of their territory, are their Ashéninka relatives on the Upper Ucayali. The two areas are linked by an old network of trails and the inhabitants of the Pajonal love to go on family fishing trips to the Ucayali. It only takes the Ashéninka a couple of days to get there by foot and they will happily spend a month downstream from the town and provincial centre of Atalaya, where they fish, eat and trade with their partners. Ucayali is the door to the outside world. It is also the site where the more adventurous among them can find a patron to work for - if they feel like it. It is quite common for young Ashéninka from the Gran Pajonal to contract work with logging patrons. It is very hard work and badly paid. But it gives them an opportunity to get around a little in the lower

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13 Various officials, topographers and technicians of the PEPP and of the Ministry of Agriculture in Lima made great efforts to support the Ashéninka people throughout this process. Although it is impossible to name them all, mention must be made of Sra. Magda Camargo, of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the now deceased Ing. Carlos Borda, of the PEPP Special Project, for their extraordinary effort, solidarity and enthusiasm, without which the Gran Pajonal demarcation project would not have been able to proceed.

14 The response from the colonist establishment was one of constantly attempting to delegitimize and undermine the new Ashéninka leadership and its organization, OAGP. But circumstances eventually forced them to accept its existence (cf. Hvalkof 1997, 2008; and Veber 1998, 2007a, 2009, for a detailed analysis of the extraordinary organizational process leading up to this).

Amazon region. Atalaya is the focal point for all river traffic up and down the Urubamba River and its tributaries in southern Peru, as well as being the hub of traffic in both directions on the wild River Tambo and further down along the mighty Ucayali until you reach the new and expanding city of Pucallpa and, eventually, Iquitos and beyond to Brazil. Atalaya is also the final destination of larger barges on the Amazon and Ucayali rivers.

But the Ucayali River and the Atalaya region is first and foremost the frontier of the extractivist economy, as is the town of Atalaya itself and many of the riverine settlements started as trading posts founded during the rubber boom from 1890 -1915. It was the centre of slave raids and slave trading during the rubber period, as mentioned in the historical summary, where local patrons of European descent organized slave raids into the Gran Pajonal and other areas - so-called *correrías* – with contracted Indigenous raiders, killing the men and abducting women and children to be traded to the patrons in the Ucayali and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> A quite lucrative business, on which the extractive economy in the region was based. It was the region where rubber barons like the notorious and ruthless *Carlos Fermin Fiscarrald*<sup>16</sup> traded rubber and slaves, and also organized raids into the Gran Pajonal (cf. Sala 1896, Izaguirre 1924). It was then that the perverse customary norms for patron-Indigenous relations known as debt bondage were institutionalized. When the rubber economy collapsed after 1915, the slave trade continued and became a major business of its own, and the practice continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Atalaya, trade in Indigenous serfs continued well into the 1980s as we will see. Apart from labour, the main extractive product was timber, mainly logged illegally by the same patrons. Additionally, drug trafficking with cocaine in different forms became another developing business, as it still is in the area.

During my first field visit to Atalaya in 1975, it became quite clear that the colonist society of the Ucayali flood plains was of a quite different character to that of the peasant settlers of Oventeni, and that the patrons descending from the rubber barons a century ago still dominated the region, the economy and the administration, and maintained a large part of the Indigenous population as serfs on their estates.

To get a grasp of the continued relations between Ucayali society and the Gran Pajonal, we spent the last part of our fieldwork in 1987 in the Ucayali, living and

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15 For personal family accounts see the autobiographical narratives of Bernardo Silva and Adolfo Gutiérrez in Veber 2009. See also Veber 2007a, 2014.

16 The notorious rubber baron, slave trader and murderer *Fiscarrald* became world famous through the 1982 movie “*Fiscarrald*” by the German filmmaker Werner Herzog, starring Klaus Kinski and Claudia Cardinale. It was shot in Camisea on the Urubamba River, and many Ashéninka from the Gran Pajonal were hired as extras, including the later president of OAGP, Miguel Camaiteri, who played the right-hand man and bodyguard of *Fiscarrald* alias Klaus Kinski.

working in the Ashéninka communities of Chicosa and Unini, both located on the old trading routes, and the latter a former Adventist mission. During this work, we became well and truly aware of how dreadful the situation was. In the area of Unini, practically all the families had experienced abuse at the hands of the patrons. On the one hand, the Unini area, as already mentioned, had been one of the preferred zones for *correrías* and the recruitment of cheap labour through debt bondage and, on the other, there were still valuable timber resources in the area which the patrons were illegally extracting. This was also being done with Indigenous labour gained through confidence tricks and debts.

One of our interlocutors in Unini had lost a son the previous year. He had disappeared during work in the forest for one of the patrons, who could not explain how he had disappeared and denied all responsibility. His father had notified the authorities of the situation but all he got was a shrug of the shoulders. Disappearances were part of the normal order of things. So were crude violence and sexual abuse. When the local Ashéninka from around Unini found out that we were carrying out a census and interviewing people about the work situation, many people came forward wanting to tell us about the abuses to which they had been subjected. A neighbour from the other side of the river recounted how, under threat of death, he had been forced to witness the patron rape his wife. Others told how they had seen sick and exhausted people brutally assassinated by the patrons while working in lumber extraction because they could not keep up the pace of work. How they had to live on a bag of manioc flour a day when they were working in the forest, how their lands were invaded and their crops stolen, how they were permanently enslaved because of debts, how their children were taken away from them and sent as child labour for the patrons, how the colonist authorities refused to register them as Peruvian citizens and denied them personal identification documents. It is impossible to travel anywhere in Peru without your identity document. It is illegal and dangerous. Quite apart from the fact that people without personal documents obviously do not exist and have no rights. They told us of the extensive trade in children, women and entire families taking place in the province, and we witnessed incidents of slavery, servitude and abuses committed by the local patrons towards the Indigenous peoples, often with the support of the local authorities and police. (For a more detailed account of these cases see García 1998; Gray 1998; Hvalkof 1998).

### **Taking action**

While doing our survey, we received statements of abuses, denunciations and many requests from local Indigenous communities for demarcation and titling as in the Gran Pajonal. Simultaneously, a delegation from the national Indigenous organization AIDSEP in Lima arrived in Atalaya to investigate similar cases of

abuse, particularly in two communities of Tahuanti and Sabaluyo, where the Indigenous peoples had tremendous problems with the patrons, and where the situation had escalated into violent clashes and attacks on community leaders, who had thus requested help from AIDSESEP. The delegation was led by Miqueas Mishari, one of the leaders of AIDSESEP, later to be the organization's president. He was accompanied by their legal advisor Pedro García, charged with handling the notifications, witnesses, and so on. To cut a long story short, we subsequently joined forces in Lima and requested an official investigation into the horrendous situation in Atalaya, which was apparently the general state of affairs in the province. After a number of visits to Atalaya, where the horrifying information continued to increase, the first step towards official intervention was taken at the initiative of AIDSESEP and the Ministry of Agriculture in Lima. At the end of the year, a multisectoral commission reporting to the Ministry of Justice was set up to investigate the assertions regarding the terrible abuses (for a detailed account by the legal advisor, see García 1998:15-82). During the development of this process in 1987, a new Indigenous organization emerged in the province of Atalaya, OIRA, which came to play a decisive role in Indigenous organization in the Upper Ucayali. A number of meetings with different authorities, including AIDSESEP, OIRA, ILO, a few NGOs, the SIL and ourselves, were held in Lima, where it was proposed that the positive results of the land titling process in the Gran Pajonal should be replicated in Ucayali through a similar, but wider, project. It was also during these meetings that an outline proposal for the establishment of a large, protected area in the Sira mountains, to the north of Gran Pajonal, in the form of a *Reserva Comunal* was presented, to consolidate the territory further. Nevertheless, there was still no concrete proposal as to how a project of this kind could be financed and implemented.<sup>17</sup> We were still awaiting the final result of the multisectoral commission's report.

In 1988, the multisectoral commission published its initial report (AIDSESEP 1988a, 1988b, 1991a, 1991c; Gray and Hvalkof 1990a, 1990b) and, in 1989, the *Instituto Indigenista Peruano* (IIP) published the commission's final report and recommendations (IIP 1989). It was a terrifying testimony to the serious crimes that were occurring, ranging from multiple murders, disappearances, torture, assault and battery, slavery, abduction of children, rape and other sexual abuses,

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17 The proposal for the establishment of this Reserve in the Sira area was presented by the very active SIL missionary and communal sympathiser in the Gran Pajonal, Richard Rutter. He also attached a map that covered a "tongue" of mountain crests that separated the Gran Pajonal from the Ucayali and extended as far as the Unini River to the east. The Asháninka organization, CECONSEC (*Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central* - Office of the Native Communities of the Selva Central), which was working in the Chanchamayo-Perené area, also discussed a similar proposal that same year. Their interest was due, amongst other things, to the fact that they were looking for alternative areas of land because of the desperate land situation in the old area of the Peruvian Corporation.

to a series of infringements of labour laws and agrarian and forestry legislation (García 1998: 55-74). With few exceptions, all of the accused were local patrons and allied authorities ranging from the forestry service to the police and even the justice of the peace. In all, 17 of the local patrons, and three major regional lumber patrons were accused of more than 60 criminal counts. None of the accused were ever brought to trial. In any case, the commission's investigation only revealed the tip of the iceberg. Everyone agreed that the solution to the problem was demarcation and titling of the Indigenous communities, reinforcing Indigenous organization and citizenship.

### **The Land Titling Project in the Ucayali**

During the course of the autumn of 1987 and spring of 1988, there was a great deal of communication in both directions between Denmark and AIDSESP in Lima regarding the formulation of a larger land titling project for the Upper Ucayali Region. There were good technical and strategic experiences from Gran Pajonal that could be replicated and adapted to the situation in the Ucayali. Similarly, it was decided that the project should be so comprehensive that, in principle, it would be able to solve the land issue once and for all in the department of Ucayali, although priority should be given to the province of Atalaya, where the problems were most urgent and acute. It was the State that formally owned the lands of the native communities, however and, naturally, only the State could issue land titles, in these matters represented by the Ministry of Agriculture. It was therefore essential for the success of a project such as this that the Ministry of Agriculture agreed to participate at a high level by cooperating in a concrete project with Indigenous organizations and their technicians. This was a prior requirement for the success of such a radical project. There was a positive and open attitude in the Ministry to the idea of the project, as long as the financial means to achieve the project could be found from international sources. AIDSESP succeeded in signing a framework agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture in Lima regarding the implementation of a land titling project for the native communities of Ucayali, an historical agreement that has had more importance for the democratic development of the Peruvian Amazon than anybody dreamed of at the time.

In Denmark, we were struggling to find a formula by which to sell the idea to the Danish International Development Agency, Danida, which did not work in Peru and had no bilateral interest in the country, far less in Indigenous peoples. The only way to get this idea across was via the NGO programme. I therefore hooked up with IWGIA, where Andrew Gray, who had also worked for years in the Peruvian Amazon of the Madre de Dios and director Jens Dahl, wholeheartedly backed the idea of IWGIA submitting a project proposal. It took a lot of effort to convince the Danida grant management team that this was a relevant

project, due to the agency's conservative and conformist idea of the concept of "development" but, finally, the project was approved by Danida in 1989. It was an historic moment that marked the beginning of a much wider acceptance of projects with Indigenous peoples as a special category of development, and particularly support to land titling and territorial legalization.

### **Project implementation**

The project commenced in 1989, setting up offices in Pucallpa and Atalaya from where the fieldwork was carried out. It would be a gross exaggeration to state that there were no problems. Start-up was symbolically marked by the fact that the building complex of the Ministry of Agriculture in Pucallpa, where AIDSESEP had use of a small office, was burnt to the ground by supposedly unknown terrorists. That was how we knew what we were up against. Nevertheless, the two Indigenous implementing organizations, OIRA and AIDSESEP, carried out the project.<sup>18</sup> They set up a team of technicians, field staff and coordinators which, for the following three years (1990-93), worked surveying, registering and demarcating more than 120 "native communities", which is the legal term in Peru.

It was an extremely complicated, difficult and conflict-ridden task. They had to manoeuvre with extreme caution in a zone where the Colombian drugs mafia, Sendero Luminoso, the MRTA guerrilla, three different counterinsurgency corps, hostile patrons, logging companies, new settlers, corrupt officials and bureaucrats against the project, as well as political parties campaigning, were all trying to establish the order of the day. The first stage of the large project was carried out between 1989 and 1993 and continued with a follow-up project from 1993 to 1995, which also included the beginning of the establishment of seven *Reservas Comunales*, including separate zones for isolated and yet uncontacted Indigenous groups.<sup>19</sup> In 1996, a third phase started to adjust and bring up to date the geo-referencing of the boundaries with modern GPS technology. Furthermore, a series of requests for the enlargement of existing communities had emerged and there are always gaps to be filled in. The Gran Pajonal was once again incorporated into this latest follow-up, through the OAGP. The three phases were funded by Danida through IWGIA, as the organization responsible for the project and its implementation.

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18 See the personal account of Miqueas Mishari, defence secretary of AIDSESEP at the time, describing the threats to his life he encountered in Atalaya and elsewhere in the Ucayali during the project. Veber 2009:126-172.

19 Today these small groups are referred to as PIAVCI: Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact (in Spanish).



Meeting of Aidesep's land titling project, Gran Pajonal, 1996  
 Photo: Alejandro Parellada

The project succeeded in demarcating 162 communal territories, of which 89 obtained new titles and 76 were enlargements of lands already titled (cf. Ñaco Rosas et al. 1997). The team strove to demarcate the communities as adjacent lands, thus creating large blocks of continuous Indigenous territories, restoring a total territory of approximately 1.5 million hectares in the Ucayali and Urubamba river basins. This did not include the communities demarcated in the Gran Pajonal nor the communal reserves, a type of co-managed protected area.

In March 1997, AIDSESEP presented a very elaborate project proposal to the Peruvian environmental authority, INRENA, to establish a large Communal Reserve in the Sira Mountains bordering the Native Communities of the Gran Pajonal in the south and the Pichis-Pachitea and the Ucayali floodplains to the east and west.

A Communal Reserve is a protected area that is supposed to be co-managed by the adjacent communities and the environmental authorities. The Indigenous communities adjacent on all sides to the reserve should therefore be a part of the management. However, it is mostly the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal who periodically access the southern part for hunting expeditions, with the Ashéninka from Pachitea also entering on the western edge, as it is practically inaccessible from other sides. The Sira Communal Reserve was finally created in 2001, covering 616,413 ha. and being the largest of its kind in Peru. It holds an extraordinary biodiversity with several endemic species, and functions as a kind of game refuge for the Ashéninka in the Gran Pajonal.

Map of the location of Gran Pajonal and Alto Ucayali



Map produced by Søren Hvalkof, 2004

The effects of the demarcation and titling projects have been profound. Indeed, they have changed the entire power structure in the region. Hundreds of former Ashéninka peons left their patrons to join together and form new communities. Now they were landowners and becoming a real political force by themselves, which altered their bargaining position in relation to the regional administration accordingly.

### **Defending the territorial integrity**

Shortly after the Gran Pajonal demarcation and titling was completed, the strength of the new organization and its leadership was seriously challenged. Widespread social chaos following the deep economic and political crisis in Peru in the 1980s had led to the appearance of the “Shining Path” (*Sendero Luminoso*) and MRTA (*Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru*) subversive militants in neighbouring Ashéninka territories (cf. Benavides 1992, 1993; Hvalkof 1994; García et al. 1998). A nexus of illegal drug trafficking and subversive movements created a disastrous state of latent violence in the central Peruvian Amazon. In the areas surrounding the Gran Pajonal, the Shining Path secured a foothold through forced recruitment and terror among the Indigenous communities. From the Indigenous point of view, *Sendero Luminoso* was “yet another patron”, as one Ashéninka expressed it, a patron indistinguishable from other colonists. *Sendero Luminoso* appear to have intended to establish a strategic centre of food production in the Gran Pajonal, a plan that was emphatically opposed by the Ashéninka. This put the Indigenous leadership in the Gran Pajonal on a collision course with the guerrillas, who put a price on the heads of the Ashéninka leaders, followed by several incidents. Alarmed by this, and sparked by an Ashéninka uprising in the neighbouring Pichis valley following the murder of one of their local leaders, Alejandro Calderón, by the MRTA in December 1989,<sup>20</sup> the Ashéninka of the OAGP decided to take control of Oventeni and Gran Pajonal.<sup>21</sup> One early February morning in 1990, a couple of hundred Ashéninka armed with shotguns, bows and arrows occupied Oventeni and declared it to be under the control of the “Ashéninka Army” (*El Ejército Ashéninka*) under the command of Miguel Camaiteri, president of the OAGP. They gave all infiltrators, allies and sympathizers of SL and MRTA in Oventeni a few days to leave the area, which many did. They set up a comprehensive defence and surveillance system in the periphery of the Gran Pajonal and took full control of the zone. They subsequently mobilized their allied Ashéninka of the Ucayali to set up a similar militia and coordinated their efforts. None of the subversive organizations ever succeeded in establishing themselves in the area,

<sup>20</sup> The fact is that Don Alejandro’s body was never found, which is why his sons and daughters have never wanted to admit that their father is dead.

<sup>21</sup> See the autobiographical narrative of Miguel Camaiteri in Veber 2009:56-109.

and, with the general decline in these movements in the late 1990s, the armed units gradually withdrew from the Ashéninka areas bordering the Gran Pajonal. The Ashéninka had succeeded in pacifying the zone with very few casualties, and prevented a military intervention, a great accomplishment in the violent Peruvian reality, where ““pacification” has normally been a military metaphor for death and destruction (cf. Hvalkof 1998:145-147, Hvalkof and Veber 2005).

The *colonos* maintained a low profile during the turbulent years, intimidated by the unexpected organizational capacity, reaction and success of the Ashéninka and their militia. The new situation had also accentuated ethnic and class differences among the colonist population. An increasing number of poor *colonos* and the new generation with a mixed ethnic background had sided with the Ashéninka and their organization. Obviously, the OAGP and their sister organizations in the Ucayali developed and consolidated during this process. Having gained organizational experience and the confidence of the communities and their registered members and voters, the Indigenous leadership in the Pajonal and Atalaya Province now targeted civil society and political control by launching candidates for the local and municipal elections. During the ensuing years, the Ashéninka succeeded in gaining mayorships and other high posts in the municipal governments in Oventeni and Atalaya. The former serfs with no citizenship or rights had been transformed into stewards of democratization (see also Veber 2007b).

In October 1996, the London-based Anti-Slavery International (ASI) honoured the Regional Indigenous Organization of Atalaya (OIRA) with their Anti-Slavery Award.<sup>22</sup> The ASI gave the 1996 award to OIRA for “its work in freeing thousands of Ashéninka, an Indigenous peoples from the Peruvian Amazon, from debt bondage”. Two of the leaders from the Indigenous organization in Atalaya were invited to London to receive the award.

Simultaneously, starting in 1993, a large Indigenous health programme was launched in the Ucayali and Gran Pajonal by AIDSESEP, targeting all the communities now being titled and organized in several local organizations, associated with their regional hub OIRA in Atalaya. The *Proyecto de Salud Indígena* (PSI-AIDSESEP) was supported by the private Danish Karen Elise Jensen Foundation and supervised by the Danish consultancy firm NORDECO. The project developed a decentralized integrated health approach focused in every community, working

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22 The ASI is the modern continuation of the “*Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society*”, which actively lobbied for British intervention to stop the atrocities of rubber extraction in the Congo and Peru at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1909, the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society lobbied the British government to investigate atrocities in the Putumayo during the rubber boom, committed by the Casa Arana based in Iquitos for the *Peruvian Amazon Company*, a London-registered enterprise (cf. Gray 1990, 1997).



The Ashéninka army parading in Ponchoni community, Gran Pajonal, 1994. Photo: Søren Hvalkof  
Below: A Sunday stroll in Oventeni, Gran Pajonal, 2005. Photo: Søren Hvalkof



with shamans, traditional healers and midwives, in combination with communal health promoters and modern biomedicine. It was divided into several subprogrammes each associated with local organizations in the Ucayali (OIRA and ORDECONADIT<sup>23</sup>) and the Gran Pajonal (OAGP). The PSI was very successful in addressing the health problems in the communities, including a decentralized Tuberculosis (TB) programme, which detected and treated many cases in the communities and was very supportive of the newly titled communities and their organizations, thus contributing to a consolidation of the land titling process and the new territorial organization. AIDSEP's Indigenous health programme eventually entered a framework agreement with the regional health authorities in Pucallpa and the Ministry of Health in Lima, finally institutionalizing a formal education system for Indigenous Health Technicians, which still is functioning today. The PSI itself continued with support from the Danish foundation until 2010. A comprehensive book about the process of establishing the PSI in the wake of land titling projects in the Gran Pajonal and Ucayali and its work was later published (Hvalkof 2004).

### **Land titling, power and democratization – a view beyond**

Over the course of the following years, the demarcation and titling of Indigenous lands and territories continued to influence the social dynamics and power relations in the region. Many communities have applied for an extension of their territories, which some have obtained, and there are a high number of applications in process in the files of the Ministry of Agriculture. Several new Native Communities have also been formed, following the steady population increase in the Indigenous groups, that are now awaiting demarcation and titling.

But the trees do not grow into the sky. Cases of community chiefs allowing timber patrons to log valuable tropical hardwood inside their community territories for personal gain or the leasing out of community land to mestizo cattle ranchers happens frequently. Lately, there has been an influx of coca growers and drug producers into the Atalaya area from the valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers, the so-called VRAEM, which is the central coca- and cocaine-producing area in Peru, and the base of the remnants of *Sendero Luminoso*. These new colonists are currently reported to have contracted Ashéninka families from the Gran Pajonal to settle in forest areas in the Ucayali and create new fake Native Communities, just so that they can be handed over to the coca producers, obviously creating conflicts with the existing communities. It requires well-functioning and strong local and regional Indigenous organizations to handle these situations, where little support can be found from corrupt authorities. However, the legal and social basis for countering this situation is in place, and

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23 ORDECONADIT, *Organización de Comunidades Nativas del Distrito de Tahuania*.



Children in Ponchoni Native Community, Ashéninka Organization of Gran Pajonal (OAGP) Centre, Gran Pajonal, 2005.

Photo: Søren Hvalkof

the maturing Indigenous organizations will find solutions to these challenges. Still, it may require solidarity and help from international support organizations – again.

The highly dynamic and participatory process of titling Indigenous community territories, as previously described, has itself become a hitherto non-existent field of social interaction. Land titling has become a means of trans-cultural communication - between Indigenous society and colonist society and between Indigenous society and State/public administration, creating binding social relationships between the parties involved, redefining the position of Indigenous society in regional development. The process constitutes a non-ideologized sphere of cross-sectoral and inter-cultural communication. In this field of open values, Indigenous rights are pragmatically expressed in specific actions related to common aspects of everyday rural Amazonian life.

Facilitation of the emerging Ashéninka's access to political "power" and success has been conditioned by several external determinants, such as the enforcement of Indigenous land titling legislation in Peru, a particular historical situation of the Peruvian state creating an operational space for Indigenous groups, favourable

international discourses, a changing global scenario facilitating political alliances between unequal and otherwise unrelated partners, like the Ashéninka-World Bank connection, and a demographic resurgence due to immunization campaigns by the evangelical missions and NGOs. The surprise in the rapidly changing role of institutions that hitherto had been regarded as the problem rather than the solution makes one recall Michel Foucault's definition of power as strategic positioning in relation to multiple factors, a strategic positioning that the Ashéninka seem to have mastered.

Their non-ideologized consciousness has furnished the Ashéninka with an instrumental pragmatism, enabling them to enter into whatever partnership and alliance they find useful for whatever strategic purpose they can agree upon (see also Sarmiento 2017). The potential of this relative freedom may have been present throughout history but it could not be achieved without a state mature enough to guarantee and enforce, albeit reluctantly, the Ashéninka's rights as an Indigenous population, and without a new globalized order permitting access to alternative alliances and empowerment to ensure such progress.

### **50 years after the Barbados meeting – now what?**

Legalization of Indigenous territories has proven to be an indispensable prerequisite for the emancipation, autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, in the light of the current global climate crisis, the titling of Indigenous territories in the Amazon has demonstrated itself as being one of the most efficient ways of preserving the forest cover and biodiversity, counteracting greenhouse gas emissions by curbing logging and forest clearing and maintaining the carbon stocks (e.g. EDF et. al 2017, Blackman et. al. 2017, Schleicher et. al 2017). At the time of writing, the coronavirus pandemic is ravaging Indigenous communities all over the Peruvian Amazon, causing numerous deaths, including several leaders and key persons in the Indigenous organizations. The Peruvian Amazon seems to have one of the world's highest infection rates of Covid-19. Well acquainted with the impotence of the Peruvian public health system, some Indigenous organizations have taken matters into their own hands, organizing anti-corona campaigns in the communities, apparently with positive results in certain regions (AIDSEP Doc 1. 2020; Servindi Doc.1, Doc 2, 2020; REPAM 2020; IBC 2020; Radio Atalaya 2020). The level of community organization and control seems to have been decisive in the prevention and treatment of Covid-19 and the effects of the pandemic are again amplified by existing structural inequalities and imbalances in the Amazon region.

The answer to the urgent challenges of our times is once again the consolidation of Indigenous peoples' territories and demarcation and titling where it is still

missing. I continuously receive requests from Indigenous organizations and networks in the Peruvian Amazon and beyond asking for help in finding them support and funding from international NGOs and development organizations in order to expand their territories and create larger territorial units, including protected areas, through demarcation and titling, and to develop corresponding territorial management strategies.

So even though the situation of the Indigenous peoples in South America 50 years after the Barbados declaration has improved considerably, and although the Barbados groups' call for accountability and action by the state, the churches, and anthropologists has reverberated in many ways, one of the seminal points in the Barbados volume (1972): the securing of Indigenous territorial rights to stop ethnocide, is still valid. Let this be a reminder and call to international organizations to continue supporting the legalization of territorial security, demarcation and titling for Indigenous peoples and for the protection of the Amazon forests and ecosystem, fulfilling the aspirations of the Declaration of Barbados for the liberation of the Indigenous peoples.

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## PART 3

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Barbados  
and IWGIA





**Alejandro Parellada**

*AP: What impact do you think the Barbados meeting had?*

At that time, I was studying anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. One of my fellow students was Peter Aaby, who was a member of IWGIA, while the Norwegian anthropologist, Helge Kleivan, IWGIA's founder, was one of my lecturers. Together we had many discussions about the role of anthropology, closely following all the international conferences. Helge was, in particular, trying to share the situation in Latin America with us, the human rights violations that were a recurrent theme at that time.

The Barbados Declaration was IWGIA's first "Document" and I clearly remember its impact on the eternal dilemma of anthropology set out in black and white: can we be both an objective observer and committed to an issue? I know that many people were sceptical as to Helge's role as a researcher because of his commitment, and he was a highly committed person. While he did not attend Barbados, he did use the Declaration extensively in IWGIA's work. There was an interesting situation in Barbados whereby the Church was criticized at the same time as being recognized for its support to Indigenous communities. The role of the Church was also discussed within IWGIA and gave rise to some conflicts.

*AP: What was going on in Danish academia meanwhile?*

The Danish academic world at that time, and in my opinion even today, does not believe that political commitment is compatible with the objective, scientific view of a professional anthropologist. This was and still is a problem. IWGIA's creation was not primarily the result of the anthropological world in Denmark but above all of that in Norway, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland.

However, IWGIA's office was established in Copenhagen because of Helge's presence, as he was from Denmark. His colleague, the Danish anthropologist, Nils Fock, was also involved, as was the Swedish anthropologist Lars Persson, who was working in Colombia and Georg Henriksen from Norway. It was originally intended to move the office to Sweden but the organization grew and then it was no longer possible. But the fact that it is in Copenhagen is a fluke.

Later, I was appointed as a lecturer at the Institute of Eskimology alongside Helge and we were colleagues for many years. Not a day went by when we didn't talk about the problems, the challenges of IWGIA's work. Nicaragua was an important topic of debate, as was support for the creation of the Indian Council of South America (CISA). Leaders such as the Bolivian, Julio Tumiri, spent some time at IWGIA's office and greatly enriched our discussions.

*AP: And then he went to the Arctic...*

Indeed. At the same time, and as a result of Barbados and the work of IWGIA, these discussions reached the Arctic with the idea of supporting the formation of Indigenous organizations, such as the creation of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, ICC (later: Inuit Circumpolar Council) and the first conference of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia, Canada. While it is difficult to make direct links, the effect of Barbados on these processes is clear.

The World Council may not have been a great success but it did manage to bring people together from different parts of the world. Meeting, getting to know each other, was really important. But there was also a great deal of scepticism among Indigenous Peoples from the different regions. It was remarkable how differently the Saami, the Greenlanders or the Latin Americans expressed themselves. But it was important that they met. Latin Americans realized that the situation in Scandinavia was much better than in Latin America. The Arctic representatives, on the other hand, were very impressed and rather shocked by the situation in Latin America. They just didn't know what was going on there. In short, they had a lot to learn from each other.

*AP: What steps were taken by organizations such as IWGIA to support the denunciation of human rights violations?*

It should be noted that, in the beginning, it was not the Indigenous peoples themselves who raised complaints about their situation but the anthropologists in Barbados and institutions such as IWGIA or journalists. But this was a transitional phase. The spirit of Barbados and of IWGIA was that Indigenous Peoples themselves should organize. And this has been a huge success. So much has been achieved in just a few years, since 1971.

One key issue has been the close relationship between the academic world and the Indigenous Peoples on the American continent. This has not happened to the same extent in Europe, Asia or Africa. And this is in relation not only to anthropologists but to legal experts as well. There is also some scepticism, for example in the Arctic, towards non-Indigenous academics.

This alliance of the academic world and Indigenous organizations has meant that, despite Indigenous Peoples' difficult situation, much more has been achieved in Latin America than elsewhere. Indigenous Peoples have to look for alliances. They are very often small groups which, by themselves, are not strong enough.

Barbados and IWGIA tried to show the world what was happening to the Indigenous Peoples. With the emergence of Indigenous organizations, the role of institutions such as IWGIA has changed. While such institutions can no longer speak on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples, there is still much to be done in communicating and analyzing the different problems they face.

From the very start, the idea was not to work for the Indigenous Peoples but with them. In any case, there are issues that IWGIA continues to discuss and to publish on. Sometimes touching on subjects when no one else dares, maintaining critical but supportive positions.

IWGIA has also taken initiatives of its own, such as its participation in the African Commission. IWGIA played an important role in initiating the discussion on the existence and rights of Indigenous Peoples in Africa. Who was it who got this discussion rolling? We could to some extent say that it was IWGIA and prominent African academics that commenced this process.

IWGIA was also able to play a facilitating, mediating role, as in the case of the land titling project in the Peruvian Amazon with AIDSESEP, or in Arctic Cooperation. Unlike the Greenlandic authorities, who were not interested, IWGIA played an important facilitating role in the formation of the Arctic Peoples' Conference in Copenhagen in 1973. I sincerely believe that this would not have been possible without IWGIA's intervention. At least, not at that time.

Unlike in Latin America, there are many Saami, Greenlandic or Canadian Indigenous academics. And they immediately took up the reins of the Arctic process. The same conditions did not exist in Latin America at that point, because this was also a time of dictatorships.

I would like to stress that Barbados was an eye-opener. It changed the academic world and it is no coincidence that it was IWGIA's first Document.





***The Declaration of Barbados – Fifty Years On***

René Fuerst (1933-) is a Swiss ethnologist, museum curator and photographer who was already a veteran of working with Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon when a group of concerned ethnologists and anthropologists came together in Barbados to analyze and debate the grave situation for the Indigenous groups of the equatorial rainforest in South America. In order to contextualize his own person and position at the time of the *Declaration of Barbados*, IWGIA arranged an interview with him. During the conversation, René mentioned his most recent book, narrating 20 years of work in the Amazon (Fuerst 2019; see also Fuerst 2008; Françaço 2017).

Shortly after the publication of this book, he lost his sight. “I am 87 years old, and I am not planning to die yet! I still have some more years in me, I believe!” he stated with his characteristic force and strong voice – even though the interview was conducted by phone on 12 September 2020 when he was in the *Hôpitaux Universitaires* in Geneva following another merciless accident. Like the book on his 20 beautiful years among various groups of Indians in the Amazon, his other major publications blend seminal texts with extraordinary photographs. (Fuerst 1997; 2006; 2011). During his time at the Ethnographic Museum in Geneva, his curatorial responsibility related to the Indigenous Peoples of Oceania, resulting in exhibitions and publications. (Fuerst, Lewis, and Monnier 1988; Fuerst and Boccazzi-Varotto 1994). René Fuerst served on the Board of IWGIA from 1982 – 1997 and was Chair of the Board from 1985 – 1993. (Dahl 2009).

*So, it's time to ask you some questions, René. Fifty years ago, some people gathered for a conference in Barbados ...*

– Yes, it was after the foundation of IWGIA (1968) and the conference in Barbados certainly inspired IWGIA's work. I, myself, knew about the *Declaration of Barbados* immediately. I was not in Barbados, but I was part of the same group of people that went to Barbados. I can't remember why I wasn't there, but I was aware of the meeting before it happened.

*When did you start your work in Brazil?*

– I started to work there in 1955 among the Xavante and the Upper Xingu Indians. So, I was already connected to the people that went to Barbados. The person I was closest to was George Grünberg.<sup>1</sup> We cooperated both before and after the Barbados symposium.

A large number of the participants at the Barbados symposium became close partners of IWGIA around this time and influenced the direction, political work and publishing of IWGIA Documents for years to come: I am thinking of people like Bernard Arcand (Arcand 1972), Nelly Arvelo Jiménez (Arvelo Jiménez 1973), Miguel Bartolomé (Bartolomé and Barabas 1973), Peter Kloos (Kloos 1977), Jürgen Riester (Riester 1975; Simon, Riester, and Riester 1980), Stefano Varese (Varese 1972; 2006) and also Miguel Chase Sardi.

– Yes! So, IWGIA is publishing a new document on the Barbados Declaration?

*Yes, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be celebrated with a new document. Our conversation will be included in the introduction to the publication.*

– Good. When I think of the Indians of the Amazon and the Barbados Declaration: since that time, a few of them have already disappeared and others have been taken over by the evangelists. The evangelists, in my opinion are the worst religious organizations in the Amazon. A few others, like the Kayapo, whom I studied for years, still exist. They survived because they are more numerous and decisive in their resistance. So, you see, out of Barbados there was hardly any good outcome.

*What was the main significance of the Barbados Declaration?*

– It was meant to help Indigenous Peoples. And it also became an inspiration for Indigenous Peoples to organize themselves. But, you know, after the symposium, the situation became very, very bad. 1970 in Brazil was the beginning of the end for many Indigenous Peoples, with the construction of the Trans-Amazonian Highway. And only some of the larger groups resisted; some disappeared, some were taken over by the evangelists – but none were protected by Brazil. The

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1 From 25 to 30 January 1971, the Ethnology Department of the University of Berne organized a symposium on the situation of the forest Indians in South America entitled “Interethnic conflict in South America”. The symposium took place in Bridgetown, Barbados under the auspices of the Programme to Combat Racism and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. Georg Grünberg worked on the preparation of the symposium and the ensuing volume of articles from the meeting. Walter Dostal, at this time also at the University of Berne, was the editor (Dostal 1972) This symposium issued a declaration, which was published as IWGIA’s first document. (World Council of Churches, 1971).

government relied on the evangelists, and this is the worst thing the Brazilians did. And yet, we should remember that around this time IWGIA (1968), Survival International (1969) and Cultural Survival (1972) appeared, and these organizations are still doing well.

– This was also a time when my career, my happy years in Brazil, came to an end with my extradition from Brazil by the military dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> In 1975 they threw me out of Brazil. Five years later I started my work in the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva and was appointed curator. There I worked for 15 years until 1998, when I was 65 years old and, like everyone else, I had to retire.

*Tell me, how did your longstanding relationship with IWGIA start?*

– It was through the great founder of IWGIA, Helge Kleivan; he was my friend. And it was he who “threw” me into IWGIA. He said: “You must be part of IWGIA, where shall we meet?” and then we met at the conference in Geneva.<sup>3</sup> The first Geneva conference.<sup>4</sup> I had my own organization in Geneva, Amazind, and Helge said, “Forget about Amazind, join IWGIA, you don’t have the financial capacity to grow your organization here.” It was true, Amazind might have collapsed. So we published a few documents with a black cover (see, for example, World Council of Churches 1971; Fuerst 1972; Junqueira 1973; Chiappino 1975). And then I became well integrated into the work of IWGIA.

*What about the situation of Indigenous Peoples today?*

– In some respects, it is as bad as before. Because they have learned what “white society” is. The strong groups, the numerous ones, like the Kayapo, they don’t need us anymore. Even, though they could teach us certain things we don’t know. Others may die away or integrate, through the evangelists, to become Brazilian citizens, whatever that means – I don’t know. I am afraid the Yanomami will have far more problems in resisting and continuing as an Indian people, compared to the Kayapo. I am afraid that the Yanomami will slowly die out. You remember, the Nambikwara?! Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon (in the years 1900 – 1906) was constructing his famous telegraph line (through Mato Grosso, from Brazil

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<sup>2</sup> See New York Times, 9 November 1974. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/11/09/archives/ouster-of-indians-from-amazon-lands-is-charged-anthropologists.html>

<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Peoples met in Geneva at “The International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations of the Americas” in 1977. The conference was organized by the Special NGO Committee under the Sub-Committee on Racism Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization. The event was in support of the UN Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1973 – 1983). See photo of Helge Kleivan, René Fuerst and Julio Tumiri in Dahl 2009:41.

<sup>4</sup> This is a reference to “The International NGO Conference on Indigenous Peoples and the Land”, Geneva, 1981.

to Bolivia and Peru); between Cuiaba and Porto Velho, he estimated that the Nambikwara numbered 20,000 people. This is a region I know very well since I have worked there. Who are the Nambikwara today? A few hundred miserable people. And I think the Yanomami may also be lost, but I hope not, of course! But they are facing similar threats to the Nambikwara.

*So, do you still see a need for IWGIA and others, 50 years after the Declaration of Barbados, working with, partnering with and supporting the Indigenous Peoples and continuing to document what is going on in the Amazon?*

– Yes. Absolutely!

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## INTERVIEW WITH PETER AABY

About the founding of IWGIA and the role of the Barbados Declaration and network

By Søren Hvalkof

### Introduction

The initiative to form IWGIA emerged during the 38<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists in Stuttgart in August 1968. It started as a response to cases of abuses and atrocities committed against Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon and South American lowlands, presented by Latin American scholars and colleagues from other continents. The initiative was further consolidated during the following 39<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Americanists in Lima in 1970 where more scholars presented urgent cases from South America. This subsequently led to the Barbados meeting in 1971.

Peter S. Aaby was among the anthropologists who started up IWGIA and who, together with Helge Kleivan, was the initial editor of the document series published by IWGIA, of which *The Declaration of Barbados* was the first in 1971. Aaby worked with Helge Kleivan in the IWGIA Secretariat, both of them on a voluntary basis. He graduated in anthropology in 1974, the year he also left IWGIA. He eventually gained a tenured position at the Institute of Anthropology in Copenhagen in 1980 but moved on to study the socio-structural systems of measles epidemics in Guinea-Bissau and other West African countries, to which he has dedicated his life, leading to an additional doctoral degree in medicine, based on his ground-breaking research on the spread and severity of measles infection and other viral diseases. He built the Bandim Health Project in Guinea-Bissau, which today employs some 150 people and receives visiting researchers from all over the world.

### Interview

Peter Aaby recalls:

“The Americas were not so much my region of interest. This is 1968, the period of the student and youth rebellion, new political movements and a lot of things going on. I was President for the students in the staff-student committee planning the education and teaching at the institute and was in the firing line.

Helge Kleivan, the founder of IWGIA, returned from the Stuttgart Conference, and wanted something to be done. He invited me, as a politically-active student, to join him in his efforts to establish IWGIA. It must have been sometime in 1969. It is a long time ago, over 50 years have gone by. There was also a Swede involved initially, Lars Persson, and some Norwegian colleagues, Henning Siverts, who later wrote one of the reports from Peru,<sup>1</sup> and Georg Henriksen, who was working with the Sami in Norway and *First Nations* in Labrador.”

“Eventually the tiny secretariat settled in the small office Kleivan had in the backyard of the Institute of Anthropology. So, I was involved from the start in the planning of the IWGIA Document series, of which *The Declaration of Barbados* was the first. But I was not directly involved in *The Barbados Declaration* itself, apart from the editing and publishing. However, the Declaration document was the starting point for us to ask colleagues from the network to come forward with all the documentation of the abuses they had been talking about, because at that point they had not really been published to a wider audience. People were also afraid that reprisals might block their research permissions and access to the field, and such. After the Declaration of Barbados was published in 1971, however, people came forward with a number of reports, from all over, all of which were published in rapid succession.”

“The second one was from Eritrea, by the Swedish anthropologist Karl-Erik Knutson *Report from Eritrea IWGIA Doc. 2, 1972*, followed by *Doc. 3 Aboriginal Land Rights* (1972) by the Australian Environmental scientist and Indigenous rights activist Albert Barrie Pittock, and *IWGIA Doc. 4 The Situation of the Adivasis of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas, Bihar* (1972), by the Swiss anthropologist Rupert R. Moser from the University of Bern, the same university that organized the Barbados Symposium in 1971. Following that, a large number of reports were published on South America from the Barbados Network. At that point, the Peruvian anthropologist Stefano Varese<sup>2</sup> had also joined IWGIA’s Document series editing committee. Anecdotally, I can mention that it in fact was Karl-Erik Knutson, then director of the Swedish international agency for research cooperation, SAREC, who sent me off to Guinea-Bissau in the first place, back in 1978.”

*Q: How come so many researchers and scholars from the Barbados Network visited IWGIA in Copenhagen in those early years?*

– “Well, I was living in a collective north of Copenhagen at that time, and we had plenty of room for visitors. So many of the visitors to IWGIA stayed with me in

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1 Henning Siverts: *“Tribal Survival in the Alto Marañon: The Aguarune Case”* IWGIA Doc. 10, Copenhagen. 1972.

2 Stefano Varese: *“The Forest Indians in the Present Political Situation of Peru”*, IWGIA Doc. 8, Copenhagen 1972.

the commune for free. It worked as a kind of free hotel for visiting people. There was no economic support for such activities at that time but we needed to travel and meet. Stefano Varese stayed with us, and also the guy from Paraguay who contributed to the Barbados volume with the case from the Paraguayan Chaco region, Miguel Chase Sardi.<sup>3</sup> He visited us several times.”<sup>4</sup>

“Many of our colleagues involved in the struggle for Indigenous rights visited us. I cannot remember all their names but one was Terence (Terry) Turner from Chicago, who was conducting research and supporting the Kayapó in Brazil. I also visited him in Chicago where he put me up in a student commune they had up there. It was in 1976 when I had been to the AAA annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, and later travelled around by Greyhound bus visiting colleagues, and also visited Cultural Survival in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I had made some contacts in the US a few years earlier in 1973, when I participated in *The International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES)* in Chicago. The president of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) who organized the Congress was the anthropologist Sol Tax, who supported Indigenous representation and had invited IWGIA to participate in some meetings on the subject. We had contact with Vine Deloria Jr., the Native American author, historian and intellectual who wrote the emblematic “Custer Died for Your Sins”,<sup>5</sup> and so we asked Sol to let Vine Deloria talk at the plenary session. Initially, the organizing board’s response was negative. Vine Deloria smiled and said “Let’s wait and see what happens if I call the Congress Centre hotel and tell them that the building is constructed on top of an old Native American burial ground, and that it would be appropriate to let a few Native Americans in to attend the plenary.” In the end, Vine Deloria was allowed to give a talk to the plenary! But there was great opposition to letting Indigenous peoples in, as this was regarded as political interference not relevant to science. One fierce opponent was the British anthropologist Sir Edmund Leach, from Cambridge, UK. We had many animated discussions with him and others but I believe we did ok and at least the issue of Indigenous Peoples’ situation and rights made it onto the agenda and we gained a lot of contacts.”

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3 Miguel Chase Sardi: “*The Present Situation of Indians in Paraguay.*” In *The Situation of the Indian in South America*. Walter Dostal, editor, pp. 173-218. Geneva: World Council of Churches 1972.

4 Ed. note: *Miguel Chase Sardi was arrested in December 1975 in Asunción with three colleagues, where he was jailed for several months and tortured by the Stroessner regime, which caused him permanent hearing damage. He was the founder of the famous Marandú Project in support of Indigenous Peoples’ rights in Paraguay, and also came under attack from some left-wing colleagues for being a CIA agent, because the project had received support from the Inter-American Foundation.*

5 Vine Deloria, Jr.: “*Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*”, Macmillan: New York 1969.

*Q: When the Barbados network and IWGIA was born back in 1968, there was no direct representation of the Indigenous Peoples themselves. Few autonomous Indigenous organizations existed at that point. Their interests and rights were put forward by proxies, concerned scholars such as activist anthropologists, linguists, historians, etc. But, as in the case of Vine Deloria's access to the plenary session at the World Congress in 1973, IWGIA was among the first to push for direct representation of the Indigenous Peoples. How come this came so early on in IWGIA's agenda?*

– “Well, I think that this started with Helge Kleivan's network. There was a conference for the Arctic Peoples held in Copenhagen in December 1971, as far as I remember. It was quite a big event with Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples represented, such as the Sami, as I recall. It was held in the Greenlandic House in Copenhagen. The point of reference here was how Indigenous representation should be organized and, based on these discussions, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was founded under the leadership of George Manuel, a Shuswap from British Columbia in Canada. This resulted in the first international conference for Indigenous Peoples in Port Alberny, BC in October 1975”.

“We also had Indigenous visitors staying with us in the collective such as Ernesto Theremp from the Shuar Federation in Ecuador. As our house was right next to Dyrehaven, the old royal hunting ground north of Copenhagen, were large herds of red deer and fallow deer roam freely, he was excited to go “hunting” and get so very close to them as they were not afraid of humans. In fact, he found it unbelievable that no one poached them at night!”

“IWGIA at that time was receiving no funding whatsoever, it was all based on voluntary work. Many students of anthropology, for example Lisbeth Overgaard, came in to help when the IWGIA documents had to be distributed by mail. We all put hundreds of hours in. The only resources we had were the membership fees, which funded the printing and distribution of the documents. I think we had around 500 members or so at that time, and I believe that the many reports we published in the Document series had an effect in spreading the message worldwide that “something is happening here in relation to Indigenous Peoples' rights”, ... “here documentation is gathered, organized and published.” IWGIA generated a lot of interest and was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in the early 1970s.

“It was sometimes really shocking documentation that was presented, like the German Mike Münzel's documentation of the Aché genocide in Paraguay<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Münzel: “*The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*” IWGIA Doc. 11, Copenhagen 1973

Bernard Arcand's document on the Cuiva of Colombia.<sup>7</sup> Outrageous stuff. Arcand, who had also produced a film about the Cuiva for the now famous *Disappearing Worlds* TV series (Granada Television, 1971) was at that time a professor at the Institute of Anthropology in Copenhagen. His wife was Danish, so he had family here, and his presence also contributed to the growing interest in Indigenous Peoples' rights and the work of IWGIA."

"But it was also times of great paranoia. The Latin Americans in particular feared CIA infiltration everywhere. And, some way down the road, there were good reasons for this. Anthropologists were used for counterinsurgency purposes and the like by the US and others. The 1960s was a period of decolonisation in Africa, and in Latin America, *coups d'états* were frequent events with repressive military regimes reigning. Also in Latin America, the infamous Project Camelot in 1964 run by US counterinsurgency agencies exploited the research of social and human scientists to promote US hegemony on the continent."

"Personally I was not that worried about spies and infiltration, but others were, and it created a lot of distrust and a very sensitive working environment. Anyway, IWGIA survived and became quite successful, and there is no doubt that the Barbados meeting, the Declaration and the documents it generated were a catalyst in the rise of IWGIA and other organizations supporting Indigenous rights."

"The network of concerned colleagues that had grown from the initial Barbados meeting in 1971 was also a driving force in compiling the book "Is God an American?", which I and Søren Hvalkof published together in the late 1970s.<sup>8</sup> We received a great deal of help for the book from many people in the Barbados network, to which several of the contributors also belonged. It was a co-publication between IWGIA and Survival International in London. A German-language edition was also published with the help of *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker* in Germany,<sup>9</sup> organizations that had all emerged in response to the disturbing documentation on the situation of Indigenous Peoples presented in the late 1960s and early 1970s at the Americanist Congresses and in the wake of the Barbados meeting."

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7 Bernard Arcand: *"The Urgent Situation of the Cuiva of Columbia"*, IWGIA Doc. 7, Copenhagen 1972.

8 Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby: *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, IWGIA/SI Doc. 43, Copenhagen/ London 1981.

9 Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby: *"Ist Gott Amerikaner?" (Aus dem Englischen von Annemarie Böll)* Lamuv Verlag, Bornheim-Merten 1980.



## THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BARBADOS MEETING FOR MY WORK

Søren Hvalkof



This is a biographical annex and background note to the article “*Land titling, slavery and democracy. The process of Indigenous liberation in Gran Pajonal and Alto Ucayali, Peru*” in the present volume. It sketches the inscrutable ways the Barbados meeting, and its group of researchers and their peer network, came to have a decisive impact on the author’s choice of research area in the Peruvian Amazon, defining the direction of his future career and dedication.

### **The rise of a movement**

When I started studying anthropology in 1972 at the University of Copenhagen, the situation of Indigenous Peoples was not part of the academic curriculum. While the anti-authoritarian youth rebellion was still unfolding, the feminist movement was on the rise, and critical Marxist studies were finding their way into the discipline, Indigenous Peoples and their rights were not part of these agendas. However, a group of concerned anthropologists allied in an incipient international network was fighting to change the indifference and calling for moral and political responsibility among anthropologists and other academics to defend the rights and integrity of Indigenous Peoples given the genocide and ethnocide they were confronting.

One of the drivers behind this political wake-up call was the “*International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs – IWGIA*”, which had been created in 1968 at the *38th International Congress of Americanists in Stuttgart, Germany*, when a group of anthropologists and human rights defenders, primarily from Scandinavia, decided to form an international support network after “detailed documentation had been presented by a number of participants on atrocities and forced integration of Indian tribes in various Latin American countries” (Dahl 2009:22). Over the following years, supported by a wide array of international scholars, the network consolidated. It set up a permanent secretariat at the premises of the University of Copenhagen and began documentation, awareness raising and lobbying efforts. Similar organizations developed simultaneously in other European countries and the USA, such as Survival International (UK) 1969, the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples, WIP/NCIV (NL) 1969, Cultural Survival (US) 1972 and Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker (D) 1970, to name but a few. However, there were still no autonomous Indigenous organizations forming

part of the network at that time, themselves being at an incipient stage in their development.

The new movement got a kick start during the subsequent Americanist Congress in Lima in 1970, where a group of Latin American anthropologists and colleagues from Europe and the US formed a network focusing on the disastrous situation and atrocities being committed against the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon basin and other lowland regions of South America. The following year, in January 1971, the first “symposium on inter-ethnic conflict in the non-Andean regions of South America” was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, resulting in the *Declaration of Barbados - For the Liberation of the Indigenous peoples*, “a strong denunciation and demand sent out to the state, the church, the private sector, and social scientists to satisfy the basic human and ethnic rights of Indigenous people” (Varese 1997, online).

The symposium was organized under the auspices of the World Council of Churches’ Programme to Combat Racism and held at the University of the West Indies in Bridgetown, Barbados. Besides the Declaration, the event produced a collection of papers on specific cases, which were published in a separate volume entitled “*The Situation of the Indian in South America*” (Dostal 1972). The original version in Spanish had been published in Montevideo a few months previously but was burned by the regime in Uruguay.

Several of the participants had a relationship with IWGIA and had supported its foundation so the first Document published by the organization was the “*Declaration of Barbados*” (IWGIA Doc. 1, 1971). Several of the case studies from the Barbados volume (Dostal 1972) were subsequently published separately as IWGIA Documents. The emerging advocacy work focusing on the situation of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon basin also brought the scholars in question to Copenhagen. One of them was the Peruvian anthropologist, Stefano Varese, who formed part of the original Barbados group and was among the founders of IWGIA in 1968. During a visit in 1974, he gave lectures and workshops about the general situation in the Peruvian Amazon, and about the situation of the Asháninka, with whom he had done fieldwork. The Asháninka were at that time generally referred to as Campa (Indians), a term later abolished and regarded as derogatory. He had published his thesis in 1968, the now famous work “*La Sal de los Cerros, notas etnograficas e historicas sobre los Campa del la selva del Perú*” (Varese 1968, 2004 in an English translation), and in 1972 IWGIA had published his Barbados paper separately in its Document series: “*The Forest Indians in the Present Political Situation in Peru*” (IWGIA Doc. 8, 1972).

That same year, IWGIA published other documents focusing on the Indigenous situation in the Peruvian Amazon. One was “*Tribal Survival in the Amazon: The*

*Campa Case*”, by the American anthropologist John H. Bodley (IWGIA Doc. 5, 1972), focusing on the Asháninka of the central Peruvian Amazon and calling for urgent action to secure their survival and livelihoods through territorial rights. The Norwegian anthropologist, Henning Sieverts, also a co-founder of IWGIA, published yet another Peruvian case study: *“Tribal Survival in the Alto Marañon: The Aguaruna Case”* (IWGIA Doc. 10, 1972) and, finally, in 1974 the American anthropologist Richard Chase Smith published *“The Amuesha People of Central Peru: Their struggle to survive”* (IWGIA Doc. 16, 1974) on the situation of the Yánesha, a neighbouring group to the Asháninka. The Quebecois anthropologist, Bernard Arcand, documenting the outrageous atrocities committed against the Cuiva of Colombia in *“The Urgent Situation of the Cuiva in Colombia”* (Dostal 1972:105-107; IWGIA Doc. 7, 1972) also became a visiting professor at the University of Copenhagen 1971-1972. But still there were no Indigenous Peoples represented in the incipient movement. This was to change rapidly over the next decade, as numerous Indigenous organizations were created and began fighting their own struggle, supported by solidarity organizations such as IWGIA.

### **The way to the Peruvian Amazon**

For me, as a very young anthropology student with no previous experience outside Denmark, Stefano Varese’s seminars introduced me to a whole new universe and were to become highly motivating in my future orientation as a professional anthropologist. With the amount of similar documentation available on the situation in the Peruvian Amazon in particular, it is no wonder that Peru came within my sights.

After finishing my BA, I left for Peru in February 1975 together with a small group of fellow students, on my first trip to Latin America. Initially, I had planned to go to the Andean highlands of Ayacucho to study the effects of the ongoing agrarian reform on the marginalized Quechua communities that were not part of the reform. However, a series of events made me change my plans, including a field visit with a government commission to Pucallpa, visiting riverine communities on the Ucayali River, which greatly motivated me to change focus and look into how the reform process was playing out in an Amazonian setting. So I decided to go back to the central Amazon and do fieldwork there instead. However, I needed specific guidance on where to go and to find a suitable setting for this. Friends referred me to the unit of the Ministry of Agriculture dealing with “Native Communities in the Amazon” and the agrarian reform process. The unit was under the framework of SINAMOS (*Sistema Nacional de Movilización Social*), a system set up by the military government to promote the reform initiatives among the general public. During the military regime from 1968-80, a large number of young academics from the social sciences and humanities were employed by SINAMOS and other government agencies to carry out the

“Peruvian Revolution” as General Velasco had coined his military dictatorship and its social reforms. The regime thus absorbed a large part of the traditionally critical intellectuals and left-wing opposition by employing them in the public administration.

Stefano Varese had been the prime mover in establishing the unit in support of Indigenous communities and, when he moved on to an academic job in Berkeley, other young anthropologists succeeded him, one of whom was the chief editor of this volume, Alberto Chirif. So I turned up at their office in the ministry in Lima to try to get some guidance and advice. It was a busy space, with people running in and out, dropping off sleeping bags and mosquito nets from field trips, and with maps and document folders scattered around on the tables and old steel filing cabinets. Although very busy, they took the time to find out what my intentions were and help me out with some directions. As I had read almost all of Varese’s publications, they suggested I went to the Gran Pajonal to visit the Ashéninka and study the impact of the recent colonization. They instructed me on how to get there, which was quite a trip given the fact that there was no road or river access. The only thing they asked in exchange was information on the demographic profile of the Indigenous and settler communities and if I would draw a map of the colonization of Oventeni and surrounding communities in the Gran Pajonal, and then debrief them on my return to Lima. I agreed.

I succeeded in getting there but, given the limits of the present volume, suffice to say I spent several months in Oventeni and the Gran Pajonal, living with the Ashéninka and following up by visiting Atalaya in the Upper Ucayali River several times. I left the area towards the end of the year on a small river barge going slowly down the Ucayali River to Pucallpa. In Pucallpa, I visited the campus of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Yarinacocha and interviewed some of their bilingual informants and teacher trainees from the Gran Pajonal. My experiences of living with the Ashéninka during my first fieldwork in the Gran Pajonal and the Upper Ucayali in 1975 was to be formative and decisive for the rest of my life and career until now. The Ashéninka introduced me to the fantastic world of their mythology and cosmology and showed me a totally different way of confronting the logic of a rapidly encroaching capitalist society aimed at stealing their labour, their land and their values. I was particularly impressed by their production system and the ontological system embedding it. I returned to Denmark at Christmas to continue my graduate studies in anthropology in the winter of 1976.

Shortly after my return, I contacted the co-editor at IWGIA and new professor at our institute, Peter Aaby, suggesting he join forces and write and compile a book, a collection of articles, on the missionary work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Latin America. At that point I regarded the SIL as a major threat

to Indigenous integrity and cultural survival, a Trojan horse of US conservatism and cultural imperialism, undermining Indigenous value systems and autonomy. (In retrospect I regard this narrative as beside the point). We succeeded in getting 12 anthropologists with a background in the US, Canada and Europe to contribute to the volume with case studies. In this we received a great deal of support and contacts from the group behind the Barbados Declaration, of which a few also wrote chapters. The book entitled "*Is God an American? An anthropological perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*" (IWGIA/SI Doc. 43) was published in 1981 as a joint publication between IWGIA and Survival International (UK). In fact, a German language translation had already been published a year earlier (Hvalkof and Aaby 1980). At that point, I decided to finish my studies and wait to go back to the Amazon until I had sufficient background knowledge, position and funding to be able to stay longer in the field and support the Ashéninka in their quest for territorial security and autonomy.

In early 1985 I returned to Peru, to be followed later that year by my (then) wife and colleague Hanne Veber and our children, research grants and fellowships in hand. We conducted extended fieldwork in the Gran Pajonal and neighbouring areas in the Upper Ucayali, until October 1987, 30 months in all. Needless to say it was an exceptional experience and we acquired a deep insight into the Ashéninka reality and gathered an enormous amount of field material and research data. We also became deeply involved in supporting the Ashéninka in their claim for demarcation, community land titles and organization in the face of the rapidly encroaching colonization frontier. Other fieldwork and visits followed in subsequent years and I eventually left academia for a while to concentrate on a land titling project in Peru, and advocacy work in the Amazon with several NGOs.

From 1988-1993, I visited the area many times, supervising a large-scale demarcation and land titling project of Indigenous communal territories supported by IWGIA (see my chapter in the present volume), and I subsequently followed up as supervisor and consultant on an Indigenous health programme in the Gran Pajonal and Atalaya over the next 10 years (Hvalkof 2004). In 1994 I returned to academia with a research grant that made it possible to spend almost three years as a guest researcher at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, USA. During this very productive stay, I also managed to conduct complementary field research in Gran Pajonal, following up with shorter visits in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002 and finally in 2005-2006. The article in this volume on the process of land titling and democratization in Gran Pajonal and Upper Ucayali is based on experiences and data obtained during this fieldwork and these visits.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BARBADOS MEETING FOR MY WORK

However, had it not been for the Barbados group and its peer network, and IWGIA's publication of all the documentation in the early 1970s, this incredible journey would not have taken place. Not only has it had a profound impact on my personal life but it has also been a catalyst for the rise of the Indigenous movement, and many of the support organizations around it. There are good reasons to commemorate the 50-year anniversary of the Barbados symposium and Declaration.

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## INTERVIEW WITH AQQALUK LYNGE, GREENLAND

By **Jens Dahl** and **Alejandro Parellada**

*Q: What was the impact of the 1971 Barbados Declaration and the 1973 Arctic Peoples' Conference on the Arctic Indigenous movement?*

A: Our first engagement with Indigenous issues was at a symposium on oil and gas development in the Arctic in Le Havre, France in 1973. It was organized by the famed author, Professor Jean Malaurie, from the Sorbonne. There we became aware of the enormous North American interest in the Arctic's non-renewable resources, and specifically those in Alaska. My own engagement started there and continued with the Arctic Peoples' Conference in November that year where I participated as Chair of the Young Greenlanders Council in Denmark. So we became involved in international issues at a time when we were busy analyzing our own political situation as part of Denmark. It was only later that I became aware of the Barbados Declaration. But I recall that at that time we, as young Greenlanders living in Denmark, had started looking at our own colonial relations from an international perspective and had become engaged in Indigenous issues. Organizing the Arctic Peoples' Conference with the participation of Indigenous Peoples from Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Scandinavia was part of this process.

We, young Greenlanders, were not least inspired by the Samí people's engagement but the situation was critical because members of the Greenlandic Provincial Council (elected in Greenland) did not want to challenge the Danish authorities. However, the conference was supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IWGIA whose Chair, Helge Kleivan, himself a Norwegian, had good relations with Norway. With this support, and in spite of the internal conflict in the Greenlandic group, we continued our engagement with the other Arctic Indigenous Peoples and we managed to convene a large Greenlandic delegation to the first World Conference of Indigenous Peoples in Port Alberni Vancouver Island, Canada, in 1975, thus becoming more and more involved in global Indigenous issues.

In Port Alberni, it was difficult to obtain a mutual understanding between the Arctic Peoples and the Indigenous representatives from Latin America and, for the first time, we heard about the violence and threats against Indigenous

Peoples, with representatives from Guatemala being taken prisoner and unable to travel. This was an enormous eyeopener for us.

*Q: You had never before heard about the situation in Guatemala and Latin America?*

A: No, we had never before heard that people were treated in that way and we were greatly affected by it. You must understand that we lived in a small bubble in Danish society. We were strongly affected and we learned never to take anything for granted and that, although there are similarities between Indigenous Peoples, some Indigenous peoples live a hard life. In Greenland, we lived on an island and adopted Christianity, which became part of our culture. We were shocked by what we learned and came to look at our own colonial history with new eyes. Our world became larger.

In Port Alberní we met Billy Neakok from Utqiagvik, special assistant to the Iñupiat mayor, Eben Hopson, from the then recently-established self-governing North Slope Borough, Alaska. Billy Neakok introduced us to the idea of convening a Pan-Inuit meeting. This took place in Barrow in 1977 and for the first time ever convened Inuit from Greenland, Canada and Alaska albeit at that time without the Inuit from Russia. Until then, the Greenlanders had met with neighbouring Inuit from Canada with whom we could communicate in our own Inuit language. One of the Inuit leaders from Canada, Jose Kusugaq, with whom I met in those years, had established the Inuit Taperiit Kanadami (ITK) and became one of the founding fathers of the autonomous region of Nunavut. Jose Kusugaq was a key person for Inuit cooperation and for the development and revitalization of the Inuit languages, which had been lost by many Inuit in Canada and Alaska. In spite of so many efforts, it has never been possible to establish a common written language for all Inuit. Although many can understand their neighbours, there are wide variations all the way from Greenland via Arctic Canada to Alaska. To this should be added that, while all Greenlanders communicate in the Greenlandic Inuit language with Danish as their first foreign language, the different Inuit groups in Canada and Alaska mostly communicate in English.

In the 1970s there were bureaucratic and political obstacles to Inuit cooperation, including language policy, but when Greenland obtained Home Rule and later Self-Rule, language and education came under Greenlandic control. Today, the Greenlandic Inuit language has become the official language although Danish largely remains the administrative language, just as English is in Canada and Alaska. As a follow-up to the 1977 meeting in Barrow, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (later the Inuit Circumpolar Council, ICC) was formally established in 1980 with the Greenlander Hans Pavia Rosing as its first president.

There are around 50,000 Inuit (Greenlanders) in Greenland and a total of approx. 160,000 Inuit in the wider Arctic region. Language differences are a challenge to meetings in the ICC and, while the Greenlandic delegation is a unit with representatives from national organizations and institutions and therefore able to establish a common understanding, the Inuit from Canada and Alaska represent different regions with a number of different dialects. At the ICC, General Assembly communication takes place through the interpretation of seven Inuit dialects.

*Q: You mentioned that the Greenlanders in the early 1970s lived in a kind of bubble and that although the Greenlanders at that time were starting to talk about self-government, some of the representatives from North America were considered very radical. Can you explain this?*

A: The representatives from North America were organized in Indigenous NGOs such as the Inuit Tapiriit Kanadami and the National Indian Brotherhood, and their rhetoric, like that of James Wah-Shee from the Canadian Northwest Territories, was quite different from ours. Although we young Greenlanders considered ourselves very rebellious, our worldview was much more restricted than that of the people from North America. We young Greenlanders were educated in Denmark and wanted to get out into the world in contrast to our elected Greenlandic representatives whose worldview was formed by their loyalty to the colonizers. One exception was my uncle, the Chair of the Organization of Greenlandic Municipal Councils, Ado Lynge, who realized that we should establish contact and learn from the experiences of other peoples.

We, young Greenlanders, became aware of colonialism and that we were a minority, and we could see the dangerous position that our elected politicians were putting us in time and again. Greenland had already obtained limited self-governance but when we were drawn into the European Community (the majority of the population in Greenland voted against in a referendum) in 1972 we were denied the protection of the very basics of our existence, first and foremost sovereignty over our fisheries, which are the basis of our economy. After a new plebiscite in 1982 we finally withdrew from the EU and associated partnership was established.

*Q: Meeting other Indigenous Peoples, how did that affect the future of Greenland?*

A: We wanted to be connected to the world! The introduction of Home Rule in 1979 gave us further strength but, for me, it was especially important that in 1978 I travelled in the footsteps of the Danish/Greenlandic polar explorer Knud Rasmussen who from 1921– 1924 travelled by sledge from Greenland to Alaska. We travelled for the Danish National Radio station, meeting other Inuit cultures, their traditions and Inuit dialects. I realized we could not isolate

ourselves but needed to develop further. I could communicate with many of the elders in our own language and this was a personal experience that became very important for me later on, in my work as President (1997-2002) and Chair for the Inuit Circumpolar Council (2010-14) and also as an elected member of the Greenlandic Parliament and cabinet member with various portfolios in the Home Rule Government.

I learned how important it is for an NGO like the Inuit Circumpolar Council to work for the common good and against all kinds of suppression. We have the freedom to be ourselves in spite of our colonial heritage and, in Greenland, we have been able to elevate our political institutions to a high level. Because of the Inuit cooperation and working with Indigenous Peoples, we have been able to position Greenland in a wider world.

*Q: Has the Indigenous perspective affected the establishment of Greenlandic Self-Rule?*

A: It is important that we are able see ourselves in our own mirror. We are often forced to position ourselves in relation to Danish society but the reality is that we have a completely different existence in Greenland and are much closer connected to the North Atlantic region's coastal communities.

We can also see that there is a completely different relationship to nature in the nomadic livelihood of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North. Life in the Siberian North resembles that of the Samí of Scandinavia and their reindeer husbandry.

From the early existence of ICC, we created a commission on Arctic environmental policy to protect subsistence livelihoods and, in the late 80s, we became involved in the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy that predated the Arctic Council in which the Arctic Indigenous Peoples from all over the Arctic are represented as Permanent Participants. At the same time, we started to work on Principles and Elements for a Comprehensive Arctic Policy with the assistance of McGill University and Professor Mariane Stenbaek in particular. The work was finished only in 2014 with the ICC GA's adoption of the Inuit Arctic Policy. Through the Arctic Council we have established close cooperation with the Samí and Russian Indigenous Peoples organized in the NGO Raipon (Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North and Far East) and the states have started to adopt our ideas on environmental policies.

This worked fairly well until recently when Trump took over as President of the United States and threatened the sovereignty of Greenland by proposing to "buy" it from Denmark. This absurd policy was taken to the Arctic Council where Secretary Pompeo railed against the scientific cooperation on environment and

tried to destroy the important fight against global warming and climate change. I am sure that the new President Joe Biden will bring the US back on board but a lot of damage has already been done in the Arctic, and I am afraid the militarization of the Arctic has already begun, with dire consequences for the Indigenous Peoples of the whole region.

In the Arctic Council, we have had good cooperation between scientists and politicians but this has now been demolished by the US and also by Russia. We must face a new world order. The future of the international role of Indigenous Peoples, through the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the UN Declaration, is under pressure as is the role of NGOs in national settings such as Russia.

It has surprised me that this has also affected our own Greenlandic position with recent statements by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicating that Indigenous issues will no longer be followed up on. An indicator in this is the positive attitude towards opening up for uranium mining in Greenland. President Trump's desire to buy Greenland has not made our position any easier and the role of NGOs such as the ICC has become even more important. The strategic position of Greenland points to the need for a changed policy both from Greenland as well as from the Danish government. In this situation, NGOs like the ICC have new roles to play.

*Q: Was there any specific momentum in the Arctic that triggered the Indigenous movement in the 1970s and were there issues that could have destroyed international Indigenous cooperation?*

A: As I said, there was the language issue between the Spanish and English-speaking peoples. We were very distant from each other. It was difficult to create common ground in a situation where the Indigenous Peoples from Latin America were facing serious conflicts. We also moved away from the World Council of Indigenous Peoples as created in 1975 and became focused on negotiating the human rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva from the 1980s.

In the many meetings in Geneva, including those drafting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we met people from different countries. I met, for example, Indigenous peoples from around the world and Latin America, and became close to representatives from Guatemala and the Geneva setting, where meetings often lasted more than a week and included hundreds of people. This cooperation was to a large extent the continuation of World Council meetings but now under the auspices of the UN Commission on Human Rights (later the Human Rights Council). In Geneva we grew very close to each other. I feel lucky that I worked with so many exceptional personalities from across the Indigenous world.

Drafting of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was exactly the process that created that common ground between Indigenous Peoples and fostered unity to combat racism, colonialism, etc. The common ground was also aimed at protecting our identity and culture and making certain that there was an authority to protect our rights not only as people but as part of a society. Looking back 50 years, I think that it was the establishment of close cooperation between Indigenous leaders at the right moment in history that was the great mover for Indigenous Peoples.

When I was a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2005-2007), we would consider reports stating that, in some countries like the United States, immigration policy specifically affects Indigenous Peoples who have fled their countries because of trafficking and suppression. This is a worrying trend that should be made known to Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world. In a country like the Philippines we see severe repression of democratic organizations, including Indigenous NGOs but nothing is being done about it. In the case of Bolivia, we are seeing reactions against an Indigenous president but also failures like any other officeholder, although the movement will hopefully continue its otherwise positive development.

*Q: The role of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs?*

*A:* It became crystal clear when fascists tried to destroy the democratic system in the US and over 70 million voted for a liar and openly racist person that we cannot take our liberty for granted. The world has already been shaken by the Russian annexation of Crimea and I am worried that autocratic leaders around the world will have free play. I am going to recommend that IWGIA convene a meeting with people who have experience of these matters.

It is very important that we discuss history and our own involvement. Together with a colleague, I host a show for Greenland's National Radio (KNR) station focusing on our history, and young Greenlanders are very excited to learn about what happened when we were young ourselves. I am frequently invited to speak to youth organizations where I teach basic human rights and especially the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In conclusion, I want to stress that what has happened to Indigenous Peoples in the last decades takes as its point of departure the Barbados Declaration, the establishment of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, and the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. In 1992, at the World Conference on Human Rights, the Greenland government proposed establishing a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. It only took 10 years to establish. And yet it took us 25 years to negotiate the ground-breaking UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am sure that it will be another 25 years before

it is accepted by national governments around the world. The primary focus was on Indigenous Peoples' basic human rights and the right to self-determination. This paved the way for the Indigenous Peoples' movement that will continue as long as we exist.





## Author references

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**Scott S. Robinson** was born in the town of Walla Walla (Washington) in 1941 but grew up in Mexico City. Upon returning to the United States, he attended high school in the border town of Tucson, Arizona. He later enrolled at the Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, where he discovered social anthropology. He pursued his postgraduate studies in social anthropology at Cornell (1964-67), obtaining a PhD in 1979. He has conducted research in Ecuador (Chimborazo) and Peru (Yungay) but his colleague Terry Turner aroused his interest in the Amazon, which led him to carry out research among the Cofán in the Colombia-Ecuador oil border area (1968-69) at the time when Texaco was drilling its first well. He has alternated his teaching life with the production of film and video documentaries: "Sky Chief" (1971), "Virikuta - La Costumbre" (1975), "Salidumay - Cantares de las Filipinas" (1982), "Hay Unos Más Vivos que Otros" (1992) and "Telecentros en América Latina" (2000). With students from the Metropolitan University - Iztapalapa (1983-2013), he has documented the impacts of displacements caused by dams. He coordinated the translation of the book *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (Abya-Yala, Quito, 2013). He is co-founder of NACLA (1966). Since retiring

## AUTHOR REFERENCES

in 2013, he has been invited to advise the “Sustainable Development Fund”, a civil association that emerged in response to the imposition of mega hydroelectric, wind and rail projects. He is author of the book *Shamanismo Kofán* (Abya-Yala, Quito, 1994) and several academic articles.

**Silvel Elías** is an Indigenous Maya K'iché from Guatemala, where he is a lecturer at the San Carlos University and an active member of several organisations working on processes to reaffirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples, with a focus ranging from tenure and governance rights to communal lands, ancestral territories and natural resources. He has published several works on all these issues. He has written the Guatemala chapter for IWGIA's yearbook *“The Indigenous World”* since 2005.

**Søren Hvalkof** is a Danish anthropologist born in 1951. He holds a Doctorate from the University of Copenhagen and has over 40 years' experience of working with Indigenous Peoples, mainly in Latin America but also in Canada, Greenland, Russia and elsewhere. He has worked in academic research, consultancy and activism. His main research interest lies with the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal and Alto Ucayali, in the Peruvian Amazon. His focus is on environmental anthropology and political ecology, with a particular interest in Indigenous Peoples' land rights. He has advised processes of demarcation and titling of Indigenous territories. He has sat on IWGIA's board and acted as an advisor to the Rainforest Foundation in Norway and England. More recently he has also been working as an election observer for the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He has conducted research at the University of Copenhagen, at the Danish Institute for International Studies and at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA.

**Stefano Varese** (Genoa 1939) is an Italian-Peruvian anthropologist, with a Doctorate from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru-PUCP awarded in 1967. He is an Emeritus Professor of the University of California, Davis (where he was a lecturer-research fellow from 1987 to 2009); a former lecturer at the National University of San Marcos in Peru; a former research fellow at the National Institute of Anthropology and History in Mexico and Director of Popular and Indigenous Cultures of Mexico (Veracruz and Oaxaca sites). He was founder and former director of the Indigenous Research Centre of the Americas-IRCA of the Department of Native American Studies, UC Davis. He has been a Visiting Lecturer at Berkeley and Stanford Universities. He is the author of more than 120 articles, book chapters and monographs. Among his books are *La sal de los cerros* (Lima, 1968; Lima 1973; Univ. of Oklahoma, 2002; Lima, 2006; Havana, 2011; Paris 2015); *Las minorías étnicas y la comunidad nacional* (Lima, 1974); *Procesos educativos y diversidad étnica: el caso del Estado de Oaxaca* (UNESCO, Paris, 1980); *Indígenas y educación en México* (Mexico, 1983); *Proyectos étnicos y proyectos nacionales* (Mexico, 1984); coordinator of *Agua, mundo y montaña. Narrativa nahua, mixe y popoluca del sur de Veracruz* (Mexico, 1985); coordinator of *Pueblos Indios, soberanía y globalismo* (Quito, 1966); coordinator with Sylvia Escárcega of *La ruta mixteca. El impacto etnopolítico de la migración transnacional en los pueblos indígenas de México* (Mexico, 2004); author of *Witness to Sovereignty. Essays on the Indian Movement in Latin America* (Copenhagen, Denmark, 2006); co-editor with Frédérique Apffel-Marglin and Róger Rumrill of *Selva*

*Vida - De la destrucción de la Amazonía al paradigma de la Regeneración* (Denmark, Mexico, Cuba: IWGIA, UNAM, Casa de las Américas, 2013); *Antropología del activismo y el arte del recuerdo* (Mexico, 2018); co-editor with Frédérique Apffel-Marglin of *Contemporary Voices from Anima Mundi - A Reappraisal* (New York, 2020).

**Thomas Moore** is an anthropologist and graduate of the doctoral programme of the New School for Social Research (New York). Co-founder and former director of the Eori Centre for Research and Regional Promotion in Puerto Maldonado (Peru), and external advisor to the Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and its tributaries (Fenamad). His experience in the Peruvian forests and especially in Madre de Dios began in 1971 and continues to this day.

**Víctor Daniel Bonilla S.** was born in 1933. He studied philosophy and literature at the National University of Colombia (1958); law at the Externado University (1959); and social and economic development at the University of Paris (1962). He has shown solidarity with the native peoples, supporting their struggles, their organisational processes, their rights and territories. Promoter of the Committee for the Defence of the Indian (1968-1971) and co-founder of “La Rosca” Research and Social Action (1970-74). He has worked with the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca in organisational and finance matters plus pedagogical production (1971-1978). He was Editor-in-Chief and contributor to the magazine “Alternativa” (1974-76) and worked on recovering the political history of the Indigenous Peoples, creating the research-education method, *Mapas Parlantes* (Talking Maps) (1978-80). He later served as an advisor to the 1991 National Constituent Assembly and the Senate of the Republic on Indigenous territorial planning (1992-1993), and to international bodies on issues of ethnicity.

**Zulema Lehm Ardaya** is a Bolivian sociologist with a Master’s degree in Amazonian Studies from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences - Ecuadorian branch. She has more than 30 years’ experience of working with Indigenous communities in the Bolivian Amazon, coordinating research to support the design and implementation of action strategies for territorial management, conservation and for a gender focus. She is the author of books and articles related to the Bolivian Indigenous movement with an emphasis on the lowlands, the process of recognition of their territorial rights, gender relations in diverse cultural contexts, community-based natural resource management, and co-management systems for protected areas.



“My call now is for the formation of a new national consciousness. This is what I have been proposing as an ideal, as a transition from the indigenism of the 20th century to a new humanism of the 21st century. My call is to move from an indigenism that excludes the indigenous world to an inclusive Mexican society; with this idea of humanism, I suggest we stop seeing the other as a beggar, poor and ignorant. Indigenous peoples are not beggars, the dominant society has made them so because the dominant society takes all the power, all the money, all the Western thought; that’s why we need to review all the baggage of the last 500 years and unpackage it in order to build a new paradigm for Mexican society in the 21st century, where we are indigenous and non-indigenous people - there is no other historical option - and this is what I call 21st-century humanism. We have to transcend the Eurocentric *mestizo* society, a product of José Vasconcelos’ utopia that has already become worn out, and become a multilingual, multicultural, diverse society. Vasconcelos spoke and wrote about an ideal man, product of a cosmic race. Such thinking is no longer valid; we have to be able to move on. The past is still alive, the past is today and will be tomorrow, my vision of indigenous society is that it transcends *mestizo* society, that which they call “the cosmic race” and which currently forms a majority in Mexican society. My call is to this sector of the people because I believe the Creole sector, with its Western thought, is not going to change any more. What has to change is the *populi*, the *masehual*, the people, and the people includes the indigenous population, 50% of it I would say, although only a quarter recognizes itself with any pride as Mexica, Mixe or Mayan, and hence a middle layer comprising the population that has been made to believe it is *mestizo*, a hybrid population because it does not recognize itself as European, nor as Mexican, far less as indigenous. It is as my teacher León-Portilla used to say: it is in *Nepantla*, that is, in the middle, neither here nor there. It is this *mestizo* population that needs to draw on its Mesoamerican roots to build this humanist society, a multilingual, multicultural Mexican society that recognizes its Mesoamerican ancestral roots and enriches them with the significance of the Conquest and the Colony.”

Natalio Hernández Xocoyotzin, náhuatl poet