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(English edition)

THE FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN VOLUNTARY ISOLATION

Many people are unaware that there are still indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation –both contacted and uncontacted- particularly in the tropics. People are also largely unaware about the impacts resulting from forced or free contacts of these peoples with the outside world. As a means of generating awareness and support to their plight, we have focused this entire bulletin on this issue, in collaboration with the Forest Peoples Programme and with other organizations and individuals working to protect these peoples' rights.

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In a world characterized by information, there are issues that have been made so invisible that the great majority of people do not know that they exist. This is the case of the Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation. Most are not even aware that some of these peoples have not yet been contacted by the predominating society and in other cases, have resisted integrating it in spite – or as a result of – having been contacted.

To this ignorance is added a second one: that the very existence of these peoples is seriously threatened by the destructive advance of “development.” Roads penetrating into the forests to extract timber, oil, minerals or to promote land settlement for agriculture and cattle-raising, can be labelled “roads of death” for these peoples. They bring unknown diseases their bodies are unready for, the destruction of the forests that provide for their livelihoods, pollution of the waters that they drink, where they bathe and fish, confrontations with those who intend to take over their territory, the death of their millenary cultures.

To understand the problem we need to divest ourselves of our “truths” and try to put ourselves in their place. All of us live in territories with very precise limits. They do too. All of us are jealous custodians of our frontiers when faced with potential or real external aggression. They are too. All of us have our feeling of nationality, with a specific language, culture and knowledge. They have too.

What would we do if a group of armed foreigners entered our territory without our authorization? The same as they do: we would resist in every possible way, including armed resistance. However while we would be considered to be “heroic patriots” they are classified as “savages.” Why is this? Because we are the ones to describe resistance.

It is important to emphasize that these peoples were never asked if they wanted to be Brazilians or Ecuadorians or Peruvians or Congolese or Cameroonian or Indonesian or Malaysian. Each government (colonial or national) simply drew up a map and determined that all the territories included within its frontiers “belong” to the corresponding country or colony. No matter that these peoples had been living on these territories before the very creation of national states or foreign colonization. They were in fact “nationalized.”

Again the question: what would we do if we had to face a similar situation? Would we accept the imposed change of nationality or would we resist it? Surely we would do everything possible to continue being what we are and what we want to be.

The difference is that these peoples are in total inferiority of conditions to resist the devastating advance of predominant society. For this reason, all of us who believe in justice have the obligation to provide them, under many forms, with the support that they need – although they do not ask for it – to defend their rights and to stop the silent and invisible genocide they are being subjected to.

In this respect, the first thing we can do is inform the world that they exist, as an initial step towards the objective of gathering determination in defence of their right to live in their territories in the way they themselves decide, including the right to remain outside a society they have no wish to belong to.

In addition to this, we must do everything possible to protect their territories from outside invasion linked to activities such as logging, mining, oil exploitation and settlement. In the first place, this implies legal recognition of their rights by the State and strict compliance with legal provisions vis-à-vis possible non-authorized invasion. It also implies that the State explicitly excludes these territories from its development programmes.

In fact, we should not be surprised that there are peoples who do not want to integrate a society such as the one we live in, that thrusts millions of people into poverty and hunger and that destroys everything it touches (climate, forests, grasslands, wetlands, soil, air). These peoples are neither poor nor ignorant. They are different and are showing enormous wisdom in wanting to maintain their isolation. In the contemporary world where so many people dream of living on an idyllic tropical island, they are integrating something very similar. But it is increasingly difficult for them to defend themselves from external aggression. Let us help them to live on their own island until the day comes when they freely decide to integrate the predominant society – if ever they decide to do so.

Ricardo Carrere

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When the first ‘conquistadores’ travelled down the Amazon in the 16th century, they found populous settlements, hierarchical chiefdoms and complex agricultural systems all along the main river. The ‘Indians’, they reported, raised turtles in ponded freshwater lagoons, had vast stores of dried fish, made sophisticated glazed pottery, and had huge jars, each one capable of holding a hundred gallons. They also noted these peoples had flotillas of canoes and traded up into the Andes and down to the mouth of the great river. Their numerous warriors carried wooden warclubs and thick leather shields made of the skins of crocodiles and manatees. Behind the large settlements, they noted ‘many roads that entered into the interior of the land, very fine highways’ some so broad they likened them to a royal highway in Spain. These stories were later discounted as the puff of promoters trying to magnify the importance of their ‘discoveries’, for since the late 18th century the banks of the Amazon have been almost entirely depopulated. During the 20th century the archetypal Amazonians were ‘hidden tribes’, groups of hunters, gatherers and shifting cultivators, who lived isolated in the headwaters of the main rivers, eschewing contact with the national society.

With the benefit of hindsight and new insights from history and archaeology, we can now see that these two perceptions of Amazonia are strangely and tragically related. Archaeology now teaches us that lowland Amazonia, even in areas of poor soil and blackwater like the Upper Xingu, was indeed once quite heavily settled. Regional trade and dynamic synergies between Amazonian peoples had led to the sub-continent being densely peopled by widely differentiated but inter-related groups, who specialised in local skills to work and use their specific environments in diverse and subtle ways.

The onslaught of western societies brought much of this complexity to an end. Warfare, conquest, religious missions and the scourge of old world diseases reduced populations to less than a tenth of the pre-Colombian levels. Slave raids, both by European soldiery and by other indigenous groups, who traded the ‘red gold’ of enslaved ‘Indians’ for the products of western industries, stripped the lower rivers bare of any remnant groups. Raiding, slaving and competition for trading opportunities with the whites created turmoil in the headwaters. The myth of the empty Amazon became a reality, as any survivors moved inland and upriver to avoid these depredations.

In the late 19th century, overseas markets and advances in technology created new possibilities of exploitation. In particular, the discovery of the process of vulcanisation, led to a global trade in a non-timber forest product, rubber, which could now be hardened for industrial use. The onerous task of bleeding latex, yoked to global trade, yielded fortunes for entrepreneurs prepared to penetrate the headwaters, enslave local tribes and force them to work the scattered stands of rubber trees. International capital flooded in to make the most of these opportunities. Tens of thousands of indigenous people perished from the renewal of slaving, the torching of settlements, the starvation of survivors, the forced labour and diseases. The process also led to further waves of surviving indigenous peoples fleeing deeper into the forests, seeking to break off contact with a changing world that brought them death and cultural degradation.

Of course, not all the indigenous peoples in the Amazonian headwaters are refugees escaping the brutalities of contact, but the impact of the outside world on even the remotest headwaters is often underestimated. For many indigenous peoples in the Amazon and also in other parts of the world, the search for isolation has been an informed choice – the logical response of peoples who have realised that contact with the outside world brings them ruin not benefits. Life in the forests without trade may have its hardships, not just because the absence of the metal goods like axes, machetes, fishhooks and cooking pots makes subsistence harder work, but also because customary trade, barter and exchange between indigenous peoples were also once ways of making life more varied and richer. But it is these peoples choice.

21st century industrial societies are now being drawn into the last reaches of the Amazon, where these indigenous peoples now live in voluntary isolation, for other globally traded resources – not slaves or rubber this time, but timber, oil, gas and minerals. If we deplore the horrors of death and destruction that ineluctably accompanied previous penetrations of the Amazon, can we now show that modern industrial society is more civilised? Can we respect the choice of other societies to avoid contact and leave them in their homelands undisturbed until, perhaps, some future time when they themselves decide on the risky venture of contacting a world that they have learned by bitter experience is not safe to interact with? If we can't, then it is almost certain that future generations will condemn us for the same avarice, indifference, selfishness and greed, for which we today condemn the conquistadores and the rubber barons.

Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme.

AMERICA

The Mbya Guarani are an ancient forest people with their roots in the Amazon. In Misiones, a province in the northeast of Argentina, they have 74 communities and a total population of approximately 3,000 people. Their culture is as rich as the biodiversity of the Paranaense forest that they have always used and protected.

Two of these communities, the Tekoa Yma and the Tekoa Kapi'i Yvate, summarize the Mbya Guarani's fierce struggle to preserve their identity and continue living in the forest. Comprising some 20 families, their dealings with Western society only started to be important in 1995. As in many other Indigenous communities, their greatest bastions of independence and cultural safeguard are their women and the Opygua (priest) of the Tekoa Yma, Artemio Benitez. They continue to struggle to make their voluntary isolation from the yerua (white people) understood and respected. But the logging companies, the chainsaws and the Misiones Government's lack of sensitivity continue to harass them.

At present they live within the Yabotí Biosphere Reserve, where they obtain their food, their medicinal plants and building materials from a mosaic of Paraense forest environments, covering 6,500 hectares. Unfortunately their territory coincides with the so-called "Plot 8" and "Plot 7" considered "private property" by their present holders, the Mocona Forestal S.A. company and Marta Harriet (see WRM Bulletin 86). The Mocona Company, with the approval of the Government, recently attempted to enclose them in 300 hectares, representing less than 5 per cent of the territory they presently use to live in. In some way, white people taking over as owners and as governors, have shrunk their territory and their forest in order to expand plantations and the good business of those who call themselves civilized.

Of the total area originally covered by the Mata Atlântica and Paranaense forests, only 5 per cent remains. This loss of biodiversity and continuity is particularly critical in environments where the Tekoa Yma and Tekoa Kapi'i Yvate are located. The lack of natural medicines and food caused by the frantic extraction of trees is threatening their health and their survival. This is of unusual gravity, not only in terms of human rights, but also in terms of demographic criticalness.

The Mbya communities of Tekoa Yma and Tokoa Kapi'i Yvate are the result of long processes of sedentary cycles, preceded by limited migration episodes. These movements have taken place throughout centuries. While the sub-tropical forest evolved, with its own fluctuations due to internal and external causes, one of its species, the Mbya, established successive transitory territories. If the resources available and their use established a good balance and the dreams of their leaders did not advise against it, they settled in the same place for a long time. If some crisis broke up this relationship, or dreams suggested a change, the community migrated, but only to settle with their sedentary features in another more appropriate place.

The life strategy of any group of hunters-gatherers with subsistence agriculture or a long food chain, has specificities that are not well understood by other human groups whose strategy, on the contrary, is based on agro-productive systems with a very short food chain.

In fact, when human populations invented agriculture some 5,000-10,000 years ago, they shortened the old, long food chains. They eliminated the living forms that existed on the soil and then planted, replacing forests or large ranges of pasture lands, by a single protected species. Shortening the food chains and the success of farming and animal husbandry fed the first urban revolution with their surplus, and from then on, massive growth of the human population.

For decades now in Misiones an unequal battle between these two life strategies has been taking place.

On the one hand are the Mbya communities, who are the longest standing inhabitants of the territory. Various communities, among them the Tekoa Yma and Tekoa Kapi'i Yvate, continue to preserve a long food chain strategy. They are hunters, gatherers and fisher-people, with a deliberately reduced practice of agriculture.

On the other hand are the white communities of European origin who very recently entered the Paranaense forest. These groups brought with them a short chain productive strategy, totally different from the one practiced by the Mbya. Instead of living in harmony with the forest, they needed deforested areas to grow their protected species.

The Mbya communities integrated the Paranaense forest over 3,000 years ago without developing the notion of private property adopted by the white population that entered more recently (sixteenth century and onwards). Objectively what happened was that their “total territory” was invaded as from the sixteenth century by white groups, mostly of European origin, who had totally different strategies for appropriating land and for production. This explains the rapid disappearance of the sub-tropical forest, the establishment of short chain agro-productive systems and the multiplication of permanent urban settlements.

While the white people were appropriating space “fixing” private property territories, the eviction of the Mbya generated their underprivileged incorporation into white settlements and fewer chances to live in a traditional way for those who still remain living in the Paranaense forest, such as Yaboti. In this environment, recognized by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve, legal and illegal ransacking of their resources continues. This has reduced local biodiversity seriously and in some cases, irreversibly, as it has reduced the Mbya's possibilities of subsisting uniquely from the forest.

For many white people, the success of a culture is measured by grandiose buildings and objects that they produce, and the time they last. For nature, success is measured by the length of time a population, such as the Mbya, have lived in the forest without the forest or the Mbya themselves disappearing. There are peoples whose inheritance is almost immaterial, but this does not mean that they are “less evolved” or “less developed.” They are peoples and cultures that have achieved what many of our civilizations have attempted but not attained: to adapt to the environment and to themselves.

The Mbya communities of Tekoa Yma and Tekoa Kapi'i Yvate have the natural right to continue living where they are today for two fundamental reasons: firstly because the area they occupy is what a hunting, fishing, gathering people with small scale agriculture needs, and secondly because that area is part of the mobile territory that their forefathers have used for centuries.

The peoples who have the most right of “ownership” of the forest are those who have lived in the forest as part of it for centuries, without the need to become its owners.

By: Raul Montenegro, FUNAM, UN Global 500 Prize, taken from “El silencioso genocidio de los Mbya Guaraní en Argentina. (O la lucha de la cadenas alimentarias cortas contra las cadenas alimentarias largas)”, e-mail: montenegro@funam.org.ar , http://www.funam.org.ar . The complete article, resulting from the joint work of ENDEPA and FUNAM can be accessed –in Spanish- at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Argentina/Mbya.html

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In the first place, it is important to clearly define what we are talking about when we refer to peoples or populations in “voluntary isolation.” This term and similar ones (such as “separate,” “isolated,” “autonomous”) attempt to describe “a situation or a historical context.” The background or basis they all have in common is that they seek to define peoples (ideally) or populations (perhaps closer to reality) that have little or no systematic contact with Western agents (in general commercial companies or missionaries). That is to say, they do not “depend” on our economic system to survive – and even less so on the symbolic system. In general such “autonomy” originates in the geographical context – and there are many peoples and human populations that could be included in the definition of “isolated” on the basis of a certain geographical niche that is inaccessible to systematic contact (populations of the Andes, the North Pole, Kalahari, the African or Asian deserts, the mountains of New Guinea, etc.). These peoples and populations have a residual contact with the dominating economy (and ideological system) and continue to maintain independent standards of survival with relation to the dominating economy in function of internal social and cultural resistance established voluntarily. However, what we have seen is that such autonomy can last while the niche they occupy is not the object of a (“capitalist”) valuation of the natural resources (or the symbolic ones, in the case of “strategic” territories for the Western powers).

However, this context does not apply to Indigenous Peoples or populations “in isolation” in the Amazon. In this context, when we define Indigenous Peoples and populations “in isolation” we are referring to peoples and populations who are closer to the state in which Christopher Columbus would have found them. They are not only in geographical isolation, but mainly, in historical isolation. This is the crucial difference in relation to the other peoples and populations “in voluntary isolation” on the planet. It is true that throughout this time (500 years!), they sought or took refuge in isolated regions, or rather, regions that were not coveted by the mercantile (or missionary) rage of our “expansion front”. In the Amazon (mainly the Brazilian Amazon but also in the Bolivian, Peruvian, Colombian, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian and Guyanese Amazon) we estimate that there are still dozens of Indigenous Peoples living almost in the same way as they lived five hundred, six hundred or a thousand years ago: garbed in their feather headdresses, or loincloths, surviving on hunting, fishing, gathering and small-scale agriculture with stone axes and fire, suffering from no virus diseases in a fully abundant environment. They may even know some of our instruments (iron instruments, glass bottles, plastic containers, etc.) that reach their hands by accident or because of previous contacts that were disastrous to them.

It should be emphasized that they remain in this state because, on the one hand, the conditions in the immediate surroundings of their habitat enable them to do so and also because these peoples aggressively produce and mark a distance (a frontier) with relation to us or to other already contacted Indigenous Peoples, seeking to maintain their living conditions through aggression and open (but disproportionate) conflict. However, not all of them have managed to maintain this distance.

It is a fact that today the majority of the isolated peoples in the Amazon are living in an extremely serious situation vis-à-vis the advance of predatory (logging and mining) frontiers towards the last virgin areas in the region. Harassed and attacked by these predatory expansion fronts (which very often have recourse to already contacted Indigenous Peoples and their enemies in the past), they have started to use fleeing strategies, decreasing the signs of their passage or changing their subsistence patterns – not opening clearings visible from planes, changing the form of their dwellings to camouflage them in the vegetation, moving more frequently and dispersing their population. Under these circumstances, many of these peoples – if not the majority – stop carrying out their rituals, radically change their subsistence routines and even those of procreation, by avoiding conception or even by aborting.

In Brazilian legislation (Law No. 6001 of 19/12/73) the denomination “isolated Indigenous Peoples” appears as a legal concept defining human populations with a pre-Columbus culture that have kept themselves geographically and socio-culturally at a distance from the Western population, which subsequently became the majority population in the country. This isolation is so strong that no knowledge exists of their demographic composition, just some traces of their existence and little or no indication of their material culture, customs or languages.

The physical, ethnical, linguistic, cultural and cosmological specificities of isolated Indigenous Peoples are an invaluable human heritage. Its diversity and existence are threatened every day by the actions of a segment of national society with the only objective of irrational exploitation and getting rich at the cost of the native populations and total degradation of the natural resources and biodiversity concentrated in their territories.

The frequency of records of isolated Indigenous Peoples is concentrated in remote territorial niches, many of these in strips along the frontiers of Amazon countries – demanding multi-national efforts. In South America, only Brazil has a specific coordination for matters concerning isolated peoples, the “Coordenação Geral de Índios Isolados – CGII” (General Coordination for Isolated Indigenous Peoples), linked to the official Indigenous body of the Brazilian Government, FUNAL. This department has records of 38 reports on isolated peoples in Brazilian territory. The resistance undertaken by these peoples is also seen in the protection of vast areas of Amazon ecosystems, as their physical and cultural reproduction is traditionally made possible by using natural resources in a way that is fully compatible with the conservation and protection of the ecosystems where they live.

The presence of Indigenous Peoples in isolation has been confirmed in various South American countries. In Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, the existence of Indigenous Peoples living in the same conditions of social isolation and secrecy has been recorded, resisting penetration in their domains, frequently with violence. In any of these countries the situation is always the same: forced to migrate, deprived of their traditional territories, submitted to all sorts of tragedies during the successive cycles of expansion and appropriation of economic and social frontiers undertaken by national societies in Amazonian territory.

Colonizing actions and occupation of the Amazon territory for centuries have been based on predatory activities, disorderly extractivism and the exploitation of slave labour, promoting the drastic depopulation and extinction of innumerable Amerindian peoples. An unknown portion of Indigenous Peoples subsists under conditions of “isolation,” undertaking a bitter and silent struggle to survive the exterminating action of the enveloping society. Public ignorance of concrete data making their “social visibility” possible to civil society and an absolute absence of specific legislation guaranteeing State protection, safeguard and support, have maintained these peoples, and what is left of them, permanently exposed to extinction, promoting continued environmental dilapidation and degradation of their habitat.

The rhythm of extinction of peoples in isolation estimated in Brazilian ethnography, in accordance with the few researchers devoted to the issue, is enough to express the devastating genocide of the saga. The anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, exemplifies the dramatic depopulation that took place between 1900 and 1957 in his comprehensive work “Os Índios e a Civilização” (published by Cia. das Letras, 1996) stating that over this period of 57 years, 87 ethnic groups which had maintained themselves in isolation have disappeared. In spite of the fact that new peoples in isolation have been “discovered” in more recent decades, the proportion of extinguished peoples or peoples in permanent contact with national society is considerably greater, in a bitter statistic, a task still to be carried out. Statistics and demographic charts will never be able to express the human and cultural content of so much extinguished life, still taking place under indifference of civil society and the acquiescence of governments.

Therefore, Indigenous Peoples in isolation are seen as the last and least favoured pariahs, without a voice, without a physical presence, without any social or even human recognition, only and sporadically remembered by the isolated voices of more informed segments of society. This dramatic picture only goes to reaffirm the immense and urgent social responsibility corresponding to the national States in this process, as well as that of the diverse sectors of society committed to democracy, human rights, environmental conservation, and the cultural and immaterial heritage of humanity. It is the State's duty to assign substantial efforts aimed at the protection of Indigenous peoples in isolation to satisfy their essential needs and implement public policies and legal measures that reaffirm their constitutional and ethnic rights and their specific and differentiated protection.

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The Nukak are a nomadic people from the Colombian Amazon, officially contacted in 1988. The present population is estimated at 390 people, distributed among 13 local groups, located in the inter-fluvial area between the Middle Guaviare and the High Inírida. Nukak as a tongue is understood by the Kakua or Bara from the Colombian Vaupes and both are classified as part of the Maku-Pinave linguistic family.

According to Nukak oral tradition, and ethnographic and linguistic information, they are a branch of the Kakua that emigrated to the North. One of the reasons for this displacement to their present territory was to evade the rubber merchants who used the indigenous peoples as slave labour at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the Nukak's sophisticated knowledge and management of the fauna and flora of the zone point to an earlier occupation.

In the twentieth century, the Nukak remained isolated from their native territorial neighbours and agents of national society for over 50 years, among other reasons because they were afraid of alleged cannibalism by white people and other natives. In 1965 a group from the western sector attempted to peacefully approach a peasant. Unfortunately this episode ended in a confrontation leading to the death of several Nukak and the capturing of a couple. Following this ill-fated event, they isolated themselves in the forest, but only eight years later, in 1974, the groups from the eastern sector established contacts with the North American missionaries from the New Tribes Mission. In 1982, the contacts were permanent and in 1985 they already had a work station inside the territory.

During the eighties, in the areas bordering the northwest frontier of the Nukak territory the rhythm of colonization increased due to the favourable price of the coca leaf. This illegal crop attracted waves of peasants, trades-people and adventurers, seeking an opportunity to improve their living conditions. Thus, encounters with the peasants became increasingly inevitable because of the overlapping of the areas that both groups occupied. In this context and following the kidnapping of a white child by a Nukak group in 1987, the first flu epidemic and the appearance for the first time of a group in Calamar – a peasant village in the Guaviare – in April that same year, all the local groups gradually started visiting the colonized areas.

During the first five years after mass contact, the Nukak lost close on 40 per cent of their population as a result of respiratory diseases that started as flu. The age groups showing the greatest number of deaths were those over forty and under five years of age, thus leaving a large number of orphans. In fact, close on 30 children and young people were adopted by the peasants and some women also married peasants. All this led to an interruption in the transmission of their technical and ritual knowledge and a loss of confidence in their Chamanic practices.

Relations with the peasants were established quite quickly by the groups in the western sector occupying the oldest and most densely settled area, while for the groups in the less settled eastern sector where they had the support of the missionaries, the process was slower. At the mission station the Nukak found medical care, they were supplied with metal tools and seeds and had interlocutors to get to know the world of the white people. This generated a centripetal effect and attenuated the motivation to migrate to settled areas. When the Missionaries' work station was abandoned in 1996 for public policy motives, this accelerated the expansion of the effects of contacts among the western sector groups.

Institutional action initiated to care for the Nukak has mainly been concentrated on health matters, on guaranteeing legal recognition of their territory and on protecting their rights as Indigenous people. However the scope of these initiatives and legal actions has been limited, given the extension of the area they occupy, the mobility and dispersion of the population, discontinuity due to administrative problems characterized by a lack of consensus in defining the type of intervention and limitations on circulation in the area, imposed by the self-named Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC). This organization is disputing control of the area with the paramilitary groups operating in the zone. Additionally the Nukak territory is surrounded by close on 15,000 peasants and located in one of the most dynamic agricultural frontiers of the Amazon.

Today, 16 years after the Colombian Government recognized the existence of the Nukak, they are now becoming sedentary and only one of the local groups in the eastern sector of the territory still maintains its nomadic treks through the forest in a permanent way. Most of them have built houses and have cultivated plots of land near the settled areas of their territory, mainly occupied by peasants who grow coca leaves. This activity is also a main source of employment for the male Nukak population and has contributed to displace activities such as hunting and gathering and has also facilitated the incorporation of agro-industrial food. Regarding health, the causes of morbidity have widened to include malnutrition and venereal diseases and the birth rate does not enable them to recover their population, as one out of two children dies before the age of five. It is also known that the groups in the western sector have problems with alcoholism, they have been involved in conflicts with firearms and at least three young men were involved with the FARC. Contrasting with this, recently celebrity magazines and programmes have devoted space to a Nukak top model, who probably had been adopted by the peasants.

In the meanwhile, institutional meetings still continue on the type of suitable intervention and the Nukak’s capacity to face changes or to manage the budget that the State annually assigns to the populations in the Indigenous reserves of Colombia (transfer resources). Although six years ago it was concluded that the management of such resources belonging to the Nukak warranted a consultation with all the leaders of the local groups and commissions were set up for this purpose, they did not have any continuity. Today these resources cover the budgetary validity of eight years (1996-2004) and amount to over 400 million pesos, which cannot be executed until the Nukak decide on what they want to invest in.

Getting to know the opinion of the Nukak regarding their learning to live with the peasants and in general with the white man’s world is a pressing task, as well as designing with them the strategies required to improve their living conditions. However, getting to know what the Nukak think or implementing any type of programme with them will not be feasible until there is the institutional will to consult them and respect their decisions. Also needed is the comprehension of the actors in the armed conflict to allow implementation of the actions all this requires. Paradoxically, this means to allow the Nukak to be contacted, that is to say, to establish a dialogue with them on their territory.

By: Dany Mahecha Rubio, e-mail: danyma@yahoo.com

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Huaorani culture and society is shaped by their will to self-isolation. Very little is known about their past, except that they have for centuries constituted nomadic and autarkic enclaves fiercely refusing contact, trade and exchange with their powerful neighbours, be they indigenous or white-mestizo colonists. Ever since their tragic encounter with North American missionaries in 1956, the Huaorani have held a special place in journalistic and popular imagination as "Ecuador's last savages". Despite the "civilizing" efforts of missionaries, they have largely retained their distinctive way of understanding the world. Relations with outsiders, seen as murderous enemies, are fraught with hostility and fear; there seems to be little space for communication and exchange, other than complete avoidance or the threat to 'spear-kill'.

For the last sixty years, Huaorani history has unfolded in response to oil development, although it is only recently (in 1994) that oil has been commercially extracted from their land. In 1969, a decade after having "pacified" the Huaorani, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) received government authorisation to create a protection zone around its mission. The 'Protectorate' (66,570 hectares, or 169,088 acres) represented one tenth of the traditional territory. By the early 1980s, five-sixth of the population had been called to live in the Protectorate. On April 1990, the Huaorani were granted the largest indigenous territory in Ecuador (679,130 hectares, or 1,098,000 acres). It is contiguous with the Yasuní National Park (982,300 hectares, or 2,495,000 acres), and includes the former Protectorate. The population (around 1,700) is now distributed in thirty or so semi-permanent settlements organised around a primary school, except for one, or possibly two, small groups that cling to autarky, and hide in the remote forested areas of the Pastaza province, along the international border separating Peru from Ecuador.

The non-contacted Huaorani, known as the Tagaeri and the Taromenani, comprise between thirty and eighty people. The Tagaeri used to live in the Tiputini region, which became the heart of the southern oil fields in the early 1980s. The Tagaeri decided to separate permanently from the main Huaorani population when the SIL mission caused a major population displacement by actively encouraging the eastern groups to come and live under SIL authority within the Protectorate. Relatives of the Tagaeri who now live in the Protectorate say that the latter's decision was partly due to intra-tribal feuding (they did not want to live in the territory of their enemies), and partly to their straight refusal to integrate; they did not wish to receive "the benefits" of civilisation. In other words, it was their political decision to live in isolation.

During the next thirty years, many raiding and killing episodes marred the interactions between Tagaeri and outsiders. Famous for their fierceness, the Tagaeri have 'spear killed' oil workers, missionaries, and others whom they saw as intruders. Most famously, they killed an Archbishop from the Capuchin Mission and a Colombian nun from the Laurita mission in July 1987. And their people have been wounded and killed as well. In the early 1990s, various informants told me that military helicopters had thrown rockets on Tagaeri longhouses, and that Tagaeri dwellings had been burnt down by company security guards. There was once a plan to exterminate them all. And then the hope, especially amongst missionaries, that they would finally surrender and accept 'pacification'. Oil exploration in the block where the Archbishop and the nun had been found dead was suspended, and the government promised to grant protection to the non-contacted Huaorani who kept fleeing away from the blocks operated by PetroCanada, Texaco, PetroBras, Shell, and Elf Aquitaine. The implicit policy, though, was to push them further to the south, in the hope that they would cross the border with Peru, and cease to be a national problem.

We now know that there were other indigenous groups refusing contact on the Peruvian side, where oil extraction and colonization has been far more intensive than in Ecuador. They too have gradually come to take refuge in the border area, at the confluence of the Curaray and Tiguino Rivers. The Huaorani mentioned the Taromenani (literally the giant people living at the end of the path) to me several times, but the descriptions of these 'similar but different' people were so extraordinary that I assimilated them to the vast category of fantastic beings that are said to people the forest.

These non-contacted groups, whatever their provenance and trajectory, all live like refugees in their own lands, by choice. They no longer prepare clearings, but plant root crops and maize under the canopy to avoid being spotted by helicopters. They cook late at night, so that the smoke rising from their hearths does not give them away. They are on the move at all times, endlessly searching for quieter hunting spots, and better hiding places. According to my Huaorani friends, they hate the noise of machines and engines, and choose to flee to the same places where the monkeys and the peccaries flee.

These self-isolated groups have suffered a great deal because of the loss of their territories, the invasion of oil companies, and the continuous encroachment of poachers, loggers, drug traffickers, tourist companies, and other adventurers. They also fear the 'pacified', 'Christian' Huaorani, who dream to 'civilize' them. They too have become enemy outsiders. These fears are not unfounded. More than once, I heard young Huaorani men boast that they will attempt to pacify the Tagaeri. "Ingesting rice and sugar like us", they told me, "the Tagaeri will become wholly tame and gentle, like toddlers". Some added that this would greatly please 'the company' (the term they use to describe the vast and complex consortium of companies, subsidiaries, contractors, and subcontractors that work in partnership with PetroEcuador), which, in return, will behave generously towards them, by offering them all the cash and all the goods they ask for.

Non-contacted groups are not a threat to any one, except to intruders; they only want to be left alone. As I argued some years ago, we need to invent a new human right for all the groups still hiding in the Amazon forest: the right of no-contact.

In continuation, let me illustrate the predicament of these non-contacted groups, and the persecution to which they are subjected, with two stories.

The ultimate modern dream: film the first contact. In the Spring of 1995, I was contacted by a Californian TV company which was developing a new project entitled "The Tagaeri: the Last of the Free People." This series of three programmes proposed to 'document' the first contact between the Tagaeri and the 'botanist' Loren Miller (the man who patented the plant from which Northwest Amazon Indians make the hallucinogenic locally known as ayahuasca or yagé). According to the script, the first episode would show how Christian Huaorani contacted their savage brothers, and managed to convince them of the virtues of western civilization, with the help of the army. The second episode would focus on the encounter between the chief Tagae and Loren Miller, the former sharing his knowledge of medicinal plants with the latter. The third part would centre on the western botanist "telling the world of the great possibilities of scientific research and the potentialities of Tagaeri land for ecotourism". The TV company, which was seeking the support of CNN and the National Geographic for this project, had to back off in the face of a wave of protests from the indigenous peoples organisations, COICA, and various other indigenous rights organisations. They graciously sent a message expressing their "agreement with the many enlightened individuals who expressed concern and disagreement with our project". They added: "We ask that you respect the right of isolation, of privacy and of non-contact of the Tagaeri population of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The Tagaeri are a community that live with the natural jungle and they made the choice not to integrate the western civilization. Please respect their decision." But the project was too tantalising, and, in the following years, various contacts were attempted by tourist companies and/ or TV crews. For instance, one Belgian tourist guide, a former mercenary in the French Legion, guided 'survival expeditions' in Tagaeri land. A British student expedition managed to provoke a group of non-contacted Indians (possibly Tagaeri). A member of the expedition got speared in the thigh; the whole episode got filmed, and was heroically shown on Channel 4 in 1997.

Christian Huaorani slaughter savage Huaorani. In May 2003, around 15 non-contacted Indians identified by the press as Taromenani were speared to death by nine Huaorani 'warriors'. The army recovered twelve bodies (nine women and three children) from the raided longhouse. A spokesperson for the army declared that: "the patrol will not interfere with the customs or ancestral sanctioning procedures of the Huaorani, the armed forces are very respectful in this sense." Everyone in Ecuador became an expert in ancestral customary law or Huaorani culture, and avidly debated the issue. Why they had done this, what it meant for the nation, what should be done about such fratricide, and so forth. The 'Ecuadorian Network for Legal Anthropology' was formed to analyse the Tagaeri-Taromenani-Huaorani conflict from a legal perspective, and propose a reform of the Ecuadorian judiciary system in a way that would accommodate different legal systems, including Huaorani revenge killing. The President of the tribal organisation (ONHAE) and other Huoarani representatives were eventually asked to comment on the slaughter. They emphasised the increased level of interference from illegal traders and loggers in Huaorani territory. On the 25th of June, the national press reported that ONHAE had decided to forgive the nine warriors, who had been involved in a killing raid for the first time, and had sworn to renounce violence and not seek revenge in case the Taromenani decided to strike back. Young Huaorani would phone me day and night during this stressful period to keep me informed of the developments. I kept asking them whether they (or any one else) had spoken to the warriors, but it seems that no one was interested in knowing what they had to say about the whole affair. Could they explain what had happened? Despite the distance, I could perceive some of the internal and external reasons that had pushed these men to kill. First the Babeiri had been in conflict with the Tagaeri for several decades. The hostilities were rekindled when PetroCanada relocated the former in the traditional territory of the latter, where they were confronted to all the ills of the frontier culture – alcohol, prostitution, dependency on alms, and so forth. Living along the oil road, the Babeiri were constantly solicited by loggers and traders of various *sorts. The Babeiri raided the Tagaeri for a wife in 1993, as a result of which they lost a young man, wounded by retaliating Tagaeri. In November 2002, a logger's boat overloaded with illegal timber collided with a Huaorani dug-out canoe. Several Huaorani were killed. All these factors somehow converged in giving the nine men the determination to carry out the raid. It was reported that the 'warriors' comprised the father of a woman killed in the November 2002 accident, and the brother and the brother-in-law of a man killed in the same accident. Without the personal accounts of the warriors themselves, all inference is open to debate. However, it is clear that there is a direct relation between increased extractive activities and the rise of violent conflict between 'pacified' and 'non-contacted' Huaorani. It would be wrong to blame violence simply on tribal vengeance and savagery, as so many Ecuadorian and other commentators have done.*

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The Ayoreo live in a zone of their ancestral territory called Amotocodie. Modern maps show it as an extensive area of virgin forest with the geographic coordinates 21º 07' S and 60º 08'W marking its centre, some 50 km to the south of Cerro Leon. They amount to some 50 people, subdivided into various groups. They approach but rarely, a watering place on some farm to drink water and perhaps a farm worker may have seen them from afar. Sometimes, white hunters find their trail in the forest or holes in trees where they have harvested honey. In 1998 a group of six warriors attacked a farm as a warning. On 3 March 2004, one of the groups comprising 17 people came into contact with the surrounding society and settled on the border of their ancestral habitat. The 2002 Indigenous Census of Paraguay does not record them because they cannot be interviewed, because they are invisible.

Throughout the last sixty years all the other members of their people, the Ayoreo from the Bolivian and Paraguayan Chaco, have been forcibly removed from their enormous habitat by missionaries and now survive precariously on the outskirts of modern society, slowly realising that they have been cheated, that they were deprived of the forest where they lived in harmony – and the forest has been deprived of them. The Ayoreo who still continue to live in the forest are some of the last hunters and gatherers of the Latin American continent who have not been contacted and who do not seek contact with modern and enveloping society.

They are nomads in their ancestral territory: they constantly walk through the still large extensions of untouched forest. Their walks are guided by an intimate knowledge of the places and the cycles of the Chaco's fruits and resources. The most decisive resource is water, sometimes abundant in certain places and sometimes extremely scarce in others and depending on the seasons. Other resources are the flesh of animals: they know where to find turtles or wild pigs or armadillos or the flag bear; they know where they can find fruit such as the heart of palm. They know where to find honey. During the rainy season during their walks, they cultivate in appropriate areas. The forest provides everything. Wise self-control of demographic growth, together with constant migration guarantee the continuity of the world in which they live, preventing overuse, deterioration and depletion of their resources.

In this way, no signs of environmental deterioration are apparent as a consequence of their presence. Rather we must acknowledge the contrary: without them something would be lacking in the forest, something related with their vitality and the validity of what we call biodiversity. This suggests that basically, not only them, but all human beings could have had a function in the world's ecosystems, just as every plant and animal has. Perhaps our absence, the fact that we have separated from this way of living harmoniously with the world, has made it weaker. We are missing from our ecosystems. Perhaps finally we humans are not the enemies of nature and the earth, but necessary…if we were to accomplish our function.

The forest Ayoreo still accomplish it. We know from the explanation of the groups or families that were removed or who left the forest to join our modern civilization in our times, in 1986, 1999, 2004, that they define it as a function of mutual protection: the forest protects us, we protect the forest. Humankind as protector of the earth.

Their way of cultivating the land during the rainy season is very expressive of their relationship with the forest and with nature: with the first rains they sow the seeds they have been storing of pumpkin, corn, water melon and beans in natural sandy clearings in the middle of the forest. They barely prepare the soil. Then they continue with their walking and let nature take over. They come back to harvest. According to their concept one has to intervene as little as possible in the workings of nature, just some minimum support, the support to allow it to do better what it does anyway.

They do not consider themselves to be the owners of the world like we modern people who have left our forests centuries or millennia ago, do. According to them, the world is not at the disposal of humans to do anything they want with. On the contrary, the Ayoreo, instead of placing themselves above the world, feel themselves to be a part of it, an integrating and necessary part. This is not only seen from their posture and attitude in their daily lives. This relationship with the world is also expressed in their social structure in a profoundly spiritual way: in parallel with family ties, the Ayoreo on birth and with their surname belong to one of seven “clans,” each clan including a part of all the phenomena existing in the world. For instance in this way an Ayoreo from the Etacore clan becomes a relative for example of the rattlesnake, of the water falling in a storm, of the rope, of the dry season, of the red colour of blood, of the moon when it can be seen during the daytime, of the totitabia bird, etc. All the Ayoreo as a whole are related to everything that exists in the world, and each one, according to his/her surname, lives with the mission of looking after his/her world phenomenon “relatives” in a very special way.

The way they live in harmony with the world is comparable to a couple living in harmony in the best sense: aware of diversity and its importance, conscious of mutual interdependency, knowing that one without the other could not be happy, would have no future, and could not live.

This is part of what the forest Ayoreo, with their cultural, spontaneous and natural way of being, contribute to the world of today: a different and diverse way of being, that not only sustains the environmental integrity of the Chaco forest where they live but also sustains a diverse conscience and presence that, without them, the world would be lacking today.

Presumably they are not aware of their importance to us. When we finally perceive it, we start understanding the significance of their existence, not only for themselves and their environmental habitat, but also for us and our future. Because finally, their attitudes and those communicated by their way of living are those that should inspire our search for new ways of life and of harmonious living if as humanity we want to have a future.

Although they may not know of their importance for humanity, they certainly must feel its weight through their solitude in carrying out their function of protecting the world. They may feel it concretely and in daily things, when heavy machinery disturbs the silence of their territory to fell trees for cattle ranches and to make new entries to take precious wood, and when they feel how the consistence of the world of which they are a part is eroded and weakened.

They still have to feel that our strength is added to theirs, that we have taken up our mission again of protecting their world and ours, everybody’s world.

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In 1990, the Peruvian state established the Kugapakori/Nahua Reserve to protect the lives, rights and territories of indigenous peoples in South East Peru avoiding, or strictly limiting their contact with national society. Despite safeguarding these territories on paper, since its creation the Reserve has been continually threatened by illegal logging and two years ago it was opened up for extraction of natural gas as part of the Camisea Gas Project (See “Camisea gas project undermines the rights of indigenous peoples”, WRM bulletin No. 62, September 2002). In the face of these threats, some of its inhabitants who had established contact with outsiders began to voice their own opinions about the Reserve and its inability to protect their territories and rights.

To address these challenges, a group of Peruvian NGOs and Indigenous Federations formed a committee to defend and strengthen the Reserve both legally and on the ground. It was clear to the Committee that in its current form the Reserve was neither working to prevent exploitation by outsiders nor meeting the needs of its inhabitants. The challenge was how to take into account the diverse needs and interests of all its inhabitants, including those avoiding all contact, and translate these into legal concepts and practical recommendations. The hope was that the proposals would serve as a model for developing legislation and policies to protect the rights of indigenous peoples living in isolation not only within the Kugapakori/Nahua Reserve but throughout Peru.

After 18 months of fieldwork and legal analysis the work of the Committee is now nearing completion and in November 2004 the proposals will be presented to senior representatives of the Peruvian state. This article briefly reviews the challenges faced by the Committee and the ways by which the project has sought to overcome them. It is hoped that the processes, methodologies and terms of reference developed through this process can serve other institutions hoping to develop policies to support indigenous peoples in isolation in Latin America and beyond.

Until 1984 the Nahua, a Panoan speaking indigenous people, lived in the headwaters of the Purus, Manu and Mishagua basins in South East Peru, avoiding all direct contact with outsiders and attacking anyone entering their territory. In April 1984, this isolation ended when four Nahua were captured by loggers and taken to Sepahua, the local town, before being sent back to their villages. A year later over half the Nahua had died from colds and other respiratory diseases introduced by this first contact, and loggers had taken advantage of their weakness and overrun their territory.

In 1990, the Peruvian state established the Kugapakori/Nahua State Reserve to protect indigenous peoples in the region still avoiding all direct contact with outsiders, or those like the Nahua who had only recently established this contact. However, in practice the Reserve consistently failed to protect the territories and rights of its inhabitants and since its establishment has been invaded by loggers, overlapped with illegal forestry concessions and opened up for the extraction of natural gas. This has led to a variety of impacts ranging from cases of forced contact and subsequent epidemics, invasions of indigenous territories by loggers and the relocation of some of its inhabitants who felt threatened by the activities of the Camisea gas project (See, http://www.ecoportal.net/content/view/full/31947 for AIDESEP's denunciation of the forced relocation of Machiguenga living in Shiateni).

In 2001 the Nahua, who were campaigning against an invasion of loggers demanded that their territory be recognised in a communal land title and excluded from the Reserve feeling that it would offer them greater legal protection. This presented a major challenge; how to support the legitimate claim of the Nahua without undermining the legal status of the Reserve and therefore the territories of its other inhabitants.

In 2002 Shinai Serjali, a Peruvian NGO that was helping the Nahua in their struggle with the loggers, began to consult a wide range of state and civil society institutions involved with the Reserve for legal and practical solutions to address its problems. An initial workshop in 2002 identified various problems: the lack of any clear legislation for State Reserves in Peru, confusion over its administration and boundaries, the lack of local awareness of its rules and boundaries and the absence of any efficient system of control (a full report from this workshop is available in English at http://www.serjali.org/en/projects/workshop/). After the workshop, a group comprising six NGO's and indigenous federations continued to discuss the situation and the result was the formation of the Committee for the Defense of the Reserve in 2003. Its objective was to strengthen the Reserve and the territorial security of its inhabitants and to propose policies and recommendations that were based on the perspectives and priorities of its inhabitants rather than those of outside institutions. The Committee was supported by AIDESEP, the national indigenous peoples organization, and its members include: Shinai Serjali, Racimos de Ungurahui, COMARU (Machiguenga Council for the Lower Urubamba), IBC (Institute of the Common Good), CEDIA (Centre for the Development of Amazonian Indigenous People) and APRODEH (Association for the Promotion of Human Rights).

The main challenge of this project was how to take into account the diverse needs and interests of all the indigenous peoples living within the Reserve. In 2002 there were at least 9 known communities corresponding to 3 different ethnic groups, each of whom had different relations with, and attitudes towards, national society. Only some of these groups like the Nahua were interacting directly with external individuals or institutions, while others were preferring to avoid such contact altogether. In addition, many of its inhabitants spoke minimal or no Spanish and had limited or no understanding of concepts such as the State, the law, property, let alone the Reserve.

To cope with these difficulties three field teams were formed whose task was to work for extended periods with only those communities who already had a sustained contact with outsiders. All field teams were made up of individuals who had previous field experience with these communities, spoke their language and had established relationships of trust with them. During 12 months of fieldwork, the teams used sketch maps and GPS equipment to help the communities make geo-referenced maps of their territories illustrating its cultural, historical and practical importance to them as well as the issues threatening its integrity The maps also illustrated their knowledge about the location and movements of peoples living in the Reserve who were avoiding all contact with outsiders.

In addition, the field teams listened to the major concerns and priorities of these communities, that ranged from invasions of loggers, disease transmission, exploitation by school teachers and the impact of the Camisea gas project. In many cases the teams introduced the concept of the Reserve, discussed how it was designed to protect their rights and to what extent it was working. A fourth field team worked for three months with the titled Machiguenga communities who border the Reserve helping them to map their resource and territory use within the Reserve and their attitudes and knowledge towards it and its inhabitants to ensure that their rights were also respected in the development of any proposals. The teams worked with the Nahua, the Nanti of the River Camisea, the Machiguenga of the River Paquiria and the Machiguenga communities bordering the Reserve.

On the basis of these concerns, a specialist lawyer in indigenous rights began to develop a legal proposal that would best reflect the problems of the Reserve and the concerns of its inhabitants. The proposal is based on the highest standards of human and indigenous rights at an international level and applies to all five State Reserves in Peru. The proposal establishes intangibility for the Reserves and prohibits all extractive industries within them as well as any efforts to contact peoples in voluntary isolation. It establishes definitions of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact, contingency plans in case of unwanted contact or a medical emergency, the means for creating new Reserves for peoples who currently live outside of them and severe sanctions for people or institutions who breach the law. The draft proposal was presented to the National Indigenous Federation (AIDESEP) and its regional bases (FENEMAD, ORAU, ORAI and COMARU) who were developing a similar proposal. The two proposals were merged and modified in consultation with all of AIDESEP's regional and local federations.

One of the Committee's objectives was also the development of recommendations that could be applied to the specific problems of the Kugapakori/Nahua Reserve. In order to do this, the key problems and priorities of the Reserve's inhabitants were circulated amongst a larger group of people including local Indigenous representatives, members of NGOs working in the area or in neighbouring regions and representatives of state institutions responsible for forestry, indigenous peoples and human rights. The group worked to develop specific recommendations to deal with a variety of complex problems ranging from illegal logging, the activities of the Camisea Gas project, the transmission of introduced diseases to peoples with minimal or no natural resistance, the incursion of settlers and the efforts of some Missionaries to forcibly contact some of the peoples avoiding all contact.

In November 2004, the results of the fieldwork and the legal proposal will be presented to senior representatives of the Peruvian Government. The presentation is the first step in the process of their acceptance and ratification by the State. It is hoped that key government ministers and other representatives will accept the proposals as an informed and thorough initiative and commit to promoting their implementation both in the law and on the ground.

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AFRICA

Indigenous Baka number 30-40,000 and live in the southern and southeastern areas of Cameroon. They are associated with, among other local communities the Bagando Bakwele, Knonbemebe, Vonvo, Zime and Dabjui farmers. About 4,000 Bagyeli and Bakola live in the southwest, and are associated with Bulu, Ngoumba, Fang and Bassa. Most Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola still rely on hunting and gathering to secure their livelihoods, and even though some also cultivate annual crops, often on the lands of these Bantu patrons, the majority still rely on the forests. Many local communities recognise them as “people of the forest,” who their ancestors found when they arrived.

Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola in general retain many aspects of their forest-based culture, including non-hierarchical social structures coupled with community recognition for individuals’ special skills, relatively small communities, an aversion to social conflict, proximate planning horizons and, to those from “outside”, an opportunistic circumspection. For almost all Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola, their forest is their ancestral home, their reliable grocery, the root of their existence, and their customary right, and forests throughout Cameroon’s southern forest zone are dotted with their favoured hunting and gathering grounds and their hidden sacred places. Their primarily hunting and gathering lifestyle combined with subsistence trade is associated with high physical mobility, which means that they can be difficult to locate at certain times of year, and their places of work and home are rarely accurately recorded - most are literally off the map.

Cameroon’s indigenous forest communities’ geographical and social isolation has enabled many of them to retain their forest-based culture since pre-colonial times, while the world around the forest has undergone radical changes. The same applies to indigenous hunter-gatherer communities who have established permanent villages for cultivation outside forests, since the vast majority of them are also completely marginalised from civic and government structures in Cameroon. This socio-political marginalisation reflects the gross discrimination that Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola face when they leave the security of their forest and communities, where they are powerful and relatively secure, for the amenities of the roadside or neighbouring local villages, where they may be mocked, cheated, and unfairly treated by government and civic authorities. This unsavoury treatment means that many Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola prefer to stay in the security of their forest community and to remain uninvolved in the “affairs of the village.”

Indigenous forest peoples' isolation also means that most of them still have almost no access to modern health care, or formal education, and most are unable to speak and read French, the official language that dominates the forest zone in Cameroon. Until recent moves by the Cameroon government and NGOs to enable formal registration few of these people had their own identity cards, and almost all were absent from official census data and electoral lists. Thus they have been unable to stand up to powerful outsiders who sought to abuse their rights and the forest remains an important refuge.

Despite a long history of trickery and persecution by people entering the forests to extract resources such as rubber, wildlife, timber, minerals, and data on the flora and fauna, Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola in general are very open to outside influences. Their traditional forest coping mechanisms, however, are proving unable to protect them from the increased demands on forests in which they have lived for aeons. Since the introduction in 1994 of Cameroon’s new forest law there have been significant investments by donors in Cameroon’s protected areas network to support older parks and to establish new conservation “planning regions”. This has been extensively documented in WRM Bulletins (see WRM Bulletins Nº 67 and 73). Campo Ma’an, Boumba-Bek and Lobéké National Parks were all established by the Cameroon government with donor support since 1995 and all overlap the traditional lands of Baka, Bagyeli or Bakola.

The fact that these communities were “off the map” when the parks were established has led to a situation where their forest rights, and hence their right to isolation are denied through the application of non-discretionary rules to protect endangered flora and fauna. Many of these new rules undermine indigenous peoples’ hunting and gathering lifestyles, even though their rights to resources and to “traditional sustainable use” of them are protected by national and international legal provisions, and international agency guidelines. Current plans by Conservation and donors (see detailed TRIDOM article at http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Cameroon/still.html) threaten to widen this pressure to cover huge “landscapes” covering much of the Congo Basin, and this will place further burdens on communities no longer able to isolate themselves.

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The Mbendjele Yaka "Pygmies" live in northern Congo-Brazzaville. Mbendjele claim shared ancestry with other forest hunter-gatherer groups in the region such as the Baka, Mikaya, Luma or Gyeli. The Mbendjele calls all these groups Yaka people. Outsiders frequently refer to these groups as Pygmies, and occasionally members of these groups do too. They are forest-living hunter-gatherers considered the first inhabitants of the region by themselves and their farming neighbours, the Bilo. Each Mbendjele associates her or himself with a hunting and gathering territory they refer to as “our forest”. Here, local groups of Mbendjele travel between ancestral campsites in favoured places where they will gather, fish, hunt and cut honey from wild beehives depending on the season and opportunities available. From time to time Mbendjele camp near Bilo villages to work for money or goods and occasionally make small farms. In spite of this, Mbendjele value forest activities and foods as superior to all others.

Negative stereotypes of the Mbendjele are widely held by the diverse Bilo ethnic groups in the region, and often publicly asserted. Typically Mbendjele are said to be chimpanzee-like, backward, impoverished, lazy, disgusting, stupid, and childish. They are regularly segregated from Bilo. They may not eat or drink together with their neighbours, sit together on the same bench, or share a cup or a plate. They may not sleep in the same houses. Sexual relations are forbidden, although they occur clandestinely. Many villagers deny that Mbendjele have any basic human rights, frequently describing them as their ‘slaves’. Some Bilo claimed to have the right to physically abuse and even kill Mbendjele who disobey them.

Despite such negative portrayals, Bilo value their relations with Mbendjele greatly. Mbendjele are essential labourers for the farming economy at key moments such as at harvest. They are considered great herbalists and healers, and genuine ritual experts. Their performance and musical skills are widely admired, and they perform all the major ceremonies of the Bilo. Villagers greatly value the forest foods Mbendjele provide. Wild honey, game meat, especially elephant and pig, caterpillars, seasonal fruit and wild nuts are considered the finest local delicacies.

Questions that approach their relations with Bilo from the point of view of innate inferiority and subordination visibly annoy Mbendjele. The Mbendjele ideal of their relationship with Bilo is based on friendship, sharing, mutual aid and support, and on equality and respect for one another. When Bilo do not fulfil these expectations they can simply be abandoned.

In stark contrast to the Bilo conception of the Mbendjele as their slaves, the Mbendjele consider themselves free from commitment and binding ties. Able to leave and go whenever they like, they will find new friends if they are not satisfied. In this way the Mbendjele exert a pragmatic and tangible power over the Bilo that allows them to resist domination and maintain their autonomy.

Since Europeans first observed them Mbendjele have used this power in their relations with Bilo. Travelling widely in the Mbendjele area in 1906, Bruel described his experiences at the Pomo (Bilo) village Mene on the Ndoki. When he first visited there were many Mbendjele. On his second visit the Mbendjele had all gone and the Pomo were complaining that they no longer got meat or ivory, but that they were frightened to look for the Mbendjele in the forest. Bruel observed that these relations

'… are voluntary and result from different needs each wishes to satisfy. As soon as relations turn to their detriment, as soon as the Babinga [*Mbendjele*] think they have reason to complain about their [*Bilo*] associates, they break the relations, emigrate and often go far away in the forest where they will make new friends.'

Bruel explained that the Mbendjele's mobility permitted them to maintain their autonomy, and disagreed with claims by other (unnamed) European observers that 'the Babingas are the serfs of the sedentary populations.' The same practices are observable today, and perform a similar purpose. Mbendjele that were with Sangha-Sangha Bilo before the 1990s are steadily abandoning them in favour of the Bongili and Bodingo Bilo. They explain that these new partners are more generous and respect them better than the Sangha-Sangha did.

The use of avoidance in hunting and gathering societies is widespread and employed to deal with various problems from food shortages to dispute resolution. The facility with which avoidance is used depends crucially on people remaining highly mobile and not losing access to vital assets when they move. Without fixed assets to guard (such as fields or harvested crops), a hunter-gatherer's entire household can be quickly packed into a woman's basket, and new huts quickly, but skilfully built at a new location. Mobility also serves to regulate resource use, by ensuring that when natural resources are low, people move on, allowing resources to replenish.

This ease of movement makes avoidance an effective response to conflict. Rather than suffer a difficult, unpleasant or exploitative situation hunter-gatherers often prefer to move away. Maybe because of internal conflict between members of a camp, or between different camps, or in relation to non-hunter-gatherers. Movements can be permanent when people feel grossly abused.

During my fieldwork in Congo I got to know one such group of Mbendjele. In 1991 Sangha-Sangha Bilo paid Mbendjele to conduct a large three-day *Ejengi* ceremony for them. During the rite some young Bilo kicked dirt on *Ejengi's* food as a sign of their dislike for the Mbendjele. This act provoked a huge brawl in which many were injured and fatalities were only narrowly avoided. One young Mbendjele man was set upon by several Bilo youths wielding sticks, and beaten unconscious.

Ngbwiti and Ekwese were disgusted by this behaviour and decided, along with all the other Mbendjele, to abandon the Sangha-Sangha. Some years later some Mbendjele returned and renewed their relations with the Sangha-Sangha. Ngbwiti and Ekwese never did.

Indeed, they resolved never to return to the 'suk-suku' (perpetual argument and fighting) of Bilo villages. They prefer to stay in a very remote area of forest known as Ibamba. Ngbwiti explained to me:

"Our forefathers had their eyes on the Bilo. Our fathers told us to do the same. 'You children of afterwards look after our Bilo. There they are.' But now we say 'Aaaaa, what kind of people did you leave us with? Why did they give us these Bilo? They are always tying us up like animals [cheating and deceiving Mbendjele]. They don't think we are real people. No, we and the forefathers are animals!

So, we left them there with that thought.

They treat us badly; their path is a bad one. So we said 'OK, that's enough, we'll never stay in the same place as them again'. So we left there and came to Ibamba. Now we are well. We took our eyes off the

Bilo.” (Ngbwiti, 50-year-old kombeti of Ibamba. Ibamba, March 1997).

Ngbwiti and his group have been living entirely in the forest since 1991. They have renounced regular access to the goods obtained through contact with Bilo. Sometimes visiting friends and relatives bring them small gifts of salt, tobacco and old clothes. When I last visited the forest in 2003, they were still in Ibamba.

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ASIA

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Outsiders are invading the reserve of the isolated Jarawa tribe in the Andaman Islands, India, and stealing the game on which they depend for food. There are also increasing reports of Jarawa women being sexually exploited. Despite a Supreme Court order to the islands’ administration to close the highway which runs though the reserve, it remains open, bringing disease and dependency.

The Jarawa are one of four ‘Negrito’ tribes who are believed to have travelled to the Andaman Islands from Africa up to 60,000 years ago. Two of the tribes, the Great Andamanese and the Onge, were decimated following the colonisation of their islands – first by the British, and later by India. The population of the Great Andamanese tribe fell from 5,000 in 1848 to just 41 today. Both the Great Andamanese and the Onge are now dependent on government handouts. The Jarawa resisted contact with settlers from the Indian mainland until 1998. The fourth tribe, the Sentinelese, live on their own island and continue to shun all contact.

The Jarawa are hunter-gatherers, and number around 270 people. They use bows and arrows to hunt pigs and monitor lizards, and catch fish and turtles. Now, hundreds of Indian settlers and Burmese poachers are hunting and fishing along the road and the coast, depriving the Jarawa of vital game. The problem has become so acute that in some areas the once abundant wild pigs and fish are now scarce. The Sentinelese tribe are also experiencing the theft of their food sources, particularly of lobster from the rich waters around their island, North Sentinel, and the Onge tribe say they cannot hunt enough pigs as these are being stolen by outsiders.

The main highway which runs through the Jarawa reserve, known as the Andaman Trunk Road, is also bringing exploitation of the Jarawa. There are numerous reports of poachers and other outsiders sexually exploiting Jarawa women, and outsiders are introducing alcohol, tobacco and alien food items on which the Jarawa are starting to depend. Those entering Jarawa land also bring outside diseases to which the Jarawa have no immunity. The tribe has already experienced one measles epidemic - prompt action by the authorities helped prevent a catastrophe.

The Administration of the Andaman Islands is making some attempt to restrict contact between the Jarawa and users of the road. This is a step in the right direction, but will not alone be enough to secure the Jarawa's future. Participants in a recent Indian government seminar on the future of the Jarawa concluded that intervention in the Jarawa’s lives should be minimised, and that their development should be at their own pace and in the direction they themselves choose. However, some within the establishment still favour forcible assimilation. The then-Minister for Tribal Welfare said in 2003 that his ministry planned to ‘reform the tribals and assimilate them with the mainstream’ because ‘it is not right to leave them as is.’ Until the Jarawa’s rights to their land and to make decisions about their future are respected, they remain in serious danger.

Lichu, one of the few surviving Great Andamanese, fears for the future of the Jarawa. ‘I think what happened to us is going to happen to the Jarawa too… lots of settlers are hunting in the Jarawa area. There is not enough game left for the Jarawa. Their fish are also being poached. Public interaction with the Jarawa should end. The Andaman Trunk Road must be shut.’

If you wish to support the Jarawa of the Andaman Islands, please join Survival International's action at http://www.survival-international.org/jarawa_action.htm

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In the Banten region of western Java, Indonesia, exists a small-scale indigenous community that has to a large extent been able to avoid the advancement of globalization, modern technology and other influences of the outside world, including environmental degradation. The Baduy people are a reclusive tribal group that has lived a relatively undisturbed, traditional lifestyle in a closed society for more than 400 years until the recent encroachment of economic and social pressures from the outside world. Although they live in an isolated area of mountainous rainforest only 100 kilometres southwest of Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city, the Baduy have in the past been able to effectively seal their community off from the rest of the world.

Inhabiting a special reserve of some 5,200 hectares set aside for the Baduy people by the Indonesian Government, the population of about 7,200 people live in two separate clans. The Inner Baduy (*Baduy Dalam*), numbering only 350 in three villages (*kampung*) in the core area, are the strictest adherents to Baduy spiritual belief, while the remaining population live in the Outer Baduy (*Baduy Luar*) area. The *Baduy Dalam* is the centre point of culture and religious following and the focus of rituals and sacred sites within the Baduy territory. Symbolically, the *Baduy Dalam* clan members may wear white with the black traditional clothing, while the *Baduy Luar* clan members are characteristically dressed in black or dark blue. The *Baduy Luar* serves as a buffer zone between the *Baduy Dalam* and the outside world with members of the outer clan acting as intermediaries for the more pure members of the inner clan.

Baduy houses are uniformly simple, constructed only of natural materials, such as bamboo and palm thatching, without windows, and are devoid of any furniture, chairs, tables or other furnishings. They use no modern utensils, mechanized equipment or manufactured materials, such as glass or plastic, and no modern device or even domestic animal is used in their traditional *swidden* rice farming techniques. Within the Baduy territory there is no electricity or other modern conveniences, and no electronic equipment, motor vehicles or other instruments of the outside world are permitted to enter. Thus, the Baduy community is perceived by many an anachronism in today's rapidly industrializing Indonesia, rejecting all forms of modernization and still following unique cultural and religious practices as defined by the Baduy *adat* law systems handed down by their ancestors more than four hundred years ago.

A most extraordinary aspect of Baduy society is the origin of this tribal group, which today still remains shrouded in mystery. According to one legend, when Muslim forces began to spread the Islamic religion through western Java and other parts of the archipelago in the early part of the 16th century, an ascetic group of people said to have originated within the ancient Hindu Kingdom of Pajajaran refused to embrace the new religion. Instead, these people fled to the upper regions of a nearby mountain range (Kendeng Mountains), forming their own religious clan based on strict adherence to unique religious beliefs; perhaps influenced in some ways by the Hindu religion of the Kingdom of Pajajaran before it fell to the Muslim invaders.

Although there has been scholarly literature about the Baduy way of life since the early days of Dutch colonialism, much of what has been written is second-hand information, often contradictory, and perhaps intentionally misleading. The Baduy seem to have long ago realized that one of the strengths of survival for their culture is to remain hidden behind a cloak of mystique. They jealously guard the knowledge of spirituality and ritual within their community, permitting no outsider to enter the sacred places or view traditional rites within the Inner Baduy region.

The Baduy believe in one central deity, whom they call *Batara Tunggal*, and regard themselves as the descendents of seven minor deities sent to earth by *Batara Tunggal* at the beginning of human-kind on the planet.

The Baduy hold as most sacred a remote place near the centre of Baduy territory, known as *Sasaka Domasa*, where this event is said to have occurred and where the spirits of their ancestors are protected and revered. However, all Baduy territory is regarded as protected and sacred, particularly the most significant forest areas which are not permitted to be disturbed or altered. Consequently, these forests comprise a valuable environmental reserve and a perpetual resource for sustainable use by the community.

Today, the Baduy people exist as an isolated, small-scale traditional community surrounded by mainstream Indonesian society, which in western Java alone is comprised of some 40 million followers of the Islamic faith. In spite of the external forces of modernization and the pressure for this small community to assimilate within modern Indonesian society, the Baduy tribe still controls its mountain stronghold where religious and cultural practices have remained largely unchanged until very recent times.

While they have been able to maintain a relatively traditional life-style until recently, the Baduy people are beginning to be influenced by developments in the world around them, including the forces of modernity, industrialization and globalization. Ironically, the Baduy way of life has until now been culturally and ecologically sustainable and they have lived in relative harmony with the environment. Embodied within the Baduy society is great wisdom and knowledge about the conservation and sustainability of eco-systems and the interconnectedness of all living things with the earth and the cosmos.

Today, a burgeoning Baduy population and increasing contacts with the outside world, have led to the development of a more market-based village economy dependent on cash crops and sale of handicrafts. In recent years, the Baduy have placed an increasing emphasis on agro-forestry production, such as the timber plantation *Albizia* tree, fruit, palm sugar and other products grown almost exclusively for sale on local markets, rather than the formerly self-sustaining cultivation of hill rice (*ladang*).

These changes have begun to cause some cultural, social and environmental impacts, which are most evident in the increasing use of non-traditional, western-style clothing, consumption of packaged fast-foods and use of other manufactured goods that are purchased with money obtained through growing cash crops. Although prohibited by Baduy *adat* law, some other modern articles imported from outside the Baduy territory, such as thermos bottles, radios and even the mobile phone, are becoming increasingly commonplace in Baduy homes.

Another important aspect of these recent developments may be seen in the impacts of a rapidly growing, local tourist industry catering to outsiders who are drawn to see and experience the uniquely spiritual Baduy way of life. Perhaps unwittingly, the Baduy people, who have generously opened their doors to visitors from outside the Baduy realm, and the tourists themselves, are participating in a gradual process which may degrade valuable cultural and environmental assets. In time, changes brought about by exposure to the steady stream of tourists may destroy the local resources that are now a prime attraction for tourists. Under such circumstances it is not necessarily tourism *per se* that creates problems for local communities, but rather it is most often the lack of planning and management of tourist demand, access and activities. The impacts of unmanaged tourism may indeed pose the greatest threat of all to Baduy culture and the greatest challenge to maintaining their sacred traditions for the future.

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The 21,000 Yanomami who live in some 360 widely scattered settlements in the forested mountains and hills between Venezuela and Brazil were largely uncontacted by westerners until the middle of the 20th century. In their myths, the Yanomami recall a far distant time when they lived alongside a big river, ‘before we were chased up into the highlands' but by the time their existence is first recorded, in the mid-18th century, they were already well established in the Parima hills between the Rio Branco and the Upper Orinoco.

Contact with the outside world has been driven by a number of different forces. Once the Yanomami discovered the value of metal goods, probably towards the end of the 19th century, they began to trade with (and raid) neighbouring indigenous groups to acquire machetes and axes, cloth and cooking pots. Metal tools reduced the labour of cutting down trees for construction and farming by about 10 times and made many other tasks much easier. Their agriculture intensified, their numbers increased and they began to move out from the highlands, north, south, east and west, pushed by their own expanding numbers and drawn downriver by opportunities for trade. At the same time, explorers, anthropologists and frontier commissions marched to the headwaters of these rivers to make these areas known to 'science' and mark the boundaries of expanding nation states. The Yanomami gained a reputation for fiercely defending themselves against intruders but this did not dissuade the adventurers. In the 1920s, British explorer Hamilton-Rice cradled a Thomson sub-machine gun in his arms, while being paddled to the headwaters of the Uraricoera and back.

Commencing in the 1950s, Protestant and Catholic priests established remote mission posts to bring knowledge of Christ to the Yanomami. Later, projects of nation-building led to roads being carved through the forests and proposals for the building of large dams. Above all, discoveries of gold and cassiterite led to massive invasions by small-scale placer miners (garimpeiros), driven there by their own poverty and opportunities of wealth.

Of course, like all human groups, the Yanomami were not disease-free in the past. Medical anthropologists presume they have long harboured minor viral infections like Herpes, Epstein-Barr, Cytomegalovirus, and Hepatitis. Tetanus was also prevalent in the soils and some non-venereal treponeme infections were probably endemic. Arboviruses, maintained in animal populations in the forests, were also present. Leishmaniasis, transmitted by sandfly, and yellow fever, which also infects monkeys, are also thought to have been present as the indigenous people show considerable resistance to these diseases. In short, the pre-contact situations were not a medical paradise but what diseases there were, were prevalent at low levels and rarely fatal.

Contact with the outside world, however, has exacted a terrible toll from the Yanomami. Already by the early 1900s, the northern Yanomami began suffering repeated epidemics of introduced diseases on the Uraricoera. In the 1960s, diamond miners invaded the Yanam (Eastern Yanomami) areas on the Upper Paragua in Venezuela and Uraricaa in Brazil, leading to massive mortalities. Late in the 1960s, workers brought in from the Rio Negro in order to expand the missions and build airstrips, infected the Yanomami of the Upper Orinoco with measles. The infection swept through the settlements, carried further upstream by frightened people fleeing outbreaks downriver. Fevers, aches and weakness prostrated whole villages, leaving the infected people lying prone in their hammocks, unable to go hunting, too weak to gather crops from their gardens, eventually too demoralised even to collect firewood or drinking water from nearby streams. Cold, hungry and weakened by disease the Yanomami fell easy prey to other illnesses. Respiratory tract infections brought on pneumonias, fevers, further weakness and mass deaths. Some villages lost as much as a third of their numbers in a single epidemic and repeated scourges of influenzas, polio, whooping cough, rubella, chicken-pox and the longer term degeneration brought on by tuberculosis, led to some groups being completely wiped out.

During the road building programme in Brazil, which involved the construction of a road through the southern edge of Yanomam (Southern Yanomami) territory, these repeated epidemics reduced local Yanomami numbers by up to 90%. The shattered survivors adopted a road-side existence begging from passing vehicles. Lay-by encounters with lorry drivers and construction crews then brought previously unknown venereal diseases into the villages, the gonorrhoea, in turn, making numerous women infertile and so slowing the people's recovery to the population losses.

In the 1970s, Sanema (Northern Yanomami) from the Upper Caura began travelling downriver to work in the diamond mines on the middle Paragua and returned bearing a deadly haul of diseases. Epidemics led to massive losses and the abandonment of the once populous Catholic mission at Kanadakuni. By the 1980s, some 25% of the Sanema of the Caura were carrying tuberculosis, leading to a demoralising and constant loss of numbers to the deadly disease.

During the 1980s, the mass invasion of the Brazilian Yanomami's territories by as many as 50,000 miners, led to further problems for even the most isolated groups. The miners not only trekked in across the forested hills, where rivers were unnavigable, they also flew in to mission airstrips using light planes. New airstrips were hacked from the jungles, in previously unpenetrated areas. As well as frequent viral epidemics and more problems with venereal diseases, the Yanomami also contracted all three forms of malaria brought in by miners – *Plasmodium vivax*, *P. ovale* and, the most deadly, *P. falciparum.* Volunteer medical teams, who came in to help counter this devastation, estimate that the Brazilian Yanomami, as a whole, lost some 15-20% of their numbers to the illnesses brought in by the miners.

These tragedies have, obviously, had more than medical impacts on the Yanomami. The trauma of mass deaths has scarred several generations and upset age-old concepts about existence, disease, curing and death. Customarily, Yanomami used to see most illnesses as the consequences of eating hunted game, while most deaths were seen as the result of shamans from distant villages sending spells over long distances or lurking in nearby forests to blow poisonous dusts over unsuspecting passers by. Mass deaths were previously unknown but, on several occasions, led isolated villages to assume they were under spiritual attack from neighbouring communities prompting them to undertake retaliatory raids to avenge themselves on the presumed killers.

However, it was not long before the Yanomami realised that the terrible epidemics they endured were consequences of their contacts with 'whites'. Among the Brazilian Yanomam (Southern Yanomami), the belief grew that diseases were the 'smoke of steel', an odour of death that came from the boxes in which metal goods were stored, an exhalation in the very breath of their sinister white visitors, an enfeebling and sickening smoke like the exhausts of their aeroplane engines.

"Once the smoke was amongst us it made us die. We had fever. Our skins started to peal. It was terrifying. The elders demanded 'what have we done to make them kill us?' and they urged us, younger ones, who wanted to take revenge, 'don't go to avenge yourselves on the whites… Don't go' they insisted 'don't go and shoot them with arrows, for they are gunmen, and they will attack us with their rifles'."*

As the epidemics continued some of the elder Yanomami urged a retreat to the headwaters to avoid further contact but diseases followed them even into the highlands brought in to the missions by government officials and Yanomami patients returning from hospitals, leading to a belief that the whites were insatiable cannibals feeding on Yanomami spirits.

If we can look beyond our own scientific explanations of the cause of sickness and death, we can see that the Yanomami's diagnoses of the medical calamity they were enduring were close to the truth. They identified with acuity the rapacity of the civilization that was engulfing them heedless of the consequences of the intrusion.

In recent years concerted efforts have been made by missionaries, anthropologists, NGOs, government agencies and, increasingly, by the Yanomami themselves to bring medical assistance to the area and halt uncontrolled access to the region. In the 1990s, some 8.5 million hectares of the Upper Orinoco in Venezuela, were declared a Biosphere Reserve and, in Brazil, another 9.9 million hectares were designated an Indigenous 'Park'. The Venezuelan government is now considering recognising a further 3.6 million hectares in the Upper Caura as an indigenous 'habitat'. Whereas in Venezuela, medical programmes remain limited (despite lavish funding of the Biosphere Reserve by the European Union and World Bank), in Brazil a concerted campaign of inoculation and primary health care, coupled with measures to expel miners from the region, has led to improvements.

The Yanomami experience teaches many lessons, one of the most obvious being that uncontrolled contact can have terrible consequences for previously isolated groups. In the Yanomami case, contact with the outside world was being sought by the indigenous people themselves, but one-sided penetration schemes which gave little consideration for the medical effects hugely exacerbated what would anyway have been a demoralising and perilous encounter. In the 19th century and earlier, it may have been possible to plead ignorance of the likely results of such contact. We now know, beyond any doubt, that enforced contact with isolated indigenous groups in Amazonia is bound to lead to massive loss of life.

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* The title and quote is from Bruce Albert, (1988, La Fumee du metal: histoire et representation du contact chez les Yanomami (Brazil) *L'Homme* (106-107): XXVIII (2-3) :87-119). For detailed information on the current situation of the Brazilian Yanomami see http://www.proyanomami.org.br

The indigenous Twa 'Pygmy' people of the Great Lakes region of central Africa are originally a mountain-dwelling hunter-gatherer people, inhabiting the high altitude forests around Lakes Kivu, Albert and Tanganyika – areas that have now become part of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The current Twa population is estimated at between 82,000 and 126,000 people.

The Twa are widely thought to be the prior inhabitants of the forests in the Great Lakes region. The evidence for this includes historical accounts and research as well as the Twas' own accounts of their origins, which emphasis that the Twa are 'from here' whilst the oral histories of neighbouring ethnic groups tell of their arrival from elsewhere through wars, migration and conquest. Local rituals also symbolically affirm the role of the Twa as the first occupants of the land. For example, Twa did, and still do, play a crucial role in the enthronement ceremonies of the customary non-indigenous landowners, the Tutsi kings and chiefs (*Mwamis*), symbolically 'licensing' the land to the incoming ruler. Twa were also indispensable for the annual royal hunting rituals affirming the *Mwami*'s mystical authority over the land and its fertility. Indeed, the stem *–twa* is a Bantu term used throughout sub-Saharan Africa for different groups of people of very low status, referring in almost every case to hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers who are recognised as the prior inhabitants of the area, including 'Pygmy' people and 'Bushmen'.

The Twa, like other African forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, have had contacts with neighbouring farming groups for many centuries, based around reciprocal exchange relationships in which forest products were bartered for starchy foods, metal tools and other products such as salt. For many centuries, the Twa were probably able (as many other African indigenous forest peoples still do) to retreat at will into the forests, and so could control to a large degree the nature and extent of their contacts with the outside world. However, as the forests began to be cleared, the Twa were increasingly forced into contact with farmers and herders, and became caught up in unfavourable trade and labour relationships, in which the scope for negotiation became more and more constrained.

Deforestation in the Great Lakes region started several centuries ago, with the arrival of farmers and herding peoples who began clearing forests for agriculture and pasture. Much of the region lay outside the main slaving routes, and population density increased as other people sought refuge there. Forested areas receded as agriculture expanded on the rich volcanic soils. During the early and middle parts of the 20th century populations increased rapidly, resulting in some of the highest rural population densities in Africa, for example 800 people/sq km in the volcanic region of north-west Rwanda. By the 1980s much of all the available land, apart from areas reserved for wildlife conservation and environmental protection, was under cultivation, particularly in Rwanda and Burundi. Pressures on the forests intensified through production of export crops: half the forests around the volcanoes in the north of Rwanda were cleared for pyrethrum plantations in the 1960s, and areas around Rwanda's Nyungwe forest were cleared for tea estates. Quinine and coffee production in eastern DRC also reduced forest cover. During the 20th century Rwanda's forest area was reduced from 30% of the land area to the present 7%; Burundi's natural forest cover decreased from 6% to 2% of the land area between 1976 and 1997.

As the forests were cleared, the areas left for the Twas' hunting and gathering activities decreased, heralding a period during which the Twa became progressively more and more landless and their traditional forest-based culture, including their religion and rituals and (according to some sources) their language, was eroded. In several areas the Twa sought to maintain control over their lands through armed defence, for example, the exploits of the renowned Twa Basebya at the end of the 19th century in what is now south-western Uganda. In the Bushivu highlands of eastern DRC Twa also fought long and bloody wars with agricultural peoples attempting to clear Twa forest lands for farms – fighting continued until around 1918. The impact of deforestation on the culture of the Twa was noted by early missionaries, such as Van den Biesen who commented on the future of the Twa of Burundi in 1897: 'When these forests have been destroyed for whatever reason, our Batwa will not be able to continue their traditional life.'

As forests were cleared, some Twa groups adopted alternative livelihoods based on crafts (pottery, basketry, metalworking) or attached themselves to powerful and rich individuals, thus becoming singers, dancers, messengers, guards, warriors and hunters for kings and princes; others became clients of local landowners. In some cases these services were rewarded with gifts of cattle or land, but most Twa remained without any locally recognised rights to lands.

Other groups of Twa were able to continue using the remaining forest for subsistence activities and trading of forest products, such as skins, vines, essential oils, honey, poles and game, with neighbouring farming communities, and to hunt animals such as elephant, colobus monkeys, wild pig and leopard, selected portions of which were given to local chiefs and sub-chiefs as tribute. These offerings might be repaid in heads of cattle.

The designation of conservation areas, which began in the colonial period, initially did not have much impact on the hunting and gathering activities of the Twa – and was probably beneficial to them in protecting the forests from being cleared by farmers. By the 1960s and 70s however, regulations based on the prevailing conservation ideology, prohibiting human habitation and restricting traditional use rights in protected areas, began to be enforced more vigorously. During the 1970s and 80s Twa were involuntarily resettled out of the Volcano National Park and Nyungwe Forest in Rwanda and the Kahuzi-Biega National Park and Virunga National Park in eastern DRC, in some cases by means of armed force. Twa in the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests of Uganda were officially evicted in the 1960s but only finally excluded from using the forests in 1991 when they were gazetted as national parks. No compensation was provided for the displaced Twa, either in cash or as alternative lands. In the Kahuzi-Biega eviction compensation was paid to the local Bantu landholders, but none of this reached the Twa who were not considered to have rights to the land.

The case of the Gishwati forest in Rwanda is another notorious case of expropriation of Twa lands. The last forest-dwelling Twa in Rwanda, the Impunyu, were cleared from the Gishwati forest in the 1980s and 90s to make way for World Bank-financed forestry plantation and dairy projects. These projects were intended to protect the natural forest, but they had the opposite effect: by 1994 two-thirds of the original forest had been converted to pasture, almost all of which was allocated to friends and relations of the President. The World Bank itself concluded that the project had failed, and the treatment of indigenous peoples had been 'highly unsatisfactory'. Since then refugees have been settled in the remaining forest, resulting in its total destruction, but the Gishwati Twa are still largely landless.

Twa communities throughout the Great Lakes region have been deprived of lands without due legal process, in violation of constitutional provisions and international norms that require resettled communities to be adequately compensated. Some Twa were able to acquire small plots of land, mostly through gifts from royalty and chiefs in times gone by. But since colonial times there has been virtually no land distribution to the Twa: in Rwanda for example, in 1995, 84% of landed Twa were still living on land originally given to them by the *Mwamis*. A few Twa communities have received land through government schemes in Rwanda and Burundi, and through private purchase by a conservation trust fund and private benefactors in Uganda. Some communities have secured use rights from local landowners in DRC by paying the fees prescribed under Bantu customary law.

However, recent socio-economic surveys show that the land situation of the Twa remains extremely serious. In both Rwanda and Burundi lack of farm land is 3.5 times more common among Twa households than non-Twa. In Rwanda 43% of Twa households lack farm land, in Burundi it is 53%. Of the Twa who do have agricultural land, the sizes of fields are much smaller, and usually of poorer quality than the non-Twa population. In Uganda up to 40% of Batwa households do not even have land on which to build a hut.

The pressure on land in the Great Lakes region continues to intensify with population growth, and the return of refugees who need to be resettled. In DRC, there are still areas of forest (although under the control of traditional land holders) accessible to some of the Twa communities, but in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, landless Twa have no-where left to go. They remain transient squatters constantly looking for somewhere they can lodge until they are moved on.

“These people who let us stay on their land, they call on us to cultivate. If we refuse they say ‘Move away, we no longer want you.’ We are not settled here, because other local people are pressing the landowners saying ‘What do you need Twa for?’ and at any time we may have to shift and settle elsewhere. If the owners are sympathetic, they move us to another bit of land, which we fertilise for them by living on it. The landlords don’t let us put up toilets because they don’t want anything permanent on their land, or holes which could be a problem for cultivation later. But if they catch us defecating in the fields, they are angry. My daughter was caught and was forced to remove the faeces with her hands”. *(Middle-aged Twa woman, Nyakabande/Kisoro, Uganda, May 2003)*

A large proportion of the Twa are now three or more generations removed from the forest-based livelihoods that underpinned their traditional society and culture, and have lost much of their traditional forest-related knowledge and customary practices. The older generation regards the hunter-gatherer epoch as a golden era when families could easily feed themselves and life was easy. These days, most Twa people eke out a living from marginal subsistence strategies such as casual wage labour on other peoples’ farms, carrying loads, making pottery and other crafts, singing and dancing at festivities and begging. In terms of housing, education, health and incomes, they are one of the poorest groups in a region that is already very poor. They have received very little government assistance to help them manage the difficult adjustment to life outside the forest.

The loss of a forest-based way of life seems to be associated with social and cultural changes. Originally the Twa enjoyed a certain status as forest specialists, involved in reciprocal relationships with farmers, supplying them with useful forest products from an environment that farmers did not understand, or even feared. This was reinforced by their role as hunters and trophy-bearers to the kings. As the Twa lost their forests and became an impoverished group on the fringes of society, they were increasingly regarded as pariahs, and discrimination and prejudice against them intensified. This took the form of negative stereotyping, enforced segregation and denial of their rights; Twa communities suffered high levels of abuse and physical violence from neighbouring groups, including cases of rape and murder. Caught between the vanishing forest world, and settled agrarian society where it was made clear they did not belong, the Twa came to feel irrelevant, unvalued and excluded - a ‘forgotten people’ – and acutely aware of their deprivation. Many Twa communities are highly stressed through unremitting, severe poverty, prejudice and conflicts from their neighbours and internal frictions between households, as well as the devastating impacts of the frequent and ongoing wars in the region, in which Twa have often been targeted by armed belligerents of all sides.

Traditionally, forest-based “Pygmy” peoples have egalitarian and fluid social institutions, in which no-one has authority over the others, and resources are fairly distributed among group members. Women access forest resources in their own right and not as a consequence of their relationship with men. Twa societies are still relatively egalitarian, with women playing a prominent role in community decision-making. However, as the Twa have settled and taken up farming, they are absorbing the patriarchal norms of neighbouring farming groups, including polygamy and tenure systems in which men own the land and women can only obtain use rights via their husbands.

Women are now the main economic providers in many Twa families, as well as continuing to be the main carers of children and older people. They generally can decide how to spend the money they have earned. However, where men have cleared farm land, their initial high investment of labour tends to make them feel entitled to control the spending of money earned by the crop, despite the fact that women did the planting, weeding and harvesting. The increased reliance on farming among the Twa may therefore reduce the economic independence of Twa women. Many Twa women also have to contend with domestic violence and family neglect as a result of Twa men's alcohol abuse. Alcoholism occurs in many indigenous communities that are facing cultural collapse, and where men are no longer able to carry out their traditional roles as hunters and respected provider for the family.

Faced with the loss of their ancestral forest lands, and the need to find a means of survival under changed circumstances, Twa in the Great Lakes region have expressed a range of different aspirations. Particularly among communities living near forest areas from which their forefathers were expelled, the Twa want to have secure access and use rights to forests, and to maintain their close links with the forest, but not all wish to resume the hunter-gatherer way of life. Communities near national parks want a larger share of the revenues from tourism. Throughout the region, Twa also want to have their own land for farming as part of their mix of survival strategies.

To press their claims, Twa communities are having to organise themselves in new ways and develop new forms of representative institutions, that can advocate and negotiate effectively with government structures and influential agencies. The new Twa NGOs and community-based associations, and their support groups in the region, are campaigning for governments to develop specific policies to address the particular disadvantages that the Twa face as a result of their ethic identity. In the absence of laws and policies addressing land rights of indigenous peoples, Twa organisations are calling for affirmative action in land allocation for Twa and recognition by governments of the immense historical injustice through which Twa were deprived of their forest lands and traditional means of livelihood, forcing them into severe poverty.

The Twa want to be respected and valued as members of society, and to freely enjoy their human rights and have equal access to services like other people. In the process of surviving as a forest people driven from their forests, and adapting to the harsh social and physical environment they now find themselves in, some groups and individuals want to retain their cultural distinctiveness; others want to integrate with mainstream society. It is their right to freely choose how they wish to relate to and participate in national society and to make their own choices about their future.

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The Malapantaram are a nomadic community numbering about 2000 people who live in the high forests of the Ghat Mountains of south India. Early writers described them as "wild jungle people" and as "wandering hillmen of sorts", and tended to see them as social isolates, as a survival of some pristine forest culture. But from earliest times the Malapantaram have a history of contact and intercourse with surrounding caste communities of the plains and have been a part of a wider mercantile economy, and are still primarily collectors of important forest products such as sandalwood, ginger, cardamom, dammar resin, honey and various medicinal plants. The Malapantaram thus combine subsistence food gathering, especially of yams, the hunting of small game – monkey, squirrel, hornbills, chevrotain deer – by means of muzzle loaders or the help of dogs, and the collection of what is termed locally as "minor forest produce". During the main honey season, March to May, honey collecting becomes their primary economic activity.

The majority of the Malapantaram are nomadic forest people, spending most of their life living in forest encampments occupied by one to four families. These encampments consist of two to four leaf shelters, made from palm fronds or the leaves of wild plantains. These camps are temporary; people reside in a particular locality only for about a week, before moving elsewhere.

The Malapantaram see themselves and are described by outsiders as *kattumanushyar* – “forest people” – for they closely identify with the forest, which is not only a source of livelihood, but also an environment where they can sustain a degree of cultural autonomy and social independence. They thus tend to live and constantly move at the margins of the forest, enabling them to engage easily in market transactions – usually involving a kind of contractual barter – while at the same time being able to avoid the control, harassment and disparagement – even violence – which they generally experience from government officials, traders and local peasant communities. The forest for the Malapantaram is thus not only a home: it is a place where they can always retreat to avoid the imposition of outsiders.

With the establishment of colonial rule and the Travancore state, the forested hills of the Ghats became forest reserves under the jurisdiction of the forest department. In 1911 rules were drawn up for the “Treatment and Management of Hillmen” and these stipulated that tribal people like the Malapantaram were to be under the control of the forestry department and to be located in permanent settlements. The Malapantaram were thus seen as essentially “wards” of the forestry department and denied any land rights – the forests being seen as essentially belonging to the state. After independence the Malapantaram came under the jurisdiction of the Harijan Welfare Department, and efforts have been made to promote the welfare of the community through the establishment of schools and health centres, and through efforts to “settle” them and induce them to adopt agriculture. As elsewhere, a “nomadic” life style and a foraging existence was derogated by the state officials, and efforts to “uplift” the Malapantaram have centred on the establishment of “settlements” – it was described as a “colonization scheme” – and its primary aim was to transform the Malapantaram economy into one of permanent agriculture. The scheme proved to be a singular failure, for the land allotted to the Malapantaram was largely taken over by local traders from a nearby village. It seems that the Malapantaram were extremely reluctant to take up agriculture, and thus sever the links that bind them to the forest – the environment with which they so powerfully identify and know is their only really safe haven.

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When Australians took control, at the end of the first world war, of the German colony of New Guinea, under a mandate from the League of Nations to protect the native peoples, it was thought that New Guinea had only a sparse population, mostly along the coast. The mountainous interior, it was believed, was a virtually empty and impenetrable jumble of rain-soaked hills. However, it is now clear that the highland valleys of New Guinea have long been among the most densely settled agricultural areas in the world.

The highland valleys of Papua New Guinea were first contacted by Australians in the 1930s and were found to be inhabited by over a million people, made up of several hundred different ethnic groups, who had been growing their vegetable staples and raising their pigs in the fertile upland soils for over nine thousand years. Although these peoples traded, through many intermediaries, with the coast, the highlanders were equally unaware of what lay beyond their territories. As highlander Gerigl Gande recalled in the 1980s: ‘we only knew the people who lived immediately around us. For example the Naugla, they were our enemies and we couldn’t go past them. So we knew nothing of what was beyond. We thought no one existed apart from ourselves and our enemies.’ The mutual astonishment and incomprehension of these two cultures, when they first met, was almost complete.

Australian officials and miners only became aware of these populated highlands in 1930, when the adventurer, Michael Leahy, first marched up into the hills from the east coast, in search of gold. The Mandated Territory was viewed by Australians as a business proposition, the local men were referred to as ‘boys’ and the isolated groups in the interior pejoratively called ‘bush kanakas’ in pidgin. The indigenous peoples were widely considered treacherous, bloodthirsty savages, remnants of an inferior race doomed to extinction. As one settler noted ‘the natives of this Territory are mean-souled, thieving rotters, and education only gives them added cunning’.

The miners pushed deep into the interior, travelling light and living off the land. They demanded food from the native people, paid for with metal tools and prized sea-shells, to keep their expeditions on the move. In their haste to get to the goldfield they dreamed of, they sparked confusion and conflicts. When warriors barred their path with arrows and threats, rather than return to the coast, the miners used guns to deadly effect to blast a path through to their goals. Sure that their technological superiority was, equally, evidence of their moral supremacy, it never occurred to the miners that what they were doing was wrong, much less that the local people might have their own reasons and interests for choosing to develop their interactions differently.

The gulf of incomprehension was wide on both sides. Trying to make sense of these strangely apparelled, pale skinned visitors, the highlanders, for the large part, assumed that they were ancestral spirits, either returning lost relatives coming from the east where the dead were thought to dwell or else ambiguous, even evil, mythic beings from the heavens. Recalls Gopu Ataiamelahu of Gama Village near Goroka: ‘I asked myself, who are these people? They must be somebody from the heavens. Have they come to kill us or what? We wondered if this could be the end of us and it gave us a feeling of sorrow. We said, “we must not touch them”. We were terribly frightened’. Remembers another: ‘They smelt so differently, these strange people. We thought it would kill us, so we covered our noses with the leaves from a special bush that grows near cucumbers. It had a particularly nice smell and it covered up theirs’.

Once it became widely known that the strange beings carried untold wealth with them, many communities wanted their visitors to stay with them and not carry on through to the lands of their rivals and enemies. Misunderstandings were almost inevitable. A typical conflict occurred in 1933, as the miners accompanied by a colonial officer, tried to push through to Mount Hagen. Ndika Nikints recalls the situation.

“The Yamka and Kuklika and all the people around us were making a lot of noise, shouting and calling out war cries. They were saying they wanted to take everything from the white men. Some people snatched things from the carriers, like tins and trade goods. Then Kiap Taylor [the colonial officer] broke this thing he was carrying and before we knew anything we heard it crack. Everything happened at once. Everyone was pissing and shitting themselves in terror. Mother! Father! I was horrified. I wanted to run away… the muskets got the people – their stomachs came out, their heads came off. Three men were killed and one was wounded… I said ‘Oh, Mother!’ but that didn’t help. I breathed deeply, but that didn’t help. I was really desperate. Why did I come here? I should never have come. We thought it was lightning that was eating people up. What was this strange thing, something that had come down from the sky to eat us up? What’s happening? What’s happening?”

This pattern of mutual incomprehension leading to violence and terror was to be repeated over and over again whenever the colonial officers and miners felt obliged to push through previously uncontacted areas to reach their self-ordained objectives. Another well-documented case comes from later in the 1930s when a colonial patrol, aimed at making a reconnaissance up the Strickland River and through the highlands north of Lake Kutubu, pushed through the lands of six different and previously uncontacted peoples. Carrying only enough supplies for one month’s travel, for a journey that in the end took them more than five, they were soon obliged to trade with the local communities, who sought to avoid all contact with the strangers.

Coming first into the lands of the Etoro people, the patrol emerged suddenly from the forests into full view of one community. ‘We jumped with surprise’ recounts one elder ‘No one had seen anything like this before or knew what it was. When we saw the clothes of the strangers, we thought they were like people you see in a dream: “these must be spirit people coming openly, in plain sight” ’. When these spirits approached them, the Etoro were even more dismayed and the more insistent the spirits were in offering gifts the more alarmed the Etoro became. The Etoro were convinced that if they accepted any gifts they would then be obligated to the unknown world of the spirits, thus bringing together two realms that should remain separate, lest the world become unmade and everybody die. Shortly after, in a confused encounter, one of the Etoro was shot and killed, confirming the Etoro in their view about who these beings were.

Further along the trail that they followed, the patrol came upon taboo signs, clear indications that the local people did not want the strangers to pass. The patrol pushed on regardless and, coming upon an old woman, pressed her with gifts of beads. When she returned to her own people, who were hiding in the forest, and showed them the gifts they were thrown into even greater dismay, imagining that the whole world would collapse to its origin point if the world of humans and spirits was not kept apart. Their consternation was even greater when they returned to their huts and found gifts of cloth, axes and machetes hanging from the rafters. Unsure what might happen if they touched them they were left hanging there. 'What are these things? Why don't you take them down?' asked a visitor from a nearly village. 'We are afraid. Who knows where these things are from. Perhaps they are from the Origin Time'.

The further on the patrol went the more often it had to resort to violence to secure food. In one encounter with the Wola, the patrol found itself in a narrow defile and fighting broke out after further miscommunication and cultural incomprehension. The devastating rifle fire and close quarter shooting with service revolvers killed and wounded over fourteen Wola. Recalls Leda: 'They shot my cross-cousin Huruwumb, and I went to see him. You could see his liver exposed. They kept sending me to fetch water for him to drink because he was thirsty. Back and forth, I kept going to fetch water for him. He lived in agony for three days. On the fourth day he died.' One of the Wola women, Tensgay, remembers other gruesome wounds:

"Kal Aenknais had his thighs and lower torso smashed. Completely pulverised here and here. He kept groaning 'Oh! Ah!'. I saw him. He died later. Wounded in the guts he was. His intestines were punctured. When he was given water to drink, to cool him off, it came spurting out of the holes in his body. Then there was Obil. His eyes were blown clean out of his head. When they landed on the path they wriggled around and around for ages. He died too. And then there was that poor blighter – aah – whose entrails were shot out. His intestines and stomach were blasted right out of his body…"

After the massacre, the white officers sent the coastal police men to get food from the village. Coming on the village hut they found the women and children cowering inside. Tengsay recalls the scene:

"We were terrified… They tore open the door of our house and demanded everything. Puliym's mother released the pigs one at a time and drove them out of the door to them waiting outside…They tore off the front of the house, attacked it with axes and bushknives… They took the pigs one at a time and shot them outside. After they killed them they singed off the bristles over a fire made from the wood torn from our house. Then they butchered them ready to carry off… After they had killed and prepared the pigs they turned on us. We didn't see well what was going on. We were cowering inside. They returned and stood there [about three metres away] and fired their guns into the house. They shot Hiyt Ibiziym, Bat Maemuw, my sister, Ndin, Maeniy and me. That's six of us… We were so frightened that we were all dizzy and faint… We slumped in a sort of stupefied state. Who was there to bandage our wounds with moss and levaes?… we just slumped indoors. We didn't think anything. All we felt was terror and dizziness. I was sort of senseless… Well, they didn't rape any women. That was done by later patrols, when they not only stole our pigs but our women too, and broke into our houses and smashed up our possessions, like our bows and things. They even excreted in our fireplaces".

The task of the colonial authorities in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, as commanded by the League of Nations, was to protect the native peoples. Accordingly, the highlands were declared a 'controlled area' into which access was only allowed to those with permits. There were strict regulations, on paper, about what those with permits could do if they entered the controlled area. They must not enter native villages; not allow their carriers (coastal porters) to trade with the local people without supervision; and ensure that all campsites were provided with pit latrines to avoid contamination of local waters. Arms were only to be used as a last resort, in self defense. However, not only did the colonial power lack the resources and manpower to control access effectively, they also wanted to encourage economic development in the interior. Permits to enter the 'controlled areas' were thus issued to miners, and the local officials were themselves in two minds about the appropriateness of the regulations.

Many of the colonials were, however, clear in their minds that, if there was to be 'development', the way of life of the native people would have to change. As one editorial in the "Rabaul Times" on 25 September 1936 noted:

“One of the greatest contributing factors to the unsatisfactory services rendered by native labourers in this country is their economic independence. For it must not be forgotten that every native is a landed proprietor, and nature has endowed New Guinea with a prolific soil, which provides adequate sustenance for a minimum of labour. Dismissal from employment, if he fails to carry out his duties, holds no terrors for the New Guinean native. It is the shadow of the sack, hovering over the white employee, which urges him to render service. Unless and until our natives reach such a stage of development that they must work to obtain sustenance or a livelihood, they will never make suitable indentured labour for the average white resident”.

From this point of view, the enforced contacts and integration of the highlanders into the modern world, were necessary steps to achieve a kind of ‘development’. A certain amount of bloodshed could then be justified as an inevitable part of the process of social change. Perhaps, if those in the outside world hadn’t been in such a hurry and could better appreciate that people in other worlds have different priorities and beliefs, things might have been different.

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