

FRONTIER ENCOUNTERS

Indigenous Communities and Settlers
in Asia and Latin America



Poverty and the maldistribution of land in core areas of developing countries, together with state schemes for the colonization of unruly frontiers, have forced indigenous peoples and settlers into an uneasy co-existence. Presenting material from various Asian and Latin American countries, **Frontier Encounters** examines factors that make for conflict and accommodation, studies the role of policy frames, and looks at promising mitigation strategies. The range of topics covered by the articles includes the texture of everyday-relations at the settlement frontier and the reconfiguration of ethnic hierarchies in tune with changing conquest cycles; settler land and resource use strategies; anti-settler riots and their politics; peace accords and what they can and cannot achieve as instruments for halting migration-induced violence; communal land titles as a promising avenue for conflict prevention and the empowerment of weak and defenseless groups; and the need for balancing indigenous rights advocacy with support and legal protection for disenfranchised parts of the settler population.

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Contents

	Preface by the Editor	v
1	INTRODUCTION: States, Settlers and Indigenous Communities Danilo Geiger	1
2	TURNER IN THE TROPICS: The Frontier Concept Revisited Danilo Geiger	75
3	COLONIZATION AND CONFLICT ON THE AMAZON FRONTIER: Dimensions of Interethnic Relations in the Peruvian Montaña Søren Hvalkof	217
4	NON-VIOLENCE IN A FRONTIER: The Strategy of Avoidance and the Struggle for Indigenous Control over Land and Resources on Mindoro Island Christian Erni	287
5	THE ARTLESS "ARTS OF RESISTANCE": State Terror and Indigenous Violence at West Kalimantan's Frontier Danilo Geiger	347
6	FROM VILLAINS AND VICTIMS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS: The Case of the Amazonian Colonos Marina T. Campos	407
7	Indigenous Peoples, Settlers and the Philippine Ancestral Domain Land Titling Program Sabino G. Padilla, Jr	449
8	THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS "PEACE ACCORD": Whose Peace? Raja Devasish Roy	483
9	NEW ISSUES IN THE POLITICS OF THE INDIGENOUS: Minimal Justice, Law, and the Dialogic Experience Ranabir Samaddar	533
	List of Contributors	555

Preface

by the Editor

Migration and the problems of interethnic co-existence that it causes have become a major concern for many citizens in the West. Over the past decades, tens of thousands from the less fortunate parts of the world have left their countries of origin for the rich, industrialized North, fleeing from violence, political persecution and the general lack of economic perspectives. As a result, conservative political parties from France to the Netherlands, from Switzerland to Australia, and from Italy to Denmark have come to power – or very close to power – on xenophobic party platforms, causing major changes in the political landscape of western democracies. Migrants and the question of how to integrate them have become very emotional subjects, and to raise the topic in the context of an IWGIA publication will be reason for suspicion for some and invite applause from others.

The concern of the present volume and the research project which has animated it is a different kind of migration from the one that so preoccupies the minds of Westerners these days. It does not lead from the peripheries of the world to the metropolitan centers, but takes place entirely in the Southern hemisphere. Its direct effects on the rich world, therefore, are limited; the conflicts it engenders have the habit of ejecting refugees to neighbouring countries, not across the North-South divide.

In most, but not all cases, the migration that this book deals with is not migration across international borders, but so-called “internal migration” within the territory of a nation-state. We are not concerned with the migration of rural folk to urban centers which is so characteristic of the developmental dynamics of developing countries, but mainly with migratory movements which bring rural people to more remote rural areas. The book’s focus is on the migration of mostly poor, landless settlers into the domains of indigenous peoples, into *frontier* areas. The arena of the conflicts engendered by this migration is thus the periphery of the periphery, and it is not surprising that the world hardly notices the often ferocious clashes that occur there more or less regularly. This lack of attention by the general public is matched by the lack of systematic scientific studies on conflicts at present-day settlement frontiers. Turning to migration studies for help and theoretical guidance, I found that they had very little to say about our subject, as almost all theoretical work deals with migration

from national and international peripheries to metropolitan centers. Comparative studies and efforts at theory-building on internal migrations to frontier areas are, to my knowledge, practically absent. To try to start filling this gap is one of the goals of this book and the research project from which it sprang.

It is a mystery to me why the subject has met with so little interest so far. The inattention of scholars and even the activist community is in striking contrast with the ubiquity of tensions and the occurrence of open conflicts caused by migration to indigenous domains. No small number of indigenous insurgencies and ethno-nationalist struggles in Asia are *nativist* in the sense that they are driven in part or mainly by the question of land and its loss to migrants. It is amazing, therefore, that the subject has attracted so little interest from security studies, or researchers of internal conflict and civil war. Scholars dealing with indigenous affairs, as well, have hardly raised the subject. My own research experience in the Philippines and Indonesia, for example, tells me that even where indigenous movements single out the *state* for criticism, much of the everyday problems on the ground and the sentiments of the village grassroots would warrant a closer look at the role of settlers as at least *partly* autonomous agents of land alienation. Historically, the star in the cast of the "Great Terrain Robbery", the dramatic epic of the displacement of indigenous peoples from their territories, has been the settler. On the more narrowly academic plane, too, migrants to the frontier emerge as iridescent characters with an intriguing theoretical dimension. Even while migrating on their own, they can often be shown to be part of state designs aiming at extending territorial control and disseminating the values that make the state and, today, the nation. The settler, therefore, is at once outside *and* inside the state, a strange hybrid that historically has contributed enormously to building and consolidating state forms of organization where they are most contested.

I surmise that the lack of interest in the topic stems from a certain uneasiness that the subject of the settler and the conflicts surrounding him/her seem to provoke. For one, is it not true that more often than not, settlers are destitute and downtrodden human beings, migrating because they lack other possibilities to secure themselves and their families a decent life? "There are no bad guys in the Sierra Madre", said the Nepalese anthropologist, Navin Rai (cited in Bion-Griffin 1985:100), who set out to study the embattled Agta foragers in the Northern Philippines. Though lowland settlers were the main cause of the slow demise of the Agta, Rai had to acknowledge that they had come for respectable reasons, and he found it difficult to hold them responsible for the Agta's plight. It is clearly not easy to make moral judgements on rights and wrongs where, in a sense, victims are facing victims.

A second, related and equally vexing question haunts the subject. Are not settlers and their indigenous adversaries both part of civil society (earlier generations would

have talked of the "lower classes"), and are we not going in the wrong direction when we highlight the often murderous conflicts between them? Is it not our task as responsible critical scholars to celebrate civil society as the repository of political reason, as against the unreason of the state? Much of the writings in development studies of the past years seems to suggest so, and it sits uneasily with many that poor buggers, indigenous and non-indigenous, could at times display such a penchant for cruel and bloody conflict.

Thirdly – and finally –, we may ask, are indigenous anti-migrant movements and their discourses so much different from the familiar chauvinist discourses of right-wing parties in Europe and other western countries, and should we therefore really give them voice and risk becoming their accomplices by addressing the migration problem?

These are valid injunctions, and all of us who have contributed to this volume have taken them seriously. We have tried to remain conscious of the fact that anti-settler discourse in fact is xenophobic discourse, and the close ideological relative of the language of hatred of the right-wing politician. Another constant challenge was to try *not* to reify culture and posit absolute ethnic opposites – here the indigenous, there *the* settler –, and enter the discussion with preconceived notions on who it is that we have to empower, and who not. Though easy to state as a matter of sociological principle, it is often difficult to do justice to the fact that both societies in the encounter are internally highly differentiated; too often, ambiguity in attitude towards the supposed ethnic antagonists fails to be recorded, as is pragmatic collaboration with them. Insiduously, furthermore, inherent in the very vocabulary that we use to discuss frontier migration and its attendant conflicts are moral judgements and sublime political advice as to how to overcome such conflicts. Thus, by addressing indigenous peoples as *communities*, we attribute the indigenous a sense of collectivity, with all the rights that follow from international human rights instruments, while denying the same to the settler, whom we *individualize* and in a sense automatically disenfranchise. Even more value-laden are terms such as "intruders" or "trespassers" for migrants and other non-native frontier actors; we have tried to avoid them whenever possible, but our usage throughout the book is, admittedly, still uneven. In all, we have tried to be alive to the complexities of the topic without making them an excuse to avoid clear judgements where these seem to be called for.

This book is the outcrop of a four-year (2001-2005) comparative research project on conflicts between indigenous communities and settlers in South and Southeast Asia, conducted under the auspices of Switzerland's NCCR North-South program (*National Centre of Competence in Research North-South: Research Partnerships for Mitigating Syndroms of Global Change*). The program, directed by Prof. Dr. Hans Hurni (Centre

for Development and Environment, CDE, Berne), is co-funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland's official arm for development cooperation. Complemented by three newly-commissioned articles, the book comprises the most important papers presented at the project's Inter-Disciplinary Workshop on the "Dimensions, Dynamics and the Transformation of Resource Conflicts between Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in Frontier Regions of South and Southeast Asia" at the Sport-Hôtel, Mont-Soleil/St. Imier (BE), Switzerland (25th to 29th September 2002). All of them have been revised and updated to accommodate recent developments on the ground. One of the papers was enlarged beyond recognition so it could serve as a rough blueprint for a planned Ph. D. dissertation (Geiger, "Turner in the Tropics"); though I strove to keep the narrative simple and plain, I must ask readers to pardon the paper's excessive length and its overdose of quotations, references and other concessions to academic conventions.

Given the geographical focus of the research project that is the backdrop to this book, a clear majority of the articles deal with case material from South and Southeast Asia, rendering the reference to Latin America in the title somewhat dubious. That impression is, however, deceiving. Not only do the two Latin American case studies (Hvalkof, "Colonization and Conflict", and Campos, "From Villains and Victims to Environmental Activists") cover major countries of the region with settlement policies that reflect regional trends, but the article that sketches a framework for the enquiry of settlement processes at national peripheries (Geiger, "Turner in the Tropics") makes constant reference to Latin American conditions, and the analytical concept it proposes has in important parts been developed on the basis of literature on the region. It is the frontier theme that unifies the seemingly disparate accounts from the Latin American and Asian arenas of conflicts on colonization fronts, and it is by reference to the frontier that astounding similarities emerge from an interregional comparison.

Funding for the publication of this book and the workshop which gave rise to it came from the SNSF and the SDC, and was made available by the NCCR North-South; it is herewith gratefully acknowledged. My gratitude for their unrelenting support (inspite of my regular flaunting of publication deadlines) goes to Prof. Laurent Goetschel of Swisspeace, the leading house of our research project, as well as Dr. Eva Ludi (Overseas Development Agency, formerly Swisspeace), Nathalie Gasser and Dr. Didier Péclard who, at various times in the process, were my immediate superiors and overseers on the construction site. Give or take a few moments of panic, Prof. Jürg Helbling (Department of Social Anthropology, University of Zürich) has been a most lenient and trusting boss; thanks for having steered the project through the shallows and past the rapids that sometimes threatened to undo it. I am grateful to Chris Erni and Kaspar Kasics for having offered their photographs. Helpful editorial comments

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1 INTRODUCTION: States, Settlers and Indigenous Communities

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photo: Christian Erni

The introduction of a new state in a region of high ethnic diversity and political instability, such as the case of the state of Eritrea, has led to a complex and often contentious process of state formation. This process involves the negotiation of power between different groups, the establishment of a central authority, and the integration of diverse communities into a single political entity. The role of the state in this process is crucial, as it determines the extent to which different groups are represented and their interests protected. The introduction of a new state can also lead to the marginalization of certain groups, particularly those who are not aligned with the new ruling elite. This can result in social and economic inequalities, which may in turn lead to further conflict and instability. The process of state formation is therefore a complex and ongoing one, and it is essential to understand the dynamics at play in order to promote a more just and equitable society.

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1 Introduction: States, Settlers and Indigenous Communities

Danilo Geiger, University of Zurich

The practical and theoretical significance of frontier settlement

The present volume is concerned with the movement of settlers to the rural peripheries of their own or, in some cases, of a neighbouring country. In our definition, “settlers” are primarily, but not exclusively, agriculturalists (see e. g. Friedmann 1996:1f.)¹. Seven years into the first decade of the new millenium, development trends in the South continue to depend on the availability of loosely-settled fringe areas as “populations sinks” for peasantries in agricultural centers that have reached or exceeded the threshold of carrying capacity under present conditions of land distribution. Unable to put a break on population growth, unwilling to confront their landed elites on the issue of agrarian reform, and incapable of increasing food production with yet more “green revolutions”, many governments of the developing world have developed programmes to resettle their rural poor to areas with untapped “development potential” (Nietschmann 1986:2), or, if they lack the means for such programmes, seek to stimulate so-called “spontaneous migration” to the margins of their national territories. With, depending on the region, from 60-80% of the national population still active in farming (see e. g. Uhlig 1984:8 for Southeast Asia, Hoshour 2000:6 for Indonesia), agricultural expansion through colonization remains an important policy concern of regional and national development planners.

However, state governments’ intentions at the “pioneer fringe” are multiple. They are shaped not only by the great potential that governments perceive as laying dormant there, but also by the hazards that symbolically unmarked and not fully controlled bits of national territories seem to hold out in state elites’ eyes. If states fill up their frontiers with migrants, they may not only seek relief from demographic and social pressure, but also want to “nationalize” space that has not borne the full signature of the national community before (Baruah 2003a, Geiger on frontiers, this volume).

Colonization invariably involves migration into areas that are already occupied (Casagrande, Thompson and Young 1964:283), raising the spectre of fierce competition for agrarian resources between the newcomers and groups that are native to the area – usually, but not exclusively, indigenous peoples. Apart from the loss of their land base, the locals are also often faced with the fact that the settlers and their descendants take control of trade, lucrative extractive industries and local political institutions, and monopolize employment opportunities. Mass immigration by settlers unfamiliar with non-intensive agricultural techniques, moreover, threatens local ecosystems, leading to the denudation of forests and the degradation of soils (Margolis 1977, Pichón 1996).

A number of factors limit the capacity of indigenous societies for open and sustained resistance against alien occupiers such as migrants; indeed, anthropologists seasoned in research in settings with high incidences of settler-in-migration have expressed their amazement at how seldom indigenous disaffection reaches the level of revolts or uprisings². Occasionally, however, they do occur. In these cases, the export of excess population by state governments and spontaneous migration to the margins of state control turns the “pioneer fringe” into an arena of open, violent conflict. When this happens, the state’s regulative capacity is usually insufficient for containing unrest, either because the government is seen as being partial, because it is too weak to enforce restrictions on immigration, or because it fails to develop effective institutional solutions for redressing grievances and instituting workable compromises. In some places, indigenous insurgency movements have emerged that try to reinstall the dominance of the “sons of the soil” by fighting the state and the migrants. Such violent escalation can lead to the militarization of the areas in question, blocking any meaningful attempt to bring sustainable – or, indeed, any form of – development to these areas. The high socio-economic and political costs caused by such conflicts include the paralyzation of local government and the continuous erosion of local livelihoods.

Where they erupt, violent conflicts over resources between indigenous peoples and settlers have the potential to lastingly destabilize not only the respective states/provinces, but indeed whole regions. Thus, American political scientists Fearon and Laitin (2001) have found that “sons of the soil conflicts”, i.e. conflicts involving autochthonous populations that face migration-induced demographic stress, account not only for a disproportionately large share of the world’s civil wars after 1980, but also tend to dure significantly longer than other internal wars (ibid.:1, 5)³. Besides protracted armed insurrections, episodic outbursts of violent anti-settler feelings have been known to occur, taking the form of riots (see e.g. Geiger, this volume, on West Kalimantan, Meiselas 2003:184-188 on Wamena in the Baliem Valley, West Papua) or prolonged street fighting and mutual raiding (see Duncan 2005 on North Maluku⁴). Also reported from the world’s colonization fronts are low-intensity range wars



Photo 1.1 : Vignettes from the settlement frontier: settler plowing his field, Higaonon area, Agusan del Norte (photo: Christian Erni)

involving ambushes, murders and occasional massacres (see *The Economist* 2006, Schröder 1993:109-135 on the violence between Brazilian Indian tribes and fence-creeping *colonos* and cattle ranchers). At the mild end of the scale of expressions of potentially violent antagonisms between indigenous people and settlers are rallies and street protests against the presence of the migrants (see Luithui-Erni, forthcoming, on the agitation against Chakma settlers in Arunachal Pradesh, India, and McElwee 2004:182 on mass protests in the Central Highlands of Vietnam).

While earlier studies on the confrontation of peoples in colonization stressed the more or less peaceful acculturation of indigenous peoples as its most likely outcome (see e.g. Spicer, ed., 1961), a number of contemporary authors highlight the corrosive effect of frontier settlement on ethnic peace, order and stability (Li 1999:17, Hoshour 1997, 2000; Nathan and Kelkar 2004:22f., DeKoninck 2006). They insist that radical and potentially military forms of *nativism* – collective action which targets migrants because of their foreign origins and the threats perceived to emanate from them (see e.g. Weiner 1992:319) – remain a distinct possibility where states organize, facilitate or permit colonization at their edges.

Frontier settlement, thus, should be an issue of great concern to all those interested in development and peace, as it jeopardizes both. Besides conflicts among people, it also creates conflicts with nature. Settlers’ usually improvident land use

practices make them an important factor in deforestation, and thus a key stakeholder group in efforts at biodiversity protection (see Campos, this volume). For students and advocates of indigenous rights, finally, settlers matter as local-level antagonists of indigenous people, and a frequent, direct source of pressure on their land base and culture.

Since the end of the 1980s, donor countries and multilateral banks have become cautious about openly supporting colonization schemes, and seem to have reduced expenditures on such programmes. This sudden prickliness after two decades of unrestrained spending, it appears, was an answer to the rising tide of criticism of the heavy social and economic costs of frontier settlement (Hulme 1988:49). Notably in Asia, major countries, however, continue to invest in colonization programmes, such as China (Xinjiang, Tibet), Vietnam (Central Highlands) and Indonesia (Transmigration). South America's most populous country, Brazil, too, has not abandoned directed colonization. In some regions, land at the periphery is getting scarce, so that the rate of both planned and spontaneous settlement has decreased considerably during the past decade. Thus, figures from the Brazilian Amazon suggest that in-migration from outside the region started to become less significant in the early 1990s; apparently, pioneers to the remaining inland frontiers have since largely been people from within Amazonia (de Almeida and Campari 1995:5, 13)⁶. In other areas, land scarcity at the frontier has become a fact, too, without, however, disrupting the influx of settlers in a significant manner. In these cases, the myth of abundance and plenty in the wilds continues to animate migration, notwithstanding the objective situation (see Barbora, forthcoming, on Karbi Anglong in Assam, and Wenk, forthcoming, on Mindanao).

While some frontiers show signs of exhaustion, and the era of planned settlement of pharaonic proportions seems to come to a close, current global climatic developments could well augur a new phase of migration to the indigenous periphery, and, indeed, a new appreciation of state and international donor support for state-led schemes. As a recent study on the effects of rising sea levels – one of the effects of global warming – on low-elevation coastal zones revealed, the resettlement of millions of citizens away from endangered seabords will become a necessity in the near future (McGranahan, Balk and Anderson 2007). Three fourths of the coastal dwellers most at risk of being swamped by flooding and devastating storms live in Asia – notably in China, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia. Many of those to be relocated, it can be expected, will be moved not to the densely-settled urban and agricultural core areas, but to the frontier fringes. Migration to indigenous domains, and thus the settler topic, will therefore continue to matter also in the coming decades.

The present volume offers first an interpretative frame for the systematic analysis of the agency of settlers, indigenous people and the state in the process of migration to the periphery. It proceeds by taking stock of characteristic patterns of interaction



Photo 1.2 : Vignettes from the settlement frontier: migrant shopkeepers, Tezu town, Lohit district, Arunachal Pradesh, India (photo: Christian Erni)

between the two actor groups, indicating important variations that seem to depend, among others, on the specific politico-military adaptations that the indigenous communities concerned have developed in the past. Picking its examples from cases of planned as well as “spontaneous” settlement, the book offers local vignettes of the acrimonious struggle for land and for another scarce resource – labour – between the two groups. Leaving the sphere of strained, but mostly peaceful cohabitation, it then takes a close look at specific forms of military nativism – riots and protracted armed insurgencies –, and probes into state efforts at peace-brokering. Finally, the book considers options for a lasting and equitable transformation of migration-induced conflicts, and explores one especially promising avenue, the provision of collective land titles.

Types of frontier settlement

Among the most important distinctions in the field of frontier migration are those that classify modes of settlement according to the extent of state support offered to the settlers. Taking our clues from Scudder (1989:x), we distinguish *state-sponsored* from *state-facilitated* and *spontaneous settlement*⁷. *State-sponsored* settlement includes all those forms of migration where governments systematically plan, organize – whether as single projects or sustained, more comprehensive programs – and fund

the transfer of substantial populations from core to frontier regions of a country. We speak of *state-facilitated* settlement whenever and where states – while desisting from directly organizing and funding it – create incentives, an enabling social and political environment and a supportive infrastructure for migration. *Spontaneous settlement*, finally, involves all those instances where migrants establish new homes at the periphery in the absence or independent of direct and indirect state efforts for the settlement of the frontier.

It is important to note that much of what passes as *spontaneous* settlement in a large part of the literature on migration is spontaneous only in the sense of not being organized and assisted as part of a comprehensive and publicly-heralded state settlement policy. It is not spontaneous in the sense of being unpredictable or surprising, because in pursuance of frontier development, states often create the incentives and the supportive environment and infrastructure for migration which we have come to define as characteristic of *facilitated* settlement (Partridge 1989:12f.). States facilitate settlement in sometimes more and sometimes less oblique ways, be it by building roads to hitherto remote frontier locations (Ledec and Goodland 1989:448), by creating attractive economic niches for migrants (Partridge 1989:13, Baruah 2003a:930f.), by crafting legislation that provides outsiders with land or use rights on easy terms (Ledec and Goodland 1989:450), or by not enforcing legislation that excludes outsiders from the right to trade, settle, or have access to land (Lynch and Talbott 1995)⁸.

Notably pioneer roads, often built to gain access to timber, hydro-electric power and minerals, but also to facilitate the posting and movement of troops, have long been known to serve as entry points for colonization (see e. g. Rudel 1983, Leonel 1992, Colchester 1993a:7f., Colombijn 2002:756f., 760). State governments routinely shrug off charges that hold them responsible for the displacement of indigenous people and forest destruction along such road corridors, pointing to the “spontaneous” and thus “uncontrollable” nature of migrant flows in the wake of road construction.

The often-positing dichotomy between “directed” or “organized” and “spontaneous” colonization is hopelessly inadequate, because it invites abuse by state planners and governments eager to deflect blame for the collateral damages of settlement. Thus, as Jones (1990, Ch. 1) maintains for Central America, major government-sponsored colonization projects have been rare in the region; most national governments, however, facilitated frontier settlement in the forested lowlands by offering land titles to forest-clearing peasants. These seemingly auto-generated population movements were thus nearly everywhere stimulated and upheld by specific laws and general policy orientations that favoured the settlement of forest areas. Zhang et al. (2001) arrive at similar conclusions for post-reform Vietnam. After 1986 when economic liberalisation (*doi moi*) started and the ban on private



Photo 1.3 : Vignettes from the settlement frontier: greeting Bengali settler, Chittagong Hill Tracts (photo: Christian Ermi)

landholdings and official restrictions on mobility was lifted, the government cut down on planned migration to the Central Highlands, realizing that the allure of cheap land and the profits from cash-crop production was enough to attract thousands to the frontier (ibid.:24). However, government claims to the contrary notwithstanding, the only thing that was “spontaneous” about this new generation of migrants is that they were not officially enlisted in a state-organized settlement program; in practice, however, they “combined personal and state resources and networks, utilising the state-built infrastructure for the NEZs [‘New Economic Zones’, D. G.]⁹ in the region, such as roads, land clearance and services, and information and knowledge about the destination provided by state channels” (ibid.:25).

Throughout the world, official settlement schemes and the state-sponsored migrants they bring blend with “free” forms of migration. These latter, however, are usually *secondary* in nature, because they depend on and result from state strategies of population distribution (Hardy 2000:24). Typically, a few years after the inception of a state-sponsored scheme, migrants who arrived unassisted by the state tend to outnumber the state-sponsored settlers, often in substantial proportions¹⁰. However, governments usually do not own up to their responsibility for unleashing “spontaneous” colonization, and shun the effort of even assessing its volume (Uhlir 1984:6).

This book tries to draw attention to the often under-rated role of the state in frontier settlement and the conflicts it engenders, and stresses the responsibility of the state in devising adequate policy solutions for them. If policy-making is to become more responsive to the needs of local indigenous communities and the concern for fragile frontier environments, a first step should be to ditch the simplistic dual opposition between “planned” and “spontaneous” colonization, and bring into view the third, most numerous and most consequential category of *state-facilitated* migrants¹¹.

But why, we may ask, are state governments so squeamish about admitting their interest and the full extent of their involvement in frontier migration? What purposes do states pursue when they sponsor or facilitate settlement to the margins?

Objectives of state-sponsored and state-facilitated frontier settlement

In Asia and Latin America just as elsewhere, migrants to frontier regions are often economic and/or environmental “refugees” hailing from densely-settled, resource-short areas (Samaddar 1997)¹². In other cases, they may be the victims of resettlement policies following the state’s appropriation of their land for development projects such as dams for irrigation or the generation of electricity (Hirsch 1996)¹³. To some measure, therefore, population pressure on indigenous domains is one of the consequences of failed development policies in core areas of state control (see e. g. Swain 1996).

It would be misleading, however, to think that migration to the frontier is following quasi-hydraulic laws of population distribution that shift people from regions characterized by high demographic pressure to low-pressure areas. Intra-country mobility and thus the flow of settlers to the periphery is determined and shaped by national policies (Scudder 1989:x); any claim to the effect of their being an autonomous force beyond the state’s capacity to stop is therefore spurious.

In many instances, states are actively organizing or tacitly supporting frontier settlement as they perceive it as either economically and demographically useful, or as a potent instrument for “nation-building” or geo-strategy (defence of national borders and internal counter-insurgency). More often than not, developing states have at some point of their history devised policies supporting (or even forcing) migration away from more populous regions to the agricultural frontier. The literature on state-directed land settlement is vast¹⁴ and often of limited utility given the narrow technocratic and managerial approach of many authors; nevertheless, it is possible to identify the most common motives that drive states to organize, promote or at least ease the colonization of the frontier.



Photo 1.4 : State-facilitated settlement: settler huts erected along newly-built government road opening the Mt. Apo area for geothermal energy development, Davao province, Mindanao, the Philippines (photo: Danilo Geiger)

Before we come to this, however, a few accompanying remarks are in order. Until roughly the second half of the 1980s, neither state managers nor development planners have perceived the guided transfer of excess population to national frontiers to be in itself reprehensible. Just as it appeared as a natural thing to governments to propose to solve the problem of the concentration of land in the hands of a few oligarchs by sending the landless to the jungle (a task sometimes entrusted to a government body which was to look after both land reform and colonization¹⁵), it seemed unproblematic to the authorities to admit that state-directed settlement might lead to the displacement and possibly the disappearance of frontier-dwelling indigenous peoples. Again, sometimes a single government agency was charged with dealing with both cause and effect¹⁶.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the rise of human rights and environmental protection as powerful new paradigms have changed the politics of international aid and profoundly transformed states’ (both in the developed and the developing world) rhetorics about the thrust and goals of development. Some aims of state-directed colonization – those with a potential for embarrassing international donors or multilateral aid agencies – are now rarely admitted to openly by governments (DeKoninck and McTaggart 1987:343), rendering it methodologically difficult for researchers to conclusively prove such designs on the part of state managers. In addition, analysts differ widely in their interpretations of the rationales of colonization programs; readiness to read geo-strategic or more generally political purposes into a program varies from specialist to specialist¹⁷.

Finally, rather than assuming that national settlement programs have in each case one clearly definable, single objective, we should be prepared to acknowledge that most of them were (and still are) probably designed to serve multiple ends. For a given country at a given time, the objectives listed below will thus occur side by side in pairs or triple combinations, rather than as singular, paramount concerns in isolation (see e. g. Becker 1996:81 on Brazil from the 1960s to the 1980s, or Tyler 2003:xii on Xinjiang from 1949 to the present). Notably since the end of the 1980s, but already before, some of these parallel, mutually-reinforcing goals have been more likely to be publicly stated than others. The publicly-stated rationales are usually couched in the discourse of poverty alleviation and rural development, i. e. benefits for the great number of disprivileged citizens; less likely to be publicly-avowed are goals that are not immediately development-related, or of benefit to social elites. Thus, governments hardly ever own up to the important concerns of military security and political hegemony, nor do they speak of how frontier colonization can be a surrogate for agrarian reform. Thereby, the public rhetoric need not be intentionally insincere; it is, however, "misleadingly silent" (see Scott 1998:191 on Malaysia's FELDA [Federal Land Development Authority] schemes) about those purposes which are bound to earn the government international opprobrium rather than donor money.

My reading of the available literature, then, suggests that the governments of post-colonial states in the tropics (and the arctic) have commonly pursued combinations of the following seven goals when they decided to sponsor or facilitate migration to the frontier:

- **defusion of existing/prevention of future agrarian conflicts in core areas of state control**

For many decades since the end of World War II, governments in Latin America and large parts of Southeast Asia have promoted frontier colonization as a political safety valve. Under such schemes, the peopling of outlying regions recommended itself as a means for relieving land pressure, caused by the skewed distribution of resources in the agricultural core areas. Semi-feudal, repressive land tenure structures kept leaseholders and tenants on the verge of starvation, fuelling discontent and sometimes flaring into open rebellion. By promising the landless to make them homesteaders at the frontier, many postcolonial governments saw a chance of *weakening support for communist insurgents* where these had emerged, or of generally *pre-empting the aggravation of social tensions* in the countryside *without having to embark on land reform* which would alienate powerful regional elites (Scudder 1989:x). A subsidiary reward of this strategy, or so many state elites have been led to believe, is *electoral support among settler beneficiaries* at the frontier, *as well as among their communities of origin* (Fearon and Laitin 2001:24).

Thus, Becker (1996:77) posits that the state-organized settlement of the Brazilian Amazon under successive military juntas (1964-1985) had as one of its main goals the reduction of social tensions in densely-settled agricultural areas. During that period, the government followed a policy of opening up the Amazon for settlement, a policy that allowed for significant economic transformations without breaking away from established economic and political hierarchies (notably those that featured the landed elite in rural areas). By stimulating migration from depressed agricultural regions, the military regimes hoped to avoid agrarian reform (ibid.). Cowell (1990:125) shares this assessment, saying that the colonization of Amazonia at the time of the rule of the colonels served a safety-valve function by providing an outlet for the millions of landless and rural poor from the South and the Northeast. Building up during the 1960s and 1970s, their hunger for land led to the invasion of ranches, hundreds of land-related murders every year and "immense pressure for land reform" which the generals tried to postpone by "dumping the rural poor in the jungle". The tight connection between the promotion of agricultural colonization and the elite's concern for the preservation of the *status quo* in agrarian relations has been expressed most poignantly by Almeida and Campari (1995:3f.): "Rather than tackle the political cost of taking from wealthy landowners and giving to the landless poor, land distribution in Brazil has mostly taken from nature [and the indigenous "Other", we might add] and given to the rich".

Lohmann (1996:40) shows the same rationale to have been operative in a Southeast Asian context. In Thailand in the 1970s, the state promoted and in part actively organized the settlement of upland areas. Frontier migration during that period was officially seen as serving a safety-valve function, "relieving potentially explosive land conflicts elsewhere". The Thai elite directly and indirectly promoted forest colonization "as a painless 'development option'" (Lohmann 1993:186) to circumvent the necessity of ameliorating the increasingly skewed distribution of resources at the centre. In recent years, however, the fact that the dwindling forests were quickly becoming scarce and therefore too valuable a commodity to serve as a sink for the potentially disaffected, plus a slow realization of the ecological and esthetic value of untouched forests among the Thai elite, led the government to stop promoting forest colonization (ibid.).

An example for the dividend in combating active insurgencies that frontier colonization may bring are the Philippines in the wake of World War II. Post-war land settlement schemes in that country peaked in the 1950s. They attempted to address the two interrelated problems of political dissidence and agrarian discontent in the agricultural core areas of Central Luzon (Crystal 1982:96f.). To that effect, a special program was designed under President Magsaysay to counter the guerilla of the "Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon" ("Hukbalahap" or "Huk") by resettling surrendered fighters or movement sympathizers to frontier areas, primarily in Mindanao¹⁸.

- consolidation of territorial control at the frontier

Modern states in general, and developing states in particular, are subjected to the constant challenge of reaffirming their territoriality. Domestic and international political imperatives demand that they demonstrate – to their own populace, their neighbours and the world at large – that they are capable of controlling and managing their domains (DeKoninck 2006:33f.). At the frontier, their hold is precarious, not so much because they face a challenge from belligerent state rivals (although that may be the case, too), but because they lack subjects (at least in the state elites' perception), or because these subjects are – to use the language of the state – “undomesticated”, i. e. not yet reconciled to the idea of the state, nor of having to live under its rule. Because of their supposedly “pre-modern” cultivation practices and lifeways, the gaze from the centre identifies frontier-dwelling indigenous populations as thoroughly alien and an implicit threat to national sovereignty (Little 2001:108). Throughout Latin America and Southeast Asia, government leaders have sought to foment or, if they could muster the means thereto, organize the colonization of the frontier to *fill it with loyal, state-bearing citizenry; propel nation- and state-building there; advance the cultural assimilation of indigenous frontier-dwellers*; and – in some cases – *reinforce implausible or contested claims to outlying areas*.

Early on, Latin American state elites realized that to govern an area means to populate it; the motto “*gobnar es poblar*” is a well-remembered part of the vocabulary of state elites from the early years of the newly-independent republics. Taking advantage of an ever-growing stream of European migrants that found their way to South America since the 1880s, governments in the region wooed European settlers in the hope that they would help occupy and develop their frontiers in the hinterland, and “help offset what were considered to be the congenital deficiencies of a mixed population” (Hennessy 1981:10). In the second part of the 20th century, the conquest of the Amazon – sparsely settled and only tenuously attached to the rest of countries such as Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia – became an objective of great national significance; implanting the political institutions that secure domination in the heartland, diffusing majoritarian ethnic symbols and cultural forms, and incorporating frontier territories and resources into the wider national economy grew into important policy rationales. Roads and settlement projects “(...) served as a way for Latin American governments to increase their control over remote parts of the national territory (...)” (Ledec and Goodland 1989:449). In Brazil from the 1960s to the 1980s, the developmentalist discourse of successive military governments exalted the clearing of the forest and the forward march of settlers along the newly-built rainforest corridors as great symbols of progress, and turned them into sources of immense national pride and mobilization (ibid.:450, Schlecht 1990:96).



Photo 1.5 : State-sponsored settlement: aerial view of a transmigration settlement, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia (photo: Danilo Geiger)

Turning our attention to Asia, we find that planned population transfer is viewed by the Indonesian government among other things as “a tool for (...) enhancing national security”. An official document from Lemhanas (the National Defense Institute) spells out clearly the security aspects of the transmigration program, calling for “a balance (...) between economic and defense considerations in the selection and development of new transmigration sites” (Lemhanas 1974:23, quoted in Hoshour 1997:558). Both the National Defense Institute and the Department of National Defense and Security (Hankamnas) have repeatedly asserted that “empty” lands pose security risks and that the transmigration programme is of strategic value for the task of populating such areas (see Lemhanas 1974:120-123, Hankamnas 1974:144-146, quoted in Hoshour 1997:558, note 6).

The important geo-strategic objective of increasing the loyal, state-bearing population shows up in the case of both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and unified post-war Vietnam: In the first instance, a resettlement project known as Khai Hoang (“Clear the Wilderness”) from the early 1960s sought to increase the number of “reliable” citizens (ethnic Kinh) in spaces inhabited by “unreliable” ethnic minorities (besides providing a safety valve for decongested rural areas) (McElwee 2004:200). In the second case, the state strove “to increase the security of the highland areas” before the historical background of Montagnard “defections” to the American enemy during the Vietnam war (ibid.)¹⁹.

Demographic engineering, along with cultural assimilation, have been the reported goals of other projects of territorial consolidation in Asia. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, communist China urged Han Chinese to settle in the autonomous areas – home to ethnic minorities – “with the ultimate objective of securing a Chinese majority” (Diao 1967:172). While officially justified as beneficial for forging a feeling of one-ness between minority and majority nationalities, and for propelling the development of the “underdeveloped” minority areas, the “true motive” of facilitating frontier settlement is “to bring greater Chinese control over the minority peoples and, in the long run, to assimilate them” (ibid.). This policy of sinicisation has turned many indigenous nationalities into minorities in their traditional settlement areas. Thus, in Manchuria, the Manchu today make up a mere 3% of Manchuria’s population of 75 mio.; at the beginning of the 20th century, they still had been in the majority (Ludwig 1990:52). In Inner Mongolia, the Han outnumber the Mongol fourfold. In China’s Tibetan-inhabited areas (which extend far beyond the Autonomous Region of Tibet), the number of Han settlers now equals that of native Tibetans (6 mio.) (ibid.). The Han migrant population in Xinjiang rose from a mere 5% in 1949 to an approximate 50% as Ludwig’s book went to print (ibid.)²⁰.

Though expressed in less explicit terms, the cultural assimilation of the predominantly indigenous population of the Outer Islands has been an aim of successive Indonesian transmigration programmes. When the responsible agencies stress the role of guided population transfer in “promoting national integration”, they actually express their hope of cultural convergence towards Javanese or, more broadly, Inner Islands norms (Hoshour 1997:558).

Social engineering through migration and population admixture, interestingly, comes in two shapes. On top of the familiar schemes that bring masses of impoverished and landless farmers to the frontier, certain Southeast Asian countries (among them Indonesia, Thailand and Laos) entertain programmes for the resettlement of mobile frontier-dwelling indigenous populations to areas closer to administrative centers. There, they are being converted to sedentary lifeways and the intensive farming techniques that state planners equate with “modernity” and “civilization”. Thus, for instance, successive Thai governments have established “resettlement villages” all over the country’s border regions. Apart from the poor and landless from the densely-settled lowlands, resettlement schemes also target “nomadic” indigenous communities (notably the remaining hunter-and-gatherer groups of the border areas to Malaysia), with the explicit aim of concentrating and sedentarizing them (Hamilton 2002:93f., note 16). A similar component is discernible in the Indonesian transmigration programme. The programme endeavours, among others, the shorter-range resettlement of parts of the Outer Islands’ indigenous populations into areas within reach of the administration (“*resetelmen*” or “*transmigrasi lokal*”) (Colchester 1986, Accaioli 2001:96f.). In the latter case, the Social Affairs Department (DEPSOS,



Photo 1.6 : State-sponsored settlement: Papuan locals about to pass through a transmigration settlement near Nabire, West Papua (photo: Danilo Geiger)

or *Departemen Sosial*) administers programs that aim at removing what are officially called “backwards” (*suku-suku terbelakang*) or “aboriginal” tribes (*suku-suku terasing*) – again mainly hunters-and gatherers, but also shifting cultivators – from the frontier. The program’s public rationale is to enable the beneficiaries to “better perform their ‘social function’ as Indonesian citizens”, including the adoption of so-called “civilized” nucleated settlements and wet-rice cultivation, but also the attendance of schools and religious services of one of Indonesia’s major religions (Accaioli 2001:96, note 79). Over the past three decades, thousands of indigenous people in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and West Papua have been resettled under the programme²¹.

That – finally – state settlement of the frontier can serve the purpose of reinforcing implausible or contested claims to outlying areas, is demonstrated by the case of India’s Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an archipelago that lies more than 1000 kms off the eastern shores of the subcontinent, yet a mere one hour’s flight from Burma or Thailand. Indian administrative personnel has to fly to the islands’ only town via the Burmese capital, Rangoon. The British colonial regime made the islands a showcase of their “secluded area” policy for tribal peoples and hunter-and-gatherer communities (the latter of which the islands were famous for), and rigorously curtailed outside access to the archipelago. At the same time, it used the islands as a penitentiary, both for ordinary criminals from the colonial motherland and Indian

agitators against colonial rule. Both geographically and racially²², the Andamans and Nicobars had very little in common with the rest of the colonial domain, so much so that the British, on the eve of Indian independence, were considering to the last moment to retain sovereignty of the islands as they considered them “no integral part of India”. After independence, India sought by all means to justify *post factum* Whitehall’s decision to integrate the islands with its Indian rather than its Burman or Malaysian dependencies. To that effect, and to pre-empt possible colonization attempts by neighbouring powers, New Delhi started a settlement program under which migrants from all parts of India were given forest land to clear and own. Frequently, the recruits were retired soldiers (*NZZ am Sonntag* 2005). Officially, at least, state-organized colonization of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has stopped today (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005a). Over the last forty years, however, the Indian government has settled approximately 300,000 colonists, consisting of former army personnel, Hindu refugees from Bangladesh, tribespeople from the border areas with Burma, and landless farmers from Bihar. On top of this, an estimated 150,000 illegal migrants – in their majority from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal – have set up shop in the archipelago. They are benefiting from the fact that although restricted area regulations are still in force, the necessary papers (the so-called “Island Pass”) are for sale. In Port Blair’s – the capital’s – bazaar area, therefore, settler languages like Tamil, Bengali, Oriya, Malayali, Punjabi and the Hindi dialects from Bihar and Jharkhand predominate (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005a).

- **defense of sensitive borders**

Often, yet by no means always, frontiers are situated along international borders, and as such are the object of intense apprehension by military establishments. Borders are more than lines separating states: They are regions unto themselves, created by overlapping state societies and economies and environments, or by peoples and economies who by choice or neglect have not been integrated into state domains. Transborder regions are often volatile: They are the setting of some 70% of the world’s small wars – wars that escape international attention, but produce considerable numbers of refugees and casualties and great amounts of trafficking in arms and sometimes drugs (Girod and Nietschmann 1992:52). Small wonder, therefore, that governments often invoke “national security” as a reason for justifying settlement programs to frontiers that are situated along their territorial perimeters.

Thus, to the military governments that ruled countries with territorial stakes in the Amazon basin from the 1960s to the 1980s, the colonization of Amazonia was a way of creating “living borders” (Little 2001:106). Under this concept, the “empty” fringes of national territories were “secured” by filling them up with people with an assumed allegiance to their respective national governments (*ibid.*). Territorial

occupation of the region was considered an issue of national security; only by sending patriotic citizens to inhabit and thus “nationalize” it could expansionist neighbours be kept from invading it (see Schlecht 1990:96 and Cowell 1990:125f. on Brazil).

Southeast Asian governments were not far behind South American ones in believing that their borderlands could be invaded by neighbouring states; they, too, embarked on ambitious colonization programmes to prevent foreign conquest. When it invoked the enhancement of national security, the Indonesian government at least partly also articulated the military establishment’s fear of empty border spaces as a security risk. With a view to the country’s Bornean boundary with Malaysia and its common border with Papua New Guinea, both Lemhanas (the National Defense Institute) and the Department of National Defense and Security (Hankamnas) have repeatedly asserted that the transmigration programme is of strategic value for the task of populating “empty” and vulnerable borderlands (see Lemhanas 1974:120-123, Hankamnas 1974:144-146, quoted in Hoshour 1997:558, note 6). In order to increase the effectiveness of borderland transmigration settlements as “centers of defense”, these offices reserved places in such settlements for retired military personnel (*ibid.*:559, note 6).

The fear of hostile neighbours was especially pronounced in the Cold War period; Thailand, for instance, had a long history of uneasy relations with Burma, and feared a spill-over from Indochina’s civil wars. To bolster its defences against cross-border infiltration and to help the Thai army combat communist insurgents active in Northern Thailand, the government accepted the settlement of an estimated 3000 Kuomintang troops from Yunnan who, after the communist victory in China in 1949, had been forced to seek shelter in Burma. Pushed out of their retreats in Burma, remnants of the KMT’s Third and Fifth Army started to arrive in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces in 1954 (Chang 1998:39); over the years, these anti-communist refugees came to number more than 11,000 people in a dozen villages in proximity of the Burmese border (*ibid.*:45). The government not only allowed them to stay under arms, but tolerated their effort to rebuild their military fortunes by trading in Burmese opium, gems and jade (*ibid.*:43f.). The Yunnanese resettlement areas maintained close links with the KMT’s headquarters in Taiwan, and Thailand allowed regular Taiwanese military flights in and out of the two provinces. The Kuomintang troops fought at the side of the Thai army until the communist insurgency fizzled out in the 1980s, the last engagement being a battle in 1981 (*ibid.*:44).

Not always do borderland anxieties indicate cases of mere “neurosis” (Cowell 1990:125). A factor that has notoriously pushed states – colonial and post-colonial – to show the flag at their frontier peripheries are *genuine* expansive moves of neighbouring states or rival colonial powers. In such instances, resources are being poured into colonization programmes which often have no other immediate

purpose than to mark the state's claim to an area that has attracted a neighbour's appetite. A relatively recent Asian case is the largely tribal, thinly-populated North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA, now the state of Arunachal Pradesh) at the remote northeastern periphery of India, an area over which China has long claimed sovereignty. In 1962, NEFA was overrun by Chinese troops; though these withdrew later, the event shocked India into realizing its defense weakness and the strategic importance of the region. In response, determined efforts were made to "nationalize" the Arunachalese frontier. Among other things, new administrative centres were opened, along with military outposts, reaching all the way to the international border; in addition, roads and other kinds of infrastructure were constructed to enable rapid troop deployment. A proposal to settle 100,000 farmers from Punjab, "both to further the assimilation of the tribals and to dissuade the Chinese from coming again", was only narrowly rejected (Guha 1999:295). However, to raise population and settlement densities, Tibetan and Nepali colonies were opened and large numbers of retired military personnel were settled in vicinity of the Chinese border. Moreover, between 1964 and 1969, an estimated 15,000 Chakma – a people with a reputation of loyalty to India – from East Pakistan's Chittagong Hill Tracts were allowed to establish villages in three districts of what is today Arunachal Pradesh. The repercussions of the Union Government's decision to strengthen border defense by populating vacant land with settlers can be felt to this day, as Arunachalese politicians periodically agitate for the removal of the Chakma "foreign nationals" from their state (see above, note 13; Luithui-Ermi, forthcoming).

• **countering independentist/secessionist rebellions at the frontier**

Europe has a long tradition of expanding state realms by means of military colonists. The Roman Empire followed a strategy of securing territories conquered by its armies with the use of well-armed and -drilled pioneer settlers (often demobilized legionnaires) who would, among others, help the military authorities suppress "barbarian" revolts (DeKoninck 1996:232). From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, secular and ecclesiastical authorities oversaw the *Drang nach Osten* of German settlers and knights into the domains of the Slavs and Balts of Eastern Europe, where they often fought alongside local patron noblemen (Gerhard 1959:218-223). In the history of Asia, too, settlers have played an important role as the "territorial spearhead of the state", and were an important military factor in the expansionary politics of royal dynasties in countries such as Burma, Thailand and Vietnam (DeKoninck 1996:234-252).

Then as now, conquest and the exploitation of satellite fringe areas by parasitic rulers have sometimes triggered revolts among frontier-dwelling populations, in which case the establishment of military colonies may become a paramount concern,

and even immigrant civilians are often trained and fielded as military auxiliaries. Planned settlement can thus become an element of counter-insurgency²³.

An especially glaring case are the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh (see Roy, this volume). After the drafters of the Bangladeshi constitution had failed to restore colonial-time autonomy and restrictions on outside access to the area, a tribal insurgency movement, led by the *Jana Sanghata Samiti* (JSS, or 'People's United Party') was formed in 1973. The Bangladesh government responded to the uprising with a military campaign that included building garrisons and re-settling the indigenous population in strategic hamlets. The second leg of the state's counter-insurgency strategy consisted in bringing in settlers to alter the region's demographic balance and help defeat the insurgency. Between 1979 and 1985, between 250,000 and 450,000 plainspeople were transferred to the Hill Tracts, where some of them seem to have created viable homesteads, while others subsist largely on food rations of the government. Largely on account of this scheme, the indigenous population's percentage of the area's total population fell from 91% in 1951 to barely 51% in 1991. During that period, settlers became involved in paramilitary violence against indigenous non-combatants²⁴ and, in turn, were targeted by guerilla attacks.

In Xinjiang, political disturbances and Uighur anger over unrestrained immigration by Han colonists are addressed by the quasi-military Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps – the province's biggest economic enterprise and major landowner, and a powerful instrument for controlling the Uighur. It is made up of demobilized soldiers from the People's Liberation Army, former Kuomintang fighters and armed Han settlers, and has become a favorite target of militant Uighur separatists (Fearon and Laitin 2001:23, Tyler 2003:194f.).

Counter-insurgency objectives also loom large in the case of state-sponsored frontier migration in post-independence Burma, a country that has wrestled with indigenous rebellions for the better part of its 60 years of existence. Thus, the Burmese army, for example, provided for the resettlement of army veterans in the restive Shan and Kachin states (Kunstadter 1967:7, note 3). Successive military juntas not only settled retired military personnel at contested frontiers, but also erected labour camps there – cynically called "New Life Camps" or "New Life Projects" as prisoners are promised a spiritual and moral 'rebirth' in the camps – in the vicinity of which ex-inmates who have completed their term are induced to settle (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005b). Apparently, the prime purpose of the "New Life Camps" is to serve the military in its fight against ethnic insurgents; inmates are routinely taken to the battlefield where they are used as army porters or human mine-sweepers (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners [Burma] 2002, n.p.).

- **provision of labour for agricultural production and resource extraction at the frontier**

Frontier expansion, significantly, is also motivated by the drive to access and exploit the often abundant natural resources that the frontier contains. Familiar with the work discipline required by capitalist production, settlers are invaluable as a work force for the building of infrastructure and the establishment and operation of extractive industries and plantations²⁵. Thus, the stimulation of regional development through the controlled movement of labor to the Outer Islands has been one of the publicly-avowed goals of the Indonesian transmigration programme (Hoshour 1997:558). Especially in Indonesia, but also in Vietnam, planned frontier settlement and the massive conversion of forest to oil palm, commercial rubber and other cash-crops have gone hand in hand, and were predicated one on the other (DeKoninck 2006:39-45). Almost as a rule, transmigration settlements have been planned to lay side by side with semi-statal oilpalm or rubber plantations, where transmigrants work as labourers or tenants. Writing on the large, bureaucratically-monitored FELDA (Federal Land Development Authority) schemes in Malaysia in the 1960s and 1970s, Scott (1998:190) describes a similar situation:

“The administrative and economic situation of the Malaysian settlers was comparable to that of the ‘company towns’ of early industrialization, where everyone worked at comparable jobs, were paid by the same boss, lived in company housing, and shopped at the same company store. Until the plantation crops were mature, the settlers were paid a wage. Their production was marketed through state channels, and they could be dismissed for any of a large number of infractions against the rules established by the schemes’ officials.”

- **alleviation of poverty and landlessness in densely-settled core areas of state control**

The classical public justification for state-directed settlement echoes the motives of most spontaneous frontier migrants – to exchange precarious livelihoods for secure ones, and to escape the terrible predicament of landlessness. From Latin America to Africa, and from South to Southeast Asia, state governments and donor agencies have proposed the colonization of “empty” frontier space as a *solution* for the problems of *high relative population pressure in the agricultural core areas, stagnating levels of food production and the failure of many peasant households to secure self-sufficiency*. In addition, they have also often invoked the goal of *decongesting overcrowded urban areas* (see e. g. Hennessy 1981:9 on Latin America, McElwee 2004:198 on post-unification Vietnam).

Indeed, given the vast discrepancies in relative population densities between many countries’ demographic centers and the frontier periphery, these arguments do not lack a certain plausibility. Thus, for instance, for the Vietnamese uplands, censuses document exceedingly low population densities of sometimes less than 50 persons/km² (McElwee 2004:199), while the figures for the Red River Delta, a major area of out-migration, can exceed 1200 persons/km² (ibid.). The figures for Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts are comparable: while the Hill Tracts have an average density of 56 persons/km², the densities in the rest of the country average 595,5 persons/km² (Levene 1999:348). Also impressive is the differential in the case of Indonesia: 62% of the country’s total population is concentrated on Java, an island whose size is a mere 7% of the total surface of the archipelago. As of 1990, Java had an average population density of 814 persons/km², nearly nine times the average for Indonesia as a whole (93 persons, see Hoshour 2000:6)²⁶. Outer Island densities, meanwhile, ranged from 77 (Sumatra) to 66 (Sulawesi) 17 (Kalimantan) and 4 persons/km² (West Papua, see Hardjono 1994:182, Sevin 2000:40).

Indonesia’s program of guided population transfer has won itself the reputation of being “the largest agricultural program ever undertaken by a state” (Levang 1997:18). Colonial-era transmigrants included, the total of people shifted by the program stood at 6,4 million at the beginning of the 1990s (ibid.). State planners have always foregrounded the alleviation of poverty and landlessness on Java and adjacent islands as one of the paramount concerns of the country’s transmigration programme (Hoshour 1997:558), and argued that the latter helped lessen population pressure in the densely-settled parts of the country. In unified post-war Vietnam, a prominent objective of the programs for frontier colonization was “to provide fertile lands to lowland Vietnamese from crowded deltas” (McElwee 2004:199). The country’s development planners perceive a “waste of good land” in the uplands as censuses exhibit low population densities which contrast sharply with the figures for rural population centres. More political objectives remain unpublicized²⁷. Latin American governments, too, have highlighted the alleviation of poverty and landlessness as a guiding concern in their settlement efforts. In all five South American countries that have territories in the Amazon (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru), governments have asserted at one time or another that organizing frontier colonization provides politically acceptable solutions to the problems of overpopulation in longer-settled rural locales and the insufficiency of domestic food production (Schmink and Wood 1984:137).

Some countries that experience chronic food shortages have resorted to the resettlement of peasant producers from areas which cannot feed their rural populations to regions with supposedly richer soils and/or fewer people. The most notorious of these programs of guided population transfer have been involuntary. Loading peasants into trucks (or box cars) and resettling them far from home has generally



Photo 1.7 : Visions of interethnic harmony: painting made for the left-leaning advocacy organization TABAK, showing indigenous Filipinos welcoming a settler (artwork: Boy Dominguez)

been unsuccessful, as testified by the example of Stalin's (politically motivated) relocation of entire populations before and during World War II. A notable example of forced relocation to avoid hunger was the massive program of forced relocation of farmers in the 1980s in Ethiopia. Then, the socialist government of Mengistu Haile Mariam tried to relocate *en masse* farmers in the drought-stricken highlands to more fertile regions in the west of country. An estimated 570,000 people were "given the choice of moving or being shot" (*The Economist* 2004). It often happened that parents and children were sent to opposite ends of the country; many found life in their settlement areas unbearable and perished in the attempt of walking back to their old home regions. In 2003, the successor government of Meles Zenawi reanimated the program, so far with little success. International donors were reportedly reluctant to commit funding for the programme, finding the scheme too *dirigiste* and suspecting it of provoking ethnic tensions in the settlement areas (*ibid.*).

Notwithstanding its wide popularity among governments and donors, the proposition that directed settlement is capable of relieving population pressure (and thus alleviate misery) in densely-settled parts of state realms is usually belied by population statistics. Given the fact that the volume of its transmigration programme exceeds that of any other country in the world, the case of Indonesia bears this out in an exemplary fashion. There, demographic studies have shown that the 6.4 million people moved away from Java between 1903 and the beginnings of the 1990s were

dwarfed by Java's net population increase (78 million) during that same period (Levang 1997:18). If the hope of absorbing overpopulation were indeed a paramount concern behind transmigration, the programme should have been stopped in the face of such crippling evidence. The fact that it wasn't has led many to conclude that political and geo-strategic aims have always outranked concern for a better population balance and the welfare of the Inner Islands' poor (Monbiot 1989:227-239, Sevin 2000:50-53). The figures for Latin America suggest a similar picture. Three and a half decades of research on the results of state-organized frontier settlement in that region have indicated clearly that the opening of agricultural frontiers is no effective means for absorbing excess population growth (Wood and Wilson 1984, Moran 1993:150). Brazil's surplus population far surpasses the population that the Brazilian Amazon is capable of absorbing (Wood and Wilson 1984, Schmink and Wood 1984:138). In the case of Peru, too, despite massive migration into the Amazon provinces in recent decades, the population accommodated in the *selva alta* – the main target area for migrants – still accounted for less than 10% of the country's overall population increment (Aramburú 1984, Schmink and Wood 1984:138). Again, only one conclusion is possible: By and large, by stimulating settlement to remote jungle areas, state governments follow political goals of territorial expansion, rather than demographic or agro-economic rationales (Moran 1993:150).

- **banishment of convicts, dissidents and/or undesirable social elements**

With a few exceptions, the migration so far detailed was voluntary. This ceases to be the case where state regimes exile criminals to colonize unsettled frontiers, or use them as a dumping place for dissidents and other unwanted parts of their citizenries. Frontier colonization in Siberia and Chinese Inner Asia was dictated as much by the exigencies of repressive authoritarian rule as by the desire to consolidate state rule in outlying areas: Russia's, China's and also Japan's peripheries were favored as exile sites, spawning the inflow of prisoners, both political and criminal, onto indigenous lands (Fondahl 1993:114). As a collateral benefit, convicts provided much-needed labour for the creation of an infrastructure (roads, telegraph lines, factories) that later would allow the exploitation of the vast resource potential of frontier areas (see Bobrick 1992 on Siberia and Tyler 2003 on Xinjiang). In the Soviet Union of the Stalin era and in China up to this day, acute political repression continuously replenished a giant pool of forced labour, a part of which was made to work in lumbering and mining (Siberia) and cotton production (Xinjiang), generating revenues that were so substantial that some writers spoke of regional "slave-labour economies" (Bobrick 1992:423 on Siberia under Stalin). Throughout history, therefore, frontiers have served empires and nation-states as dungeons where undesirables could be stashed away indefinitely (St. George 1969:33). As a welcome side effect, the resulting network of



Photo 1.8 : Frictionious co-existence: Chakma women selling firewood to Bengali settlers at a Chittagong Hill Tracts market, CHT, Bangladesh (photo: Christian Ermi)

prison camps and “labour farms” offered itself as a supreme recruitment system for manpower for the “taming” and exploitation of the frontier periphery.

The tropics, too, have had their share of frontier gulags. It has already been reported that the banishment of prisoners – both ordinary criminals and political detainees – to labour camps at remote frontiers has been standard practice in post-independence Burma, and reference has also been made to the British colonial government’s practice of exiling Indian nationalist firebrands to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. To cite a contemporary Latin American example, Peru’s *montaña*, remote and difficult of access, houses prison complexes such as the Sepa Penal Colony near Atalaya on the Urubamba river. Situated in the heart of indigenous territory, the penal colony is “an amalgamation of a prison and a colonisation project”. Hvalkof (1998:84) describes it as “a notorious labour camp where long-term prisoners and the prison staff exercised a regime of terror”. Few areas, however, were so completely identified with convicts and banishment as was New Caledonia in Oceania. The island group, claimed for France in 1853, was designated a penal colony and became an “archipelago of prison camps surrounded by European farmers and graziers who fed the convicts” (Latham 1982:170-172, quoted in Chappell 1993:309). Between 1864 and 1894, 20,000 convicts were sent to these islands (ibid.:311). Through the years, however, New Caledonia retained the stigma of “Le Bagne” (the penal system) and the reputation of being a decidedly insecure place²⁸. As a result, the colony

attracted only a fragment of the 2 mio. European farmers whom the administration had originally hoped to settle (ibid.:309).

- **evacuation and resettlement of disaster, conflict and development victims**

Far less significant in size and frequency than all previously-listed ends of directed frontier colonization, but usually well-publicized, are “humanitarian” purposes of relocation. In Southeast Asia as well as elsewhere, thousands were resettled – both voluntarily and against their will – in frontier locales because their areas of origin had become uninhabitable due to natural disasters or were needed for alternative purposes (usually such of development). A third reason behind (usually forced) relocations were considerations of military security because the settlers’ areas of origin were the scene of armed insurgency movements whose local support the authorities wanted to drain (MacAndrews 1982:10). Thus, Indonesian authorities resettled the inhabitants of the island of Makian in the Northern Moluccas to the larger neighbouring island of Halmahera, following predictions of an imminent volcanic eruption on Makian (Lucardie 1985). A major trigger of forced resettlement in Southeast Asia is the construction of hydro-electric dams; Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines have had some such cases (MacAndrews 1982:11, 13, Crystal 1982:99f.). Finally, Malaysia’s Emergency (1948-1960) where the government, aided by the British army, wrestled with a Communist rebel movement, witnessed the involuntary resettlement of thousands to the military-controlled “New Villages” (MacAndrews 1982:11).

Colonization fronts – a “knowledge frontier”?

The consequences of frontier settlement

Given the fact that governments tend to view colonists as tools in grander strategies such as state-building, national security and avoidance of land reform in the national heartland, it is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of state efforts to actively organize or indirectly facilitate frontier settlement do produce disappointing results – at least when measured by common development indicators. Representative for others is the critique offered by DeKoninck and McTaggart (1987:342f.), who found that post-colonial frontier settlement in Southeast Asia had to be indicted on three principal charges: Environmental degradation; failure to create viable societies in the settlement areas; and adverse impacts on indigenous peoples there²⁹.

Throughout Latin America and Southeast Asia, impoverished settlers have been found to be major agents of forest loss, even though much of the blame for having given them access to yet untouched forest lies with governments and logging companies (Colchester 1993a:4; 9-13). The most significant form of environmental

damage, thus, is the destruction of the tropical rainforest and its replacement with an ecological system less well adapted to the regional conditions. At the same time, massive deforestation and migrants' ill-adapted farming methods have caused massive soil degradation at colonization fronts, causing yields to decline and forcing settlers to abandon their properties (DeKoninck and McTaggart (1987:342). Furthermore, in planned settlement processes, state authorities often deprive migrant farmers of the possibilities for experimenting with locally-available cultivation methods, as they insist on permanent agriculture and remain hostile to shifting cultivation, in spite of the latter's long history of adaptive success (*ibid.*).

The characteristic instability of settler communities, however, owes itself not only to the pioneers' penchant for mining the environment, but also to the fact that the potentials of the agricultural frontier quickly attract competitors from within national society. In fact, even where settler communities or single individuals have succeeded, this will raise the attractiveness of their assets for external capital, accelerating the process of take-over and chain displacement that has been reported from many colonization fronts (*ibid.*:349). Across all world regions, in most cases the pioneer small-scale farmers who cleared the land have not kept it, but were forced to sell it to more wealthy frontier and urban entrepreneurs, and were left as poor as when they had started (see de Almeida and Campari 1995:5 on Brazil; also on Latin America, see Foweraker 1981, Schmink and Wood 1984:141, Schmink 1988, Scudder 1989:xiv-xv). In the event, "many directed settlements, though made in the name of distribution, quickly regressed into consolidated and concentrated land property structures" whose social benefits were nil (de Almeida and Campari 1995:4). Most forms of state-sponsored and -facilitated settlement, therefore, have a circular logic, "routinely recreating the inequalities and impoverishment they are designed to redress (...)" (Murray Li 1999:36, note 18 on Indonesia, also on Southeast Asia, see Pelzer 1945:134, DeKoninck and Déry (1997:3f.). Ironically, thus, among the victims of frontier expansion, we often find indigenous communities and pioneer settlers alike.

Every attempt to generalize on the impact of frontier settlement on indigenous communities risks bordering on banality – too diverse are the conditions from one settlement frontier to the other, and too dependent on the relative numbers and the sociological, political and military characteristics of the groups involved in the particular contact situations. While many of the erstwhile pioneers abandon the frontier for the cities or end up as tenants or day wagers on someone else's land, frontier-dwelling indigenous communities often either die away or migrate-out as a result of the impact of settlement, notably where contact has been abrupt and the technological and material levels of the two clashing cultures grossly uneven (see Eder 1993 on the Batak of Palawan, the Philippines, and Moran 1993:150f. on the Brazilian Amazon). Wherever settler in-migration transforms local population balances in dramatic ways,



Photo 1.9 : In the shadow of frontier violence: Matigsalug parade celebrating the anniversary of the release of the group's collective land title (CADT), protected by armed guards, Bukidnon, Mindanao, the Philippines (photo: Kaspar Kasics)

they are bound to have severe negative effects on indigenous peoples' livelihoods and human security. Where they are more numerous and militarily and technologically more at eye level with the settlers, indigenous peoples are more likely to be able to deter settler incursions and preserve their social cohesion and a sufficiently large land base to survive. In these cases, there is the possibility of more balanced relations between the two groups. The longer the contact situation endures, the more likely are various forms of nativist reactions on the part of the indigenous communities – ranging from outbreaks of religious/mystical nativism to expressions of political and finally violent/military nativism (see Geiger, forthcoming). The violent politicization of ethnic differences is a distinct possibility, with fatal effects for the political stability and development prospects for potentially large regions.

However, as already mentioned, politico-legal frameworks – i. e. legislation and salient institutional aspects of the political system of a country – influence migration flows to the frontier in critical ways, hemming them in, enabling them, or forcing them "underground". I propose to distinguish two fundamentally different politico-legal constellations that determine and constrain both the strategies that settlers resort to in trying to establish themselves at the frontier, and the practical role of local state agents in the allocation of land and other strategic assets. In situations of legal disenfranchisement of indigenous communities, or in situations that are legally ambiguous (e. g. with regard to land rights), state policies and an ethnically-biased, corrupt bureaucratic apparatus assist incoming settlers in displacing resident indigenous

communities from their territories, allowing us to speak of a process of “*integrated displacement*” (Lopez 1986:85-121, 1987). In most cases involving ethnic clientelist connections between the migrants and the bureaucratic apparatus, this constellation gives the former a decisive competitive advantage over indigenous communities. Where indigenous territories are being classified as part of the “public domain” (as in the case of the Philippines before 1997), or where indigenous community-based customary land rights are recognized by national law only to the extent that they do not conflict with officially-authorized uses of the forest (as in Indonesia till today), indigenous lands are open to the competing claims of the wider society.

Not in all cases, however, do states have policies that legislate or ease the appropriation of indigenous land by settlers. Where states continue to use policy instruments once devised by colonial predecessor regimes to protect vulnerable aboriginal peoples against the transgressions of majority populations (as, for example, in Northeast India), the legal situation is in fact reversed, as regulations for the separate administration/protective discrimination of indigenous citizens empower locals and disenfranchise outsiders. In tribal-dominated areas of the region (constitutionally recognized and administratively organized as either autonomous districts, autonomous regions within such districts, or even as full-fledged states), non-natives are often forbidden by law to own land, operate businesses, assume jobs in the civil service or hold elected political offices. Where a regime of protective discrimination in favor of indigenous locals is in place, “tribal” status confers privileges, while outsiders are turned into “denizens”³⁰ – citizens with restricted rights that do not grant them legal parity with local “sons of the soil” (Baruah 2003b). In such “*citizen-denizen constellations*”, however, the pragmatics of power and rule at the frontier help secure outcomes that are not much different from those under the conditions of “integrated displacement”. Across Northeast India, denizen settlers have managed to establish themselves in great numbers in autonomous districts, “tribal blocks” and “tribal belts”, and they have infiltrated the “Inner Line” – beyond which no non-native settlement is allowed – to an extent which makes a parody of the law. Denizen settlers have become integrated into the economy of the region in substantial, but informal ways (subsistence and export production on land that they own *de facto*, business and retailing by virtue of farmed-out business licenses, etc.; see Luithui-Erni, forthcoming, on Arunachal Pradesh). Land transfer across the ethnic boundary is substantial, silently tolerated by state agents, and aided not only by the impoverishment of many indigenous smallholders (who have to mortgage their land), but also by the emergence of an indigenous class of large landowners who sell clan land or act as strawmen for denizen cultivators (see Barбора, forthcoming, on Central Assam).

Whereas legislative and political systems differ from country to country and from region to region, sometimes representing a limiting factor, sometimes (indeed,



Photo 1.10 Nativist mobilization: Graffiti urging the eviction of the tribal Chakma settler minority from Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India (photo: Christian Erni)

in the majority of cases) an enabling condition for settlement to run its course, the evidence from the literature and our own comparative research is unequivocal: frontier settlement *generates intense pressure on the environment and the resources in the receiving areas; it contributes to the spreading rather than the amelioration of poverty; and it is responsible for the disappearance of invaluable cultural diversity, or, failing to do that, the proliferation of ethnic conflict*. How are we to explain the dismal showing of state-sponsored and state-facilitated frontier settlement?

One – fairly popular – way of interpreting the failure of colonization to fulfill publicly-voiced goals is that, as Stephen Tyler (1999:267) surmises, “governments typically underestimate the impact and disruption caused by resettlement and fail to recognize the conflicts that arise”. The inference is that governments’ attitudes (and those of the multilateral banks and state donors that contribute funding and political respectability to settlement schemes) toward the attendant ecological and social costs of colonization are based on ignorance. If only enough of the right information – as Chase Smith (1985:214) paraphrases the proposition – could be put into the right hands, then mistaken policies would be corrected. Colonization fronts, asserts Emilio Moran (1985:101), are “*knowledge frontiers*”, liminal spaces that constantly surprise us with new kinds of information whose complexity researchers are just beginning to grasp – a complexity that transcends the absorption capacity of policy makers and bureaucrats. It is, therefore, the task of agronomists – for instance – to bring

across the message that soil types vary tremendously within regional ecosystems, to heighten awareness for the need to adjust plans to local constraints. Similarly, anthropologists must help sensitize the state apparatus for the wisdom of indigenous resource management, developed from longstanding experience in the region (ibid.:99). In bureaucratic contexts where ignorance of peripheral regions can be nearly total, the thrust of the efforts of the scientific community must be to generate better understanding of the ecological, social and ethnic consequences of the frontier encounter (ibid.:101).

A second, and, to my mind more convincing reading of the facts stresses that governments and their international backers actually have all the information needed to assess the situation properly, but choose to ignore it. Hulme (1988:48) concludes in his evaluation of academic works on land settlement that "the findings of applied research on settlement schemes are commonly not utilized". The sobering reviews of land settlement experiences in the 1980s echo the "lessons of experience" generated by research in the 1950s (ibid.:47). There is thus, he posits, "little purpose in re-diagnosing well-known problems and re-recommending known solutions when experience demonstrates that the fruits of such efforts are likely to be ignored or avoided" (ibid.:56). Government policies towards indigenous peoples – the ones involving colonization assuming a prominent place – are not based on ignorance, they are largely based on the political interests of state elites (Chase Smith 1985:56). These interests are defined by the policy imperatives of the "nationalization of space" which include the diffusion of majoritarian political institutions and cultural forms throughout the state domain, and the exploitation of natural resources in frontier areas (see Baruah 2003a, and Geiger on frontiers, this volume). Frontier colonization by means of state-sponsored or -facilitated settlers is a means to that end, regardless of the fact that it produces high levels of environmental degradation, social strife and inter-ethnic conflict.

Mitigating conflicts on settlement frontiers

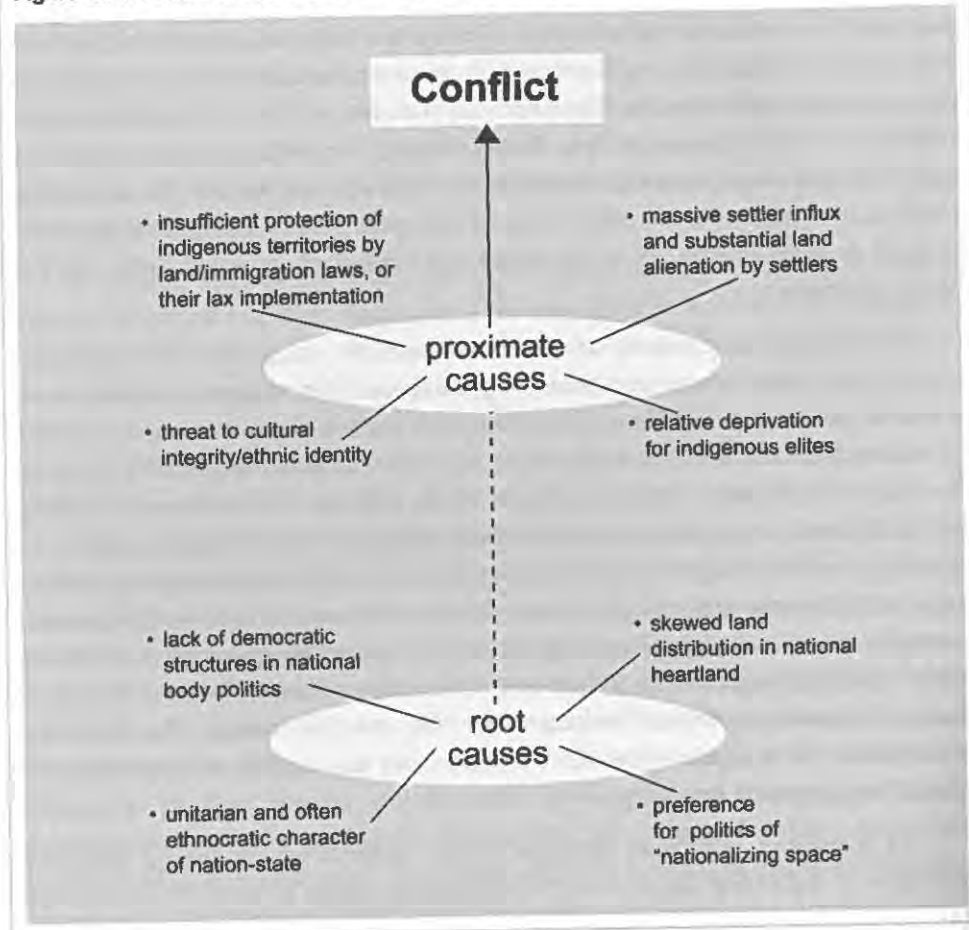
My understanding of the possibilities for containing and, if possible, transforming the conflicts arising on settlement frontiers, is heavily tinged by my belief that decisions-makers' "ignorance" of the detrimental consequences of frontier migration is structural, and as such not amenable to mitigation through critical scientific research (see also Dove 1983 on state policies on agricultural development). "Higher" policy rationales seem to predominate, relegating the concern for local people's rights, biodiversity conservation and even political stability to the sidelines (Clay 1994, Sponsel 1995:268f., Baruah 2003a:922). In a large number of cases, the invasion of the frontier by settlers is no accident, but the result of conscious

strategies of conservative rural development, nation-building by proxy and territorial consolidation. In most cases, settlers are where they are because the state wants it that way. The "territorial compromise" (DeKoninck 1996; see Geiger on frontiers, this volume) renders the state dependent on peasant colonizers as the main pillar of state power on hostile ground. Therefore, the state has no interest in addressing the root causes of the ensuing conflicts. To the contrary, the conflicts tend to be seen as inevitable and even necessary. Consequently, violence and loss of life in frontier conflicts over migration and other forms of state-sanctioned development appear to national decision-makers not as the lamentable breakdown of social order, but the noble *beginning* of it.

The lasting transformation of communal conflicts – in our case those between settlers and indigenous communities – presupposes that mitigation tackle these conflicts' structural foundations, not merely their surface manifestations. In a world of nation-states that will not wither away so soon, mitigation necessarily involves the state – yet the state is the main agent in the making of the settlement frontier and its destructive and often violent dynamics. Mitigative interventions that aspire to lastingly transform migration-induced conflicts at the indigenous periphery need to target and try to change basic policy orientations of the state in the developing south – notably the politics of "nationalizing space" that states employ to make the frontier truly "theirs" (Baruah 2003a, Geiger on frontiers, this volume). This is a herculean task, an exercise in utopian thinking rather than practical change. The following propositions for mitigation, therefore, contain more than a grain of skepticism and should be interpreted accordingly.

As mentioned, mitigation strategies for the conflicts we are dealing with here will have to encompass answers to the immediate conflicts between the two groups (and their partly violent manifestations) *and* the underlying structural causes of the conflicts. Figure 1.1 gives the former as proximate causes, the latter as root causes. Four interrelated factors are ultimately responsible for the penchant of states for ejecting rural proletarians to their indigenous peripheries: *A skewed land distribution* in the national heartland that deprives the overwhelming majority of peasant producers of the means to sustain themselves, making them available for relocation to the frontier (World Resources Institute 1992:122, Colchester 1993a:9-11); *a preference for the politics of "nationalizing" frontier space* by the help of agricultural pioneers; *the unitarian and often ethnocentric character of most nation-states* in the developing world as a result of which frontier-dwelling indigenous communities are cast as the "minor part of the nation"³¹ (Trankell 1998) and their territories as a prize for courageous pioneers and frontier entrepreneurs; and *a lack of democratic structures* guaranteeing that political careers continue to be built on frontier wealth, and local government to be subservient to the interests of settler patrons. Taken together, these four factors cause states to treat frontiers as regions that hold solutions to the body

Figure 1.1 : Causes of Conflicts at the Settlement Frontier



politic's problems (Schmink and Wood 1984:138) – problems to which colonization, or so the story goes, holds the key.

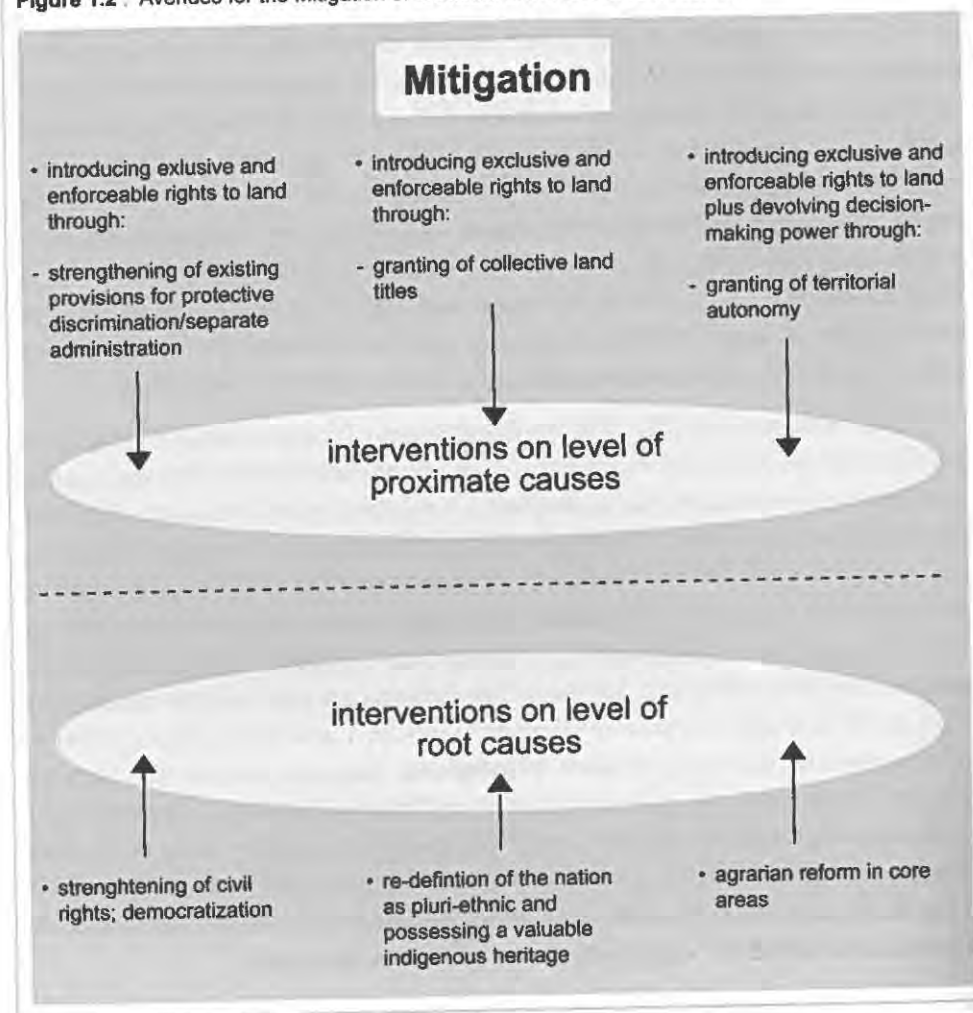
Any significant and lasting reduction of migration-induced conflicts at the indigenous periphery is therefore premised on interventions that interfere with the nature of the political order and the state's basic policy orientations. They are (see figure 1.2): *Agrarian reform in the densely-settled core areas of state control*. Land redistribution and the liquidation of large estates in the hands of a few wealthy landowners would considerably lessen social tensions and demographic pressure, and reduce the temptation for state elites to use frontier migration as a "safety valve". The *strengthening and expansion of the civil and political rights of the citizenry*, and support for a general process of *democratization* would heighten public and media awareness for the concerns of ethnic minorities, and thus keep a lid on the worst

outrages of the settlement frontier. It would also introduce other avenues to political fortunes than "power from the forest" (Dañguilan Vitug 1993), curtail the tendency of local government to put itself at the service of the locally powerful, and give indigenous people voice through direct participation in the political process. The *re- definition of the nation as pluri-ethnic and possessing a valuable indigenous heritage*, finally, would seal the fate of the infamous politics of "nationalizing space". They would end indigenous frontier-dwellers' exclusion from the "moral community of the nation" (see Geiger on frontiers, this volume) and allow more citizens to emphasize with the fate – ecological, social and political – of their habitats and territories. These interventions at the very base of the societal and political edifice of the nation-state transcend the immediate concern for bringing peace and justice to the frontier, but are indispensable if the changes that we envision should be incisive and lasting.

If we move on to the level of the proximate causes of conflicts between indigenous peoples and settlers, the following four factors can be identified that frequently cause the rise of nativism and its violent escalation. *A massive settler influx and substantial land alienation by settlers* will create widespread disaffection among the indigenous communities at the frontier. Large-scale settlement and land grabbing by migrants indicates that *land and immigration laws afford only insufficient protection to indigenous territories*, possibly because they are implemented in a lax and haphazard manner. Indigenous struggles against settler intrusion are also identity conflicts, as the loss of land and "resource sovereignty" (Howitt, Connell and Hirsch 1996) is accompanied by the marginalization of indigenous language, religion and material culture. *Concerns for the integrity of culture and identity*, then, are a third proximate cause of violent nativist conflicts, ventilated and popularized by indigenous elites whose chances of rising to influential political positions have been compromised by settler immigration. Thus, the *relative deprivation of indigenous elites* is a fourth causal factor behind the violent articulation of nativist sentiments.

Different authors have considered a broad range of mitigative interventions to get a handle at the proximate causes of conflicts between settlers and indigenous peoples. For the purpose of this overview, I have selected and will briefly describe four measures that, to the best of my knowledge, seem to represent reasonable prospects for the mitigation of migration-induced conflicts at the indigenous periphery (see figure 1.2). These measures comprise, of course, a *stop to programmes of planned settlement and the covert facilitation of "spontaneous" colonization; the strengthening of provisions for the protective discrimination/separate administration of indigenous communities; the granting of collective land titles; and provisions for territorial autonomy*. All these policies are meant to consolidate the position of indigenous communities at the expense of their settler competitors. Given the fact that in many instances, a large part of local settler populations are just as deserving and powerless as indigenous people, and have chosen relocation to the frontier to rescue themselves from economic

Figure 1.2 : Avenues for the Mitigation of Conflicts at the Settlement Frontier



hardship (van Schendel 1986, 2005:211) or environmental disaster (Parnwell and Bryant 1996:336f.), how can we justify such a preference for the indigenous?

The main argument, I think, is moral. Where claims to land clash between these two groups, settlers' entitlements have to be ranked second, as their coming to the frontier represents an act of *internal colonialism* (see Geiger on frontiers, this volume) that has to be balanced by allowing the indigenous the right of closure. The right to free movement for all national citizens needs to be qualified; if it is exercised as part of an oppressive state policy – of which we can certainly speak in the case of state-sponsored or -facilitated settlement –, then it has to be rated second to the autochthonous population's right of self-determination, which may include the right to restrict entry into their territories. The burden of accommodating economic

or environmental refugees must be shifted back from indigenous frontier-dwellers to the state whose mistaken policies have prompted them to seek survival at the frontier. Foot soldiers of state strategists in a game of territorial consolidation, settlers should be given sanctuary by those who fielded them if host populations turn hostile. In case of friction, the basic principle should be that prior occupancy of an area confers superior rights of ownership³²; where indigenous peoples are involved, an element of redemption or, as Padilla (this volume) expresses it, "restorative justice" in acknowledgement of past discrimination is added, demanding that the state provide maximum protection to indigenous interests. In short, I consider a "politics of recognition" (Taylor 1992) an adequate response to conflicts between indigenous people and settlers; in particular, it should aim at *investing indigenous people with exclusive and enforceable rights to land* (see figure 2)³³.

By halting programmes of planned settlement and the covert facilitation of "spontaneous" colonization, states can help avoid the opening of new and ever remoter settlement frontiers, and stabilize those whom earlier programmes and incentives for "spontaneous" migration have already brought into existence. Booms in highly-priced agricultural products and economic hardship will still attract considerable numbers of truly "spontaneous" migrants, but at least the state would no longer make efforts at multiplying their numbers and supplying them in bureaucratically-administered settlements.

Part of the political legacy of colonial rule in some former British dependencies in Asia are regulations that ban outsiders from permanently settling on indigenous land, owning it or operating businesses there. In some states of Northeast India, for instance, protective discrimination in the form of policies of exclusion is still in force today, but its provisions are either being ignored by the state authorities (the *Inner Line* prohibition on outside settlement), perverted by the locals in connivance with bureaucrats (the prohibition on outsiders possessing business licences) or serve as palliatives used by the central government and national security establishment to assuage growing feelings of outside determination of local affairs (the policy of reserving state assembly seats and high political offices for the indigenous). As political and economic de-regulation continue, these institutions and the entire idea of protective discrimination have come under increasing stress and may face total erasure in the near future (see Barborá, forthcoming, on Central Assam, and Luithui-Erni, forthcoming, on Arunachal Pradesh).

Some scholars hold that no other legal regime guarantees indigenous communities' control over land and resources better than tightly-enforced provisions for protective discrimination/separate administration. Goodland (1988:396), in his World Bank study on possible policy approaches to the question of indigenous peoples in development, recommends them as "the most feasible means of protecting a tribal group whose

culture is endangered by national intrusion". In a place like Arunachal Pradesh, it was the special protection afforded by the British and later Indian *Inner Line* Policy to the the state's indigenous communities which prevented for many decades the often violent land conflicts and attendant social disintegration that have haunted other indigenous domains in the country (von Fürer-Haimendorf 1982:297f.). Cautiously and with due respect for nationalist sensitivities and justified anti-colonial sentiments in a post-colonial age, I would recommend that policy makers in India *re-appraise the conflict-preventing merits of British-introduced rules of exclusion, reaffirm their validity as crucial elements of present legislation, and devise mechanisms for their efficient and honest enforcement*. Convinced of the effectivity of protective discrimination in preventing conflicts between settlers and indigenous peoples, I am of the opinion that re-opening the discussion on old-style rules of exclusion is in the best interest not only of the Indian Union and state governments, but of many post-colonial governments in the South.

The two formulae with the widest possible application, however, are the *granting of ethnic territorial autonomy* and the *issuance of collective land titles* to indigenous communities. Provisions for ethnic territorial autonomy legislate the transfer of decision-making, lawmaking and fiscal powers to an ethnic group within a delimited territory, often on the basis of the state's recognition of the need to redeem past injustice and discrimination which the group in question had been subjected to. Collective land titles, on the other hand, do not involve a devolution of power; they recognize, however, an indigenous group's superior ownership claims to parts of its ancestral territory, and often involve the restitution of alienated land to that group. By defining land as communally-owned and basically inalienable, collective land titles are meant to undercut the operation of a notoriously violent and fraudulent land market. Both approaches are represented by one or more case study articles in this volume (Hvalkof, Padilla and Erni on titling, Roy on autonomy).

Each of the formulae has its distinct merits, but also its shortcomings. Thus, the *demarcation of indigenous territories and the granting of collective land titles to indigenous communities* – tested above all in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia – has been shown to be an effective means for clarifying competing land claims between locals and intruders, has fostered the sustainable use of natural resources within the titled areas, and can have positive trade-offs also in the realm of indigenous community organization (Hvalkof and Plant 2001). As it bestows no political rights on the beneficiary group, and involves neither a loss of sovereignty nor the re-drawing of administrative boundaries for the respective state elites, collective land titles are usually easier granted than ethnic territorial autonomy. For the same reason, the acquisition of land titles is not predicated on the use of force by the claimant group, as the struggle for ethnic territorial autonomy usually is, and therefore is an option that stands open also to the less martial among the indigenous peoples. It also does not necessarily

lead to ethnic purges to remove pockets of "ethnic others" (settlers), as the creation of autonomous homelands often does when reality contradicts the ideal of ethnically-pure territories. However, the continued presence of sizeable numbers of settlers can be a problem in most areas with standing titling applications, and as political power still resides with the settler-dominated institutions of local government, formal rights over the titled areas often do not imply effective control over them (see Wenk, forthcoming, on Mindanao, the Philippines). Another pervasive problem with land titles, finally, is that they do not provide any solution for the reality of many people's economic dependence from settler capital. Because this includes community leaders, the neediness – and thus the venality – of core stakeholders threatens the orderly management of the titled communal domains (ibid.; Hughes McDermott 2000). It would thus seem that the chances of success for this strategy of boundary-drawing might rise considerably if the mapping and titling process were supported by socio-economic support programs for the indigenous title holders (Wenk, forthcoming).

Compared to demarcation and titling, *territorial autonomy* is a much more encompassing proposition. In the name of their particularity, indigenous or other communal groups are given formal jurisdictional authority over the areas where they live, often including law-making powers. This can allow groups to manage and develop their own educational systems, religious institutions, or language laws. Important for our topic, autonomy provisions may entail the right to legislate a ban on outsiders owning land or operating businesses, and thus restrict land alienation and limit the sometimes grossly superior economic power of settlers. Other than land titling, it provides beleaguered indigenous communities the means to safeguard their language and culture, as it may imply the right to determine the language of instruction in schools and the tongue used by the bureaucracy.

While autonomy regulations have sometimes indeed enabled indigenous populations to do well, the evidence for them to have positive effects on ethnic group relations is checkered. Territorial autonomy works best where its boundaries coincide with a relatively homogenous group (Bertrand 2004:187). When the population seeking autonomy has to share the territory with other ethnic groups of substantial demographic strength (as is the case everywhere where colonization has made substantial inroads), when in-migration has reduced it to a numerical minority, and when the areas it dominates numerically do no longer form a contiguous territory, territorial autonomy may accentuate rather than deflate conflicts between autochthonous locals and migrants (Mozaffar and Scarrit 1999). In such cases where there is a mismatch between contemporary demographic realities and the romance of an indigenous homeland, tribal groups have sometimes resorted to terror and violence to disperse settler neighbours whose presence diminished the force of their claim to an ethnic homeland (see Goswami, forthcoming, on Bodoland, Lower Assam, and Samaddar, this volume). In a context such as the Indian one, where agitation for ethnic

space is habitual and indigenous movements are forced to employ drastic means to attract official attention, the victimisation of outsiders quite regularly accompanies indigenous claims to exclusive homelands (Baruah 2005). Where minority identities become "oppressive" (Mahmood 1996:244ff.), the demand for territorial autonomy loses its inherently emancipatory connotation and can become a recipe for mindless bloodshed.

The articles in perspective

In most instances where migrants and indigenous people meet, cohabit and – on occasion – fight, they do so in spatial settings that are rather peculiarly structured. The arenas of these encounters are situated at the outer reaches of effective state control, contain comparatively vast and seemingly "untapped" resource potentials, and are inhabited by human societies – indigenous communities – which have so far eluded full-scale integration into the post-colonial nations. Defined as much by the presence of raw opportunity and the absence of the regulative force of the state, such spaces generate their own codes of social behavior and economic practice on the part of the intruding individuals, be they settlers, traders, ranchers or actors of yet another occupational background. The state's agenda, on the other hand, is largely determined by the desire to augment its presence – both materially and symbolically – in these zones, which gives it a clear, though not always straightforward stake in the endeavour of the pioneer settler and his/her peers. **My opening article** seeks to develop a comprehensive frame of analysis for the contests for property and resources and the struggles for cultural dominance which take place at the world's colonization fronts. It proposes that the agency of states, settlers and indigenous people and the logic and dynamics of the conflicts that engulf them can best be understood through the prism of the "frontier" notion – an interpretative concept extensively referred to in the first half of this introduction, but not, so far, explained.

My point of departure is the canon fathered by its most well-known proponent, American historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner's was a one-sided story of European settlement, exalting the supreme virtues of the heroic pioneer while remaining silent on the fate of the Native American victims and the environmental mayhem caused by the "winning of the West". On top of this, his work (as well as that of his many followers and even more numerous detractors) was parochial to an extent that it is of little use for broader comparative purposes such as those pursued in this volume. Its true worth, I suggest, lays with the myths to which it gave expression – the myths of the frontier as the fountain of social valor and material prosperity and the source of inexhaustible natural wealth that had no owners –, which are re-embodying themselves in the imaginings that guide non-native frontier

actors at contemporary world frontiers. And yet in a second sense, Turner, whose social Darwinist leanings discouraged so many from embracing the frontier notion, proves himself relevant for all those interested in present-day issues of development, stagnation and conflict in the Southern hemisphere. His famous "frontier thesis" was an exercise in "centering the margin" (Horstmann and Wadley, eds., 2005) as it drew systematic attention to how the rural periphery shaped and consolidated the social and political institutions of the colonizing centre (see Nyerges 1992:861). We may not share Turner's idea that the West was the cradle of American democracy, but his conviction that the opportunities of the frontier were a formative influence in the rise of national elites and national political cultures carries much explanatory power for students of current-day politics of the developing world. Several authors, for instance, have shown that the looting of tropical forests by the timber industry gives rise to business empires which damage and retard the evolution of democratic institutions in the respective countries (Colchester 1993b:77, Dañguilan Vitug 1993; see also Hvalkof, this volume, p. 250). Turner's lasting message, thus, is that to a significant extent, the political fate of nations is also in fact decided at its edges.

Nevertheless, if we want to recuperate the frontier notion for our purposes – the study of ethnic cohabitation and conflict in the wake of migratory moves to state peripheries in the contemporary South –, we have to stray from the Turnerian track, using a larger canvas than the one that the Wisconsin Don preferred. According to the canon that Turner fathered, the process that had formed the American national character was as unique as its results, and parallels in other theatres of European colonial expansion were not so much as hinted at. It took many decades to free frontier studies from their self-chosen isolation, and to show that *Caucasian* conquests were merely one among many possible historical manifestations of the frontier phenomenon, rather than the defining moment in the definition of the frontier as Turner and his disciples had claimed. Counter to the master narrative, frontiers are as characteristic for many present-day developing countries as they were for yesterday's colonial empires; different from the past, however, they come about through processes of "internal colonialism" that replicate the classical colonial project.

The main part of the paper strives to demonstrate that frontiers are regions with peculiar political, economic, social and cultural characteristics which cannot be found in core areas of state control; eight generic properties are detailed for contemporary states in the developing world. In a next step, I try to convey my understanding of the state policies that drive frontier formation in the South. The thrust of these policies, I will maintain, is that of "nationalizing space" (a term coined by political scientist Sanjib Baruah [2003a]); the fact of the continuing centrality of nation- and state-building at the periphery casts doubt on the mantra of "globalization" as the dominant force that is said to determine peripheral predicaments today. In the concluding section, I try to insulate my concept of the frontier against possible charges of being

ahistorical and static. Contemporary frontiers, it is clear, are frontiers in transition, influenced as they are by the worldwide wave of conversions to (formally) democratic forms of governance and the rising importance of the discourses of human rights, minority rights and biodiversity protection. Nevertheless, I doubt that these changes have been more than skin-deep; the terminal paragraphs present my evidence for the conclusion that the world's troubled frontiers will not fade away any time soon.

How do settlers try to assert their dominance? How do they maintain their claim to indigenous land and labour? What views of the world and their place therein do settlers entertain, and to what extent do these views nurture ideas of settler supremacy and prefigure the colonists' interaction with the natural environment? How, on the other hand, are indigenous cosmological and ontological models structured? Are frontier systems of ethnic and racial subordination immutable, or can they be subverted – and if yes, what are the factors that make for change? Søren Hvalkof's account of more than seventy years of colonization among the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal in the Peruvian *montaña* illustrates one particular, but in many ways representative configuration of interethnic relations between settlers and indigenous communities which gives us first clues as to how a more general morphology of everyday conflicts at the world's settlement frontiers could look like. Hvalkof details the changing fortunes of the colony of Oventeni, a settlement of peasant migrants of Quechua origin founded in 1935 by Franciscan missionaries. Cattle-raising, the single most prestigious and culturally iconic form of land use among Latin American migrants to the frontier (Jones 1990, ch. 7) and the economic mainstay of the *colonos* of Oventeni, is ill-adapted to the conditions of the Gran Pajonal; only by exploiting Ashéninka labour can it produce at least marginal profits. Describing the appalling forms of chattel slavery and bonded labour in use in the Peruvian *montaña* until the late 1980s, the author substantiates Duncan Baretta and Markoff's (1978) claim that cattle frontiers stand out for their cruelty and the culture of violence which they nurture within frontier society. In an interesting aside, Hvalkof points out that some of the worst abuses in the long history of the settlement frontier in his study area actually came on the wings of recent interventions of international lending institutions, reminding us that the barbarism of the savage periphery cohabits easily with metropolitan, late-modern capitalism.

To bring into view the historical continuities in interethnic relations in Gran Pajonal, Hvalkof depicts recurrent "cycles of conquest" which structure the history of indigenous subaltern frontier-dwellers like the Ashéninka. Fueled by the changing desires of the outside world, ever new groups of intruders invade indigenous territories, seeking to extract ever new forms of natural wealth. Failing in the attempt or exhausting limited supplies, they typically withdraw after the boom phase, leading to the temporary collapse of the – depending on the resource in question – colonization endeavour or the extractive bridgehead. The discovery of a new type of resource then

leads to the resurrection of the frontier. The author distinguishes four such cycles in the history of the Peruvian *montaña*, hinging on the extraction of rubber and slaves, the raising of cattle, the cultivation of sugarcane, coca and lately coffee, and – most recently – the felling of tropical hardwoods. He identifies two historical conjunctions – the great rebellion of 1742 and the phase of intense land titling and territorial reordering in the late 1980s and the 1990s – at which the Ashéninka were able to throw off the yoke of foreign domination and overturn seemingly unassailable and successfully "naturalized" structures of inequality and exploitation. Zeroing in on the more recent of these successful challenges to the "tyranny of history" (a notion coined by the historian, Jenner [1992]) which the frontier seems to impose on indigenous communities, Hvalkof shows how the Ashéninka managed to outwit the deeply-entrenched colonist networks in the Gran Pajonal by shrewdly using opportunities that came with the globalization of the discourses of biodiversity protection and indigenous rights. "Frontier conditions' extraordinary ability to reappear", however, is borne out by the dramatic deterioration of the situation since the late 1990s when structural adjustment programmes emasculated the Peruvian state, re-empowering both the local colonist elite and a rapacious lumber industry which has since been ravaging the area. The present *tristesse* notwithstanding, the author nevertheless draws hope from the example of the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal, arguing that it demonstrates that the world-wide diffusion of emancipatory rights discourses, coupled with a heightened sensitivity on the part of national governments, can boost indigenous mobilization to a point where it succeeds – even if only for a time – in tempering conventional frontier politics. If, however, we are to disrupt for good the logic of the perennial reproduction of frontier conditions, Hvalkof concludes, advocates of indigenous rights and other allies of indigenous frontier-dwellers must not relent in their efforts to press for the enforcement of hard-won international standards on human rights and environmental protection.

Christian Erni's study on frontier interactions – past and present – on Mindoro island in the Philippines complements Hvalkof's Latin American material with an Asian perspective. Importantly, it introduces us to a universe that is altogether different from that of the self-consciously ethnocentric and formerly warlike Ashéninka whose ancestors had once confronted (and defeated) the Spanish in an open rebellion. Through most of their history, the Buhid, indigenous swiddeners in the south-central portion of the island, have tried to avoid violent confrontation with outsiders, retreating into the forested, hilly interior as danger approached. A concomitant of this strategy of conflict avoidance and withdrawal is an ethics of non-aggression; the Buhid share this combination of characteristics with a score of other politically fragmented indigenous societies inhabiting difficult terrain along the rims of densely-settled agricultural core areas in Southeast Asia. While offering protection from longer-term occupation by portions of state-level societies, these "refuges",

as Robert Dentan (1992) termed them in his classification of frontier habitat types, have historically been open to periodic incursions and raids by predatory outsiders, making a defensive and submissive posture the most promising political and military adaptation on the part of the indigenous populations concerned. Ironically, then, peacability – of which very few human populations have a proven record (Fabbro 1978, Howell and Willis, eds., 1989) – emerges as a more or less regular (and regularly undervalued) adaptive response to the notorious violence of the frontier.

For the bigger part of the 20th century, but especially after World War II, Mindoro has been a prime target of mainly spontaneous migrants from overcrowded parts of the country such as the Visayan islands, Central Luzon and the Southern Tagalog region. Until shortly before the turn of the millenium, national land laws put few obstacles in the way of land-seeking settlers or corporate interests vying for indigenous territories; Erni vividly describes the mechanisms, dynamics and local indiosyncrasies of the Mindoro variant of such a regime of “integrated displacement” (Lopez 1986: 85-121, 1987) of indigenous communities. An interesting element that recalls the legacy of Spanish colonialism which the Philippines share with Peru – the scene of Hvalkof’s case study – is the *sanduguán* (“of one blood”) institution, the highland equivalent of the *compadrinazgo* bond tying clients to patrons in Philippine lowland society. To secure their access to Buhid labour and the highly-priced forest products obtainable from them, settlers routinely evoke “blood-brotherhood” and thus the mutuality of kinship relations in their interactions with Buhid trading partners and wage labourers. Yet, as Erni shows, it is not merely the cunning manipulation of cultural materials by colonists and traders which secures the one-sided flow of wealth and resources across the ethnic boundary; rather, it is the fact that the structures of inequality have been firmly internalized by the Buhid, rendering open defiance or even acts of collective resistance on their part unthinkable. Thus, the fact that the Buhid associate the outside world with “systematic random violence” (see Tsing 1996: 190 on fellow non-assertive tribals, the Meratus of South Kalimantan) from which there is no escape is, for instance, dramatically reflected in the ubiquity of invasive cannibalistic spirits and ghouls in their cosmology.

Being an ecological anthropologist, Erni focuses on patterns of land and resource use this and that side of the ethnic divide. His account of lowland settler practices confirms the general observation that external frontier actors – in the main migrant farmers, cattle ranchers and loggers – are opportunistic in their use of land and resources, seeking to maximize short-term profits at the expense of sustainability. Particularly in the colonist-dominated foothills, this has resulted in grave soil degradation and the infestation of large tracts of land with *imperata* grass; in the interior, meanwhile, even the remotest stands of tropical hardwoods have been logged by lowlanders – not infrequently with the help of Buhid youth –, and the rivers and creeks have largely been emptied of fish and other aquatic resources. The Buhid, on the other hand, seem

to have developed an awareness of the dangers of unrestrained swiddening – above all in critical watershed areas –, and are increasingly relying on (ecologically more sustainable) perennial crops. By adopting the concept of communal forests into their largely privatized landholding patterns, and through their use of traditional mechanisms for enforcing the new rules against intra-communal “freeriders”, the Buhid seem to have banned the famous spectre of the “tragedy of the commons” (Hardin 1968) – at least with regards to shifting cultivation. It is the presence of the settlers who are impervious to Buhid community conventions, which establishes a situation of “open access”, leaving many forests vulnerable to reckless exploitation.

The ascension of the “social forestry” paradigm in the late 1980s and the recognition of indigenous peoples as a special constituency among the country’s forest-dependent population in the 1990s led to a radical break with the past, marked, as it had been, by state connivance in indigenous displacement. An Administrative Order of the environmental ministry of 1992 and later, in 1997, a full-fledged law – the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act, or IPRA – provided local indigenous communities the chance to acquire communal titles to their territories, and to thus protect them rather effectively against settlers and other interlopers. The Buhid made eager use of the new opening, and in 1998 were granted a so-called CADC (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim) over 94,000 has of land. Community leaders are trying to secure the populace’s compliance with rigid and incisive conservation rules. Their authority, however, does not extend to the settlers, some of whom have openly challenged the legal standing of the title; many still live and cultivate land inside the CADC area, and clandestine logging by migrants is rampant even deep in the interior. As Erni shows in his lucid terminal paragraphs, it is here where the realities of the frontier catch up with the Buhid, and the state’s claim to have successfully regulated it reveals itself as fantasy. At the savage periphery, violence and the ability to credibly threaten others with its use continues to be a vital source of power. The state’s rhetoric of the rule of law notwithstanding, “land security is dependent on the owner’s ability to defend his/her rights to land”, and in the case of the Buhid, that ability is severely curtailed by the non-confrontational and non-violent behavioral dispositions in which they have been schooled for generations.

The sheer weight of oppressive conditions, their tendency to appear “natural” where they have lasted for generations, and the often glaring imbalance of force in favor of ruling groups and classes make rebellions rare and exceptional occurrences in the lives of subaltern populations (Scott 1986:5). Indigenous peoples are no exception to this. Acculturation, the disintegration of social and cultural systems and psychological disorientation – frequent responses to the mass influx of settlers – limit the possibility for collective action. In many cases, the dependencies inherent in clientelistic bonds to settler patrons discourage resistance against the presence of abusive migrants (Hvalkof 2003:7, 15), and even if nativist feelings are widespread,

they are tempered by the fact that the latter usually enjoy the protection of the state (Fearon and Laitin 2001:23ff.). Nevertheless, history does provide examples where against all odds, local hostility towards a fast-growing settler population *has* turned violent. My article on the bloody purges of Madurese settlers by indigenous Dayak that ravaged Indonesian West Kalimantan in 1997 seeks to locate the circumstances that led to the unlikely event of a nativistic uprising. Set besides the example of the current struggle of the Buhid (Erni, this volume) or the Ashéninka (Hvalkof, this volume) to have their territories demarcated and legally secured, and viewed against the case of the underground insurgency of some of the *Jhumma* people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (1975-1992, see Roy, this volume), the West Borneo material sheds light on a third, distinctly different type of collective action – the riot. While riots tend to conjure up the image of spontaneous, irrational crowd action, scholarly investigations of sectarian mass violence in India (Das 1990, Tambiah 1996) and recent comparative analyses of the subject (Horowitz 2001) have shown that elements of planning and the careful selection of targets are integral to the riot phenomenon. In West Kalimantan, the victims were plucked from a wider range of unpopular neighbours – both migrant groups and fellow “sons of the soil” – whose houses and properties were left untouched to prevent them from joining the fighting on the side of the Madurese. To keep religion from becoming an issue in the violence – a losing proposition for the Dayak, since the Malay majority shares the same faith with the Madurese –, Muslim places of worship were consciously spared from destruction, and an alliance forged (first covert and unofficial, yet later – in a second round of violence in 1999 – affirmed by common action) which united Dayak and Malay under the banner of nativity (i.e. being “sons of the soil”).

What is more, a calm calculation of interests speaks also from the fact that the victim group was numerically insignificant (making up less than 3% of the province’s total population) and widely unpopular, guaranteeing the nativists secure military success. I have tried to argue, however, that the violence against the Madurese was not so much “displaced aggression” as it was a communicative act – “collective bargaining by riot”, as E. P. Thompson (1971) would have called it. In West Kalimantan in the late New Order epoch, disaffection about the loss of land to state-sponsored forms of development and the lack of political influence ran high, yet had no legitimate outlet as dissent was not tolerated and Dayak leaders who could have negotiated compromise solutions had been removed from positions of power decades ago. By butchering peasant paupers, the Dayak, I contend, were sending a signal up the ladder of power that the government had overlooked Dayak interests for too long. The case of the Madurese, then, illustrates the more general observation (Weiner 1993:173) that as the weakest part in frontier expansion, settlers often reap what others have sown, taking the punches that were aimed at more powerful and therefore unassailable forces.

The article examines different explanations of the causes of the pogroms, and carefully weighs economic against political and cultural interpretations. Notably, it argues against often-repeated, mechanistic propositions that resource scarcities propelled the Dayak to action, by pointing to the fact that other areas of Outer Indonesia experienced worse forms of mal-development without producing the syndroms of nativist unrest. Refuting simple Malthusian theories relating violence to population/resource disequilibria, I am making the case for a multi-causal and distinctly historical explanatory approach. Departing from the curious fact that vestiges of an ancient war cult played a prominent role in the Dayak uprising, I examine the question why pacification had eliminated such institutions of violence elsewhere on the island of Borneo, but not in West Kalimantan. The answer points to a tradition of self-defeating state-building strategies in this part of Borneo, which was until recently based on the use of Dayak as mercenaries against the enemies of the day. The slaughter of unwanted migrants in 1997, I suggest, should be interpreted as the unintended consequence of opportunistic pacification strategies that systematically nurtured “customary” violence by indigenous irregulars.

The frontier is maybe the single most crucial reference point in the article; it provides the explanatory context for things as disparate as the state practice of ethnic soldiering, the aggressive demeanor of Madurese pioneers and the chronic “invisibility” of the Dayak in the eyes of the developmentalist state. Above all, however, the concept helps to make sense of the ubiquitous, delirious tales of Dayak magic and savagery which surrounded the events and captured the imagination of the national and international press. Interpreting them as part fact and part fiction, the article concludes by highlighting the persisting frontier representations of indigenous “wildness” and the mystical force of forest-based lifeways which circulate in Borneo to this day, and shows how the Dayak tapped these powerful images to increase the impact of their assault on their settler antagonists.

While the present volume so far only looked at settlers from the safe distance of the comparative perspective or the gaze – more often than not devoid of ethnographic sympathies – beyond the rim of an “indigenous” field site, the following article by Marina Campos has its empirical focus on a concrete settler population. By choosing to do research among small migrant farmers (*colonos*) along the Transamazon Highway of Brazil, she selected the one group that lost most from the paradigmatic change that Western perceptions of the tropical forest and its inhabitants – native and non-native – underwent in the course of the past generation (see Geiger on frontiers, this volume). As Europeans and North Americans came to see the Amazon as the threatened “lungs of the earth” rather than a “green hell” or an extractivist eldorado, indigenous Amazonians and to a lesser degree also the long-established, racially-mixed backwoodsmen (the so-called *caboclos*) successfully reshaped their identities as “forest people” and thus “natural conservationists”. *Colonos*, however, failed to

do so; international opinion and increasingly also national policy makers chose to characterize them in terms similar to those advanced in the paragraphs on pioneer settlers in my frontier article (Geiger, this volume), i.e. foregrounding “fugitive” land use practices and resource consumerism. On the basis of her own solid field data from three municipalities in the state of Pará, Campos sets out to redeem the Brazilian *colono* and dislodge images of reckless settler opportunism and destructive “frontier mentalities”.

Campos starts by noticing a puzzling disinterest in *colonos* in academia which is at odds with their numerical significance at Amazonian frontiers; today their numbers exceed those of indigenous peoples and *caboclos* by far, at least in Brazil. This should make them a force to reckon with in the struggle for the protection of Amazonian rainforests; however, unlike indigenous Amazonians and *caboclos*, they have so far rarely been thought of as potential allies in that struggle – for two reasons: First, they are not “native” to the area and are thus not thought to have any knowledge of appropriate uses and management of the forest. Second, the logic behind their role in deforestation has so far been neither sufficiently nor sympathetically examined. Systematically obscured were notably the role of public policies associated with small-scale agriculture and frontier colonization, market forces and precarious land tenure regimes. In the recent past, as Campos points out, the national government has displayed a systematic bias against small migrant farmers, using them as scapegoats for the ecologically disastrous consequences of its own development programs, its failure to reform dysfunctional agrarian laws and the sins of other, more affluent and politically influential frontier actors. Behind the cover of official accusations of “peasant pyromania”, the author explains, medium and large-scale landowners – whose capacity to do serious harm to the forest is not constrained by the shortness of labor which hems in small *colonos* – are free to convert giant slices of forest into pasture or plantations.

Campos then shows that an impartial look at settler resource management practices in her study area produces little to support the image of the ecological villain which the authorities have attached to the *colono*. Two circumstances account for this: First – and probably most importantly –, her research sites form an “old frontier” long saturated with migrants, with no primary forests and thus no room for expansion left for the colonists. As they lack the capital for long-distance moves to newer colonization fronts, *colonos* are forced to intensify their production and shift to fixed-field regimes, and the improved access to credit facilities and the agricultural extension services of the government often described for “old frontiers” enables them to invest in soil conservation measures. Thus compelled to permanence, the *colonos* – second – have sought interaction and exchange with long-established neighbours – in the main *caboclos* – who brokered the knowledge needed to break with the habit of mining the environment. Many of Campos’ respondents had 15 or more years

residence in the area, in the course of which they started experimenting with natural forest management and agroforestry, and partially reconstructed the tropical forest in their own farm plots. Her paper shows that, given the chance, settlers are well-capable of adopting sustainable cultivation methods in a frontier environment.

The *colonos*’ economic and ecological sophistication is matched by their political astuteness. Encouraged by the coming to power of a leftist president and long-time ally of agrarian movements in the countryside, *colono* organizations started a successful struggle for the recognition of their resource-use systems and political legitimacy for small peasant migrants: crucially, the latter quest involved an alignment with recognized “green actors”. Thus, one of their most significant umbrella organizations – the *Movimento pelo Desenvolvimento da Transamazônica e do Xingu* (MPDXTX) – participated in the formulation of a development program which obliged both the government and farmer organizations to reconcile the objectives of smallholder agricultural production and environmental conservation; among others, the program mandated the dissemination of sustainable agro-ecological technologies and the establishment of major new conservation areas in the region. Through the MPDXTX and other grassroot initiatives, Brazilian *colonos* have made a credible claim to the role of environmental stewards, “subverting” – to some extent – “the dearly-held dichotomy between ‘forest protectionists’ and ‘forest destroyers’” which informs much current thinking (my own included) on settlers and indigenous peoples on world frontiers.

While Campos’ study demonstrates the need to subject our assumptions about the protagonists in struggles for frontier resources and their respective relationships to the environment to constant re-evaluation, a comparison with other cases even in the nearer region suggests that the proposition that settlers are capable of sustainable resource management and make natural allies in the struggle for the protection of the environment, is by no means universally valid. Equally problematic is the generalization of the notion that small peasant migrants are victimized by national discourses on deforestation – the point of departure of Campos’ treatise. For one, the setting of her study is an “old frontier” where the supply of cheap, unoccupied land has dried up years ago, and with it migrants’ incentives to clear new plots elsewhere rather than protect the fertility of the original holdings; pioneer settlers at active colonization fronts are guided by different rationales that correspond to those outlined, for instance, in my frontier article (Geiger on frontiers, this volume). Second, the diffusion of environmentalist priorities and the concomitant public stigmatization of peasant settlers as agents of forest destruction is highly uneven and less than global, as Hvalkof (this volume) points out for Peru. There, the positive public image of the *colono* is undiminished, and so is the self-image of the colonists of Oventeni who feel that they are one with the heroic pioneers and civilizing heroes of the founding days of the Peruvian national estate. Different from Brazil, Peru had no strong domestic alliance of environmentalists and minority rights advocates creating awareness for

the destruction of the rainforest and forest-dwelling indigenous peoples, and the human impact of colonization and settlement was never publicly addressed. Unlike their settler peers along the *Transamazônica*, the Oventeni colonists have never run out of political legitimacy, and thus were never forced to open up to national „green agendas“ and adapt their production system to environmentalist concerns. The latter continues to be organized around cattle-raising which puts a heavy strain on forest resources and, unless supported by forced Ashéninka labour, fails to satisfy even the elementary economic needs of the settlers. The transformation of the colonist from passive emulator of metropolitan ideals of development and progress to a creative agent of social change and a serious asset in the struggle to preserve the rapidly-dwindling tropical rainforests, we may conclude, depends on a rather broad range of factors which rarely appear in the propitious combination of Campos' Brazilian case study.

Despite a growing trend towards the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights by national governments, situations of legal ambiguity with relation to land and resource tenure in frontier areas still abound. Where resource-hungry settlers, corporations and government agencies encroach upon lands inhabited by indigenous peoples, conflicts over land and resources – latent or open – with resident indigenous communities are inevitable. One option for the prevention both of the creeping process of land loss to frontier interlopers and the violent escalation of land conflicts is the mapping and titling of indigenous domains. In several Latin American countries, land demarcation and the struggle for legal titles have become an important and often remarkably successful strategy for the defense of indigenous territories (see Hvalkof on the Peruvian Amazon, this volume; other countries that have advanced in the same direction are Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia). In South and Southeast Asia, ill-designed agrarian laws and repressive political regimes have for a long time conspired against using this tool. In recent years, however, democratization, decentralization and the reform of the forestry sector have in many countries created more favorable conditions for land titling programs, and indigenous organizations in the region are showing a growing interest in that approach. **Sabino Padilla Jr.**'s paper scrutinizes a landmark piece of relevant legislation from the Philippines of which Chris Erni's article has already made mention. Ten years into the law's existence, Padilla evaluates its track record in removing the causes of land conflicts between indigenous communities, settlers and other frontier interlopers, and identifies the obstacles that impede its smooth implementation.

Republic Act (RA) 8371 of 1997, also known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), has gone further towards providing indigenous communities security of tenure than any other law ever designed by a post-colonial government in the region. Among other things, it orders the state to delineate and title indigenous territories wherever they are found, endows title-holding communities with collective ownership

rights over land and resources – including the right to block the entry of migrants into the title area –, and mandates the restitution of community land taken over by outsiders through fraudulent means. Furthermore, in an astonishing puzzling gesture of respect for cultural and legal pluralism, it endorses the use of indigenous customary law for resolving conflicts within the titled domain, including those involving outsiders.

While pointing out that IPRA is not without its birth defects (including, for instance, the perpetuation of the notion of superior state interests and the acceptance of existing logging contracts and mining leases in title areas), Padilla sets IPRA in its proper historical context as a law that will set the standards in the region for years to come. By beginning of 2006, a total of 852,000 has of land (about one-fifth the size of Denmark) were transferred to indigenous ownership, documented by Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADTs), the strongest form of native title available under Philippine law. With the promulgation of IPRA, the Philippine government has declared an end to the complicity of the state in the displacement of indigenous peoples, and made the transition to a “politics of recognition”. While bearing a superficial resemblance to the programs of agrarian reform that seek to improve the lot of the small peasantry and the landless, the provision of collective land titles to communities of indigenous citizens rests, as Padilla points out, on a rationale all its own, which he calls the principle of “restorative justice”. Other than the idea of “redistributive justice” which underlies land reform, “restorative justice” is animated by the national community's wish to redeem a population group for past injuries and injustices. It is not so much predicated on the proof of the size of the constituency – as with the fight to end rural feudalism and thus the misery of a sizeable part of agrarian society – than on a public consensus acknowledging the nation's guilt which justifies the dispensation of special rights regardless of numbers and proportions. Padilla shows that the tensions between land reform and the movement that seeks to reconstruct indigenous communal territories account for a sizeable part of the difficulties into which the programme has run in recent years.

In two of the paper's most captivating sections, Padilla outlines the forces that have mobilized against the law's implementation. After initial enthusiasm on the part of legislators and the cabinet, the present government's will to implement the law has slackened, and the pace of title issuance has slowed down dramatically. The implementing agency, a body with largely indigenous officers, is grotesquely underfunded and, moreover, infested with the germs of bureaucratic inertia which plagues everything that the Philippine state has ever touched. Early in the process, powerful mining interests mounted an assault against the law, with near-fatal results: In 1998, a supreme court-challenge to the constitutionality of IPRA lodged by dupes of the mining industry was defeated only narrowly. Six years later, in 2006, the present government of President Arroyo made a mockery of the law-givers' original intentions. It placed the titling programme under the supervision of the Department

of Agrarian Reform (DAR), misconstruing the issuance of ancestral domain titles as resting on the same element of social justice as the redistribution of large landholdings in the country's agricultural core areas.

On the local level, settlers – who may, depending on the case, represent between 40% and 60% of the inhabitants of a title area – have often tried to obstruct the census-taking, delineation and titling processes as they feared eviction once the title was granted. (The author, however, also recounts instances of peaceful accommodation and, indeed, even enthusiastic co-operation between migrants and title-seeking indigenous communities, indicating that boundary-setting in ethnically heterogeneous spaces need not imply by necessity a zero-sum logic). A severe problem in many title areas is the hostility displayed by the leftist revolutionaries of the New People's Army (NPA) who reject the titling of indigenous domains as a counter-revolutionary ploy of the government, threatening indigenous leaders who advocate the idea with violence and confiscating and destroying survey equipment. Padilla surmises a very pragmatic calculation to be behind the anti-titling stance of the guerillas: For one, the law affects its main constituency, the poor peasants, negatively and is thus in conflict with the revolutionary agenda. Second, it contradicts the guerillas' own version of agrarian reform which draws to a significant degree on supposedly "vacant" land that forms part of indigenous ancestral domains. By bemoaning the fact that ancestral domain claims cover swathes of territory far larger than the claimants' numbers would warrant, the revolutionary left discards the propriety of "restorative justice" for indigenous communities on the same grounds as traditional politicians and many common citizens. A second non-state adversary with a considerable potential to disrupt the titling process are the different factions of the Bangsa Moro movement for the self-determination of the Muslim south. Not only do Muslim settlers – a significant actor group on many indigenous domains in Mindanao – stand to lose from IPRA, but the existence of indigenous title areas threatens to subvert the Bangsa Moro organizations' aspirations to autonomy or secession of what they describe as their people's "ancestral territory".

The conclusions from Padilla's paper are rather sobering. Land titling and the demarcation of indigenous territories only constitute valuable instruments for the containment of the sort of conflicts treated in this volume to the extent that laws actually *can* influence the course of events in an essentially lawless state domain. The hegemony of the state at the Mindanao frontier is contested by several armed formations who all have the potential and the will to thwart the empowerment of the region's indigenous communities. The state's resources for translating an emancipatory land law into reality are severely limited, as expressed in the fact that most delineation and titling efforts are carried out by non-government organizations such as the author's. Only if the government shows strong and sustained dedication to the vision of "restorative justice" through land rights can it hope to overpower

the forces arrayed against it. In the more likely event of a lapse of commitment as time wears on, the laudable legislative initiative for reducing tenurial insecurity for indigenous peoples is bound to drown in the morass of bureaucratic ineptitude and malpractice and lose itself in the closed circuit of a morose legal system all of whom have kept Philippine society stagnating for most of the post-colonial period.

State-sponsored settlement has been a background theme in at least two of the articles in this volume. In the case of West Kalimantan (Geiger), *transmigrasi* – Indonesia's programme for guided population transfer to the Outer Islands – contributed to heightening land pressure in the province, even if it was not directly involved in the shipment and provisioning of the Madurese settlers whom the Dayak nationalists violently opposed. While most of the Brazilian *colonos* in Campos' study have come to Pará on their own, hundreds of thousands of others who poured into the Amazon arrived under the tutelage of INCRA (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária*); in significant measure, the massive colonization programme which the agency oversaw has determined the dynamics of frontier expansion in this country. The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the setting of **Raja Devasish Roy's** article, have become a chiffre for the military uses of state-organized settlement. When in 1973 the breakaway province of East Pakistan, re-christened Bangladesh, revoked the constitutional safeguards that had given the Hill Tracts relative autonomy, parts of the indigenous communities of the area rose up in arms. Purportedly to reduce population pressure in the lowlands, but with the main aim of subduing the rebellion, the Bangladesh government brought in large numbers of settlers some of which it armed and fielded as militia against the indigenous insurgents. Largely as a result of forceful demographical engineering (1979-1985), the indigenous population's percentage of the area's total population fell from 91% in 1951 to barely 51% in 1991. In 1997, the conflict was officially ended by a peace accord, but relations between parts of the settler population and indigenous communities have remained tense, and the question of what to do with the settlers that came in as part of the government's counter-insurgency strategy is still unresolved. From the privileged vantage point of a former facilitator of the peace negotiations between the guerilla and the government, Roy scrutinizes the content of the Peace Accord of 1997, chronicles the tardy process of its implementation, and, slipping into the role of the utopian thinker, sketches a model accord that does not, like its real version, contain the seeds of further violence.

Accords and treaties that define the terms under which rebellious ethnic and linguistic minorities (re-)submit themselves to the rule of a national centre belong to the standard techniques of governance in the world of states. Accord-making is seldom the result of a pure, innocent desire for peace, but a means to reduce the tactical space of the adversary. Rarely is its potential for the democratization of society and the harmonization of ethnic relations realized; what interests states is the compact's power to contain a conflict's violent manifestations rather than to resolve or reconcile

the divisions which gave rise to it (Samaddar 1999). Furthermore, accords tend to be “monologues that pass as dialogues” (ibid.:11). Given the vastly superior resources of the state, it can largely choose the moment for negotiations, while war-weariness and the whims of foreign state backers often force the decision to lay down the arms upon its non-state adversaries. The result are frequently unfavourable terms of peace for the latter, an assertion that Roy finds confirmed for the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti* (abbreviated as JSS), the main insurgent group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict and antagonist of the government in the negotiations. The guerillas’ main aspirations – the departure of the settlers and the army, the restitution of land that had gone over to them, and a powerful regional body under indigenous control to oversee the devolution of power to the new administrative entities – remained unfulfilled, prompting one faction of the JSS to defect and oppose the agreement among charges of a “sell-out”. Violent clashes between supporters and opponents of the accord among the former guerillas have since claimed dozens of lives, belittling claims of a successful transition to peace in the wake of the agreement.

Most serious for a conflict that revolved around land alienation by settlers, says Roy, is the “stalemate on land-related matters” which stymies the peace process. A new government with no sympathies for the accord is dragging its feet on the planned devolution of land administration authority to the hill district councils (the units of indigenous self-government provided for by the accord), and the Land Commission which is to adjudicate in cases of contested land claims was only convened in 2005 and seems mired in conflicts over the control of the office of the chairperson. Finally, the rehabilitation outside the Hill Tracts of the estimated 200,000 or more government-sponsored settlers who arrived at the behest of the military junta between 1979 and 1985, is not making any headway. The *refoulement* of these migrants – some of whom had soiled their hands as para-military ansar in counter-insurgency operations – had been a core demand of the indigenous guerilla. However, reflecting the JSS’s weak bargaining position in the negotiations, the government only agreed to include such a provision in the form of an unwritten and secret additional clause, on which it has since reneged. (A decade later, but in a radically different power constellation, the Iraqi Kurds have raised a similar demand for the repatriation of thousands of mostly Sunni Arabs settled by Saddam Hussein in and around the strategically important city of Kirkuk in Iraqi Kurdistan. Other than the Jumma people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, it appears that the Kurds will get their way. With the support of the American occupation power, the Iraqi government recently approved the relocation plan, offering generous monetary compensation and land to those willing to be relocated [*NZZ am Sonntag* 2007]). Worse, against the spirit of the agreement, the present government seems determined to re-strengthen the settler element in the Hill Tracts, and has more or less openly transferred new migrants to the area (Roy, forthcoming). The republic of Bangladesh has quite clearly not called a halt to its campaign of

territorial expansion, and has not abandoned the dream of national fulfillment through assimilating its cultural edges (Levene 1999:363).

The equidistance between best practice (“peace with justice”) and the realities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997, Roy insists, is vast. Thus, the autonomy regulations that were formulated are not hinging on constitutional safeguards and can easily be overturned by a majority vote in the national parliament; they do not include provisions for fiscal autonomy; and neither the smaller indigenous ethnic groups nor women are adequately represented in the new structures. Still, deficient as they are, they represent a challenge to established notions of the Bangladeshi state, and are irking those elements of the settler nation that are opposed to any sort of prerogatives for indigenous frontier-dwellers. As the guerilla has decommissioned and a return to violence is no longer possible, the only promising avenue for the area’s indigenous peoples, the author maintains, is to fight for the complete and faithful implementation of the Accord and cultivate alliances with NGOs abroad and progressive sections of the settler population.

The blatant case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts apart, the person of the settler cannot generally be equated with illegitimate intrusion, nor should we posit as a rule that indigenous peoples are invested with superior moral and legal claims to contested resources. Not always, either, is there in fact a power imbalance in favor of the settlers, and is it self-evident that it is the indigenous side which we have to seek to empower. Some regions – such as Northeast India – have legislative frameworks that give locals privileged access to land, employment and political representation that, in effect, turn migrants into second-class citizens (Baruah 2003b). In the complex contemporary political geographies of South and also Southeast Asia, as Willem van Schendel (n.d.:13) notes, the discourse of “indigeneity” can be used for many ends, “from demanding basic rights for dispossessed communities to mobilizing support for majoritarian racist and fascist projects” (for the charge of fascism, see also van Klinken 2000 on Central Kalimantan, Indonesia). In this case, emancipatory ideas linking indigenous peoples with the right to self-determination may “fuse with xenophobic ideologies of belonging” (van Schendel n.d.:14) that preach the expulsion and, if necessary, violent annihilation of non-indigenous co-citizens. In the concluding paper to this volume, political philosopher **Ranabir Samaddar** reminds us of the “dark underside” of the “politics of recognition” and dares us to seek solutions that answer indigenous concerns without sacrificing the human rights of migrants and refugees.

The quest for group rights such as instruments of protective discrimination or autonomous domains, the author notes, clashes with the fundamental tenets of the liberal modernist state. Where indigenous people seek the right to curb frontier migration and put a ceiling on the size of non-native communities in their territories,

they violate the basic right of all national citizens to unrestricted movement, residency and property ownership. Providing for autonomous areas and exclusive homelands implies that we abandon the republican ideal of equal citizenship rights for a differential system of justice, force, entitlements and taxation, allowing a minority to dominate the public sphere and turn its norms in its favour. (Unsurprisingly, this tension between special rights for minorities and the principal of equality inherent in the citizenship idea has led to constitutional challenges against the legality of pro-indigenous legislation in two of the cases discussed in this volume – the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act in the Philippines [see Erni and Padilla, this volume] and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord [Roy, this volume]).

However, so Samaddar, the violation of abstract principles of modern statehood does not by itself delegitimize the indigenous quest for recognition and prerogatives; what really speaks against it is the fact that, if South Asian experiences are any measure, the concrete modes for realizing self-determination are patently unfeasible and insalubrious for all. On trial stands the model of the ethnically-defined, exclusive homeland which is not only the prime political project of indigenous elites in South Asia, but also the standard administrative solution to law-and-order problems in that region. The homeland idea holds both indigenous rebels and state elites captive, without proof of having solved anyone's problems. In every territorial entity – existing and potential –, it creates groups that belong and those who do not, and puts the latter in acute danger of violent displacement. The vectors of conflict generated by the homeland discourse are variegated, ranging from bringing an ethnically-defined group scattered in many states into a homeland, to maintaining the territorial integrity of a homeland that exists, and creating a new homeland for a group that does not yet have one (Baruah 2003b:57). India – on which the article focuses – has made the idea of exclusive ethnic space the main pillar of its strategy for mitigating ethnic conflicts, but that has not diminished the frequency and intensity with which the latter occur. The "Indian paradox" (a phrase that Samaddar borrows from Weiner [1989]) thus revolves around the observation that rather than assuaging communal grievances, that country's liberal constitution has given birth to the "political subject marked by permanent opposition" – including, prominently, indigenous peoples.

If exclusive homelands provide only destructive and self-defeating solutions to the problems of the settlement frontier, what other options are there? In search for an alternative to the exclusionary "politics of belonging", Samaddar pleads for abandoning the ultimately statist discourse of "rights" for the "different skies" of a "justice" discourse and a return to the basic human values of care, charity and hospitality. In an attempt that is, as he himself admits, almost "too delicate and fragile for politics", the author remonstrates with indigenous movements to seek ways to grant at the very least "minimal justice" to the mass of humanity that has moved into their ancestral territories. Instead of continuing to affirm roots

and origins as the basic criteria of citizenship and belonging, indigenous leaders should, he suggests, appreciate the "historic possibility of a revision of the rules of political life" in the Indian national community and refuse a type of democracy that "can only express itself in ethnocratic form" – i. e. the rule of autochthonous "insiders" over non-native "outsiders". He then proceeds to propose six minimal conditions that future autonomy arrangements should fulfill to satisfy the criteria for minimal justice for all involved groups. Noteworthy, in particular, is the insistence on a mutual commitment of the indigenous and migrant beneficiaries of an autonomy regulation and the state counterpart to engage in continued conversation in the post-agreement phase (and thus on "dialogue" as the basic policy principle), and the urge for indigenous leaders to seek innovative forms of mutual accommodation (e.g. non-territorial forms of autonomy).

If the author remains rather vague in his sketch of "better practice", this seems to reflect the basic difficulty of squaring the notion of indigenous self-determination with the wish for territorial and political inclusiveness. Other writers have made their own and at least partly inspiring contributions to advancing the boundaries of our political imagination in that regard³⁴.

As the essay rounds off the collection of papers in this book, marking the terminal statement on the issue of frontier migration and possible measures for mitigating its attendant conflicts, I feel that a few words are in order to put it into perspective. While it aims to spell more general truths, the paper's empirical basis is admittedly South Asian and Indian. Only a small minority of states do constitutionally empower ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities – and, conversely, disenfranchise non-native parts of the citizenry – the way that India does (a so-called "citizen-denizen" constellation). It is far more common for legal frameworks to be neutral in the contest between (internal) migrants and locals and thus give the former a competitive edge because of their superior education and political connections. In a great number of cases, too, laws continue to discriminate in favor of the migrants who are seen as being of help for "development" and nation-building. (Both possibilities give rise to the pattern of "integrated displacement", the second fundamental variety of politico-legal frameworks). Only in the case of "citizen-denizen" constellations can I see the "politics of homeland" leading to exclusion, denial of dignity or ethnic cleansing in the frequency that Samaddar rightly notes for South Asia. In most parts of Asia and Latin America, indigenous communities are too weak and politically impotent to ever rise to become "ethnocracies" that consign others to "denizen" status. The right to self-determination, as I see it, comes to most indigenous communities as a weapon of self-defense, not as the genocidal missile as which the author denounces it. While it would be foolish to deny that the "politics of recognition" routinely lead to appalling human rights violations on the Indian subcontinent, we should guard ourselves against undue

generalizations. Group rights (including the right to self-determination) are hardly per se "dangerous ideas" (see Hobsbawm 1990 on ethnicity and nationalism) and recipes for disaster, irregardless of who is claiming them. Thus, only if we anchor it firmly in its South Asian specificity will the full force of Samaddar's indictment of the lethal "politics of homelands" unfold.

Notes

- 1 It seems wise to work with a sufficiently broad definition that includes descendants of early migrants or later arrivals at a colonization front who work in urban professions or as civil servants. Very basically, settlers are people who have come to *settle* in an area, regardless of how they make their living there. Paramount is his/her intention of taking if not permanent, then at least long-term residence in the new place. Different from itinerant traders, gold prospectors and the like, the settler's activity is not transient. In contrast to the settler, such transient migrant types have sometimes been labeled "sojourners" in the literature (see Meinig 1969:214).
- 2 An example is Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1966), whose introduction to a monograph on a famous Adivasi uprising in Central India features the following reflection:

"(...) anyone with a first hand experience of conditions in areas where tribal people are subject to exploitation by more advanced populations must be surprised not by the occurrence of uprisings, but rather by the infrequency of violent action on the part of the tribals, deprived of the ancestral lands and the freedom they enjoyed before their contact with populations superior in economic and political power".
- 3 Of the 31 groups in their sample – the so-called MAR database of ethnic conflict cases developed by Ted R. Gurr at the University of Maryland – that qualified as "sons of the soil", 18 (or 58%) have been in rebellion against the state since 1980. Meanwhile, only 28% of those ethnic insurgents that were not "sons of the soil" engaged in rebellion during the same period. Slightly less than 30% of civil wars with "sons of the soil" participation can be found in Asia (ibid.:1, 5) (Using a different data set, Fearon [2001, quoted in Fearon and Laitin 2001:5] even found a percentage of 62,5% Asian "sons of the soil" civil wars). The authors estimate that on average, "sons of the soil" wars have a duration of 43 years, as compared to only 9,2 years for all wars in their dataset (ibid.:1). They also remark that the MAR database provides evidence that in a majority of conflict cases, violence was preceded by state-supported or -condoned migrants upsetting the ethnic balance of the respective region (ibid.:5). Examples for presently active or recently-terminated indigenous insurgencies with a strong anti-settler tinge include that of the Western Saharaouis, the Uighur of Xinjiang, the Bangsa Moro of Muslim Mindanao, the Chakma and other indigenous groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Bodo of Assam, the Boro of Tripura (India) and the Acehnese and West Papuans (Indonesia).
- 4 Other authors (see e.g. Accaioli 2001) have even suggested that a majority of the cases of ethno-religious fighting that rocked Indonesia between 1997 and 2001 can be reduced to conflicts between indigenes and settlers.
- 5 Thus, in the course of 20 years, the World Bank, for instance, gave support to more than 50 government-sponsored settlement projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to its own informations, the largest of these were the Ejido programme in Mexico and the Transmigration programme in Indonesia, who accomplished – with the Bank's help – the resettlement of 3.9 mio. and 750,000 families, respectively (World Bank 1994:17).
- 6 For an Asian example, see Erni, this volume, on Mindoro (the Philippines). Immigration figures to the island culminated five or six decades ago and have since steadily declined. Today, Mindoro has ceased to attract migrants; in 2000, the growth of its population had fallen to the level of the national average (ibid.:304).
- 7 A multitude of other terms have been proposed for the same distinction, among them "induced" and "voluntary" migration (MacAndrews and Yamamoto 1976), "official" and "spontaneous" colonization (Smith 1969:93), and "planned" and "free" migration (McElwee 2004:202). Scudder's usage, which I prefer, corresponds nearest to Rudel's (1983:400f.) and Moran's (1983:298ff.) distinction between "directed", "semi-directed" and "spontaneous" settlement.
- 8 Thus, for instance, governments often issue blanket amnesties for migrant occupants of upland forests which, as is the case in the Philippines, belong to the state. The effect is that restrictive land and forestry laws lose their power of deterrence (Lynch 1984:205).
- 9 "New Economic Zones" has been the grandiose designation for pioneer fronts under successive communist government programmes for population redistribution and the redeployment of labour to "underutilized" national peripheries. First conceived in the early 1960s in North Vietnam, the New Economic Zones were extended to the South after unification. In these zones, landless farmers and urban poor were settled to clear forest and set up agricultural cooperatives or plantations, frequently with little or no support from the authorities. Later, in the 1980s, the NEZ's began to be better planned and more heavily capitalized by the government.
- 10 Owing to the sorry quality of most countries' population statistics at their national peripheries (see Geiger on frontiers, this volume), figures on non-assisted migrants are often not more than informed guesses. Thus, in present-day Vietnam, the official, planned movement of migrants to the Central Highlands frontier "is being dwarfed by uncontrolled and spontaneous migration (...)" (McElwee 2004:202). The New Economic Zones of the Central Highlands Province of Dac Lac, for instance, were the target of an estimated 311,000 "planned" migrants between 1976 and 1996; during the same period, approximately 350,000 spontaneous migrants settled in the area (ibid.). For Indonesia, another country with a well-documented state programme of planned settlement, the estimates vary widely. For the period of 1950-1990, the World Bank (1988, cited in DeKoninck 1996:254, note 2) proposed a figure of 5 mio. unassisted migrants who followed the official transmigrants. This would amount to well over 50% of the volume of official transmigration, which has been put at 9 mio. people for the considerably longer period between 1950 and 1990 (World Bank 1988, cited in DeKoninck 1996:238). From 1983 to 1988 alone, an estimated 1,020,000 people have moved to the Outer Islands on their own, often trying to re-connect with official transmigrants; Hurst (1990:29-33) reckons them to have at least equalled the number of official transmigrants who were resettled during the same period. Husa and Wohlschlägl (1996:131), on the other hand, contend that since the 1960s, unassisted migrants were "several times" more numerous than assisted migrants, a claim which the census material for regional transmigration hubs such as South Kalimantan confirms. Thus, in the period between 1953 and 1986, unassisted settlers outnumbered official transmigrants by 5:1 (Cleary and Eaton 1992:234). At the high end of estimates of "spontaneous" migrants as set against assisted ones in Asian countries are those for Mindanao in the Philippines. At the peak of state-sponsored frontier colonization (between 1948 and 1960), participants in official resettlement programmes to Mindanao only accounted for 10% of the total number (1,25 mio) of those who flocked to the island (Wernstedt and Simkins 1965:83f., 90ff.; Paderanga 1988:156).
- 11 An alternative to shrinking the category "spontaneous" settlement to size is to omit it altogether. To avoid the inherent denial of state involvement, Little (2001:110, 253 note 16) has opted to speak of "improvisational" rather than "spontaneous" colonization.

- 12 To stress the fact that for the majority of the settlers, relocation to the frontier is a matter of sheer survival, van Schendel (1986, 2005:211) has tried to popularize the notion of "self-rescue migration".
- 13 Since dams are usually constructed in the uplands, those displaced and turned into migrants are frequently indigenous people. Settlers vs. sons-of-the-soil constellations, then, sometimes involve indigenous people on both sides of the divide, a fact which does not seem to render the attendant conflicts any less bitter and likely to escalate. An example of such a conflict is the partly violent agitation by Khamti, Singhpo and other tribals against the presence of the descendants of some 15,000 resettled Chakma in Arunachal Pradesh (Chaudhury and Biswas 1997, Luithui-Ermi, forthcoming). In the late 1960s, the Chakma were offered asylum by the Indian government after their houses and fields in their East Pakistan homeland had been lost to the Kaptai Dam, a large hydro-electric scheme that displaced more than 100,000 people. Related cases of indigenous frontier migration with different backgrounds include the Ifugao, Itneg and other tribal settlers on Agta territory in the Sierra Madre, North Luzon, the Philippines (Bion Griffin 1988:91ff., 98); tribals from northern Vietnam (e.g. Hmong and Tay Nung) who are a conspicuous group among recent migrants to the Central Highlands (deKoninck 1998:358); Kwaio and members of other tribal peoples from Malaita in the Solomon Islands, whose massive immigration has caused violent nativist reactions on the island, Guadalcanal (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2001); and the descendants of Adivasi labourers on Assam's tea plantations who have become a favourite target of radical Bodo nativists in Lower Assam, India (Goswami, forthcoming). Hvalkof's account (this volume) of Andean settlers of Quechua extraction in the Peruvian montaña provides a congenial Latin American example.
- 14 For basic comparative works that analyze experiences with state-directed settlement in the developing world, see Scudder 1981, Oberai (ed.) 1983, 1988, and Manshard and Morgan (eds.) 1988. For regional evaluations, see Chambers 1969 on Africa; Dozier 1969, Crist and Nissly 1973, Nelson 1973 and Part 2 of Schmink and Wood (eds.) 1984 on Latin America; Jones (1990) on Central America; and Pryor (ed.) 1979, Jones and Richter (eds.) 1982, Uhlig (ed.) 1984 and Schumann and Partridge (eds.) 1989 on Southeast Asia. Wimaladharmas (ed.) 1982 (on Sri Lanka), Fassbinder and Erbe 1990 and Hoshour 2000 (on Indonesia), de Almeida and Campari 1995 (on Brazil) and Hardy 2003 (on Vietnam) have provided valuable works on important country cases. A penetrating review article on settlement schemes and academic writing on them is Hulme 1988.
- 15 A case in point is the "Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária" ("National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform", or INCRA) in Brazil, founded by the military regime in the early 1970s (see Schlecht 1990). In the 1970s, the Philippine government of Ferdinand Marcos, too, allotted jurisdiction of settlement programs to the agencies responsible for land reform (Paderanga 1987:15).
- 16 An example of the latter is the baptising in 1911 of the predecessor organisation of today's FUNAI (the National Indian Foundation) in Brazil as the "Service for the Protection of Indians and the Settlement of National Workers", short SPI (Maybury-Lewis 1991:220).
- 17 Scholarly opinions on Indonesia's transmigration program may serve to illustrate this. Thus, while many of the politically more alert researchers (Colchester 1986, Hoshour 1997, 2000; Sevin 2000) have long concluded that the program was first and foremost meant to tie the Outer Islands to the political centre, others have decided to omit reference to geo-strategic purposes or refer to them only in the vaguest terms. The latter group is represented by Colin MacAndrews, a noted authority on transmigration, who stated that "Indonesian policy purposes are a mixture of economic, social and development aims, and occasionally political" [italics mine, DG] (MacAndrews 1982:11).

- 18 The program, set up in 1953, was designed and supervised by the army; an army unit, the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR), was responsible for implementation.
- 19 The settlement of Vietnam's Central Highlands by ethnic Kinh (and impoverished highlanders from the Northern Highlands), started after the fall of the US-backed South Vietnamese regime in 1975, represents one of the world's most ambitious programmes of state-sponsored colonization. Under the programme, more than one million people were transferred to the area – home to indigenous peoples of whom many had made common cause with the Americans – over the last two decades, brought in with government support or arriving independently (Hardy and Turner 2000:1).
- 20 For a more detailed account of China's undeclared program of demographic change in Xinjiang – an endeavour that has no parallels in the modern history of Central Asia –, see Tyler 2003:213f.
- 21 Thus, it may be said that settlement schemes that target the frontier are not necessarily unidirectional; the vectors of population transfer may point two ways. What is on record in the cases just described is a population *exchange* rather than a population *infusion* into frontier spaces.
- 22 Four of the Andamans' six indigenous groups – the Onge, Jarawa, Sentinelese and Great Andamanese – are of African stock, while the native population of the Nicobars is of Malayo-Polynesian origin; only the Shompen of the Nicobars are related to native ethnic groups of India (the Tamil) (*NZZ am Sonntag* 2005).
- 23 Fearon and Laitin (2001) are stating the obvious when they observe that immigrant groups typically function as a conservative social force in situations of civil conflicts at the frontier. They are unlikely to sympathize with indigenous rebels opposing the state that has facilitated or sponsored the settlers' presence on contested territory. Thus, even in the absence of explicit and active counter-insurgency campaigns, settlers provide state centers a large population base that can be mobilized as a counter-weight to independentist rebellions if and when they break out. In that sense, colonization has always a latent military function.
- 24 In fact, settler *ansar* (auxiliaries) and home guards have reportedly been involved in massacres of indigenous villagers and other grave human rights violations (see e. g. Mey, ed., 1984, Levene 1999).
- 25 In fact, a second logic is at work. Not only do state planners depend on the labour of settlers for powering the extraction of frontier resources, but migrants, too, are frequently in need of employment opportunities in their new locales. It could thus be argued that in a sense, the state must provide jobs in the burgeoning frontier industry if it wants to avoid social unrest among the settler population.
- 26 In many cases, these average figures for Java do not adequately depict local conditions. Thus, in the central part of the island around Klaten and Sukoharjo, densities above 2000 persons/km² are frequent (Sevin 2000:40).
- 27 As mentioned before, the second purpose that is being served by moving settlers to Vietnam's indigenous periphery is to increase the security of the highland areas, a worry rooted in recent history. During the Vietnam War, the American Army had successfully attempted to incite the Montagnard highlanders to rebellion.
- 28 Indeed, numerous native revolts are on record, the largest of which, in 1878, killed 200 whites and drove most of the French *colons* to the capital, Noumea.
- 29 Actually, the authors listed a fourth one – health problems among the settlers –, a consequence which may largely be subsumed in item two, "failure to create viable settlements", and which I thus will not explore in detail here.

- 30 The term "denizen" goes back to the power of "denization" of British monarchs to grant some aliens parts of the privileges of natural-born subjects. Denizens, for instance, while free to buy land, were not allowed to inherit it, and – with the passing of time – were also forbidden to sit in the privy council or the houses of parliament (Baruah 2003b).
- 31 Or no part of it at all (see Geiger on frontiers, this volume).
- 32 Another argument that indigenous people sometimes invoke is that settlers have a comparatively wide range of options where to build their lives, consisting of the ethnic core areas and plenty of enclaves at various frontiers; indigenous people, on the other hand, find social networks and thus the resources for survival only in their ancestral homelands. This reasoning is nicely captured in the following words by the icon of Kanak resistance to *Caldoche* colonization, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, directed to *Caldoche* leader Henri Lafleur: "We are from here and nowhere else. You are from here but also from somewhere else" (quoted in Chappell 1993:324).
- 33 I am, of course, aware that autochthony and boundary-setting in its name can and indeed often have legitimated the violent exclusion of strangers and may, in some cases, reveal themselves as mere slogans to keep the latter from exercising even their basic human rights (see e.g. Samaddar, this volume). As Kingsbury (1999:353) points out, allowing "indigeneity" or "sons of the soil"-status to become the basis of legitimation for social movements implies a very real risk of "abuses of power" to the detriment of the non-"indigenous" Others. It is also true that the offer of an ethnically-exclusive homeland to one autochthonous group often activates others to raise similar demands, motivated by the fear of becoming themselves minorities in the new structure. In the worst case, this can lead to a never-ending spiral of nativist movements. These well-grounded concerns have to be addressed by providing institutional safeguards for the protection of internal minorities of homeland constituencies. In theory as well as in practice, it is possible to design political settlements which guarantee the security needs of several constituent groups in a politically restive area (Lake and Rothchild 1998).
- 34 See notably van Schendel (n.d.) for his trinity of forms of co-existence and power-sharing between indigenous people and outsiders. Baruah (2003b) suggests "dual citizenship" and the naturalization of second-generation immigrants, a proposal that impresses me less because of its exclusive concern with the plight of the settler to the detriment of indigenous interests.

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2 TURNER IN THE TROPICS: The Frontier Concept Revisited

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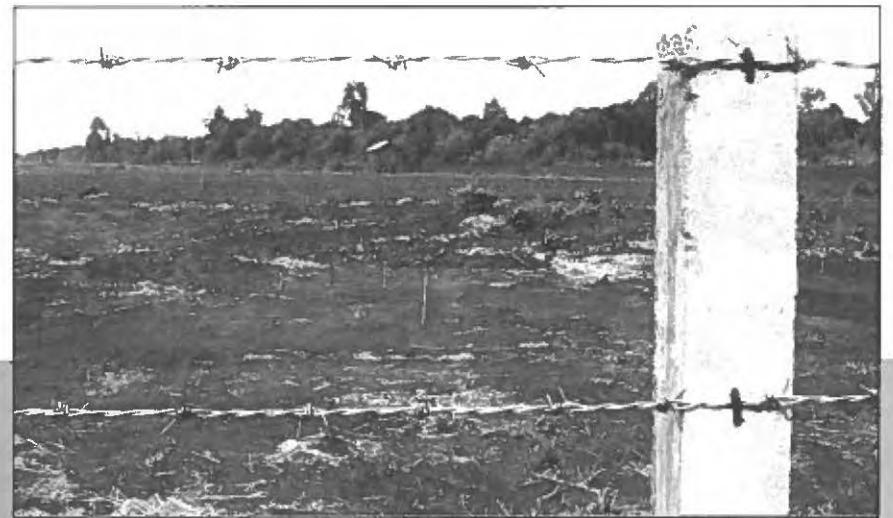


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2 | Turner in the Tropics: The Frontier Concept Revisited Danilo Geiger, University of Zurich

Introduction

The study of patterns of everyday relations between settler populations and indigenous communities, of the characteristics of the conflicts which often embroil them, and the options available for their containment (or, still better, their lasting transformation) covers much theoretical ground. No single body of theory can realistically claim to have something of value to say in fields as diverse as – to name just a few of those touched upon by our subject – migration studies, ethnicity, the politics of identity and the management of conflict. Nevertheless, I would like to probe here into a concept that, I believe, can provide us with a better and more systematic understanding of crucial issues which this present volume addresses. The notion of the “frontier”, venerably old but ideologically difficult, offers interesting clues to questions such as why it is that the intrusion of migrants is boding ill for natural environments, why settler-indigenous relations have the propensity to turn violent (and the violence to turn so characteristically ferocious and cruel), and why the state seems to stand by idly or support the settler part as natives and newcomers clash. By providing an understanding of the peculiar geographical, political, social and cultural spaces in which the encounters between our two collective antagonists are taking place, the frontier concept enables us to develop useful generalizations on, among other things, the moral economy that guides the utilization of resources (Colombijn 2002:744) and the use of violence (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978) by non-state intruders – be they settlers or others – into indigenous domains, and the particular institutional conditions that characterize and delimit state agency at state margins (Swift 1978:6-10, Bodley 1990:24-38). As such, the frontier concept may serve as a heuristic device for the identification of spaces across the globe where the interaction between states and local contenders for scarce resources is structured along similar lines (Hennessy 1981:11), and as a tool for the comparison of the seemingly disparate manifestations of migration-induced conflict at the rural periphery (Jacobs 1971, Lamar and Thompson 1981a, b).

In the most general sense, frontiers are *areas remote from political centres which hold strategic significance or economic potentials for human exploitation, and are contested by social formations of unequal power* (see Hvalkof, this volume, p. 219). For the bigger part of the past two centuries – as for today –, frontier-making has in essence been the expansion of the nation-state or of fragments of its population into the domains of indigenous peoples, whose assertion of autonomy, among other things, prevents the state from implementing full administrative control in the frontier zone. In a nutshell, therefore, frontiers are loosely-administered spaces rich in resources, coveted by non-residents¹.

In the public mind, the study of frontiers in scientific terms is closely associated with one specific historical context – the American West in the 19th century – and one particular school of historiography – that of American exceptionalism, developed in the footsteps of Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932). For good or for bad, any effort to endorse the frontier concept as a respectable tool for comparative analysis has to start with a critical evaluation of Turner's work. Accordingly, I will begin by introducing the main lines of the Turnerian "frontier hypothesis", explore its extraordinary appeal as a celebratory account of America's pioneer past, and show why it fell from grace once Western history had started to embrace – among others – the environment and Native American rights (section 'The Turnerian Frontier and Its Discontents'). Its chauvinist overtones and social Darwinist leanings aside, Turner's frontier narrative also explicitly discouraged comparison; the following section ('Reclaiming the "F" Word: Beyond the Turnerian Frontier') reinstates the frontier concept as a powerful framework for the comparative analysis of conquests and colonization at state fringes. Taking its clues from the biases and omissions of Turner's frontier notion, the section outlines the minimal conditions for re-endorsing the "frontier" as helpful for an understanding of comparative conquests. My inquiry then (section 'There to Here: From Colonial to Post-Colonial Frontiers') proceeds to evaluate different schools of comparativist reformers who rejected Turner's parochial concern with the American condition. Choosing between those who associated frontiers with the past age of European colonial expansion, and those who have argued that frontier-making can be a feature of contemporary "Southern" forms of colonialism, as well, I side with the latter.

My protracted shoot-out with Frederick Jackson Turner, this singularly troublesome ancestor of frontier studies, will be followed (section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier') by a presentation of my own version of the frontier concept, one which allows for the comparative analysis of contested state peripheries across time and place – including, in particular, those of developing nations in the contemporary South. The section adds on and enlarges the sketchy and preliminary frontier definition that I have supplied at the beginning of this paragraph. As a frontier concept that transcends Turner will have to fit a broader range of phenomena than those on which he theorized, the three principal frontier types – "frontiers of

settlement", "frontiers of extraction" and "frontiers of control" – will be outlined in some detail. The section contains, furthermore, a discussion of salient aspects of frontier situations as I perceive them, including reflections on conflict-generating individual and state strategies, a part on how to think about power in frontier settings, and some thoughts on the tricky question of agency and accountability at the margins of the state. I then proceed to outline from a comparative perspective eight – as I perceive them – generic properties of contemporary frontiers in the developing world (section 'How to Recognize a Frontier when You Meet One'). This lengthy exercise in developing diagnostic criteria for "frontier-spotting" is followed by an exposition of the "politics of nationalizing space", a cocktail of policies which I hold to be representative for the agenda of contemporary states at their contested peripheries, and as such to a large extent responsible for the high levels of conflict characteristic for these zones (section 'Nationalizing Space: The State's Agenda at Contemporary Frontiers'). In the vein of the currently-popular policy recommendations which so thrill development planners, I then deliver a prescription for mitigating the frontier syndrome, which centers on eliminating the destructive frontier traits outlined earlier, and abandoning the "politics of nationalizing space" which have produced them (section 'Abolishing the Frontier'). I am concluding my paper with reflections on the challenge which recent global trends towards democratization and the ascension of the discourses of minority rights and environmental protection are offering to my proposition of the durability and thus the continued analytical importance of the frontier at the beginning of the 21st century (section 'The Adventures of the Frontier in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries').

The Turnerian frontier and its discontents

American anthropologist Anna Tsing (2005:31) has perceptively noted the seemingly trivial fact that the "frontier" is not a native category; indigenous people usually do not use it to denote aspects of their plight. When it arrives in material form, along with it come "many layers of previous associations", shaping conditions "to the model of other wild times and places" (ibid.). The fact that in their comments on the discovery of gold or savage ethnic clashes on the island of Borneo, domestic Indonesian voices invoke images of the Californian gold rush and the Indian Wars, bears out that the frontier is actually a "traveling theory, a foreign form needing translation" (ibid.). No version of that theory has traveled further than that of the US-American West, and no one has recounted it with more vigour and with better timing than Frederick Jackson Turner. Because of the truly global influence it commands among ordinary consumers of popular science, and the hostility which it evokes at the same time in many of the world's history and anthropology departments, a closer look at Turner's frontier narrative is warranted.



Photo 2.1 : Frederick Jackson Turner, ca. 1911
(Wisconsin Historical Society, Image ID 28356)

In July 1893, at a meeting of the American Historical Association that flanked the Chicago World's Fair, Turner delivered a paper that rapidly made him the most prominent American historian of his era and even now a major figure in the pantheon of the profession (Nobles 1997:5). A slim 29 pages, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (Turner 1893) earned the young Wisconsin college professor vast influence and near indiscriminate acceptance in academia. Besides American historiography, his ideas made their imprint on fields ranging from economics to sociology and even literary criticism. Turner's appeal reached into politics, as well, as leading American statesmen from Theodore Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan borrowed from him in designing both foreign and domestic politics (Bassin 1993:510, Limerick 2000:79-83). Today, more than a century after its formulation, the stringent critique to which the frontier hypothesis was subjected since the 1930s – I will turn to it in a moment – has diminished the authority of Turner's imagery and organizing ideas in the scholarly community, but has hardly affected their standing in the American public and the world at large (Limerick 2000:74-92). The irresistible simplicity of Turner's concept, based on the easily-understood logic of environmental causation, continues to exercise a powerful attraction, and it can be fairly stated that no other inside-theory of American nation-building is as widely known or appreciated (Bassin 1993:510). Yet what was it that Turner said?

His major proposition – the famous "Turner thesis" or "frontier hypothesis" proper – was that the centre of American history was actually to be found at its edges². The movement of European immigrants and New Englanders to the interior

of the North American continent was, said Turner, American history's single defining experience in that it shaped both the American "national character" – whose cardinal virtues Turner took to be individualism and egalitarianism – and American political institutions, democratic to an extent the professor thought was unequalled by any European nation. The distinctive features of American society could be explained, Turner said, by the "existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of (...) settlement westward" (Turner 1963:27). The trajectory of the moving frontier signified not only geographically a steady movement away from Europe and the pioneers' origins, but also progressively freed them from the influence of Europe's political institutions and steep social hierarchies (ibid.:30). The frontier, in other words, was a great "seedbed" for the growth of American democracy (Mikesell 1960:62), and shaped the pioneer nation to an extent that dwarfed the influence of imported European values and practices³.

In Turner's argument, the frontier was an environment which rewarded character traits such as frugality, inquisitiveness, optimism and a belief in self-help (Turner 1963:57). To cope with the harsh conditions of the "wilderness" and the "primitive" societies that considered it their home⁴, European colonists had to strip off the veneer of "civilization" of their European origins, rediscovering their racial energies and reinventing both their character and egalitarian society in the process. Gradually, the settlers turned the "wilderness" into "civilization", but in the process, they themselves became genuine Americans (ibid.:29). This double "metabolic change" (Simonson 1963:9) repeated itself as the frontier moved westward. Turner described this westward movement as a succession of different frontiers: first, that of the trader and trapper; then, that of the rancher and miner, followed by that of the farmer, and, finally, that of the townsman. When one frontier moved west, it was replaced by another (Turner 1963:35).

Basic to Turner's 1893 essay and, indeed, his whole academic persona was his insistence that the nation's pioneer stock and the social and political community which it created made America exceptional, and that uniqueness flowed from the frontier experience (Nobles 1997:7f.). While Turner's predominant interest was to explain why American society was so much more egalitarian than Europe (save for France after 1789), he also wanted to demonstrate why the country had been spared violent class conflict of the sort that led to revolutionary upheavals elsewhere. Again, the frontier provided the answer: Besides fostering economic and social equality in the West proper, it also softened the edges of the antagonistic labour relations which industrialization had produced in the eastern heartlands of the new nation. By absorbing population from Northeastern America's crowded cities where work was hard to find and the potential for class conflict great, and by focusing these migrant proletarians on community-making and farming, the frontier acted as a safety valve which provided an alternative outlet for what might otherwise turn into dangerous political passions (Turner 1932:41, 44; Billington 1967:7).

Finally, Turner made yet another, somewhat tangential point, as well, which added more than just a touch of nostalgia to his text. In a report about the recently published national population census of 1890, the Census Bureau had concluded that it was no longer possible to draw a "frontier line" on the map of the United States. Population in the West had reached the mark of 2 persons per mile² (0,8 persons per kilometer²), the basis for calling an area settled. White settlements, large and small, now so thoroughly dotted the map that the "frontier" had ceased to be a living force and, possibly, a meaningful idea (Turner 1963:27). With the Census superintendent's pronouncement, Turner rather pathetically declared, a formative and glorious phase in the nation's life had come to a close, boding ill for America's future (*ibid.*).

The idea that the pioneer heritage defined the individual and the nation had been present in American writing since the middle of the 18th century (Cronon 2000), which renders Turner's thesis less original than is generally admitted⁵. Turner's achievement was to have tapped into a widely popular notion, fashioned it into a brilliant text, and given it academic legitimacy (*ibid.*). For many Americans, his 1893 essay represented the central narrative synthesis of all of American history. The reasons for its extraordinary popularity are not too difficult to point out. Turner's way of explaining the new nation's distinctiveness sat well with a people who "felt instinctively that they had created more than they had inherited and that they owed little to the old world" (Mikesell 1960:63). Of equal appeal was Turner's representation of American history as a creative act in which rich and poor had participated equally (*ibid.*). "The Significance of the Frontier...", in brief, was a piece of writing that gave ordinary Americans a "usable past" (Simonson 1963:20f.). Others, however – fellow Americans and critics of other nations –, found the past of Turner's making less usable. While the Wisconsin professor's disciples managed to keep his legacy more or less intact throughout the first half of the 20th century, the chorus of the critics grew louder with the passing of World War II (Barnhart 1999:1). The challenges that were raised ranged from mild revision to outright (and often outraged) rejection; as the decades passed, academic careers were increasingly built on the refutation rather than the affirmation of the "frontier hypothesis" and what it stood for. Finally, a century after the article's publication, historian Kerwin Klein (1996:180) was forced to note in retrospect that "the ritual flagellation of Frederick Jackson Turner has become a popular scholarly pastime".

For many, Turner's propositions were muddled and contradictory, and thus flawed as an analytical tool. His definition of the frontier, for instance, was fuzzy and changing. He incessantly revised his original 1893 article, and by the time his first book, "The Frontier in American History" (Turner 1920) appeared, meanings and synonyms for "frontier" had multiplied. Thus, it was one time rendered as "the West", another time as "the hither edge of free land", and in some third case as "the line of most rapid and effective Americanization". Additional renderings were "a migrating region", "the

mere edge of settlement", "the belt of territory occupied by frontiersmen", and "a form of society rather than an area" (Klein 1996:185, note 7). Yet other uses of the word were "a state of mind", "a stage of society rather than a place", and "the region whose social conditions resulted from the application of older institutions and ideas to the transforming influences of free land" (Billington 1967:7)⁶.

To just as many, even more objectionable was the fact that the thesis' arguments were fraught with error. Thus, American democracy had not begun at the frontier: Westerners, rather than inventing the American character, had borrowed most cultural values and political ideas from Europe and the older settlements in the original Atlantic colonies (Simonson 1963:19, Cronon, Miles and Gitlin 1992:4). Turner's view of that democracy was immature and rather mystical: He credited it with a numinous "spiritual essence by which persons can achieve their full measure of individuality and dignity" (Simonson 1963:19) and overstressed the egalitarian nature of American society (*ibid.*:19f.). The emphasis on the frontier as the single most critical force in American history was misplaced; other factors such as urbanization, trans-Atlantic immigration and industrialization were equally – if not more – important. Rather than by movement to the West, the history of the nation was crucially determined by conflict in the East, i.e. the violent tension between industrial capitalism on the East coast and plantation slavery in the confederacy (Beard and Beard 1927, Beard 1941, Nobles 1997:9). In glorifying the rugged, self-sufficient pioneer, Turner had downplayed the role of the federal government in financing railroads, fielding the cavalry when necessary and negotiating Indian treaties when opportune (Martin 1964:51, quoted in Nash 1991:77, Limerick 2000:25). Many of those who settled the West did not fit the description of the quintessential frontier hero of Turner's writings – white, Anglo-Saxon and male. Systematically overlooked by traditional frontier historiography was the significant contribution of African-, Mexican-, Asian-Americans and pioneer women to the making of frontier history (Nash 1991:79-87). And finally, the aspirations that these pioneers harbored were in a large number of cases unachieved, defying Turner's central conviction that frontier settlement promoted freedom and opportunity. While thousands of people helped conquer the frontier, thousands more were conquered by it (Fite 1966:285)⁷.

While a first strand of critique thus questioned the validity of the proposed effects of frontier expansion on the westering individuals and the national body politic, a second challenge focused on its repercussions – unreflected by Turner – on that which (and those who) stood in its way. Quite clearly, Turner's preoccupation with what the frontier did to the colonizing society had prevented him from seeing what that society did to the frontier – namely, to its indigenous communities and the environment they inhabited (Lattimore 1962d:490). Revisionist historians – though few of them Native Americans⁸ – charged Turner with negating the genocide and ethnocide visited upon the continent's indigenous peoples while celebrating its perpetrators. In his treatise,

they were pictured “as if they were some kind of geographical obstacle to the westward movement of whites” (Jacobs 1971:307), freak creatures on the sidelines of the great epic that was the “winning of the West”. Turner’s frontier notion was ethnocentric in the extreme, and had meaning only from the perspective of the colonizing culture. Thus, native Americans *did* play an active role in shaping if not the larger course, then at least important aspects of frontier history (White 1991a, b; Cronon, Miles and Gitlin 1992:10f.). Seen through their eyes, the westward movement of Euro-Americans was hardly the positive process as which Turner had celebrated it. For the Indian, rather than freedom and opportunity, it held displacement, destruction and death in store (Nobles 1997:12), so its history had to be recounted as one of holocaust, not of the spread of civilization (Barnhart 1999:3). Ascriptions of savagery were not entirely out of place, but should be attached, if anything, to the party of the colonizers⁹. The “free land” in Turner’s account of the frontier was nothing of the sort, having passed into European hands only through the (near) annihilation of its erstwhile Indian owners (Cronon, Miles and Gitlin 1992:4). Not progress and development, but conquest, colonization and invasion were the terms in which frontier processes in the American West had to be narrated (Limerick 1987).

Thus, by the 1970s, the Turnerian canon struck many as racist and imperialist in its depiction of America’s “legacy of conquest” (Limerick 1987); it was also, as specialists in environmental history have pointed out, ecologically innocent. Contrary to the master narrative, frontier expansion to the semi-arid plains had ushered in a “ruthless assault on nature”, powered by predatory forms of primitive accumulation (Worster 1991a:18). Central to the pioneers’ economic behavior was the belief that land and natural resources were abundant and infinite – an attitude which facilitated the wanton destruction of Western ecosystems (Hague 1977). The real significance of the frontier lay in the enormous wastefulness it had fostered and the attendant degradation of the natural resource base of the nation (Clark 1972).

Finally – and closest to my concern here –, Turner’s work was taken to task for its narrow and exclusive interest in the American condition, and the grounds on which he declared the American frontier – and, by extension, any frontier – gone were questioned. In his attempt to finally put the “American” in American history, it will be remembered, Turner had told his story in a way that emphasized the uniqueness of the national experience¹⁰. The great majority not only of his disciples, but also of his detractors had followed him in this, as they dug their trenches defending or assaulting the sage. In a major survey of the field, Mikesell (1960:64) called the neglect of comparative research the “principal failure of Turner”; not only did one forego the chance to illuminate the frontier experiences of other settler nations, but without a comparative perspective, even the significance of the American frontier itself would have to remain obscure (*ibid.*; see also Hayes 1946, Heaton 1946).

Figure 2.1 : The Misgivings about Turner in a Nutshell

**An “Unsubtle Concept in a Subtle World”?
Drawbacks of the Turnerian Frontier Concept**

- *narrow in explanatory concern*: preoccupation with the impact of frontier conditions on the colonizing core (institutions, mentality)
- *narrow in choice of diagnostic criteria*: defines frontier conditions in a way that rules out the possibility of diagnosing frontiers in the present
- *mythical*: idealizes frontier as a „gate of escape“ for the poor and the oppressed; understates the role of government in frontier expansion; overstates the formative influence of frontier ‚spirit‘ and relations on the formation of the national political system
- *parochial*: overstates American exceptionalism, discourages comparison
- *strongly ethnocentric*: negates the involvement of an indigenous counterpart in the frontier process
- *triumphalist*: celebrates “victory” over nature and original inhabitants of frontier

On a different note, some scholars discounted Turner’s belief in the “end” of the frontier in the American West, and questioned the wisdom of defining frontier conditions solely in terms of a population density ceiling reached and a process of settlement concluded (see e.g. Limerick 1987:23f.). The West, they insisted, had not lost its distinctiveness as a region, as many of the issues that framed frontier expansion up to 1890 – land sales, gold rushes and oil booms, as well as bitter struggles between Indians and whites, speculators and settlers, ranchers and farmers, bureaucrats and taxpayers – had by no means been put to rest (Nobles 1997:16). Turner, however, had stressed discontinuity and made every effort to exclude twentieth-century events from the category “frontier” (Limerick 1987:24). By rendering the term “useless as a guide for the present and future” (Lamar 1968:63f.), the Turner school wasted its explanatory force on rather antiquarian concerns and gave away the chance to study frontier processes in global, comparative terms.

In sum, then, the balance sheet of the frontier of Turnerian vintage looks terrible (see Figure 2.1).

Turner’s gaze was clearly the gaze of the white, male Anglo-Saxon, and his tale was a tale of praise for the perseverance of the pioneer who turned wilderness into civilization. The indigenous Other was written out of the picture; in his refusal to address the conflict between conquerors and conquered, and his denial of the fact that the Europeans had slaughtered their way across the continent, Turner’s was an apologetic settler discourse. Though elegant in form, the famous “frontier hypothesis” was at its core a rather crude prop for an ongoing nation-building effort (Lamar and

Thompson 1981a:4), and as such deserves to be deconstructed. Thus, a number of vocal American critics of Turner's carried their misgivings about his ideas to the point of dismissing the frontier concept itself as too tainted by its association with evolutionary ethnocentrism to be helpful as an analytical tool (see Limerick 1987, Worster 1987, 1991b, White 1991a, b). Probably the most stylish epitaph is from Patricia Limerick (1987:25) who concluded that "the frontier is an unsubtle concept in a subtle world".

However, while some recommended ditching the "frontier" as an explanatory framework, an equally vocal group of scholars has chosen to retain important elements of the concept, while rejecting the underlying ethnocentrism of Turner's formula (see e.g. Cronon 1987, Aron 1994, Jacobs 1994, Klein 1996). And, hacking away at the intellectual isolationism and the narcissistic tendencies that define Turner's frontier as a uniquely American legacy, a growing number of anthropologists, historians and practitioners of other disciplines felt justified in exploring the frontier as a more general phenomenon, illuminating through comparative research the experiences of diverse peoples in a multiplicity of environments at widely differing times (see e.g. Wyman and Kroeber, eds., 1957, Bohannan and Plog, eds., 1967, Miller and Steffen, eds., 1977, Savage and Thompson, eds., 1979, Lamar and Thompson, eds., 1981, Wolfskill and Palmer, eds., 1981, Kopytoff, ed., 1987). Predictably, my sympathy is with this latter group of revisionists who have deposed Turner, but not the concept on which he had tried his hand.

Reclaiming the "f" word: Beyond the Turnerian frontier

It is probably true that to revive the frontier as a serious field of study and embrace it for understanding comparative conquests, we have to free ourselves, as historian Susan Armitage (quoted in Nobles 1997:11) has put it, from the "dead hand of Frederick Jackson Turner". Hackneyed, ethnocentric and bound up with notions of Manifest Destiny¹¹, the "frontier hypothesis" is of a piece with 19th century thinking, and becomes a liability for my 21st century concern with indigenous contestations of expansive designs at the edges of states.

"Reclaiming the 'F' Word" – the programmatic title of a widely-quoted article by Kerwin Klein (1996) – without celebrating its subject as the locus of pioneer independence, nobility, grandeur and adventure, requires, first and foremost, that we use it as a frame for the study of inter-ethnic relations (Seymour-Smith 1986:125). As its value for getting to the bottom of "national characters" is, at best, dubious, we better put it to use to elucidate the interpenetration of different ethnic groups – as a matter of course frictional in character – that occurs when one of them intrudes into the domain of another (Leach 1960:50, Lattimore 1962d:469, Lamar and Thompson

1981a:7f). Next, the frontier concept has to be reframed to focus not only on ethnic and sociopolitical conflicts at the periphery, but also on patterns of environmental exploitation and change there (Nyerges 1992:861). Once it is informed by a genuine concern for the periphery as a habitat for those who flock to it and those whose ancestral home it has been since time immemorial, the frontier concept sheds light on characteristic forms of resource use by the former, both on the level of state policies and the behaviour of the individual colonists – or logging and mining companies, for that matter (Colombijn 2002:744)¹². Third, a revamped frontier concept needs to be conscious of and address the characteristic power disparities between invaders and invaded. Basic to frontier situations is an expansive moment, the fact of a "projection of power into the domain and life space of other peoples" (Friedmann 1996:15; see also Colombijn and Wadley 2001:8). In the contemporary age – late modernity –, at least, the invading groups owe their dominance not to any supposed superiority in culture or social organization, but to the fact that they are attached to states that command military and logistical resources vastly superior to those of the invaded (Swift 1978:7; see also my discussion in the section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier'). Fourth, our value-added, post-Turnerian idea of the frontier addresses the power disparities just mentioned by analyzing interactions in terms of conquest and colonization (Forbes 1962, Limerick 1987). (I will explain in the next section how such a terminology can be defended in an age that claims to have no knowledge anymore of colonies and colonization). Fifth, even where the coercive conditions of conquest and colonization are putting sometimes narrow limits to the choices open to the indigenous party/parties in the frontier encounter, we need to remind ourselves that indigenous people are not (and have never been) passive recipients of outsiders' aggression (Thompson 1981:2). If it aims to be more than a simply-knit morality play that turns Turner's cant of pioneer heroics on its head, the comparative study of frontiers will acknowledge and account for the active historical agency of those invaded, and the – basically – reciprocal nature of interactions at the frontier (Wolf 1982, Nobles 1997:12). Given the range of possibilities afforded to actors on both sides, the frontier becomes a multidimensional world of consort and conflict rather than one of immutable antagonism between cultural monoliths (White 1991b, Faragher 1994:232)¹³. Sixth, if the concept is to rid itself of the colonist- and colonizer-centered spin that Turner gave it, the frontier should be re-conceptualized as a zone that can (and must) be seen through the prism of both the expansive, modernizing and the traditional, local society/societies. The two (or more) societies involved will locate centre and periphery in a very different manner. Significantly, for the members of most indigenous societies, the frontier zone is not the outer edge of an expanding civilization, but the centre of the universe (Gray 2001:395f., Hvalkof 1989:137-142 and 2003:7). And seventh (and last), our re-calibrated frontier notion tries to make productive the discovery that the frontier as Turner had described it was

Figure 2.2: Foundations of a Post-Turnerian Frontier Concept

"Reclaiming the 'F' Word": Resurrecting the Frontier as an Explanatory Concept

- if it is to regain meaning and significance, the frontier concept must be understood as a framework for the *study of inter-ethnic relations*
- the attempt to develop a more meaningful and relevant frontier concept must include a *focus on the environment* and the *characteristic patterns of resource use by non-native frontier actors*
- such a concept is conscious of and addresses the *characteristic power disparities between invaders and invaded*
- it addresses these power disparities by analyzing interactions in terms of *conquest and colonization*
- it acknowledges and accounts for *active historical agency* of those invaded, and the *reciprocal nature of interactions* at the frontier; it does not, however, see the zone as the "neutral, bicultural borderland of peaceful give and take" which some recent scholarship makes of it
- it is alive to the fact that invaders and invaded entertain different (and possibly opposite) notions of a frontier system's lay-out: One group's civilizational center may constitute the periphery in the other group's cosmology. Frontiers *must be seen through the prism of both the expansive, modernizing and the traditional, local society/societies*
- it recognizes the *mythical dimensions* of conventional frontier historiography as a source of strength and inspiration, as they point to powerful cognitions guiding non-native frontier actors at world frontiers

largely mythical (see preceding section, as well as Smith 1950, Hennessy 1981:11, Nash 1991:197-257). Rather than an accurate description of social facts, Turner's frontier narrative is a mirror reflecting the collective imagination of settler nations. Therefore, being settler discourse, the Turner thesis has its usefulness in pointing to cognitions which guide non-native frontier actors at other world frontiers, including those in contemporary countries of the developing South. Beliefs in pioneering as an avenue to prosperity and status, in the abundance of land and natural resources in the new locales, in the absence of rightful owners of these coveted things, and the beastly nature of native contenders as they eventually emerge, have been (and continue to be) powerful forces that drive the conquest of indigenous peripheries globally, colouring and shaping the modalities of frontier encounters (see below, section 'How to Recognize a Frontier when You Meet One').

The seven conditions for the safe use of a post-Turnerian frontier notion that I have just outlined are summarized in Figure 2.2.

There to here: From colonial to post-colonial frontiers

Frontier studies are more than the story of American exceptionalism that Turner's frontier school has made of them. After the end of World War II, a rapidly-growing number of researchers ventured out to explore "other wests" (Heaton 1946) than that of the American prairies and deserts, using the frontier concept as their central organizing idea. Far from the noisy debates over the semantics of the Turner thesis, historians, geographers and anthropologists compared processes of settlement in the United States with those in other former British colonies (see e.g. Alexander 1947, Price 1949, Sharp 1955, Allen 1959, Burt 1965, Cross, ed., 1970, Jacobs 1971, Lamar and Thompson, eds., 1981), the former French dominions in North America (Burt 1940), Hispanic and Portuguese America (see e.g. Zavala 1957, Hemming 1978, Hennessy 1978), the German expansion into the eastern parts of Europe in the late middle ages (see the sources mentioned in Gerhard 1959:219-224) and the Russian conquest of Siberia (see e.g. Lobanov-Rostovsky 1957, Treadgold 1957, Wiczynski 1976). Moreover, daring generalizations were developed which conceived of all New World colonies as parts of a "great frontier" of the European metropolis (Webb 1951, 1952). Some of these studies closely followed Turner in their concern with the influence of frontier legacies on national institutions, while others (see notably Price 1949, Jacobs 1971, Hemming 1978) turned the looking glass around to focus on the encounter between invaders and indigenous peoples, as well as its impact on the latter. Realizing that there can be no understanding of colonies without an understanding of their empires, their authors all emphasized the connectedness of frontier areas more than their isolation. "The frontier that Turner portrayed as 'isolated'", wrote New Western Historians Cronon, Miles and Gitlin (1992:9), "was instead part of the worldwide expansion of European economies and nation-states that traces back to the fourteenth century and before. As such, we can best know the history of the American West if we read it as a chapter in the much larger history of European colonialism".

Thus, the attempt to reconstruct the frontier notion in the perspective of world history (Wyman and Kroeber 1957:xix) and liberate it from the shackles of intellectual isolationism, had borne valuable first fruits: A growing body of research had established that across the globe, the occupation by *Caucasians* of vast and supposedly "empty" spaces could be profitably compared by help of the frontier concept. Even more significantly, as Turner's American example was put in its proper, larger context and the analytical perspective expanded, other types of frontiers came into view on which Turner had had little to say. As the gaze widened, there appeared alongside his "frontier of settlement" – rapidly moving and generative of violent change in its voracious appetite for land – a kind of frontier which was much more stagnant and tranquil, a zone of long-term culture contact decidedly more characteristic for large parts of Europe and Asia than the "tidal wave" type that the Turner school

had described (see e.g. Lattimore 1940, 1962a, d, Gaubatz 1996). To direct one's attention exclusively to the latter, as Gregory Bateson (1935:180), an eminent student of culture contact, scathingly remarked, would be comparable to researchers of gravity who choose to restrict themselves to the study of houses collapsing in earthquakes. Indeed, the inclusion of Central Asian and European case material helped students of comparative frontier history rediscover the fact that the word "frontier" had a range of meanings far richer than Turner had allowed. Linguists have traced the term back to medieval Latin (*frons*, meaning "forehead"), and then forward through several centuries of semantic change. The word worked its way into English and other European languages as a term for the militarized border regions of a political entity, a zone where states came up against other states or non-state peoples (Juricek 1966: 10ff.)⁴. Until roughly the mid-nineteenth century, Americans, too, had understood frontiers to be the more or less fortified outer edges of the colonies and, in extension, of their state and nation; use of the term showed a preoccupation with defending rather than advancing what was designated (*ibid.*:14, 16). In decreeing frontiers to be the outer edge of "unsettled" land, Turner eclipsed this earlier meaning, and his erasure of such previous usages was predicated on the elimination of Native Americans as a political and military force (Faragher 1994:239). Since to medievalists and other scholars of European political history, however, the term could not but mean political borderlands, lexical usages and academic understandings branched, unnoticed except by the few who had a command of both literatures (Power 1999:1ff.).

Thus, as comparative frontier studies comprehended the American West as part of something larger, they understood that more encompassing thing to be European colonial expansion. Locating the frontier wherever white colonists established themselves certainly meant a vast improvement over Turner's exclusive concern with the Trans-Mississippi West. At the same time, however, it also implied that the full potential of the frontier concept as a framework for the comparative study of conquests was not realized. If the frontier is a phenomenon that attaches to colonies in general, then why confine the search for world frontiers to the epoch of old-world colonialism? Unwittingly, the first wave of revisionism had endowed the general image of the frontier with the peculiar characteristics of European colonization, and ruled out the possibility of describing matters in terms of the concept where the expanding state was not European and colonial, but Asian, African or Latin American and post-colonial. In the view of these early globalizers of the frontier thesis, the frontier had a definite historical moment – the colonial era –, and it had a definite, normally short life span as frontier processes everywhere were carried to their inevitable conclusion by the colonial hegemon. According to the Turnerian narrative and the cant of those who charged it with neglecting other European world frontiers, such frontier processes were of necessity lineal and irreversible. As the story went, frontiers opened but once in a given colony, dissolving sooner or later into regular

administrative units as a result of the irresistible power of colonial gifts and guns. That is quite obviously a fallacy, an ill-advised shortcut through history.

Over the past decades, scholars from a host of disciplinary fields have registered their objection to the idea that "at least half of the frontier equation be European or Euro-American" (Klein 1996:208, note 40), arguing that frontier-making forces – conquests and invasions – did not depend on Caucasian cast; they had already been a feature of the pre-colonial world (Leach 1960, Lattimore 1962d:469-472, Scott 1998a, b, Colombijn and Wadley 2001) and could still be encountered after decolonisation, too (see e.g. Lamar and Thompson 1981b:314, Nobles 1997:xii). Most pertinent to my concern here, it was pointed out that old World colonial rulers had been succeeded by regional counterparts who embarked on similar and at present still ongoing projects of conquest and exploitation. In dealing with the tribally-inhabited margins of their national territories, many sovereign nation-states of the South have reproduced colonial-type economic and political relationships (see e.g. Stea 1996:31); as a consequence, being indigenous still refers to the experience of being colonized and subordinated, but in a context which is nowadays primarily local (Sills 1993:10)⁵. No longer imposed by colonizers external to the region, such colonialism has been called "internal" (González Casanova 1965, Stavenhagen 1965, Hechter 1975, 1985) or "intramural" (Meinig 1969:214), and the frontiers it generates may usefully be distinguished as "internal frontiers" (Yiftachel and Fenster 1997:255)⁶.

There are many reasons why first-generation proponents of comparative frontier studies stopped short of discovering post-colonial conquests at national peripheries as a congenial and legitimate field of enquiry. Besides a creeping eurocentrism and lack of reflection on the part of some of the most vocal proponents of the idea of studying "other wests" in frontier terms (see notably Webb 1951, 1952), the logic of comparison played a crucial role, as did the failure to see that one was theorizing on the basis of a very narrow sample of cases. In search of a useful foundation for generalization, the pioneers of the field restricted themselves to examples which suggested easy comparability, involving culturally-related groups of colonists, vast open spaces, and a sufficiently large military edge which the colonists enjoyed over their indigenous adversaries (Mikesell 1960:65). Frontier processes were analysed from the narrow premise of settler societies which had their base in metropolitan, industrializing countries and brought a tremendous economic and military advantage to bear in the colonial encounter. Such processes could not possibly be open-ended, but were pre-determined to result in the frontier's rather rapid "closure". Backed up by robust states, white colonists in North America, Southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand all managed to suppress tribal resistance and break up tribal autonomy relatively swiftly and at low costs, thereby reducing their indigenous adversaries to helpless wardens of the state. Where Caucasian colonial powers opened "frontiers of settlement", indigenous resistance to the encapsulation by settler society was

usually not of long duration, and frontier conditions indeed rather soon gave way to the regular administrative control of fully-subjugated populations¹⁷. Everywhere else, however, colonial frontiers were not of the "tidal wave" type. Rather than putting a premium on the implantation of white settlers, the colonial agendas were either bent on controlling trade routes or simply deterring neighbouring states, or else focusing on the surgical exploitation of certain natural resources of the territories concerned (Wolf 1982:195-261, Watson 1984). The literature refers to the first of these two alternative types of frontiers as "frontiers of control", and to the second as "frontiers of extraction"; rather than involving the removal or extermination of the native population, both of them were often depending on the continued presence of vital indigenous communities, making them the site of a more stable, longer-term interaction between invaders and local communities (see the more detailed exposition below, section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier'). The Northwestern and Northeastern rims of British India, the hills and mountains of British Burma, the Dutch Indies' Outer Islands and vast stretches of French West Africa were examples of hybrid combinations of "frontiers of control" and "frontiers of extraction" where the writ of colonial law was perennially challenged by truculent indigenous societies, many of whom were subdued and subjected to substantial forms of domination only in the first half of the 20th century.

Thus, the idea of the frontier as something short-lived, called into existence just once and necessarily with a European colonial cast, fails to account for two important manifestations of the colonial frontier, where "frontierness" proved much more resilient. The canon of the linear, irreversible frontier process is even less persuasive where non-western imperial colonizers or post-colonial governments of the developing South expanded to tribal peripheries, thereby creating "internal frontiers" of remarkable temporal persistence. Imperial China's Inner Asian frontiers have been documented at least since the time of the Han dynasty (Gaubatz 1996:17), moving back and forth over time ("oscillating" in Lattimore's [1940] words) in response to the alternating dominance by the empire and its nomadic neighbours. The history of Southeast Asian statecraft shows a picture of downriver or coastal kingdoms controlling ports and fertile, wet-rice producing alluvial plains, projecting their power with shifting luck to the adjacent hills and mountains, and thus resigned to live with highly unstable and perennially re-negotiated frontiers (Scott 1998a:50-54). Africa, as well, had autochthonous frontier dynamics which followed a trajectory much different from the "tidal wave" type typical for the colonization process in North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Igor Kopytoff (1987) described the characteristics of what he called the "interstitial" frontier, where herdsmen and farmers in search of greener pastures regularly split off from petty kingdoms to occupy the politically "open" spaces in the interstices between established princely polities. As these frontiersmen were not the advance agents of a metropolitan expansion that

produces culturally and politically homogenous space, these offshoots transformed into new, independent polities and ethnicities and in time became the motor of new frontier processes at their fringes. This perpetual reproduction of local frontiers by countless small-scale migrations has patterned much of Africa's cultural history up to this day, says Kopytoff, and he concludes that frontiers can be a force for cultural-historical continuity and conservatism just as well as for sweeping cultural transformation (ibid.:8-16).

Most crucially, the perception of frontier processes as linear and irreversible fails to explain why so many post-colonial governments to this day are engaged in the very same business of pacification and administrative subjugation of tribal peoples at their fringes that their colonial predecessors thought they had closed the books on once and for all (see Strathern 2000, Helbling 2006:294). Northeast India, Burma's tribal areas, the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the interior of Borneo, Aceh and West Papua in Indonesia are cases in point where colonial regimes never established full administrative control, and thus left their post-colonial successor governments a legacy of still-open frontiers.

To make a long point short, frontiers are as characteristic of many present-day developing countries as they were of yesterday's colonial empires. They are cyclical rather than lineal phenomena in that they move back and fro, "close" and "(re-)open" in response to a twin logic. *First*, in their capacity as loosely-controlled space characterized by a tension between hegemonial state designs and indigenous autonomies, frontiers are made and unmade in keeping with the expansion and contraction of states and the force they can muster to control the fringes of their influence. In that sense, frontier conditions, rather than belonging to a past age of Caucasian pioneers, are being constantly reproduced to this day in many of the former colonies, a fact to which the discourse on "failed states" and "state collapse" in the Southern hemisphere testifies (see e.g. Zartman, ed., 1995, Shultz 1995). Frontiers and frontier conflicts are still with us, because they are not the ephemeral side-effects of European expansion, but the consequence of state-making projects in general (Scott 1999:45).

Nation-state expansion and contraction, however, is not the only determinant of the emergence, efflorescence and demise of frontiers. While states – notably those that were founded and consolidated in the post-colonial period – are clearly powerful actors, they have historically often followed rather than preceded individual exploits of outsiders at the frontier. In their capacity as places of bounty, frontiers – *second* – form, flourish and desintegrate in tune with the cycles of exploitation of valuable resources by invaders acting on their own or in loose association with the state. To that effect, frontiers recede and advance in relation to changing demands for frontier commodities on regional and world markets (Hennessy 1981:10, Little 2001:1-4);

if and where agricultural land is the dominant commodity sought after by outsiders, the changing pressures originating from national (and sometimes even regional) structures of land use and distribution determine the dynamics. One and the same area may see frontiers arise and vanish again serially, as the "discovery" and depletion of one resource is followed by similar "boom and bust" cycles spurred by the interest in different forms of frontier wealth (Little 2001:3). In the light of the logic of demand-driven and market-bound interest in territorial peripheries, too, frontiers emerge as durable and resurgent phenomena rather than one-time occurrences which owe their existence to a particular world-historical constellation.

Two or three things I know about the frontier (including a definition)

A frontier concept that wants to be of use for the comparative analysis of contemporary frontier dynamics has to avoid the biases and omissions of the Turnerian frontier notion. More significantly still, it has to encompass a larger scope of phenomena than those which Turner and first-generation students of comparative frontiers based their reflections on. It is such a concept that I am proposing here.

In the most general sense, a frontier is *an area remote from political centers which holds strategic significance or economic potentials for human exploitation, and is contested by social formations of unequal power* (see Hvalkof, this volume, p. 219)¹⁸. Frontiers have existed since millenia, making frontier studies the turf not only of anthropologists and other investigators of present matters, but also of historians and, importantly, archaeologists (see e.g. Green and Perlman, eds., 1985, Lightfoot and Martinez 1995, Parker 2006). While most scholars see them arise at the seams of states, others (see Lattimore 1962b:25, Colombijn and Wadley 2001:8) have posited that any articulation of more centralized societies with less centralized human communities can give birth to frontiers. In our time, the era of late modernity, the social formations referred to in the definition come in the shape of a dominating and expansive national society and one or more locally-situated, non-dominant indigenous societies (see Hvalkof, this volume, p. 219)¹⁹. The lure of natural treasures – land, minerals and other natural resources – and national interests in territorial control notwithstanding, *state penetration of these spaces is comparably weak, while the indigenous societies in question have retained a considerable degree of autonomy*²⁰.

The definition stresses the basic ingredient of conflict – sometimes manifest and open, sometimes latent and submerged – in frontier situations, and points to the vast discrepancy in power that characteristically separates intruders and frontier-dwelling indigenous communities – a point which has tended to go amiss somewhat in recent revisionist takes at the North American frontier (see e.g. White 1991a, Faragher

1994:239). Furthermore, it posits that frontiers are distant places, and foregrounds the quest for land and other natural resources and, alternatively, politico-military motives which animate intrusion into and occupation of them. Allow me to dwell on these last two points for a moment.

Though often associated with remoteness and forbidding terrain, frontiers are not confined to physically inaccessible parts of national territories. True enough, they are "out-of-the-way-places" (Tsing 1993), but in more and, significantly, in other terms than just geographical distance. The distance that separates frontiers from the centralities that determine national political processes and development dynamics is in crucial ways a socio-cultural distance, and one in symbolic worth and respect accorded to their inhabitants by the dominant centre. Being the abode of communities with tribal lifeways, differences in culture and sociopolitical organization are to some extent objective and tangible. However, equating these lifeways with a low civilizational standing, national elites in the city centres proceed to define frontier habitats as the far ends of civilization (see e.g. Kristof 1959:270), thus adding an element of racial hierarchy to the immediate, profane spatial distance. In many instances, in fact, that spatial distance is much smaller than usually assumed. Frontiers may be found just a few dozen kilometers distance from major cities (see Bakels 1990 on the Badui of West Java) or situated within bustling export processing zones (see Chou and Wee 2003 on the Orang Laut in the "Growth Triangle" comprising parts of Singapore, Johor [Malaysia] and Riau [Indonesia]). While in the popular mind, frontiers refer back to a pre-modern social environment, they are known to co-exist easily with international space centres (see Collomb 2006 on the Kali'na and other groups in French Guiana), technologically-advanced mining operations (see Connell and Howitt, eds., 1991 on various Australasian cases) or the military bases of the globe's single remaining world power (see Shimizu 1989 on the Aeta of Zambales, the Philippines).

Furthermore, while frontiers are peripheral spaces, they are not necessarily and not always situated along national borders. When frontiers are borderlands, we are dealing with a special constellation rather than a definitional criterion for "frontierness". Salient examples of countries with frontiers in non-border spaces are the archipelagic states of Southeast Asia (Philippines, Indonesia) where island interiors, not border-straddling redoubts on a continental land mass were historically the locus of indigenous autonomies (examples: Mindoro and Mindanao in the Philippines, Sulawesi and Seram in Indonesia). Mainland Southeast Asia, too, harbors examples for non-border frontiers: Vietnam's Central Highlands are an expansive territorial enclave that borders only in the case of Kon Tum province on a neighbouring country.

Finally, it bears mentioning that frontiers are not confined to the developing South. Being resource-rich, loosely-administered spaces coveted by non-residents, they may

be found as well in industrialized countries of the North (see e.g. Burger 1987, Fleras and Elliott 1992, Young 1995, Howitt, Connell and Hirsch, eds., 1996, Gradus and Lithwick, eds., 1996). The central Australian desert, Canada's Northlands, Alaska's Arctic slope and Israel's Negev are just as likely to exhibit frontier characteristics as the mighty rainforests of the Amazon, the hills of self-isolating Burma or the interior of Borneo and New Guinea.

Given the impressive diversity of frontiers through the ages, as well as their many regional idiosyncrasies, it is difficult to advance plausible generalizations on their nature and functioning (Power 1999:2). The field of comparative frontier studies has long suffered from propositions which, while claiming universal relevance, reflected concern with only a fraction of the scope of frontier phenomena (ibid.:1f.). Thus, we have found that Turner reified one frontier variety to the point of eclipsing all others (see section 'There to Here: From Colonial to Post-Colonial Frontiers'); the same, but in reverse, goes for some historians and political geographers who have hardly taken note of the class of specimen that Turner was describing (for a good example, see Anderson 1996). To a large extent, the diversity of frontier phenomena hinges on the specific prizes which particular frontiers hold out to those who set out to conquer them. It makes sense, therefore, to distinguish frontiers according to the major uses which the invading individuals and the states in their backs intend to make of them. Scholars of comparative frontier history have arrived at a rough classification of principal frontier types all of which can be assumed to have been present in antiquity, the immediate pre-colonial and the colonial period, and can still be made out in the present post-colonial age (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995:3, Friedmann 1996:1f., 10-19; Gaubatz 1996:21)²¹. They are:

1) "*Frontiers of settlement*" (variously referred to as "settlement frontiers", "colonization frontiers", "land frontiers" or "agricultural frontiers" in the literature): Here, state power roots itself primarily through agricultural expansion. Frontiers of settlement arise wherever colonists advance in substantial numbers from the consolidated heartland of a state's territory to its more thinly-populated margins (Friedmann 1996:1f.). Characteristically, large numbers of outsiders set up permanent residence at the indigenous periphery, dispersed across the rural areas where they commonly displace, or at least disrupt, local settlement and subsistence (Gaubatz 1996:21). Frontiers of settlement's most distinctive feature, however, is that they are mobile and fleeting, often consuming large tracts of land along with the resident indigenous communities in their rapid advance; more often than not, they are sites of acute conflict and violent change (Wendl and Rösler 1999:4). As the preceding sections will have made clear, the legendary 18th and 19th century exploits of European pioneers in North America, South Africa (and to a lesser degree in Australia and New Zealand) exemplify these "moving" settlement frontiers in their most dramatic form, and have provided the main context for comparisons in early attempts to expand on Turner's work.

Significantly, this frontier type appears in two important varieties: *primary settlement frontiers* comprise a region's best agricultural lands and typically attract outside settlement early on in the process (usually – but not always – already in colonial times). This type of settlement frontier has today largely ceased to exist, as it has become incorporated into the agricultural and administrative core of the region (and countries) in question. Still to be found in many countries of the developing South, however, are *secondary settlement frontiers*, which are both harder to penetrate and less desired by migrants because they are made up of agriculturally marginal land (Prescott 1987:36-43). Secondary settlement frontiers, then, are the main arenas of struggle between indigenous peoples and settlers in contemporary times.

2) "*Frontiers of extraction*" (or, as some authors prefer to call them, "extractive frontiers", "frontiers of exploitation", or "resource frontiers"): Frontiers of the extractive type are formed when the main reason for invading the thinly-populated margins of a state's territory is not to establish settler colonies, but to prospect for and extract natural resources (Friedmann 1996:2). Depending on the resource concerned, profitable operations at the extractive frontier need not necessitate the presence of a large workforce from outside. Where extraction is highly capitalized, as where deep-laying sub-surface seams of precious metals or diamonds are mined, the presence of outsiders is often confined to small numbers of well-trained specialists encamped at the work compound (see e.g. Kennedy and Abrash 2002 on the operations of Freeport MacMoRan near Timika, West Papua). Where no trained labour is needed, the bulk of the workforce may be recruited locally from indigenous groups (as in the infamous case of forced labour on the rubber plantations in the Peruvian Amazon at the beginning of the 20th century, see Taussig 1984) or be drawn from the migrant population. Not infrequently, therefore, frontiers of extraction co-exist and overlap with frontiers of settlement²².

However, of particular notoriety and historical fame are those manifestations of extractive frontiers which entail not the comparatively discrete presence of a few well-earning white-collar workers, but the sudden, massive influx of impoverished soldiers of fortune. Notably gold rushes have in many corners of the globe become a romanticized part of the regional frontier folklore, their often devastating consequences for local ecosystems and human communities notwithstanding.

Like frontiers of settlement, frontiers of extraction are of a dynamic nature, since extractivism is typically transient. When local ore, oil or timber reserves have been exhausted, the frontier entrepreneurs – corporate and wildcat alike – break up tent and operations are shifted to more promising locations, closing the frontier at least momentarily. Often, a new bonanza follows as there is a demand for a different resource that is locally available²³. The dynamics of extractive frontiers, therefore, respond to cyclical booms in highly-priced commodities (Hennessy 1978:12,

1981:10) which may express themselves in successive “cycles of conquest” (Hvalkof 1989:130-133 and Hvalkof, this volume, p. 231).

3) “frontiers of control”: At frontiers of this type, neither settler colonization nor the exploitation of minerals or other natural treasures are a major objective of the state; the latter confines itself instead to the control of major towns, infrastructure and trade through what is essentially a pragmatic system of indirect rule (Gaubatz 1996:21, Haines 2004:539f.). Such pragmatism may be motivated by the fact that resident indigenous communities have retained their military capacities, restricting the state’s capacity to implement more ambitious policies; however, administrative restraint is just as often by design rather than default. At frontiers of control, the state’s gaze is often directed outwards, towards the adjacent domain of a rival state, rather than towards its own – often truculent – frontier-dwelling populace and the extractivist potentials of its own frontier territory. Frontiers of control are the quintessential borderlands, zones of territory lining the boundaries of states which, as a subject, have attracted considerable scientific attention in the course of the past decade (see e.g. Donnan and Wilson, eds., 1994, Donnan and Wilson 1999, Rösler and Wendl, eds., 1999, Horstmann and Wadley, eds., 2006). Like settlement frontiers, however, they do not by themselves exhaust the range of constellations that the frontier notion stands for.

In pre-colonial times and throughout most of the colonial period, the preoccupation with the military security of the realm frequently dictated a policy of non-interference with tribal polities residing in the belt of territory that lay between the boundaries of formal jurisdiction and those of effective administrative control (Embree 1989:82). The frontier of control was a line (or, more precisely, a zone) of defence where pre-modern and often incompletely-subjugated polities served the same purpose that obstacles of nature (rivers, mountains, deserts, marches) served elsewhere: they effectively impeded foreign invasion and conquest. In imperialist theory, tribal peripheries made perfect *cordon sanitaires* which insulated the zones of genuine fiscal interest to the colonial state from the spheres of influence of neighbouring powers (ibid.:83)²⁴. In the current age of nation-states, military elites usually resort to more proactive strategies. To discourage foreign invasion, frontier zones along international borders are fortified with military garrisons, their road systems expanded, air fields and helipads constructed and, possibly, population numbers raised through colonization schemes (see e.g. Albert 1992, Allen 1992, Girot and Nietschmann 1993, Luithui-Emi, forthcoming). As areas where state agency is either tempered by armed indigenous might or a concern with fickle neighbours, frontiers of control can still be encountered, among others, in some of Burma’s minority areas (Lintner 2003), Pakistan’s Northwestern Frontier Province (Hart 2001, The Economist 2006c), Jemen’s Hadramaut (Naumkin 1989), large parts of Tchad (Azevedo 1998), Acholi territory in Northern Uganda (Finnström 2003) and the Shuarä-inhabited areas along Peru’s border with Ecuador (Little 2001:222-228).

The three types of frontier do not represent mutually-exclusive categories; rather, they frequently overlap in a particular place, rendering it difficult (and sometimes rather arbitrary) to distinguish “dominant” from subsidiary forms of outside use of a frontier. Typically, changes in relative importance of invaders’ interests in a frontier lead to a transition from one type to another.

Frontier types can differ tremendously from each other with regards to the numbers of intruders that they bring to frontier lands, the possibility for longer-term co-existence between these intruders and indigenous communities, and the trajectory and intensity of state involvement in frontier expansion. With regard to the last point, for instance, it has been observed that the interest of the state at extractive frontiers tends to be spasmodic, “growing and ebbing in response to large-scale economic processes in the metropole” (Brown and Fernandez 2000:176), while it is more constant and calculable at settlement frontiers and frontiers of control; there, the support for settler colonies and the imperatives of holding and consolidating national territory commit the state to a modicum of policy continuity.

Nevertheless, all three types share the essential quality of being geographical regions with peculiar political, economic, social and cultural characteristics which are not found in the core areas of state control (Kopytoff 1987:11, Gaubatz 1996:4) – a proposition which the middle part of this paper (section ‘How to Recognize a Frontier when You Meet One’) is going to illustrate. Basic to these distinctive character traits is the texture of governance, the way in which the state is being run and its laws and principles of rule enacted. Frontiers are, to borrow a metaphor from meteorology, administrative low-pressure areas where institutions of government are rudimentary when compared with those that secure domination in the more-firmly controlled areas, the very idea of the state and of citizenship have not sunk in with a large part of the resident population, and rival forms of collective identity remain strong. Here, at the indigenous fringe, the leviathan is engaged in an ongoing project of establishing control, and its presence is often precariously fragile; not fully master in its own house, its policies are to a large extent geared towards changing this (see section ‘Nationalizing Space: The State’s Agenda at Contemporary Frontiers’). At its core, therefore, the frontier is a political fact, an outgrowth of states’ purposive utilization of geographical space (Kopytoff 1987:11)²⁵.

Furthermore, irregardless of their specific type, frontiers are – as hinted at by the definition – notoriously conflict-ridden. Conflicts over the control of “meaning, space, territory and power” (Hvalkof, this volume, p. 277) are woven into their very fabric. While violent contention does also often pit one occupational group or social strata of sojourners and settlers to the frontier against another (see section ‘How to Recognize a Frontier...’, part h), the main and most volatile fault line runs between what can be seen as a coalition between settler society and the state²⁶ on one side, and the indigenous

communities native to the frontier on the other. The basic fact that frontiers are, as Ferguson and Whitehead (2000) have expressed it²⁷, the “violent edge of empire”, suggests the high conflict levels commonly arising from the dialectics of conquest and resistance. It is, however, possible to move beyond such trifle generalities, and pinpoint with more precision that which renders the actions of the state and intruding individuals so highly conflictive. Thus, the agency of states and freelance individuals have in common that they are conflict-engendering because frontiers are *zones of deregulated economic activity* (see section ‘How to Recognize a Frontier...’, part f). Such licence is greatly helped by the fact that both *the state and settler society define frontier-dwelling indigenous communities as standing outside the “moral community of the nation”*, and thus neither deserving of human compassion nor having a legal personality (see *ibid.*, part e). And maybe most basically, state agency at frontiers stands out as being generative of conflict because, other than in areas subject to regular control, it is *not bound by the need to win local citizens’ allegiance, but aimed, instead, at securing control over coveted territory and resources* (see section ‘Nationalizing Space...’). Here, at the state’s remote ends, *concerns for state- and nation-building outweigh considerations for political stability, biodiversity conservation or, for that matter, local communities’ rights. At its margins, the state does not shun conflicts but accepts them as inevitable and even necessary. To national decision-makers, it may be argued, violence and the loss of life in frontier conflicts over state-sanctioned development (including, of course, settler migration) appear not as the lamentable breakdown of social order, but as the noble beginning of it.*

To raise another important point in this general introduction to frontiers, many authors – myself included – have emphasized the fact that the ground on which conflicts at the frontier are fought is everything but level. Of the two systems that meet (and clash) at the frontier, one is dominant, the other marginal (Swift 1978:6); the two are separated by a “vast discrepancy in effective power (...)” (Friedmann 1996:15). Yet, again, such a statement is hopelessly broad and bordering on platitude. How exactly is the dominance of settler society being played out on the ground, and what are the resources on which the power of frontier actors – superior and inferior – is based? The following account of power at the frontier draws mainly from anthropologist Marianne Schmink’s and sociologist Charles H. Wood’s (Schmink and Wood 1992:13-18) work on the Brazilian Amazon in the 1980s and early 1990s, and is complemented by Norman Whitten’s – another anthropologist’s – insights on autochthonous indigenous notions of power, foregrounding power sources that are usually overlooked by conventional analyses of frontier systems.

Following Max Weber, power can be understood as the capacity of an actor to impose his or her will successfully on another (Weber 1964:152). The relative power that contestants command in a dispute is assembled from multiple sources. In a frontier context, the most tangible bases of power are economic wealth and

direct, physical force (Schmink and Wood 1992:14). Compared to indigenous people who have entered the monetary economy only recently and generally on unfavorable terms, the more affluent among the invaders (e.g. cattle ranchers and plantation owners) command vastly superior economic resources; the average colonist, on the other hand, can be said to be economically more or less at par with them. As evidenced by the Amazon’s cattle ranchers, economically powerful intruders to the frontier frequently rely on hired gunmen who help them secure access to land through violence or the threat of physical harm (*ibid.*). When they do not field hired killers or private militia to scare off rival users of coveted soil, members of the dominant strata are often able to deploy the army or police on their behalf (*ibid.*:14f). Given the ease with which economic might can buy goon muscle and firepower both from private and public sources, some authors have claimed that at the frontier, violence is the basic mechanism of social control and the privileged means for achieving subordination and exploitation (see e.g. Gordon 1992:209).

Other sources of power are indirect, such as the power garnered from access to, or control over, important parts of the state apparatus (Schmink and Wood 1992:14). The economically powerful among the intruders to the frontier tend to be well-connected politically, and are thus able to influence the allocation of public funds for road-building, development projects, and tax and credit incentives in their favor. Similarly, they often have the means to manipulate the rules and practices that mediate intergroup conflict (e.g. the legislature, courts and administrative institutions) (*ibid.*). Time and again, ranchers, mining companies and plantation owners have shown their capability to lobby national and state parliaments against passing progressive legislation that protects indigenous land and resource rights, or to bend existing laws, if progressive legislation is indeed in force. In many cases, even lowly colonists benefit from the composite effects of what one scholar (Lopez 1986:85-121, 1987) has called the “integrated displacement” of indigenous communities. In many polities of the developing world, state policies and an ethnically-biased, corrupt bureaucratic apparatus assist incoming colonists in helping themselves to indigenous land. Protected by settler patrons in local government and facilitated by superior knowledge of laws or the skills of make-believe, settlers often enjoy a decisive competitive advantage over indigenous communities.

The least direct source of power is the ability to construct or draw upon certain ideological discourses that confer varying degrees of legitimacy upon competing claims to frontier resources (Schmink and Wood 1992:15). In competition over them, different actor groups formulate and strategically deploy values and ideas suited to strengthening their position. In the case of the Brazilian Amazon, the overwhelming majority of these legitimizing discourses are borrowed from outside rather than invented locally. Some of the contestants appeal to the values of modernity, as when ranchers invoke “economic rationality” to justify their ownership of large

landholdings, or mining companies cite "efficiency" in their effort to drive away independent small-scale miners (*ibid.*). In the great majority of countries of the south during most of the post-independence period, such ideological positionings have proved effective, as they "resonate with dominant values and assumptions within the state apparatus and in society at large" (*ibid.*). The armed forces, especially where frontiers are located at international borders, tend to employ a discourse that appeals to patriotic notions of national security, the sanctity of national borders, and the sovereignty of the fatherland (*ibid.*). Indigenous communities the world over invoke their alleged ability to manage natural resources more sustainably than others, reinforced, among other things, by notions of the sacredness of certain features of the landscape. Conservationists *avant la lettre*, they successfully extoll the wisdom of traditional culture, a script that not only endears them to the global environmentalist movement, but in many cases seems to have been itself inspired by it (Turner 1991, Conklin and Graham 1995:699, 704). Colonist peasants, on their part, appeal to the "virtues of self-sufficiency and the dignity of fulfilling God's mandate to make the earth produce" (Schmink and Wood 1992:15f.) – inferring, of course, that indigenous cultivators do not engage in proper "production" worthy of that name.

The fact that power at the frontier is multi-dimensional – physical, economic, political, ideological – implies that a particular group might be well-endowed in one field, but less so in another (Schmink and Wood 1992:17). In the case of the Brazilian Amazon of the early 1990s, for instance, gold miners clearly had an edge over indigenous people and subsistence-oriented agricultural settlers with regards to coercive capability, yet their ideological resources were meagre (*ibid.*). As for indigenous actors, alliances with domestic and international human rights and environmentalist organizations empowered them both ideologically, materially and with regards to political clout, a support that failed to come forward for peasant settlers and gold miners (*ibid.*). Thus, in the case of indigenous communities, a tangible empowerment has resulted from the ascension in the 1980s and 1990s of the discourses of minority rights and environmental protection, balancing out – at least to some extent – their economic weakness and exposure to violence from outside actors of different shades; small-scale settler agriculturalists, on the other hand, have benefited in modest measure from the increasing importance of a more general human rights discourse, yet have so far found little recognition in the ranks of those professing environmentalism (see also Campos, this volume, p. 428).

To posit, as my frontier concept does, that contemporary state margins are at least partly defined by indigenous autonomy, implies that in these zones, crucial parts of indigenous social, political, economic and ideological systems have so far refused to yield to acculturative pressures from the encapsulating national society; received notions of power are among these resilient features of indigenous society (see this section, note 20), challenging and possibly neutralizing the forms of power

which I have sketched above. In his attempt to conceptualize power at the margins of ethnically-plural nation states in general and in Amazonian Ecuador in particular, Norman E. Whitten (1984:55-60, 1985:179-187) has stressed the pervasive "duality of power patterning" that characterizes the manner in which ethnic systems operate in frontier settings. In these settings, two different, yet interlinked power spheres exist; each of them is informed by culturally-specific notions of power. In Whitten's Ecuadorian case, settler society defines power as flowing from the control of capital (money) and influence which affords an individual access to the bureaucracy and politicians. In inter-ethnic situations, to share in "modernity" and possess the industrially-manufactured goods that epitomize it, also confers "power" over others which cannot make a similar claim. For an indigenous person (notably the Canelos Quichua among which the ethnographer worked), however, power derives first and foremost from the ability to tap cosmic forces through shamanic knowledge; that same knowledge usually makes a person the centre of a kindred that controls a segment of community territory (Whitten 1984:59). Crucially, Whitten demonstrates that the general dominance of settler society does not necessarily lead to a situation of total hegemony, i. e. the replacement of the indigenous by the settlers' concept of power. Both remain in force as the epistemic nodes of separate spheres of power which exist side by side. Even if recourse to bureaucratic connections and monetary resources decides many concrete situations of inter-ethnic confrontation, the power of shamanic knowledge can still be harnessed by many Canelos Quichua, and brought to bear in the arena dominated by settler actors.

To demonstrate the need for a multi-voiced account of power in frontier arenas, Whitten describes the case of Sicuanga, a shaman who got himself into trouble over a bank loan which he was unable to repay as he had used it to fulfil social obligations. He was summoned to a meeting with bank officials where he was publicly harangued and made to promise to repay the money instantly or else forego the collateral of 50 has of community land to which he had agreed. He walked away defeated, and painfully realized that the "new capitalist order of existence" had come to control his life (Whitten 1984:49). To keep from despairing, he disappeared in the forest to engage in the quintessential pastime of Canelos Quichua men, hunting. Out in the forest, he entered into conversation with the spirit masters of trees, water courses and animals, replenishing his shamanic strength and feeling his confidence surge as he roamed his group's ancestral territory. His new-found trust in himself and the mighty powers that he mastered communicated itself to his relatives and his kindred. Sicuanga's resurgence as a man of power "generated a revitalized sense of collective capacity to respond" in his community (*ibid.*:59). The community, invoking "shaman-controlled warrior imagery", forwarded a note to the bank officials that threatened the bank with violence for the case that it insisted on appropriating community territory. In the end, behind-the-scene negotiations of members of Sicuanga's kindred with

bank representatives secured a compromise that involved a re-negotiation of the debt on long-term repayment terms without interest (*ibid.*).

Just as the “duality of power patterning” in this Ecuadorian case forced representatives of settler society to de-escalate a conflict with indigenous actors, it may in other cases prevent settler individuals from starting it in the first place. Where belief in the efficacy of indigenous forms of power is also shared by substantial portions of the settler population, the threat to use such power may act as a deterrent against the theft of field fruits and moveable property, and force colonists to be careful with land grabbing, as Fulcher (1983:112f.) demonstrates with regards to the widespread fears of Dayak black magic practices (*ilmu-ilmu*) among Javanese transmigrants in the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan²⁸.

A final, pivotal issue in this attempt at providing a first, general sketch of frontier phenomena and their dynamics awaits clarification. Frontiers being at base loosely-administered spaces, the question of how we are to judge the discrete presence of the state and its role in the quest for coveted resources in the zone, is imposing itself with great urgency. Are states, we may ask, failing to subject frontiers to effective administrative control (and impose legal restraints on the actions of settlers, miners, loggers and other private intruders) because they lack the means thereto, or because they lack in political will?

The issue of agency and accountability at the frontier is a difficult one, defying, I believe, bold generalizations. Present-day post-colonial frontiers differ heavily with regards to the strength of the states within whose boundaries they are situated, the population pressure emanating from the core agricultural areas, and, indeed, the particular resource endowment of the periphery which may or may not make state involvement in frontier expansion imperative. The same incommensurability stands in the way of brash generalizations on the weight of state policy at colonial frontiers and frontiers in antiquity. Consequently, scholarly opinion on how far states should be held responsible for what goes on at their margins is divided, and positions should be read to reflect single case or regional conditions rather than global truths.

On top of this, different researchers often disagree in their interpretation of one and the same case, indicating that a scholar's theoretical and political inclinations rather than presumed case-study peculiarities may dictate arguments on states and frontiers. In what follows, I shall outline the pros and cons in that debate, without attempting to decide it in favor of one or the other side. Too absolute an insistence on the frontiersmen's structural autonomy of the state, I believe, conceals the obvious parallelism of interests that so often connects the two, and plays into the hands of state elites eager to escape the blame for environmental mayhem and human rights abuses at the frontier. On the other hand, positing that pioneers and other non-native non-state actors are always and by necessity strawmen of the government is to indulge in naïve phantasies of the power of the state at the margins of the world system.

Conventional frontier historiography, following the example of Frederick Jackson Turner, stresses the lack of laws, rules and institutions at the frontier, emphasizing instead the role of the enterprising individual and the pioneer value of self-reliance (see e.g. Billington 1967:7). The North American settlement process, the story goes, was unplanned and chaotic, and time and again, the federal government and the army found their treaty policy towards particular groups of Native Americans thwarted by the clandestine, illicit advance of colonists and gold diggers into Indian territory. Atrocities committed by settlers and frontiersmen and their use of force and deception as they appropriated Native American land, labor and minerals were beyond the government's power to prevent, whose agents as a rule arrived after the fact (see e.g. Prucha 1962:156).

The same line of argument has been advanced for the conquest of Siberia by Tsarist Russia. The driving force of Russian expansion beyond the Ural mountains (ca. 1580-1650), write Goehrke and Scheidegger (1980:25), were private entrepreneurs of the likes of the Stroganov dynasty who, attracted by Siberia's fabled wealth in pelts, recruited and equipped expedition forces consisting of cosacks – battle-hardened frontiersmen specializing in hunting and trapping. Notably in the second half of the 16th century, the tsar tried everything to reign the Stroganovs and their cosack conquerors in. The government, embroiled in a costly war in what is today the Balticum, was anxious to avoid new military commitments in the east, and threatened to hang the cosack leaders and fine their financiers for having ventured into Siberia without authorization (*ibid.*:23). Rather opportunistically, official troops moved in after major routs by the cosacks, and secured the area in question (*ibid.*:24). The state, then, limped behind the trapper's frontier, and contented itself with building a network of fortified garrisons in its wake, whose troops could be used to secure supply lines, control the natives and extract *jassak* (a tribute in pelts) from them (*ibid.*:25).

A number of scholars have criticized the view that colonial authorities played but a minor role in developments at their frontiers and thus could not be held responsible for them, as innocent and morally as well as factually wrong. Nobles (1997:14f.), for instance, explicitly rejects the Turnerian proposition that the North American frontier was set into motion by masses of impoverished individuals who sought to better their lives, positing instead that frontier advance “depended on the participation, even the active promotion, of the national government”, and was therefore a “fundamentally political, not merely demographic” process. While admitting that the relationship between settlers and the state was often troubled, even tumultuous, and the former's hunger for land at times clashed violently with the government's preference for an “orderly” settlement process, Nobles sees pioneers and policymakers in ultimate respect as “allies in a process of conquest”, and North America's colonization – even in its early stages – as unmistakably “state-sponsored” (*ibid.*:15).

In many cases, the proposition that colonial states tried hard to establish a monopoly of violence and firm administrative control in its wake at the first chance, does not stand up to historical scrutiny. As Rodman (1983:7) argues for insular Melanesia, the interests of the labour trade that provided indigenous manpower to British-owned plantations in Queensland were best served when the state kept a low profile and attempted neither to advance the pacification of indigenous societies (because that would have eliminated the local demand for weapons which were the de-facto currency of the trade) nor to regulate the singularly brutal practices of the labour recruiters. Enforcement of the "Pax Britannica" only became imperative for the colonial government once the yields from the extraction of key natural products (e.g. sandalwood and birds' nests) had fallen and the labour trade drawn to a close. Drawing on his Central Asian material, Lattimore (1940, 1962a, cited in Gaubatz 1996:19), too, argued that colonial empires consciously kept frontiers marginal, incorporated with the core only through alliances with intermediate groups – compradors – in native societies that secured the dominant group its access to coveted goods. Bodley (1990:30), comparing evidence from different colonial domains, comes to the conclusion that "lack of control has been a deliberate policy on many frontiers", a fact that, as he underlines, committees of inquiry into settler misdeeds and massacres have pointed out to colonial publics in several countries as early as the 1830s.

John Bodley (*ibid.*:29f.) and Jeremy Swift (1978:6, 9) have taken the discussion to contemporary postcolonial frontiers. Bodley (1990:30), arguing on the basis of data from Brazil and Paraguay, maintains that the murders and massacres of indigenous people which he documents would not have been committed "if local officials had not cooperated in them". Swift (1978:6), citing evidence from the Amazon, posits that associating the frontier with rambling, freewheeling individuals and an altogether impotent state may serve to "excuse the serious human rights abuses – murder, forced labour, theft of land – that characterize modern frontiers (...)". Sponsel (1994:39f.) makes the same claim in his examination of one of the most notorious gold rushes in recent memory – the invasion (1980 to the mid-nineties) of the Yanomami territories in Brazil by an estimated 40,000 gold panners²⁹. The Roraima gold rush as a direct result of which some 1500 Yanomami are considered to have died, could have been halted in time, Sponsel (*ibid.*:40) wrote, if the government had bothered to intercept the traffic of mining personnel, equipment and supplies at the state capital of Boa Vista. Instead, the army allowed the miners to use Air Force and mission station airstrips in the interior (*ibid.*). Sponsel, therefore, holds that "ultimately, the provincial and federal governments (...) are responsible for the Yanomami crisis, either indirectly through apathy (...) or directly through covert support of the mining operation" (*ibid.*).

State connivance in the private projects of non-state actors at the margins is still more pronounced in the case of agricultural pioneers. Colonial expansion often

entailed the arrival of colonists in native lands before the army and the administration established their presence (Barnes 1990:107), and the latter usually provided only rudimentary forms of support to the pioneers. In contrast, many contemporary developing countries have until the most recent times allocated considerable funding to colonization programs that offered ample benefits to settler recruits, often covering transportation costs, housing, credits, cleared plots (complete with land titles), farming implements and food rations (see e.g. Jones and Richter, eds., 1982 on state-sponsored colonization in Southeast Asia). While only a fraction of contemporary migration flows to the frontier is directly funded and organized by governments, most of them facilitate what is mistakenly called "spontaneous migration" by a variety of means of which road-building into hitherto inaccessible parts of the territory is but one (Partridge 1989; Colchester 1993a:6). In controversies on the reasons for the high rates of deforestation in frontier zones in which impoverished farmers have a major role, state elites have made shrewd use of that category error, claiming that migrant flows are, as a matter of fact, unstoppable and irreversible (Moran 1983:300). Critical analysts, however, see them as premeditated and therefore predictable, and refuse to absolve states from the responsibility for the havoc wrought by migrants on contemporary settlement frontiers (see e.g. Myers 1991, cited in Pichón 1996:349, Colchester 1993a)³⁰.

Clearly enough, the frontier concept itself, if used uncritically, becomes a vehicle for the exculpation of state planners and managers, hiding behind the supposed anonymity of frontier processes. Swift (1978:6) thus demands that the analytical focus in comparative frontier studies be shifted from individuals to institutions and "broad economic and political processes". The frontier, he maintains (*ibid.*:9), creates special roles and institutions of its own. I will examine some of them – the settler patron and the indigenous broker – in the section that follows ('How to Recognize a Frontier when You Meet One', part c), while a third one – that of the religious mission – will be dealt with shortly in the section entitled 'Nationalizing Space: The State's Agenda at Contemporary Frontiers'. In that same section, I am endeavouring a rough sketch of the policies that a majority of developing countries of the South pursue in their attempt to integrate frontier zones more firmly into the national body politic.

Therefore, rather than being "non-state spaces", as Scott (1998a:52ff., 1999:45) calls them, contemporary frontiers are spheres of administrative practice – however meek and makeshift it may be in some cases – and, importantly, the site of often ambitious state- and nation-building projects. State designs are making themselves felt with vigour and the influence of state policies and regulations on the lives of those who inhabit the margins – indigenous and non-indigenous alike – can be considerable. If the state's posture at contemporary frontiers is discrete in comparison with national heartlands, this is so, as political geographer John Prescott (1987:36) maintains, because the state deems it convenient, not because it is unable to be more

imposing. Prescott has little doubt that while colonial and early postcolonial frontiers still marked the actual limits of state authority, "the political authority of modern states extends beyond the (...) frontiers and can be exerted when necessary" (ibid.).

Nevertheless, we should not overstate the case for the hidden hand of the state behind private enterprise at the frontier. Many developments are not willed by the government and the social forces representing its base. In spite of their seeming lack of political clout and material resources, subaltern frontier actors have in a number of cases successfully resisted state plans that excluded them from the utilization of frontier resources. A number of critical scholars have supplied examples of non-state actors thwarting state objectives for frontier management by invading indigenous territories which were meant to be administered in the manner of "frontiers of control", rather than conquered in the manner of "frontiers of settlement". Schmink and Wood (1992:7) state the case of the discovery of gold deposits in southern Pará (Brazilian Amazon) in the 1980s. With the official development policies – since the mid-70s – favoring the expansion of large-scale capitalist ventures like mining, plantation agriculture or cattle ranches, the massive influx of self-made small-scale miners provided a real and unforeseen challenge to the military regime. Like no other occupational or ethnic group on Pará's frontier before them, the *garimpeiros* effectively contested corporate claims to land and mineral resources which the administration was determined to uphold. They not only confronted Kayapó Indians over access to reservation land, but also competed with mining companies that held rights to gold deposits on state lands. "Unlike in the confrontation between peasants and ranchers", Schmink and Wood (ibid.) maintain, "even the most powerful mining companies generally found themselves on the losing end of battles with *garimpeiros*, whose growing political and economic power added a formidable new voice on the frontier". The central government's strategy of resolving certain disputes in favor of the gold seekers – and against the mining companies whose existing licenses they had challenged –, and to allow the *garimpeiros* to go about their business as long as they submitted to military supervision, failed; in 1980 in the Serra Pelada, the *garimpeiros* reneged on an earlier compact with the government and took the rich gold deposits into their hands, from whence they could not be taken anymore later (ibid.:7f.). The presence and obstinacy of gold miners who had spontaneously flocked to the gold rush areas of Southern Pará was one of the factors that finally threw the military's plan to "nationalize" the Amazon frontier into disarray (ibid.:8).

In Pará, yet other groups of frontier actors – whatever the circumstances that had initially brought them to the frontier – openly contest the state's claim to land and resources. Government lacks the means to lastingly subdue them, or expel them to areas where they can no longer challenge the state's hegemony. Pioneer farmers and rubber tappers in the Brazilian Amazon are one of the most glaring examples. "Beneficiaries" of early state-sponsored settlement programs or spontaneous arrivals,

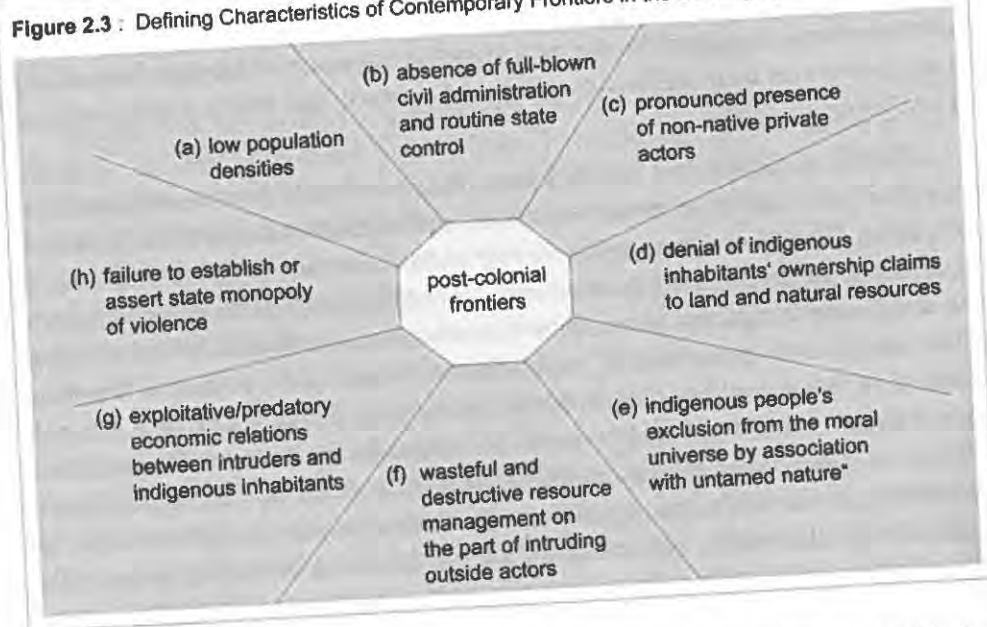
they have been (and still are) embroiled in their tens of thousands in partly violent resistance against land speculators, agribusiness operators or cattle barons who deprive them – supported by the administrative apparatus and police force of the (local) state – of their unofficially-established rights to land which they had cleared (see Foweraker 1981).

Finally, while it is true that they can critically influence frontier settlement in a variety of ways, governments do not entirely control migrant decisions for or against migration. Rising world market prices for agricultural commodities (cash-crops) which can be cultivated in frontier areas can exact a powerful pull on settlers, luring thousands to areas hitherto regarded as too remote or otherwise too difficult for colonization. This can generate "land frenzies" which are not directly of the making of the state, even if, of course, enabling state legislation provides the backdrop against which such population movements have to be viewed. An example for the interplay of larger market forces and a facilitating national politico-legal framework are the Vietnamese Central Highlands. In the 1980s, the region was opened for spontaneous migrants when the government lifted earlier, tight rules on residency (McElwee 2004:202). In the 1990s, the world market price for coffee rose sharply, prompting thousands of people to set out for the Central Highlands in search of the profits to be made from "black gold" (ibid.). Confronted with the rising environmental and socio-political costs of uncontrolled immigration, local authorities have since called for a stop to migration of any sort to their provinces, but the political centre proved unable to reimpose restrictions on free movement on a peasantry unbound (McElwee 2004:203).

How to recognize a frontier when you meet one

In this bulky section, I will try to substantiate my claim that the frontier is a geographical region with peculiar political, economic, social and cultural characteristics not usually encountered in the core areas of state control. Scholars have proposed a multitude of different definitional approaches to the subject, some of them tailored to a single type of frontier and a specific time period, others with a claim to broader, comparative applicability that spans across a wide range of situations and epochs of world history. Many of those who have worked with the concept have given it a rather narrow meaning by choosing a single indicator for the "opening" and the "closing" of the frontier. Thus, Lamar and Thompson (1981a:7) have focused on the military and political sphere, assuming frontiers to come into existence once the first representatives of the intrusive society have arrived, and expiring when "a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone" (see Hennessy 1981:12 and Dentan 1992:223 for closely-related understandings). Turner's definition, as I have explained, was more slippery, but its pivotal element was the availability of free land (Turner 1963:28), and he declared

Figure 2.3 : Defining Characteristics of Contemporary Frontiers in the Developing World



the frontier gone when an area's population density surpassed a certain threshold – in the case of the Trans-Mississippi West 2 persons/mile² (see Webb 1951:25, Billington 1967:7, Eder and Fernandez 1990:94 and Nyerges 1992:861 for similar approaches). Other authors have advanced single-criterion definitions that hinge on the absence or presence of "development" (Stea 1996:27) or the government's ability to put a lid on violence in the area under consideration (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:590).

A less monochromatic picture of the frontier emerges from the studies of scholars such as John Bodley (1990:24-41), Jeremy Swift (1978), Norman Whitten (1984, 1985:44-54), Rodolphe DeKoninck (2000), Paul Little (2001:1-10, 229-239) and Anna Tsing (1993, 1996, 2005), who all propose frontier concepts that rest on more than one leg; among others, they have drawn attention to the salience of the limited interference by state governments in such spaces (Bodley 1990:25, Swift 1978:6); the preponderance of private actors (Swift 1978:9); the lack of clearly-defined rules of interaction (e.g. binding and unequivocal laws) (Little 2001:8); intruders' use of force and deception in the quest for land and resources (Bodley 1990:25); their routine denial of indigenous ownership rights (*ibid.*); their proneness to degrade the environment (Swift 1978:12, DeKoninck 2000:11f., Tsing 2005:27-54); and violence and terror as a standard means to get things done at the frontier (Tsing 1996).

I have tried to combine the insights of these forerunners on the frontier trail of my preference and am proposing a list of eight generic properties that distinguish present-day frontiers in the developing South (see Figure 2.3).

I will argue my case based on accounts by ethnographers and other researchers, complemented, where available, by information from media sources. Owing to the geographical focus of this volume and my own expertise as an ethnographer and political anthropologist, the main part of the supporting data is from insular and mainland Southeast Asia, the Amazon and – to a lesser extent – Melanesia. Regions such as Africa and Oceania are not and Central Asia is only marginally represented in the literature that has informed this article. Evidently, therefore, the claim to authority of the frontier formula that is proposed here is less than global.

Frontierness, I contend, is multi-dimensional, as the consequences of the conquest of national peripheries reverberate in the political, economic, social and cultural domains, affecting not only the human societies involved in the confrontation, but also the natural environment whose riches represent the prize of that confrontation. Similarly, the interaction between state and non-state actors at the margins of the state has both material and immaterial, cognitive aspects, which need to be accounted for in a list of characteristics of frontier space. On the single count of a state's establishing "political control" or "hegemony" over a slice of the periphery, most if not all frontiers could safely be pronounced dead today; however, notwithstanding the presence of people in uniform and the pretense of regular administration, the experience of communities and individuals at the frontier is that of living in a world apart. Governance is of an entirely different quality at the state's margins, and so are many aspects of the moral, social and economic behavior of those who have come to set up shop here – temporarily or for good. Only by including other parameters of structure and agency can we hope to grasp the complex and multi-layered peculiarities of frontier space.

A frontier is a frontier when a majority of the eight characteristics can be shown to be present in sufficient strength; frontier closure is indicated when a majority of the proposed general traits fail to materialize in strong form. Absence of one or two of them does not mean that an area has lost its frontier character, and, conversely, the presence of only a small fraction of the total collection of traits does not make a place a frontier. By assessing the empirical evidence for the presence (and relative strength) of the entire scope of frontier characteristics in particular locales at a particular time, we may attempt to construct well-grounded and multi-faceted frontierness profiles (see Figure 2.4).

Let me elaborate on the details of the canon by introducing the characteristics one by one.

(a) Relatively low populations densities

Throughout the ages, expanding societies have pictured frontiers as wide, unsettled places where the vastness of the territory is only matched by the sparseness of

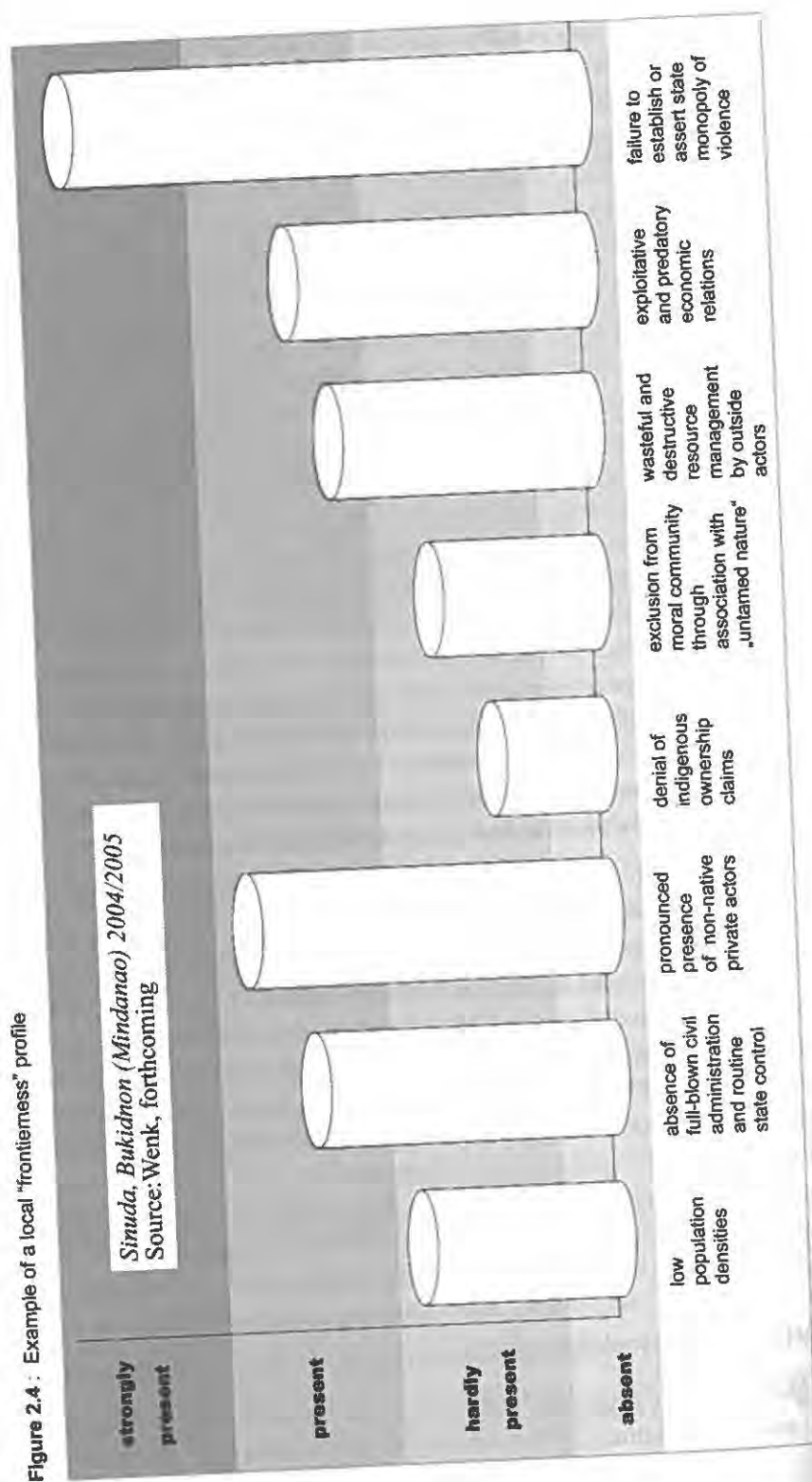


Figure 2.4: Example of a local "frontierness" profile

human habitation. References to the (presumed) absence of human settlement at the frontier, the (comparatively) low populations densities – or low man-land ratios –, and the resulting “abundance” of natural resources that characterize frontier space, are legion in the literature (see e.g. Billington 1967:7, Friedman and Alonso 1969, quoted in Feinman and Nicholas 1992:76, Swift 1978:6, 12, and Strassoldo 1980, quoted in Feinman and Nicholas 1992:76). Turner’s own frontier definition, as already mentioned, hinged first and foremost on the population density criterion when he declared in unison with the US census authorities that the 0,8 persons per kilometer² ³¹ counted in the trans-Mississippi West in 1890 represented a threshold beyond which an area ceased to be a frontier (Turner 1963:28f.). Such attempts at setting a limit for frontier status in absolute demographic terms are, I believe, futile and of dubious scientific standing³². Nevertheless, it remains a fact that national peripheries do attract agricultural pioneers for the reason that they are – or appear to be – comparatively loosely settled and offer them the hope of acquiring idle land (Eder and Fernandez 1990:94, Nyerges 1992:861, DeKoninck 2000:9). Where the frontier is one of extraction rather than of settlement, we can equally assume low population densities. If that were not the case, the supply of precious natural resources that make the area attractive for outsiders would either have been depleted long ago, or could not be accessed except at high political and military costs as numerically strong and locally-concentrated indigenous populations would likely resist their expropriation (Swift 1978:13).

However, at the risk of undermining my own credibility, I would like to warn against putting too much emphasis on the first of our frontier criteria. For one, reference to low population densities can only be included if qualified as being so not in an absolute sense, but in comparison with and contrast to other zones of state sovereignty. Thus, for instance, with population densities of 50 persons/kilometer² and more, the carrying capacity of the land in Vietnam’s Central Highlands has been reached and even surpassed³³ (McElwee 2004:199). Nevertheless, the Highland frontier’s appeal to landless Kinh farmers is undiminished – unsurprisingly, if we consider that population densities in the areas where most settlers are hailing from – the Red River delta – on occasion exceed 1200 persons/kilometer² (ibid.).

Second, there is ample reason for distrusting state authorities’ figures on population numbers at the frontier from whence density estimates are derived. Population counts at state margins are notoriously unreliable, as they often either lack data on indigenous populations or assume ridiculously low figures for them (see this section, part b) below). Thus, the Philippine government’s statistics for the 1980s overlooked an approximate 3,5 mio. indigenous people and an ever higher number of other upland dwellers, leading to grossly-distorted ideas on local and regional population densities (Blum and Geiger 1991:42). In certain cases, the proposition of the frontier being unsettled or sparsely inhabited may reveal itself as a strategic lie on



Photo 2.2 : Out-of-the-Way Places: New Tribes Mission landing strip in Banwaon country, Binikalan, Agusan del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines (photo: Irina Wenk)

the part of national governments, diverting attention from the fact that the territory is home to groups that might dispute outsiders' ownership claims to land and other resources. The issue of the biased representation of land ownership matters in the context of frontier expansion – the *tenurial myth* – will be taken up again in point (d) below.

Thirdly, the proposition that land and resources abound at the frontier is sometimes being disconfirmed in the course of the rapid advance of the settlement frontier. New arrivals are ever so often waking up to the realization that even the most undesirable plots already have their owners, and that these defend their property by use of arms, if need be (see e.g. George 1980:121 and May 1992:128ff. on Mindanao). In many cases, the open settlement frontier has become a fiction that barely veils the reality of a wild, uncontrollable land market and inexorable, sometimes violent territorial struggles. It is intriguing to see how in such cases, the myth of the inexhaustible land supply at the frontier often lives on in the densely-settled heartland, apparently resistant to the fact that the frontier's potential for settlement has been quite literally crowded out. Often, this myth of redemption in a land replete with rich soils and free of competitors – Hennessy (1981:13) calls it the *agrarian myth* – has been found to animate peasant immigration for two or three generations past the moment where the chances of succeeding have vanished (Barbora, forthcoming, on Central Assam, India). Thus, it is crucial to distinguish between the material and the discursive reality of low population densities in promised frontier lands; only if we include the imaginary do present-day conditions at the world's frontiers warrant inclusion of this criterion.

A fourth argument against overestimating the assertion that frontiers are by necessity loosely-settled will round up this exercise in self-critique. If it is true that, as I contend, frontiers are frontiers because of their economic potential for an expanding society, that potential's exploitation will draw in outsiders in great numbers, with the effect that the area's population density rises³⁴. Patricia Nelson Limerick (1987:23) points out that if low population densities were decisive, the emergence of cities, towns or even mining camps – a regular feature in frontier histories – would close the frontier. Yet very much to the contrary, she remarks, frontiers – as e.g. in gold rushes – have often been *opened* by sudden surges of populations, and closed again by the latter's departure after the valued resource had been used up (ibidi.). Thus, at the micro-level at least, we may argue with some justification that population minimums characterize a pre- (as well as possibly a post-) frontier state, while frontiers themselves require at least some population infusion from the outside. Once the place concerned – emptied of the commodity that drove the boom – reverts to its original state of low population density, it will have reacquired its former "backwater" qualities (e.g. absence of government services, unavailability of all but the most basic goods for consumption, bad infrastructural connectivity, etc.)³⁵, and ceased to be a frontier.

To sum up, the reference to low population densities may suffice as a *relational* proposition, but upon close scrutiny, is rather difficult to operationalize.

(b) Absence of full-blown civil administration and routine state control

In frontier areas, the state is engaged in an ongoing project of establishing control; its presence is, therefore, fragile. It maintains a reduced presence of administrative personnel, tax agents, and often, but not always³⁶, police and military forces. Full-blown civil administration is absent, and with it routine state control, allowing us to speak of an institutional vacuum at the frontier (Kopytoff 1987:16). Among others, this has the effect that private actors are hardly restrained or monitored in their dealings with indigenous inhabitants of the zone.

Where the frontier sits at an international border, or where tribal resentment against the state has taken the form of an active insurgency, political authority normally resides in the army barracks and police headquarters. On a great number of Southern frontiers, the chances of encountering soldiers, border patrols or armed forest guards are many times higher than those of sighting a civil servant (Swift 1978:8)³⁷. Another indicator of the lack of routinized government is the predominance of military personnel in frontier administrations, as in Assam (Baruah 2001) or Kalimantan (on Central Kalimantan, see van Klinken 2002:71, on West Kalimantan, Davidson 2002), where throughout most of the postcolonial period, governors were army generals. One of the reasons why the principle of the supremacy of political over military

institutions is so often being flaunted at the indigenous periphery is that central state elites seem to find it hard to trust the local indigenous leadership, even when it has been fully enculturated in the national political system. "Supervision" by the army will most efficiently prevent it from taking chances. Thus, in the Indonesian province of Central Kalimantan, a province which was established in 1957 with the aim of giving self-rule to the indigenous Dayak, Suharto's New Order regime systematically undermined Dayak political control by putting army officers as secretaries to the side of the Dayak governors (1965 – 1983), and later by entrusting the highest administrative office directly to Javanese (van Klinken 2002:ibid.).

As mentioned earlier (section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier', note 25), many present-day states of the developing world fail to achieve uniformity in administrative methods across their territory – a commonplace feature of the modern western state (Embree 1989:80). In the past as in the present, frontier management has often relied on the granting of special administrative status to indigenous areas. Under such statutes, states declared their authority over the frontier to be limited and the rights of the local population to be restricted – notably the right to some semblance of self-rule. In British India, a complex system of administrative zones ('restricted areas', later 'Inner Line' areas) existed which served to delimit the reach of the legal code that governed the rest of the country, and curtailed the mobility of ordinary subjects with regards to travels to and settlement in indigenous areas. After independence, the Indian government retained colonial legislation for separate administration essentially unchanged (Bodley 1988:357, Lynch and Talbott 1995:117ff.). In the Philippines, the American colonial government introduced a system of reservations in the tribal hinterland, most of which lasted through the commonwealth period (1935-1945) and the post-independence era, where they have been administrated until recently by successive offices tasked with looking after the welfare of the country's indigenous peoples (see Macdonald 1995). In yet other cases, states had to – and still have to to this day – concede in their very administrative codes that the writ of the law did not reach to the frontier. Thus, Moroccan royal administrators famously distinguished between the *bilad al-makhzan* (or *bilad al-hukm*), the area of jurisdiction of the governmental bureaucracy where the state ruled supreme, taxes were collected and the law obeyed, on one hand, and the *bilad as-siba*, the zone of tribal dissidence and, from the centre's perspective, lawlessness, on the other (Hart 2001:15-19). Finally, in contemporary Papua Niugini, approximately 25% of remoter administrative units such as the Gulf Province, are marked out as "non-councillor areas", i. e. areas where contact between the provincial authorities and the local population is too feeble and sporadic to allow for the adjudication of disputes in courts, or even the election of village councillors – the lowest level of local government (Hanser and von Trotha 2002:18f.).

Specialized minority offices have served (and continue to serve) governments as a convenient tool for frontier management. Such agencies have typically been



Photo 2.3 : Areas under separate administration: state border of Arunachal Pradesh, India, where the restrictive Inner Line regulations apply, 2004 (photo: Christian Erni)

tasked with establishing relations with yet "uncontacted" indigenous groups, administering reserves, acting as official legal representatives for members of indigenous communities, and helping to integrate them into mainstream society. Famous examples of such offices are the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) in Brazil (see Ramos 1984:90-97), and the Presidential Assistant on Tribal Minorities (Panamin) in the Philippines during Marcos times (see Rocamora 1979).

Sanjib Baruah (2003:921) has observed that in frontier regions, the "routine practices that reproduce the consent of the governed in a modern democracy" are either absent or present only to a degree. They are: tax payment, voting, and the provision of "key services" such as "guaranteed public order" (ibid.). The state's failure to provide security is going to be addressed in point (g) below, so let me say a word on the subject of taxes – their collection (or failure to collect them) being a good measure for the presence (or absence) of the frontier. Weak state penetration is indicated by the state's inability (or lack of determination) to collect taxes according to tax laws. Not only are indigenous producers and the immigrant frontier population usually rarely taxed by state authorities, but on certain frontiers, the state's monopoly on tax collection itself is actually being challenged by insurgents who finance their operations in varying degree through more or less voluntary "donations" from the local population (see e.g. Marks 1996 on Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Peru). Often brandished by the governments in question as being wicked forms of extortion, such taxation by non-state actors may be seen analytically as a just reward



Photo 2.4 : Precarious legitimacy: mural exhorting citizens to co-operate with the police to enhance security, police station, Wamena, West Papua, 1996 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

for the provision of security which the state itself fails to offer (Baruah 2002:4180 on Northeast India). Often, such “revolutionary taxes” are being levied under the very eyes of powerless or disinterested local authorities. In the restive district of Karbi Anglong in Assam, for instance, hardly 200 kms from the bustling state capital of Guwahati, local officials admit that in recent years, ethnic Karbi and Dimasa rebels have become ever more daring, as indicated by the fact that “earlier, the notice for taxes used to come secretly, now they deliver it by bike” (Asian Centre for Human Rights 2005:23).

At the frontier, government services are available, if at all, in reduced quality and quantity. Administrative personnel and teachers are often ill-motivated to serve in a – in their view – boring and primitive backwater. Service in frontier locations not only fails to confer prestige and future career opportunities on bureaucrats, but, indeed, is by itself an indicator of low standing in the internal hierarchy of the apparatus. Consequently, recruitment to frontier area posts is chronically difficult for the central administration, and those who are finally posted to such locations see their nomination as a punishment (see e.g. Hanser and von Trotha 2002:17, 188 on Papua Niugini’s Gulf Province, Baruah 2002:4181 on Northeast India).

A good indication of the discrete posture of the state at the perimeters of its domain is the often restricted capacity to provide basic infrastructure such as roads from state means. Notably at the extractive frontier with its outstanding opportunities

for private profit, roads that penetrate hitherto inaccessible corners with high resource potentials are often built with private rather than public funds. Just as often in these cases, private interests also define where the road passes and where it leads to. In Peru around the turn of the millennium, lumber patrons in the Selva Central and the Upper Ucayali revived old state plans – shelved for a lack of finances – for connecting the provincial town of Atalaya in that resource-rich area with the Andean foothills. In a matter of three years, the road was built with funds from the logging companies’ coffers, along a route that would give the financiers access to the rich mahogany stands of the Gran Pajonal, but left the only small town in that area unconnected (see Hvalkof, this volume, p. 251f.). In the Selva of Ecuador, a road network that connects oil blocks with regional administrative centres has been built by oil companies, while Guyana’s southern penetration road was constructed by a (Brazilian) mining company (Colchester 1993a:7)²⁸.

Partly as a function of the thin presence of civilian administrators, partly as a reflection of pervasive government neglect, many of the emblems of high modernity – cadastral surveys, the systematic certification of birth, death, and marriage, population counts, tax rolls and voters’ lists (Scott 1998a, 1998b) – are absent or minimal at the frontier, rendering the state’s knowledge about its local citizens grossly incomplete. Often governments do not know the population size – not even in faint approximation – of particular indigenous peoples (see e. g. Clarke 2001:427 on the situation in Southeast Asia), a fact which, tragically enough, often only comes to the awareness of the world when it is forced to take stock of the casualties from natural disasters or political strife. Thus, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which studied the period of political violence (1980-2000) in Peru’s poverty-stricken and partly remote highlands found that nearly twice as many people had died during the insurgency than had been estimated before (69,000 instead of 35,000). The Commission rightly condemned as scandalous the fact that the death toll among the largely indigenous inhabitants of the erstwhile war zone had been that grossly underestimated; to explain why the society at large had failed to notice the disappearance of tens of thousands of fellow Peruvian citizens, it pointed to the “near total exclusion” of the country’s *indigenas* from the moral community of the nation (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2003b).

If population counts are unreliable for the frontier, the registration of landed property is highly selective, if not inexistent in many areas. In Indonesia, for example, cadastral surves and land titles are almost unknown in the uplands, “and territorial control is exercised most directly through forest law and policy” (Li 1999:15). While the state does indulge in map-making and the classification and staking of frontier space, such exercises in territorialization rarely produce unequivocal results. Again for Indonesia, Anna Tsing (1999:190) has found that “official mapping offers contradictory views about the status of any given plot (...). Territories officially classified as ‘forests’, i.e. government-controlled land, may include entire districts and



Photo 2.5: Reminders of a distant authority: poster with Indonesian state philosophy, 'pancasila', and portrait photographs of Suharto and his vice president in a Dayak longhouse, West Kalimantan 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

multiple towns and villages with their agricultural terrains. Government departments often map areas differently, such that potential transmigration sites, production forests, and nature reserves may be found, in different maps, on precisely the same site". Forest territories, in other words, may simultaneously be committed to settler colonization, commercial logging and conservation without the different government line agencies being aware of this overlap (Tsing 1993:304, note 12).

It would be tempting to conclude that where state personnel is thinly-spread, state legislation, as well, is absent; indeed, we often find reference to the "lawlessness" of the frontier (see e.g. Billington 1966:69-73, Bodley 1990:24-41, Gray 2001). However, nothing could be more misleading than the assumption that frontier space is unregulated by state laws. At its indigenous periphery, the state comes into being through territorialization, a technique that aims at dividing the state's territories into political and economic zones, "rearrange people and resources within these units, and create regulations delineating how and by whom these areas can be used" (Vanderveest and Peluso 1995:387). States, then, project control by promulgating laws which allow certain forms of land use while outlawing others; declaring some areas wildlife protection areas or national parks while giving private companies access to others which contain resources whose exploitation is said to be of national interest;

and endowing either itself or – as it also happens – local communities with the right to own or utilize land. However, the presence of laws is characteristically deceiving. At their margins, states create forms of law and (dis)order which they would find intolerable in the national heartland (Watts 1992:117). At frontiers, a state's laws are "more honoured in the breach than the observance" by most everyone (Bingling 2000:13), including those who are meant to enforce them; passed by a distant centre, legislation is either interpreted opportunistically or ignored altogether.

Political power at the frontier, then, is only partly mediated by laws, and much less still by constitutions (see section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier' for a more detailed exposition of power). Here, informal positions and power relations are often more determinative of political processes than formal ones. At its margins, the state is often a "shadow state" (van Klinken 2002:82); it may have all the formal institutions of local government, but – as mentioned before – decision-making is with the remote centre. Often, informal parallel governance structures exist which ensure that strategic decisions remain with those institutions that guarantee the paramourcy of "national security" over other policy goals (and thus the supremacy of the army), and the continued alimentionation of the responsible institutions by the proceeds from frontier resource exploitation. The activities of national political parties which compete for local votes as everywhere else may give the appearance of thoroughly "nationalized space" (see section 'Nationalizing Space: The State's Agenda...'), but on close inspection, the competition for political office at the national margins is little else than a continuation of the frontier's predatory economic contest (see this section, part g) by other means. Locally, power may be with large landowners or logging and mining tycoons who hope to translate economic into political capital by assuming elected offices in provincial and often national legislative assemblies (see e.g. van Klinken 2002:76). Under the conditions of the "shadow state" at the frontier, "hidden lines of influence connect elite business interests with ethnic and party vehicles" which articulate national with local-level politics (ibid.).

The institutions of local government, to the extent that they exist, are subservient to the interests of the economically powerful (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:4). Monbiot's (1993:152f.) account of the interface between the central and the local state in the Brazilian Amazon shows this drastically: State governors depend on the support of landlord mayors; the governors control the police and the judiciary, who therefore do the landlords' bidding in the latter's near-constant conflicts with smallholder farmers or indigenous communities. To make matters worse for peasants and Native Amazonians, little help will come from the federal government or the national parliament, who might have been in the best position to overrule the states' corrupt authority: A significant portion of ministers and assembly members are themselves part of the landed elite and will not undermine the interests of their local peers.

As the boundaries between legality and illegality, public and private ownership, violence and law are so characteristically porous and forever shifting, some authors have found it useful to describe frontier governance in paradoxes: No institution demonstrates more blatant a disregard for the law than the judiciary; the arrival of the police in a village is tantamount with the arrival of criminality; the authorities do their best to protect those least in need of protection, while persecuting those who are most vulnerable; and in the aggregate, the government engenders anarchy (Monbiot 1993:153; see also Schmink and Wood 1992:349, Tsing 2005:33). The ethics of governance at the far ends of the state reveal themselves in acerbic clarity in the Brazilian proverb: "For our friends everything; for our enemies the Law" (Monbiot 1993:153).

(c) A pronounced presence of non-native private actors

The allure of the frontier with its high economic windfalls and loose government control brings in – depending on the nature of the frontier's particular economic potential – cattle ranchers, planters, settlers, gold panners, gunslingers, lumber jacks, traders, oil workers, dam builders, and bio-prospectors who operate beyond the pale of formal state control (Swift 1978:9, Bodley 1990:24-41). Missionaries, anthropologists, daring tourists and people in search of alternative lifestyles flock to the frontier, too, looking for raw materials of a different kind (Lewis 1988, Young 1995:xi, Meiselas 2003). Standing in a long line of intrepid freelancers on the frontlines of expanding empires and states³⁹, these adventurer-entrepreneurs are the main cast at what John Bodley (1990:24-41) calls the "uncontrolled frontier". It is the "combination of free resources and free enterprise", he points out, which is responsible for much of the devastation that frontier expansion visits on human societies and nature (ibid.:25). At the frontier, conquest is no longer the prerogative of kings and the mighty, but something to be had by even the lowliest of men, provided they have strong hands and an enterprising mind (Orizio 2001:99); as a result, rugged individualism and sometimes a pronounced hostility to outside control can be encountered among freelance frontier actors (Baker 2000:173). The frontier's resources seem inexhaustible and its confines, geographical *as well as moral*, are non-existent (Orizio 2001:99f.). Enterprising individuals who operate at state peripheries "seem to feel that doing business in this frontier land means a holiday from whatever moral codes exist in the heartland" (Baruah 1999:207), an attitude that endows the frontier with a political culture entirely its own.

Frontier entrepreneurs often assume administrative functions locally, as in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon, where local government often consists either in a pioneer patron or the padres at the mission centre (Salazar 1981:590, Brown and Fernandez 2000:191). In the small towns of the Peruvian *montaña*, colonist patrons

follow their own rules and laws, sometimes openly mocking the authority of the central state and its system of justice (Hvalkof 1998:88)⁴⁰. Thus, as Igor Kopytoff (1987:12) has pointed out, the frontiersman can "literally *construct* a desirable order" at the perimeters of the state domain, as the frontier is defined by an all-encompassing *institutional vacuum*.

An intrinsic part of that autonomous order and an institution that characterizes the negotiation of power across ethnic lines at the frontier are the twin characters of the patron and the ethnic broker. Indigenous people often attach themselves to individual frontier entrepreneurs to secure access to goods, favors and relationships which are unavailable in their own society, but essential in an environment which is moulded by the intruding society. Members of influential colonist families, cattle ranchers, shop owners and traders with extensive business connections and friends in the administrative centres act as brokers of state-derived power and largesse (such as financial support and credit in times of need, yet also subsidies, licenses and land rights) (Li 1999:19). Though usually cloaked with notions of reciprocity and moral obligation on both sides, anthropologists have often described such relationships as utterly unbalanced and exploitative, involving ludicrous terms of trade for indigenous labour and produce (see Lopez 1983:39-42 and Gibson 1986:47f. on the Buhid of Mindoro, the Philippines). Where the state machinery is weak and its representatives few, frontier entrepreneurs' links to some state institution, senior officials and, indeed, the idea of "the state" itself provide them with power in and over the periphery – power which they both personify and help operationalise (Li 1999:19). Patronage is thus one of the distinctive ways in which power works at the margins of the state; as an institution, it articulates the category "core state area" with that of the "frontier" (ibid.:20).

The indigenous ethnic broker is the flip side of the settler patron coin. At all contemporary frontiers, state-appointed village heads, tribal councillors or indigenous representatives in provincial parliaments act as conduits of power and goods between the two societies. As leaders who owe their position to the outsiders, their role is complex and contradictory; they may conduct themselves as mediators of foul compromises and agents of exploitation, or see their job in mitigating the worst excesses of the development process (Swift 1978:10). Indeed, it is not uncommon that local leaders broker land to outsiders, or otherwise betray the trust of their kin and co-villagers in favor of building alliances with the newcomers (Li 1999:19). This reminds us that at the frontier, there is no easy fit between ethnic identity and class status, as its advance and consolidation bring into their own collaborations that transcend the boundary between conquerors and conquered (ibid.; Tsing 2005:35; Lattimore 1962c:137).

A crucial group of actors on many frontiers are agricultural pioneers – together with other types of settlers the focus of this volume. Agricultural expansion has, of

course, been a central feature in the history of mankind; on all continents except Australia, migrations of population groups in search of more or more fertile land date back for millenia. Much of the near-constant spatial spread of intensive forms of cultivation as which the history of agriculture appears, was the aggregate result of countless individual and group decisions to exchange old homes for new in an attempt to secure precarious livelihoods, escape the yoke of oppressive and greedy rulers, or both. But the opening of forests for farming was (and still is) not only a function of consumption needs and peasant survival, i. e. economic factors; historically, it remains inherently linked to *political* developments, not the least of which is state formation (DeKoninck and Déry 1997:1). In every major region of the world, the formation of states and the consolidation of their borderlands have at least partially relied on the peasantry. The imperial histories of Rome and China and that of the European Middle Ages are essentially accounts of how the states in question secured their territories by implanting military colonists in regions beyond their control, thus acquiring at their peripheries both living defences and a territorial spearhead that pointed into the domains claimed or contested by neighbouring powers (DeKoninck 1996:231ff.).

Historically, then, an altogether different, second *persona* of the pioneer emerges – that of the perennial subaltern who subjects his and his family's aspirations for a better life to the geo-strategic concerns of the monarch⁴¹. In unbroken continuity with pre-colonial practice and the role models of antiquity, says DeKoninck (ibid.:232), today's colonists in countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia are entering into a Faustian bargain with the state when they volunteer for a guided population transfer programme. In what he calls the "territorial compromise", state-builders take possession of coveted areas, but at the price of only loose control over the personnel – the peasants – that they employ for this territorial expansion. Viewed from the opposite angle, the peasant settlers have to shoulder the costs of colonization and defence, but they are compensated through the acquisition of considerably large tracts of land and a clean start into a life unencumbered by feudal lords and oppressive authorities (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:590f.). The list of countries in the South with a relatively recent track record in strategically-motivated, organized land pioneering includes Brazil and other Latin American countries, and practically all of Southeast Asia (DeKoninck 1996:232f.; see also Hardy and Turner 2000:3). A surprisingly large number of states, therefore, have up to the most recent past used territorial expansion by means of settler-colonizers as a cheap and efficient means of expanding and consolidating territorial control, defusing social tensions in overpopulated core areas, and spreading over the entire national territory the cultural values that make the nation.

This basic structural ambiguity of frontier colonists as an actor group is reflected in recurrent, heated discussions on how to value their role and that of the state in matters

such as deforestation and the displacement and destruction of indigenous societies (Colchester 1993a:2-11). Taking the example of the first of these two themes, forestry experts agree that from the Amazon to the Outer Islands of Indonesia and the Central Highlands of Vietnam, impoverished farmers are the principal agents of forest loss (ibid.:4). However, to blame them directly for deforestation as has become popular e.g. among Latin American government officials would mean to overlook both the role that uncontrolled logging has played in opening the frontier for settlement (ibid.) and to divert attention from the forces that have deprived colonists of land and other means of subsistence in the first place: A skewed land distribution in their regions of origin and a continuing bias in favor of large land owners and mechanized, capital-intensive agriculture on the part of governments and international lending institutions (ibid.:9-13; Colchester 1993c).

Furthermore, to point fingers at migrants for their alleged responsibility for ecocide and the predicament of indigenous frontier-dwellers would also imply that we underrate the overall role of states in frontier settlement. While it is true that for every person re-settled in official settlement programmes, probably two more move into the forest on their own initiative⁴², the infrastructure for colonization was laid down not by the peasants, but by the government (Monbiot 1993:159; Colchester 1993a:5ff.). Much of what passes as *spontaneous* settlement in less careful discussions of frontier migration is spontaneous only in the sense of not being organized and assisted as part of a comprehensive and publicly-heralded state settlement policy. It is not spontaneous in the sense of being unpredictable or surprising, because in pursuance of frontier development, states often create direct incentives and a supportive environment and infrastructure for migration (Partridge 1989; Colchester 1993a:6). States facilitate settlement in sometimes more and sometimes less oblique ways, be it by building roads to hitherto remote frontier locations (Ledec and Goodland 1989), by creating attractive economic niches for migrants (Partridge 1989), by crafting legislation that provides outsiders with land or use rights on easy terms (Ledec and Goodland 1989), or by not enforcing legislation that excludes outsiders from the right to trade, settle, or have access to land (Lynch and Talbott 1995).

In the light of this evidence, it is no surprise that one prominent analyst offers the view that settlers are to be held no more responsible for felling the forest than soldiers are for fighting wars (Myers 1991, cited in Pichón 1996:349), as they are subject to a host of forces – economic, social, legal, political – that they are little able to comprehend, yet alone control (Pichón 1996:349). Other authors have tried to foreground the economic plight of the migrants and the survival aspect of frontier settlement, and have suggested to flag this home by labeling all such settlement "self-rescue migration" (van Schendel 1986, 2005:211). Although there are exceptions, indigenous communities who have to put up with large numbers of settlers in their domains, have by and large remained unimpressed by such considerations. In their



Photo 2.6 : Spearhead of the state or faultless proletarians? Settler family on their way to town, Agusan del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines, 2003 (photo: Christian Erni)

great majority, they prefer to see the settlers as unwelcome competitors for land, resources and – yes, why not: state affection (see e.g. Fearon and Laitin 2001).

(d) The tendency for the state and private actors to deny indigenous inhabitants' ownership claims to land and natural resources

It is an essential characteristic of frontier expansion that colonizing societies define the spaces to be conquered as “lacking any legitimate political institutions” and “open to legitimate intrusion and settlement – this even if the areas are in fact occupied by organized polities” (Kopytoff 1987:11). It is still common among governing elites and the general populace of developing countries to locate indigenous societies below the civilizational threshold; often depicted as “nomadic”, they are said to lack notions of territoriality and the means to uphold order or resolve conflicts internally (see e.g. Duhaylungsod and Hyndman 1993:59, 68). The implication, of course, is that from such a “state of nature”, no rights can flow which have to be taken into account in the process of expansion. From the perspective of the expanding state and the individuals who set out to establish themselves at the frontier (or mine it and then leave), the situation is one of occupation, not of conquest, since no third party's prior rights are thereby extinguished. The frontier is essentially an empty space (Burger 1987:132, Fisher 1996, Howitt 2001:234), and as such it appears on

the maps of government agencies on the basis of which logging contracts, mining concessions and the likes are given out and settlement schemes planned (Cowell 1990:124, Tsing 1993:45, Fried 1995:76-79). Somehow, aerial surveys, even if based on satellite images, fail to record indigenous settlements, swidden fields and orchards, sanctioning the issuance of leasehold permits to large plantation companies on the grounds that the area is uninhabited state domain (Djuweng and Dove n.d.:10f. on West Kalimantan, Indonesia), and the planning documents for development schemes big or small remain silent on the presence of indigenous communities in the project domains, even though it is amply documented by ethnographic works and attested to by the governments' own minority agencies (Schröder 1993:110 on Brazil's giant Grande Carajás project in the 1980s). State authorities either presume the land and natural resources at the frontier to be freely available, or arrogate the right to allocate them according to their needs and priorities (Swift 1978:6, Bodley 1990:25, Tsing 2005:30).

Underlying the legal attitude of so many post-colonial governments are centuries of colonial theory and practice, and it has received the unqualified support of generations of academics, both metropolitan and from the South, writing on frontier affairs. Famously, the prevalent – though never uncontested – legal view that guided European monarchs in their drive to acquire overseas territories from the “age of discovery” in the late 15th and early 16th centuries throughout the 18th and even 19th centuries, was that these territories were vacant lands, deemed “terra nullius”, to which Europeans could freely take title (Wilmer 1993:61, Richardson 1993, Niezen 2003:149f.). According to one legal opinion during that time, the “terra nullius” doctrine applied in all cases where the peoples encountered in “new lands” had either “no civilization at all” or “a civilization inferior to the standard prevailing in Europe” (von Glahn 1981:316). Mediated through colonial law, the doctrine found its way into virtually all national constitutions of the decolonising South.

Notably in the settler nations which originated from Europe's colonial expansion, historians and social scientists often assisted the nation-building endeavor by providing accounts of frontier processes which, from today's perspective, have to be read as having a strongly apologetic, legitimatory tinge. Most prominent, of course (and endlessly castigated for it) was Frederick Turner, for whom indigenous societies, being “savage”, were no legal subjects, but an intrinsic part of nature (see above, section ‘The Turnerian Frontier and Its Discontents’). Walter Prescott Webb, another eminent historian of the west, even surpassed the founder of American frontier studies by defining a frontier in varying formulations as “an area inviting entrance” for its gifts of land and minerals, or “inherently a vast body of wealth without proprietors” (Webb 1952:2, 13). Other scientists, too, have compromised their work by omitting mention of indigenous rights, without having an immediate stake in nation-building; representative for them is American historian Catherine LeGrand (1984:29) who



Photo 2.7 : Dispossessed by settlers: Chakma refugees returning from Tripura have found their land and houses occupied by settlers. They have been put up temporarily in public buildings, Khagrachari District, Chittagong Hill Tracts, 2004 (photo: Christian Emi)

introduces Colombia's Caribbean Coast in today's province of Antioquia – a region containing numerous indigenous peoples – as "vast expanses of public lands to which no one claimed ownership". Consequently, frontier expansion translates as the "incorporation of public lands into the national economy" (ibid.).

Present-day governments' refusal to acknowledge indigenous rights in the contest for frontier resources comes in various shades and nuances of argument, and private actors often embrace "folk" versions of these official rationalizations of conquest and displacement⁴³. Undeniably, public discourse on these matters has also undergone changes in the past two decades, reflecting the growing influence of the twin ideas of minority rights and the value of cultural and legal pluralism. In some countries at least, the emphasis has moved from the outright denial of rights to the position that indigenous communities may have rights, but rights which have to be rated as inferior to those of the nation and the settler citizen. Noting a basic conflict of rights, reference is made to the "higher good" of the national collectivity to resolve it. Thus, bureaucrats may justify frontier colonization by supplying statistics that show excessive population densities in majority areas and land abundance at the frontier, suggesting that it is the majority's "manifest destiny" to fill up the latter, as Christopher Duncan writes in his introduction to a recent edited volume on official minority policies in Southeast Asia (2004: 13). In Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts,

where a Peace Accord stipulates the restitution by settlers of illegally-acquired land, representations with the authorities to demand appropriate action are often met with the comment that by wanting to keep their land to themselves, indigenous people behave selfishly, as they possess so much of it, and settlers so little (Roy and Halim, forthcoming). The suggestion that indigenous frontier-dwellers occupy far too much land in relation to their numbers, and therefore should relinquish their rights to it, is as old as John Wayne's famous *Playboy* interview where he justified the dispossession of Native Americans by the odd man-land ratio that obtained among them⁴⁴.

Some authors have interpreted states' refusal to acknowledge – and sometimes even make out! – indigenous ownership rights to contested frontier resources to be purely opportunistic (see e.g. Jennings 1971, 1975). While not denying the obvious truth that to shape the "Other" in an image that casts him as a legal minor does away with the need for justifying his expropriation, I suspect the reasons for the proliferation of state-held stereotypes of indigenous peoples to be of a deeper, because epistemic nature. As James C. Scott (1998a, b) has shown, the modern state depends for its reproduction on the systematic assimilation of local economic forms and practices; it dreads difference and diversity and trains its personnel to level it unexplored, replacing it with standardized forms ("simplifications") that facilitate the more efficient management of the realm. Local agricultural practices and tenurial forms such as shifting cultivation and communal property remain "illigible" to state managers and bureaucrats, they are but "raw", idiosyncratic forms – Scott speaks of "hieroglyphs" – that have to be transformed and reduced to satisfy the craving of state elites for scientific and technical progress and the "rational" design of the social and economic order (Scott 1998b:1-8; 11-52).

Indigenous communities' experience, then, is one of pervasive invisibility in the eyes of the state. Their property systems, even if acknowledged to exist, fall below the radar, so to speak, of state operators, for whom there can be only two types of property – state or private. Alternative regimes of land tenure in use in indigenous communities – notably communal property – are poorly understood by planners and bureaucrats, regarded as provisional (because bound to evolve) and maligned as ecologically harmful. With regard to the latter charge, Hardin's famous "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968) has provided a welcome argument, albeit at the cost of a serious misreading of what community rights to land mean. Hardin proposes that common property resources are bound to be overexploited when populations grow, because there is a situation of "open access" which does not allow to exclude users (or usages) which prime short-term yields over concerns for resource regeneration. Underlying the argument – or, rather, its application to indigenous communities – is the notion that indigenous communities have failed to evolve rules that efficiently regulate land and resource use among their ranks. (It goes without saying that this idea in its turn has emanated from the more archaic notion – discussed in this section – that



Photo 2.8 : State simplifications: model of a straight-row transmigration settlement at a development fair, East Kalimantan, Indonesia (photo: Danilo Geiger)

indigenous societies are policies without authority and therefore ways of ordering their internal affairs). A huge body of anthropological literature documents that it is wrong to equate communal property regimes with “open access”, and therefore automatic resource degradation when population densities rise. Under traditional conditions at least, indigenous foragers, swidden cultivators and fisher folk alike have been found to practice sophisticated common property regimes that efficiently mediate access, use and transfer of resources. Many of the studies in question maintain that, if “open access” indeed exists on contemporary indigenous territories, the situation in fact has come about not as a result of the communal rights system, but because the state involved has refused to grant indigenous communities the same right of closure and sanction against outsiders which they traditionally exercised against free-riding community members (see e.g. Palsson 1998 on fisheries; Laungaramsri 2005 on the ironies of the Thai government’s policy on shifting cultivation).

On a more experiential level, indigenous communities have seen pleas for compensation for the destruction of their orchards by caterpillars ridiculed with the argument that in the jungle, there are no trees planted by man (IWGIA 1996:165), and – as mentioned above – have witnessed bureaucrats “reading” aerial photographs of their territories in a way that neither settlements nor fields were said to exist⁴⁵. As “the only legitimate landscape is that which has been planned and layed out by the state” (Djuweng and Dove n.d.:7), state authorities routinely deny the obvious – that

forests and other presumably “chaotic” natural environments are social landscapes, produced and modified by a variety of human practices for decades, centuries and sometimes millenia (Zerner 2003:6)⁴⁶.

To resume what I have so far said, states may disenfranchise indigenous communities by either denying them the status of societies with politics, and refusing to accord them any ownership rights to land and resources; or acknowledge them as legal subjects, but define their rights as being of a lower order. Just as often, however, states pragmatically refrain from applying and enforcing laws in frontier areas that in fact protect local landowners and outlaw outside encroachment on community territories and natural resources. In some cases, Latin American and Asian countries afford themselves the luxury of progressive land laws which in theory at least prioritize the rights of indigenous forest occupants over most other claimants (see e.g. Maybury-Lewis 1991:220, 227 on Brazil, Hvalkof, this volume, on Peru and the *montaña*, and Padilla, Jr., this volume, on the Philippines). Forests are protected by law from illegal logging, and extensive areas have been classified as protected areas or national parks (see e.g. Zerner, ed., 2000). However, the vastness of the frontier makes it difficult to enforce forestry regulations (Pichón 1996:350), and on top of it, government and bureaucrats lack the political will to enforce them when indigenous communities and other politically and socially marginal groups are concerned. Too often, laws are only “remembered” by agents of the state when they are forcefully invoked by the locals, and even then the outcome of a dispute depends entirely on the relative negotiating power of the parties involved, not on the legal facts. As in most cases local communities are ignorant of the law, the frontier becomes in essence a lawless domain, a legal enclave where existing rules don’t hold and aggrieved locals often have no other recourse than the resort to violent means of asserting their rights.

At the heart of land-related violence – which need not always, and not even principally involve indigenous communities, but may take place between different groups of colonists – is a chaotic land tenure situation in which informal use rights compete with titled property rights and traditional collective ownership regimes of indigenous communities (Pichón 1996:350). While states theoretically do have the means of peacefully regulating what are actually quite common situations of legal pluralism, this becomes difficult in a zone where state agents are not only few, but also notoriously tempted to benefit personally from the bounty of the frontier. As a result, we find that in this land where “nothing is as it seems”, the “boundaries of law and theft, governance and violence, use and destruction” are notoriously confused (Tsing 2005:27). Informal arrangements and relationships guide land transactions and access to landed property, brokered by public officials whose venality is setting infinitely broad limits to the interpretation of the law. Thus, in transmigration sites in the Indonesian province of Riau (Sumatra), intense competition for land between

population transferees from Java and Bali (the main islands targeted for resettlement by Indonesia's population redistribution program) on one hand, land-strapped peasants from the adjacent province of North Sumatra, and local indigenous and peasant communities on the other hand has led to an all-out scramble for plots in the transmigration schemes (so-called *packets*). As it has become standard practice for transmigration projects to allocate one in five *packets* to "local" transmigrants – either people directly displaced by the schemes, or "locals" in the broader sense of being from the region that hosts the transmigration scheme –, the intense demand in land and secure livelihoods quickly gave rise to an illegal market for the letters which documented participation in the transmigration scheme and tenure rights on on-site plantations. False promises by unscrupulous agents and government officials tricked many applicants into making down payments for letters that they never got to see. Middlemen purchased most of the letters, reproduced them and proceeded to re-sell them to multiple buyers. In one transmigration site, this practice resulted in over 2000 claimants for less than 200 *packets* of land. Violent assaults by failed applicants on local officials (because they were suspected of implication in the fraud) or on local landowners (because they had been compensated with *packets* for land affected by site development, and were rumoured to have sold them to middlemen) occurred repeatedly (Hoshour 1997:562f.).

This description of the situation in Sumatra, however, pales in comparison with the following account of fraudulent practices on the land market in the Brazilian frontier state of Pará. Probably nowhere else on the planet have intruders devised such ingenious ways of forging legal evidence for land claims, winning the region the distinction of having "maybe the unruliest property market in the world" (*The Economist* 2004:44). Allow me to quote Foweraker's (1981:109ff.) lines if not in full, then still at considerable length:

"In Pará, the story was much the same [as in the two other states studied by the author, Paraná and Mato Grosso, D. G.]. Small-holders, companies and economic groups were in the rush to buy land, and if it was already 'private' property, there was no limit to the area that could be bought in any one transaction. But many of the titles were false or contested, and again the state administration might be responsible. (...) [Officials indulged in] the pernicious practice of double and treble titling, by which two or three estates might 'legally' exist under different names, but cover approximately the same area of land⁴⁷. (...).

The indiscriminate issue of titles by the state is essential to this 'bureaucratic' speculation in land, but it would be misleading to suggest that the bureaucracy is uniquely responsible for the speculation. Many private interests take advantage of the legal confusion to forge their own documents, and titles to land, in order to take control of the frontier. In other words, deliberate cheating

over land is added to bureaucratic malpractice and to the anyway tangled legal histories of these regions; and certain regions, such as Paragominas in Pará, are notorious for the incidence of forged titles. The forgeries are carefully accomplished, and, in the case of 'old' titles, the paper carefully yellowed by 'age'. The speculators, or *grileiros* (practising *grilagem*⁴⁸) can often find willing accomplices in the private real estate offices which flourish wherever frontiers expand. These offices, manned by a peculiar breed of parasitic land lawyers, are as much interested in profit from land as the speculators themselves. (...) Stories in Pará tell of such lawyers who have worked within the Federal land agencies, and, having created sufficient land problems through the bureaucracy, then set up their own offices in order to solve them. *Grilagem* contributes to the legal conflicts which afflict the frontier regions, and while it is a predominantly private practice, it could not continue without the at least occasional collusion of the state and Federal administrations. (...)

In these conditions, all appearance of legal normalcy breaks down. Every possible piece of paper laying claim to land is registered and negotiated as title; instances are recorded of children as young as three 'applying' for title to land, and having their signature duly 'witnessed' in the land office (...). The result is that title to the land is no real guarantee of 'ownership'. Moreover, title does not represent the only right to land on the frontier, which may also be legally claimed by the fact of its occupation or *posse*⁴⁹; and with titles to land appearing increasingly invalid, *de facto* occupation rather than legal documentation begins to define the process of frontier expansion"⁵⁰;

(e) **The tendency of the state and private actors to define indigenous inhabitants as standing outside the moral universe by symbolically associating them with "untamed nature"**

Some 300 years ago, accompanying his ruler on a military campaign, Mullah Darvish of Herat left us the following description of the strange, unknown lands and forests of Assam into which his party had ventured (Elwin 1959:15):

"This land is not like our land,
its sky is not like our sky.
(...)
The seasons all begin here at the time of
their conclusion elsewhere.
Here there is heat in our winter and chill
in our summer.
Its roads are frightful as the path leading
to the Nook of Death;
Fatal to life is its expanse like the

unpeopled City of Destruction.
 Its forests are full of violence like the
 heart of the ignorant.
 Its rivers are beyond limit and estimate
 like the minds of the wise (...)"

Unlinked from their immediate temporal context, the lines from the Mullah's chronicle convey certain common experiential truths about the frontier which invariably impress themselves upon the itinerant visitor and the one who has come to settle down for good. Frontiers, first of all, are likely to irritate and confuse those who enter them unprepared. Similar to initiates in rites of passage, by venturing into the frontier zone, they cross a threshold to a symbolic domain which is "in but not of the world", a so-called "liminal zone" (Turner 1974). To the intruder, frontiers are zones where the laws of nature (and, we should add, social life) as we know them are suspended and all meaning collapses (Tsing 1993:182), making them areas of fundamental unpredictability. Where nothing can be taken for granted anymore, fear and apprehension reign. Nature is awe-inspiring, potentially lethal, and the fact that it is inhabited by human societies is in no way comforting. In a loose way, the present section will explore some of these themes.

In the collective imaginary of conquering societies, utopian fantasies of the frontier and its potential co-exist with dystopian visions that construct it as a zone of danger and death (Taussig 1984:74-83; Brown and Fernandez 1991:4). Thus, the notion of a paradisaical Eden where man can commune with nature and find the secret of human happiness, the great agrarian myths that have propelled so many past and present migratory movements to areas at the edges of the known world, and the hypnotic call of precious metals and other treasures resting in or growing on its soil, have always had to assert themselves against images of a dark and menacing frontier. Often in a perpendicular movement, frontier optimism has alternated through history with representations of these spaces as places of violence, cultural perversity and natural perils driving once-civilized men to barbarism (Hennessy 1981:13, Little 2001:ix, Tsing 2005:31). In fact, dystopian elements are an integral part of the dream of frontier redemption: The settler, trader and wildcat logger knows that it is only against great hardships and by overcoming the mortal dangers of savage nature that a more prosperous existence can be secured or a fortune can be made in these places. As so many aspects of the frontier, its dangers are at the same time imagined and real (Tsing 2005:29). Thus, at the edge of the pioneer front in Rondônia (Brazilian Amazon) in the early 1980s, settlers lived in the knowledge that they or their children could meet their deaths any time from malaria or an Indian arrow or club. Yet that was the price for the chance of restarting their lives free from the shackles of class and inherited misery: "To own something, you have to endure the tiger's breath",

said a colonist's wife. "Before we only lived on the land of others. One year here. One year there. They never gave us land to plant. In Rondônia, we're suffering in the jaguar's mouth. But even if we fall, perhaps we'll come out winners in the end" (Cowell 1990:119).

The phantasmagorical dimension of the perils of the frontier, on the other hand, are indicated by the fact that fear of them seems to grow proportionally with distance, striking fiercest in the hearts of those who have never seen the forest or the bush. In New Caledonia, France's former penal colony, an overwhelming majority of *caldoches* (white settlers) today lives in the islands' urban and mining centres, leaving very few genuine *broussards* (rural settlers). In the average settler mind, the "bush" looms darkly as "a mysterious frontier, dangerous and far away, where most of them have never gone" (Guiart 1983:238-244, quoted in Chappell 1993:310).

As mentioned before, the fact that most of the wilderness as which the frontier environment is imagined is inhabited by organized polities – indigenous communities –, is ignored. Historically, for the state and the individuals it continuously ejects into the periphery, frontiers have always been liminal and subversive, both in a practical and a symbolic sense. Such spaces and their inhabitants have served (and continue to serve) as "exemplars of nature, barbarity, rudeness, disorder, immorality and irreligion against which the culture, civility, sophistication, order, morality and orthodoxy of the centre could be measured" (Scott 1998a:54), confirming thus the more general observation that frontiers help colonizing cores define their own cultures and identities (Lattimore 1940, 1962a, quoted in Gaubatz 1996:18)⁵¹. Historically, state rulers have had good reasons for painting their realms' frontiers in dark colours. In pre-colonial times, they were the privileged sanctuary for rebels, bandits and princely contenders, and took in great numbers of defected subjects who had grown tired of the burdens of tribute and corvée labour (Scott n.d.:8ff.). The colonial frontier attracted a similar cast of runaways and dodgers and served violent nationalists for arms caches, as an operation base and recruitment area (see e.g. Lan 1985). In the post-colonial era of the present, finally, state margins are absorbing and provisioning coup-plotters, insurgents and secessionists (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:593-602, May 1992:145, note 61). Through all times, in addition, frontiers have served empires and nation-states as dumping places for undesirables; where penal colonies for criminals and dissidents were installed, public perceptions of the periphery as peopled by outlaws and the unruly were, in a rather ironical way, reinforced (see e.g. Bobrick 1992 and Forsyth 1992 on Siberia, Tyler 2003 on Xinjiang, Venkateswar 2004 on the Andaman Islands and Chappell 1993 on New Caledonia).

Most of all, however, the frontier is home to indigenous peoples with cultures, modes of production and social orders that are alien, if not totally illigible to the intruding society (see previous chapter). Indigenous modes of production are

stigmatized as “primitive” and an epitome of underdevelopment (see e.g. Bodley 1990, Dove 1985, McCaskill 1997, Duncan 2004). The fact that many rainforest shifting cultivators, pastoralists, “sea gypsies” and land-based hunters-and-gatherers have so far at least in part eschewed effective administrative control and refused to submit to the modernizing imperative, has earned them the distrust and contempt of the elites of the nation-states claiming jurisdiction over their territories. Because they embody the historical possibility of autonomy and resilience to state rule, Anna Tsing (1993:101) explains,

“such groups have quietly become icons of the archaic disorder that represents the limits and test of state order and development. From the perspective of the elite, ‘primitives’, unlike communists, are not regarded as seriously dangerous but rather as wildly untutored – somewhat like ordinary village farmers, but much more so. Disorderly yet vulnerable, ‘primitives’ are relatively scarce, and their taming becomes an exemplary lesson in marginality through which the more advanced rural poor can be expected to position themselves nearer the center”.

The prescription, usually, is “development”, with the main aim of raising these groups’ level of “civilization” through social engineering (Duncan 2004:3)⁵². Colonists (and sometimes other intruders to the frontier) have appropriated the developmentalist ideology of the state as part of their personal adaptive strategies (Little 2001:219f., Hvalkof 1989) and use it as a charter upon which an ethnic hierarchy can be established locally, with themselves on top and the indigenous at the bottom – creatures of nature whom the settler helps domesticate (Lopez 1986:108-111). It is one of the major ironies of the frontier as a sociological subject that a formerly powerless and socially marginal group – most, if not all settlers have left their former homes because of poverty and lack of perspectives – emancipates itself by putting another group, the indigenous, in its place. In their new surroundings, not only can colonists acquire relative economic prosperity, but the alchemy of conquest affords them a degree of power and prestige which they could never even dream of in their former lives⁵³. It is the existence in frontier lands of an indigenous “Other” lacking all signs of colonist-defined “civilization” which transforms yesterday’s social outcast into a person of considerable repute and influence.

The metonymic bond between “savage” autochthonous populations and “untamed nature” dates back for millenia, and so, of course, does the attribution of “wildness” to wayward frontier-dwellers (see e.g. Kristof 1959:270, Jennings 1975, Wolfskill and Palmer 1981:xi, Dentan 1992:226, Gray 2001:393, Peluso and Harwell 2001, Ludden 2003) The perilous qualities of the natural environment (life-threatening deserts, intractable rainforests, rugged mountains) that conquerors and explorers of all ages encountered are reflected in their perceptions of the human societies populating these wilds – uncultured, savage brutes with queer and often revulsive customs⁵⁴



Photo 2.9 : Where “civilization” meets “savagery”: lowland vendors deriding a Buhid marketgoer (squatting), Oriental Mindoro, Philippines, 1985 (photo: Christian Erni)

who have to be shunned or annihilated if one is to survive⁵⁵. As indigenous peoples melt and become one with the hostile environment, subjugation rather than peaceful co-existence imposes itself as the logical course of action (Gordon 1992:210). Most scholars of frontier affairs agree that the demonization and reduction to inhuman status of native populations in the course of conquest has always had an important strategic dimension to it: by providing approval for behavior that would otherwise be considered immoral or illegal, it removes inhibitions against the use of deception, intimidation and violence as the most effective ways of appropriating indigenous land and resources (Jennings 1975, Wolfskill and Palmer 1981:xi, Bodley 1990:26-38, Dentan 1992:226, Sponsel 1995:268f., Gray 2001:393). By classifying the communities encountered as “backwards” and “primitive”, acts of expropriation become feats of civilizing mercy. By defining the frontier as a zone of legitimate intrusion and indigenous peoples as undeserving of human compassion, frontier society and its state backers create conditions conducive to a high level of violent ethnic conflict over contested resources. A direct and lethal connection, therefore, exists between the racist invective “*bugre*” (“savage”), the settler term of reference for Native Amazonians in use in the Paulista West of Brazil in the 19th century, and the craft of the *bugreiro*, the professional Indian killer (Dean 1981:60), or between the label “vermin of the *veld*” for the Bushmen in the German colony of Southwest Africa, and the atrocities committed by settlers and the *Schutztruppe* when the colony was formed, and later when labour discipline had to be established on the farms (Gordon 1992)⁵⁶.

Today in most countries of the South, as military conquest is no longer a necessity, violence powered by dehumanizing stereotypes has become less frequent and conspicuous a feature of frontier relations. A globalized political correctness has removed the most blatant expressions of racism from the vocabulary of settler society and state administrators⁵⁷. Nevertheless, indigenous communities have undoubtedly remained a thorn in the side of most nations. Unless thoroughly reformed, national elites and, indeed, a large number of citizens are loathe to admit them into the “moral community of the nation” which defines itself through its embracement of “development” and “modernity” (Wilmer 1993:64-67)⁵⁸. The legacy of the ascription of “backwardness” and “primitivity” and the various forms of exclusion that it mandates still has a powerful presence, as Duncan (2004:1) asserts for Southeast Asia: “Classifying minorities as primitives helps strip them of political identity and discourages them from participation in larger state projects”, and governments, he reminds us, “actively use these pejorative labels to exclude and deny autonomy to indigenous minorities at the same time as they can claim to be developing these populations”.

Let me now still turn to a final, generally less well appreciated aspect of the subtle cerebral dimensions of the frontier, with manifestations in the past and the present. Implicit in the notion that the indigenous inhabitants of the frontier are a part of nature is the conviction that they share in nature’s occult powers, derived from knowledge to which “civilized” man has no longer access. In many instances, it has been found that settler stereotypes identify indigenous people not merely as naïve and primitive rustics, but also as dangerous sorcerers and, depending on the particularities of the case, also people with unbroken warlike proclivities (see e.g. Murphy 1960:47, Lopez 1986:155f., 159, Gordon 1992:212-216, Tsing 1993:179). Their uninterrupted linkage with “traditional” culture and the jungle, desert or mountain environment at the same time makes them people to be despised and feared. The illegibility of the indigenous frontier-dweller’s knowledge, thus, becomes the source of its awful power – “the power”, as Tsing (1993:182) formulates for the South Kalimantan frontier, “of a black hole that [sucks] up civilized subjectivity, leaving unwary citizens defenseless”. Conversely – once more in Tsing’s lucid words – “literacy, piety, hygiene, bureaucracy – all [lose] their power in these backwood places” (ibid.).

The curious mixture of derision, disdain and awe with which frontiersmen perceive the indigenous “Other” is a manifestation of the pervasive “liminality” of frontier spaces. In the context of the study of religious rites for which it was developed, the term designates a threshold between two known cognitive states which correspond to an initiate’s former and future social being; as he passes from one to the other, he crosses a realm “in but not of the world”, where things are notoriously ambiguous and meanings shifting (Turner 1974). As “areas of dawn” (Kristof 1959:270) between the realm of darkness and unreason (the yet untouched native sanctuaries) and the



Photo 2.10 : Where “civilization” meets “savagery”: Peru’s former president, Fujimori, posing in native garb together with a group of Yine (Piro), 1992 (photo: Der Spiegel)

heartland where state rule shines brightly, frontier spaces and all they contain embody liminality in the true sense of the word.

But how then, we may ask, do such lofty cognitive structures influence ground realities at the frontier? The ambiguity of the conquerors’ construction of their indigenous counterparts as both pathetically primitive and ignorant *and* dangerously powerful, I think, can fall both ways. It can, on one hand, counteract the usually superior leverage that intruders to the frontier enjoy in the competition for land and natural resources. Alternatively, it may amplify frontiersmen’s determination to violently pacify the perilous frontier, and remove rather than strengthen inhibitions against abuse, murder and genocide.

In several reported instances, indigenous people were able to turn the fact that settler society attributed mystical powers to them to their advantage. Fulcher’s (1983:112f.) account from East Kalimantan (Indonesia) documents that the threat to use such power may act as a deterrent against the theft of field fruits and moveable property, but also against land grabbing on the part of colonists. Javanese transmigrants’ fear of black magic (*ilmu-ilmu*) – a practice widely attributed to the indigenous Benuaq and Tunjung Dayak in Fulcher’s research area – normally keeps them from “pressing complaints or potential conflicts too far” (ibid.:113). Every transmigrant can recite a string of cases of death, illness or misfortune in the settler community which he interprets as the result of revenge or anger on the part of the

Dayak. The Dayak are careful not to deny such accusations. On occasion, they even take credit for deaths or illnesses in the settler camp, or make pointed threats, thereby manipulating Javanese fears of the mystic potency of indigenous frontier-dwellers (ibid.)³⁹. My own case study contribution in this volume on anti-settler violence in the western part of the same island comes to similar conclusions. When they furiously lashed out against the Madurese migrant minority in the late 1990s, the Dayak made productive the lingering trope of the unreformed Dayak headhunter which is part of the stigma of backwardness and primitivity that attaches to Borneo's indigenous peoples to this day. By fashioning their attacks on the settlers in ways reminiscent of the headhunting practices of old, they tapped fears, still widespread in Borneo, of the occult powers of an ancient warrior culture. Rumours about terrifying instances of war magic greatly enhanced the efficacy of Dayak violence, as both government soldiers and the Madurese victims fell under their spell.

Rather than assuming that the ambiguous construction of the indigenous "Other" aids the latter in negotiations of power at the frontier, some authors suggest that it constitutes a basic condition for their cruel and sadistic repression, thus turning the frontier into an arena of terror (Taussig 1984, 1987; Gordon 1992:212-220, Morris 1992) In his work on the interface between traumatic political histories and local forms of power and healing, Michael Taussig (1984, 1987) has shown how phantasies of the in-born savagery and the magical potency of the indigenous inhabitants of the Amazonian frontier provided the ground for atrocities and cruelty justified as self-defence on the part of settlers and planters. In a re-evaluation of the drama of rubber extraction in Peru's Putumayo region between 1900 and 1915, he finds that the systematic torture, starvation, and execution of indigenous labourers was driven by the managers' and foremen's deep-seated fear of acts of treason, ambushes and attacks by indigenous locals which colonial representations had stereotyped as war-mongering cannibals (Taussig 1984:492f.). A cross-cultural "trade in terrifying mythologies and fictional realities" established the frontier as a "space of death" where the "metamorphosing images of evil" which the planters entertained of the indigenous "Other" became "a social force of horrendous and phantasmic dimensions" (ibid.:492, 494). Taussig's impressions from the Peruvian frontier in the days of the rubber boom are of immediate applicability to many present-day frontiers elsewhere where in an air of "magical realism", the violence of the present feeds on phantastic narratives of past violence and savagery (Tsing 1996:188).

(f) The tendency of resource management on the part of the intruding society to be wasteful and destructive

The main allure of the frontier are the great financial windfalls to be made there, when only production costs, but not the costs for the replacement of a diminished

natural resource have to be taken into consideration. "Resource consumerism" and an exploit-and-move-on mentality are the hallmark of the economic rationality guiding most types of non-native frontier actors (Colombijn 1997:315f.). Blinded by the illusion of an inexhaustible resource supply, frontier interlopers select what biologists have called "fugitive strategies", behaving in ways similar to those described for non-human species when they occupy new ecological niches (see MacArthur and Wilson 1967:82, cited in Margolis 1977:42, 58ff.). Through such strategies which prime the flexible, rapid and distinctly temporary exploitation of local potentials, as Anna Tsing (2005:38) has noted with characteristic irony, "natural treasures themselves become fugitive", flowing out via unpaved logging roads and improvised landing pads. Ruthless disregard for future economic prospects in the locales targeted for exploitation is especially evident with extractive industries like mines (Howard 1988, 1994/95, MacMillan 1995, Howitt, Connell and Hirsch, eds., 1996, Ballard and Banks 2003), oil companies (Haller et al., eds., 2000) and logging businesses (Dañguilan Vitug 1993) which can operate without the environmental and social constraints imposed on them in metropolitan areas. Construed as wilderness devoid of human (i.e. "civilized") habitation, and far removed from the homes of the urban elite, frontier ecosystems are considered dispensable; the fact that they have repeatedly been selected for hazardous experiments with military technology bears this out dramatically. Only recently, Brazil's government revealed that in the era of military rule (1964-1985) the army had secretly entertained a nuclear program which foresaw tests in the eastern Amazon (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005d; on nuclear testing in the Taklamakan desert of China's Xinjiang province, see Tyler 2003:151, 153).

To say that the nature of the frontier as a *zone of deregulated exploitative activity* has severe environmental impacts is to state the obvious. As resources are mined in this "dusty battle of man against man, and of man against his environment" (Edgerton 1983:159), frontier ecosystems are often irrevocably destroyed, in some cases with far-reaching and catastrophic consequences that make themselves felt at a regional and even global level (Sponsel 1995:266). Locally, once-intact forests, tundras and mountain fastnesses become the scene of environmental disasters normally associated with densely-settled areas, threatening resident human communities with mudslides, insect pests, floods and droughts, depending on the season. Deforestation in tropical rainforest habitats is among those instances of environmental depredations at the frontier that have received the widest attention (see e.g. Hurst 1990, Colchester and Lohmann, eds., 1993, DeKoninck 1998).

The resource-use patterns of settler agriculturalists have often been found to be unsustainable and therefore an undisputable factor in resource depletion and deforestation at the frontier (Margolis 1977, Pichón 1996, 1997, Sierra 1999, Cassels, Curren and Cramer 2005). The land-use practices of "shifted cultivators" – migrants to the frontier – can generally be said to be improvident and destructive compared

with those of native shifting cultivators, although forestry laws and policing practices continue to persecute the latter for the harm that they are said to bring to forests and the sensitive catchment areas of rivers (for a recent assessment of the adaptivity of shifting cultivation, see *Indigenous Affairs 2/2005*, edited by Christian Erni). Being generally unfamiliar with non-intensive agricultural techniques, settlers are forced to be opportunistic in their use of resources, with the result that forests are quickly denuded and soils degraded (Browder 1995, Begossi 1998, Tyler 1999:266f.). In rainforest environments, plough-based, intensive agriculture is unsuitable because the soil is nutrient-poor and quickly leached-out once the protective forest cover has been removed. Furthermore, in contrast to forest-dwelling indigenous people who have the knowledge required for selecting more fertile areas and avoiding less productive soils, settlers usually lack such selective ability (Goodland 1982:18). In his work on the Brazilian Amazon, Adrian Cowell (1990:124) has aptly captured the average colonist's disorientation as he/she is forced to cope with the jungle environment at the pioneer frontier:

"(...) I began to think of the colonists (...) as people walking backwards into the forest. They were entering a completely new environment, but the colonists barely seemed to look at it. When a colonist arrived at his title-deeded rectangle of virgin hilaea, what he saw was a European-type farm, which he had usually left behind in the south of Brazil, and which he could regain here in Amazonia, if only he could get the tropical vegetation off it".

Typical, too, is for settlers to have an expansionist attitude that prioritizes the clearing of new land over conserving the fertility of plots already cultivated. Such an attitude fails to consider the long-term effects of resource extraction (Pichón 1997, World Bank 1992a). Various writers have blamed environmental degradation in pioneer zones on the settlers' supposedly footloose lifestyles, lack of deep-rooted ties to the land, and, as a consequence, a lack of concern for sustaining its fertility (see e.g. Bowman 1931, Allen 1959).

However, in discussing the sustainability of settler agriculture, we must guard ourselves against brazen generalizations and purely mentalistic explanations. Migrants' time horizons in frontier locales and their readiness to invest labour and capital in measures that limit the erosion and restore the fertility of farm plots seem to depend crucially on their relative affluence or poverty, and on the type of agriculture practiced by them. A third factor, finally, seems to be whether or not a region's supply of available land allows farmers to evade the consequences of land degradation by moving away.

The poor and the hungry have more reason to over-harvest and degrade their environments than the more affluent farmers whose immediate consumption needs are not so pressing; they find themselves locked in a downward spiral of environmental



Photo 2.11 : "The dusty battle of man against his environment": abandoned gold mine, Davao del Norte, Mindanao, 1995 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

degradation that leads to increased poverty (Leonard 1989). Poverty may also drive lowland cultivators to become so-called "truck farmers", linking their fates to urban-based frontier entrepreneurs who ferry them on trucks to the primary forest, equipping them with chainsaws for felling trees and seeds for planting along the roads that loggers drove into the forest. Albeit not producing for their own sustenance, such indentured labourer-settlers are notorious for the destructivity of their slash-and-burn practices (Dove 1988:16).

Furthermore, cash-crop farming has a much worse environmental record than subsistence production. Only where migrants produce for regional and international markets, thus adding a second factor to the general frontier condition of vast "available" cultivable lands, does the mix of incentives for overuse become devastating in the aggregate. The Buginese pepper-farming migrants at the East Kalimantan frontier (Indonesia) are a case in point. Vayda and Sahur (1985:105f.) characterize the rationality of their resource management practices as directed to the sole aim of profitable production. Because the average Buginese pepper farmer is a transient cultivator, moving to wherever new forest has been opened, he is not hemmed in by considerations for the long- or even short-term maintenance of the soil fertility of particular plots of land. Buginese cash-crop-cultivating pioneers stand in sharp contrast to local peasant farmers and Dayak shifting cultivators "who, dependent on local resources and having no appreciable mobility, try to avoid destroying these resources and, in the process, destroying themselves" (ibid.:106). Often in history,

cash-crop cultivators were the main agents of frontier expansion and its attendant environmental consequences; examples are the Amazonian rubber boom at the beginning of the 20th century, the forest-devouring palmoil plantation economy in Southeast Asia (ongoing since the 1980s), and recently the spectacular advance of soybean production from Brazil's savanna belt into the Amazon – a development which environmental activists and researchers have identified as being the single biggest hazard presently threatening the region's rainforests (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2003a)⁶⁰.

The extent to which settlers practice opportunistic and unsustainable forms of land-use, finally, depends crucially on their opportunities for mobility (Margolis 1977:47). In so-called "old" or "mature" frontiers (see Amanor 1994), these opportunities are severely restricted, as all fertile and large tracts even of more marginal lands are already occupied. When the costly transfer to still active colonization fronts outside the region is the only available "exit" option, migrants have to reconcile themselves to the perspective of staying on the plot and maximizing its potentials in a longer-term perspective. Thus hemmed in, many *colonos* living along the Transamazon highway in the Brazilian state of Pará have in recent years started to experiment with natural forest management and small-scale agroforestry. They have developed novel, hybrid agricultural knowledge systems, brokered by long-established *caboclo* backwoodsmen, which put them in a position to break with the maladaptive and unsustainable "fugitive" land-use practices embraced by earlier generations of settlers (see Campos, this volume).

The more critical among human ecologists have taken pains to demonstrate that it is not so much "frontier values" which make pioneer settlers indifferent to the long-term consequences of their behavior, but a particular set of economic and ecological conditions which normally prevail at the frontier. Given the fact that a) labour and capital are in short supply in pioneer settings, limiting soil conservation options on established plots; b) often, plots deeper in the frontier interior can be opened up which guarantee – at least for the immediate future – higher yields than the degraded plots; and c) market prices are highly unstable, prompting cash-crop-growing pioneers to maximize output at the cost of soil exhaustion (and areal expansion), settler land-use practices, however deleterious, are in fact rational economic adaptations (Margolis 1977:43-47, 50ff.).

A similar re-evaluation has occurred with regards to the role played by state policies and policy orientations in a broader sense, and several authors have demonstrated the great historical depth and geographical ubiquity of state-sponsored deforestation by supposedly independent pioneers. Thus, pre-modern agrarian states in Asia depended in a near absolute manner on the promotion of intensive agriculture and the clearing of forests (Dove 1985, 1988, Ludden 2003). To establish and consolidate their realms,

the rulers had to push back the jungle and arrondate more taxable subjects, i.e. wet rice cultivators. Forests were associated with metaphysical and political danger; clearing them to make farms became a "quintessential imperial project" (Ludden 2003:n.p.g.), and was exalted as the ultimate civilizing act (Dove 1985:12-21). These ancient agrarian ideologies resonate in contemporary civil servants' perceptions of the rainforest as an ecological type and human habitat (*ibid.*; 1988:21f.). Similarly, Ledec and Goodland (1989:450) posit for Latin America that in many states, forest clearing and the conquest of the frontier are "great symbols of progress", and thus have become "important policy objectives in their own right". The authors illustrate their case with the developmentalist discourse of the Brazilian authorities from the 1970s to the 1980s, who propagated the Amazon's transformation from a "Green Hell" into a "civilized" landscape, calling the disappearance of the great forests "our moon shot" (*ibid.*:450f., quoting Myers 1979:138).

The case of indigenous swidden cultivators excepted, it has been a very recent phenomenon that states punish their citizens for destroying the forest; more often, they have rewarded them. State-organized frontier colonization has often set out direct incentives to pioneers for removing primary forest cover, either in the form of monetary rewards or legal title to the land cleared. Latin American legislation is exemplary in this respect: Here, the majority of the land area in frontier zones is legally available for homesteading. In order to acquire formal or informal usufruct rights to a piece of land, claimants have to demonstrate their actual use of it. One of the clearest and strongest demonstrations of active land use that the law recognizes is the elimination of natural forest (Jones 1990, Pichón 1996:348).

As word of the havoc wrought by frontier expansion in the world's tropical forests is spreading and culprits need to be identified, many national governments are publicly holding settlers responsible (Colchester 1993a:4). Most authoritative studies on deforestation, however, disagree, shifting the blame to more powerful actors. They contend that, while forests are primarily lost through clearance by impoverished migrants, the main cause of degradation has been uncontrolled logging, an extractive activity that happens at the behest or with the implicit approval of state authorities (*ibid.*:4; Myers 1991:2; Goodland et al. 1990:4, World Bank 1992b:20f.). Besides, many states' direct sponsorship of frontier migration and others' "laissez-faire" attitudes towards it have brought the settlers to the forests in the first place – a policy that is motivated foremost by the desire to leave the skewed distribution of land in core areas undisturbed (Colchester 1993a:5ff.). The role of the migrant in deforestation, therefore, is today more controversially debated than when postcolonial frontiers were still young, and negative and positive ascriptions – those of "villains" and "victims" (see again Campos, this volume) – are currently battling for hegemony.



Photo 2.12 : Take what you can while the getting is good: logging trucks, Tongod, Sabah, 2001 (photo: Christian Erni)

(g) The tendency for economic relations between intruders and indigenous inhabitants to be predatory or, at the least, based on unequal exchange

At the frontier, an intruding society tries to bring itself into the possession of resources – be it land or the natural wealth below or above the soil – belonging to another society (see e.g. Lattimore 1962b:25, 37, Willems 1977:259, Hennessy 1981:12, Wolfskill and Palmer 1981:x). Frontiers are theatres of accumulation; to the extent that the things accumulated do already have owners who do not want to part with their property, they are arenas of dispossession. On the world's many settlement frontiers past and present, millions of hectares of land have passed from indigenous into colonist hands through force, threat, cunning and deceit. In the course of this "Great Terrain Robbery", indigenous communities were either physically obliterated, herded into reservations or pushed back to areas that were too distant or too uninteresting for colonists to penetrate. Today, as most nation-states have established at least tenuous military control over their indigenous fringes, the use of violence in the contest for land is usually left to the individual colonist⁶¹. Thus, in the mid-1980s in the Brazilian state of Maranhão, settler attacks on Indian villages within the state's many reserves – and Indian retributions in their wake – were reported almost weekly, plunging the area into actual range wars that were driven by the colonists' thirst for land (Schröder 1993:109-135). At the same time, 2000 kms to the west of Maranhão at the frontlines of colonist expansion in the Brazilian Amazon, land speculators were known to hire

professional Indian hunters to kill members of uncontacted tribes occupying territory that was about to be opened by a road (Cowell 1990:106ff.)⁶².

But by and large, in most contemporary situations, settlers and other frontier interlopers can avail themselves of means of acquiring land that stop short of brute force. Taking Palawan island in the Philippines as an example, the modalities for land transactions across the ethnic boundary range from the occupation of fallow swidden plots with or without compensation to the confiscation of a piece of land as a collateral for a bad debt (pawning of land), the retention – usually against the will of the owner – of land originally rented or borrowed, and formal land sales (Lopez 1986:104-107). The native Palaw'an in most cases bitterly resent the usurpation of their land and deny the justness of most transactions, but they are afraid of the tensions that refusals are bound to create, and are intimidated by the settlers' reputation for violence (ibid.:106f.). The "skillful presentation of the settler self" as embodying "modernity" and knowing to deal with and manipulate "the government" and "law" ensures in day-to-day interaction that the Palaw'an accept and internalize the hierarchical ordering of entitlements to land and other resources (ibid.:108-117). The legal situation at the time of the Palawan research was such that it formally put migrants and indigenous people at par, requiring that they formalize their land claims through the acquisition of different sorts of patents (to parts of the "public domain") or title (to land classified as "alienable and disposable"). The field thus was leveled against the indigenous who lacked both the knowledge of the procedures and the financial means to acquire such documents. Therefore, far from being the effect of the use of threats and force on the part of the settler population only, the establishment of settler communities at the cost of the original indigenous inhabitants on southern frontiers often is the composite result of state legislation that eases outsiders' access to the critical factor of production (land), a political economy (export-oriented, commercial agriculture) that prioritizes settler production strategies over indigenous ones, and the creative use of superior links to local nodes of power by the settlers themselves. Maria Elena Lopez (1986:85-121; 1987) has offered the poignant term "integrated displacement" for all those situations where the outcome of land contests between intruders and indigenous communities is prejudiced by legal and political conditions that systematically or by malevolent indifference favor the former.

Still, when talking of the allure of the frontier, it would be misleading to put too exclusive a stress on land and natural resources. Manpower, as well, was and is a coveted resource, as it is in equally short supply in these thinly-populated areas. As studies on slavery and serfdom have shown, it is precisely the combination of scarce labor and relative land abundance – typical of the frontier – which is most likely to produce highly coercive forms of labour control (Domar 1970, quoted in Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:602). On many modern frontiers, the settler economy thrives on unpaid or underpaid indigenous labour (Dentan 1992:227, Anti-Slavery



Photo 2.13 : Exploitative labour relations: Buhid man carrying load for cattle rancher, Occidental Mindoro, 1985 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

International and IWGIA, eds., 1997, Hvalkof 1998). Exploitative trade relations where patrons and trader middlemen use fraudulent measurements or threats to force unfavourable terms of trade on their indigenous trading “partners”, are commonplace. Asymmetrical trade and exploitative labour relations between settler patrons and indigenous clients are often couched in terms that invoke the intimacy of real or ritual kinship. Thus, in Mindoro, Philippines, lowland settlers commonly use the term ‘sandugo’ (Tagalog for “of one blood”, “bloodbrother”) to address their Buhid clients, in the calculated hope of forcing them to accede to their terms of trade, continue exclusive trade relations with them and pay back “debts” incurred in earlier exchanges or while working in their fields (Gibson 1990:130, Erni, this volume). Bondage engineered by settler patrons has been reported in recent years from Southeast Asia (see e.g. Legaspi, Haygood and Santos 1997 on the *tabong* system in Quezon province and the Mt. Pinatubo area in the Philippines), South Asia (Robertson 1997 on the *kamaiya* system in Nepal’s Terai) and the Amazon (Hvalkof 1998 on the continuing reality of debt bondage and slave raids in the Ucayali area, Peru). It is no exaggeration to claim that in the institutional vacuum of the frontier, feudal bondage and predatory forms of capitalism are left free reign, challenging our idea of the sweeping reach of the “civilizing” forces of modernity.

Any discussion of predatory economic relations in frontier settings would remain incomplete if it omitted the violent contradictions at the heart of settler society. In fact, some of the most impressive works on land conflicts at state peripheries focus entirely

on conflicts between smallholder settlers on one side, and the large landowners, bureaucrats and hired thugs arrayed against them (see e.g. Foweraker 1981, Schmink 1982 and 1988 on the Brazilian Amazon). Typically, the unequal access to land in the settlers’ areas of origin – the condition that they wanted to leave behind in the first place – follows them to the frontier, as they come into conflict with a wealthy class of ranchers or agribusiness operators wishing to transform the forests into grazing land for cattle or monocrop plantations. On most colonization fronts in the Amazon (see e.g. Scudder 1989:xiv-xv, Schmink 1982 and 1988, Schmink and Wood 1987) and partly also in Southeast Asia (see e.g. Pelzer 1945:134, DeKoninck and Déry 1997:3f.), pioneer smallholders are the ones who take the hazards of opening an area for cultivation, but rarely reap the longer-term benefits of doing so. In the Brazilian Amazon, the pattern is that of large landowners and cattle ranchers terrorizing pioneer settlers into leaving their plots, using gunmen and availing themselves of the silent or active support of the police and state authorities (Foweraker 1981, Branford and Glock 1985). If, indeed, the slogan “Land for the Killer” (Monbiot 1993:152) – an ironic adaptation of a battle cry popular among peasant syndicates the world over – should capture the essence of the accumulation of landed property at the frontier, we must not forget that the victims are to be found on both sides of the ethnic divide.

(h) The failure of the state to establish or credibly assert its claim to the monopoly of violence

To assert that violence is only legitimate if employed by the state and its organs is the hallmark of established states – indeed, it has in past decades and sometimes centuries been the main justification for putting an end to tribal feuding and warfare at the frontier (see e.g. Rodman 1983). In reality, however, many present-day states in the Southern hemisphere are either unable or unwilling to control violence in frontier areas⁶³, in spite of the fact that they administer them more or less regularly and have eliminated serious challenges to their rule. A second group of states have yet to get to the point of ruling unchallenged, as ethnic insurgents or revolutionaries in the heartland refuse to accept domination under current dispensations. At frontiers, an unusual number of individuals and groups have access to military skills and military tools (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:593); predictably, they are rife with violence from varying sources, employed for the most diverse reasons⁶⁴. The following vignette of the situation in Bukidnon province in North-Central Mindanao, Philippines, in the early 1980s, will serve to illustrate this:

“Philippine Army and Constabulary soldiers were everywhere, tearing around in ramshackle jeeps, Civilian Home Defence Forces (CHDF)⁶⁵ encamp for training on random hillsides, New People’s Army (NPA)⁶⁶ ‘night visitors’ haunt barrios as well as the dreams of the rich (who hire armed guards and

accumulate small but lethal arsenals with the help of soldiers willing to sell their armalites⁶⁷ for P. 1.500⁶⁸), armed sects terrorise *barrios* in the south, Manobos and Bukidnons (the two 'tribal minorities' in the province) conduct sporadic raids in retaliation for the loss of their lands to settlers and agribusiness, Army renegades or 'Lost Commands' maraud along the southern border, and bandits – posing as NPA, Army, or 'Lost Commands' – still further confuse this picture of growing violence and insecurity" (Edgerton 1983:151).

Thus, frontier violence may be the corollary of an ongoing armed conquest of frontier peoples who refuse to submit to the rule of the centre. In Burma's frontier regions, for instance, indigenous minorities have for the most part of the 60 years since the country's independence been in open rebellion against a succession of military governments who failed to deliver on promises of ethnic autonomy. The fighting has taken a horrible toll of lives both among the insurgent groups and the armed forces; a Wa rebel leader, for instance, estimated in 1986 that since the onset of the war on Wa territory 18 years earlier, one in four of the Wa population may have died from it (Smith 1991:423). The brutality of state-building against a defiant indigenous periphery is also evidenced by the ongoing campaign of joint Laotian and Vietnamese forces for the annihilation of an estimated 15,000-20,000 Hmong fugitives in the mountainous jungles of Saisoum in Laos. Reports document air bombardments and cruel mop-up operations by ground troops that have included massacres (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2006b:7). The Hmong are considered traitors by the Laotian state, because during the Vietnam war, many of them had taken part in American operations against the Ho-Chi-Minh trail and the communist Pathet Lao.

A *second* manifestation of violence typical for frontier regions – referred to in the above quote – is connected with insurgencies of a non-ethnic character which usually center around the demand for redistributive justice and a new social order to buttress it. Their relative inaccessibility for the state apparatus makes frontier areas the ideal operation base for revolutionaries, demanding difficult decisions from the local indigenous and settler populations. In countries as wide apart as the Ivory Coast, the Philippines and Colombia, we can see the state locked in a battle for territorial control and the allegiance of sometimes large sections of its citizenry. Where it wages counter-insurgency warfare, the state itself becomes the source of routine violence that affects the entire frontier zone and all its inhabitants⁶⁹.

A *third* major pattern of conflict is apparent at the frontier in which the state is not a principal protagonist. Frequently, different ethnic groups – some native to the area, others newcomers – are pitted against each other in a contest for language rights, access to land and jobs, administrative privileges and stakes in the distribution of political power. While many of these conflicts feature indigenous people on one side and settlers on the other, others lack this "sons-of-the-soil" component, involving indigenous groups on both sides (see e.g. Asian Centre for Human Rights 2005 on the



Photo 2.14 : Challenging the state's monopoly on violence: guerillas of the New People's Army (NPA), South-Central Mindoro, Philippines, 1989 (photo: Christian Erni)

clashes between the Karbi and Dimasa in Karbi Anglong District, Assam, and Banerjee and Athparia 2004 on the violence between Kuki and Naga in Northeast India). The fact that in the latter case, the antagonists are all of tribal extraction, does not temper the ferocity with which these conflicts are fought (*ibid.*). Some states have apparently reconciled themselves to a situation of "durable disorder" (Baruah 2005), where insurgent groups are mushrooming, nourished by contacts to mainstream political parties and finances siphoned off from governance contracts and development funds. Ethnic violence is allowed to erupt periodically in raids and counter-raids, political murders and massacres (*ibid.*:3). In India's Northeast, states political scientist Sanjib Baruah (Baruah 2002:4178), "militant organisations play as important a role as the institutions of the state in the performance of certain key functions" that are usually reserved for the latter – "guaranteed public order" being foremost among them. The "pervasive culture of militancy" in the region is the result of the fact that the state is not seen as a reliable provider of security by most citizens, a gap which ethnic militia help to fill. As an ethnic group must feel threatened by a rival group's organizing of an armed force for 'national liberation', it has to form its own armed militant group (*ibid.*:4179f.). This situation – political science calls it the "security dilemma" – is at the root of the proliferation of "liberation armies" in the region⁷⁰ (*ibid.*:4180).

Where indigenous insurgencies are "nativist" in orientation, i.e. directed against settler populations, states usually side with the latter and stimulate the formation of settler militia or, where these are already existing, fight the rebels in joint operations



Photo 2.15 : Buying protection on the market of violence: armed cowhands, Occidental Mindoro, 1985 (photo: Christian Emi)

with them – thus giving rise to a *fourth* distinct mode of frontier violence (see e.g. Fearon and Laitin 2001:18-25). Settler militia operating in cahoots with the military have been responsible for some of the worst excesses in armed “sons-of-the-soil” conflicts (ibid.:18; 39). Overall, state authorities seem to agree that violence by members of settler society is to some degree necessary and justified if the latter are to prevail over the original inhabitants of the frontier (Gordon 1992:209, Alfred and Wilmer 1997:41f.) – a plausible proposition if we remind ourselves that many governments of developing countries have gone to great pains to install settlers there⁷¹. Incidences of armed migrants taking part in hostilities against indigenous communities as they were reported from Mindanao (George 1980:143-152), the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission 1991:39-42) and Xinjiang (Tyler 2003:194ff.) lend credibility to DeKoninck’s (1996) assertion that the use of military colonists is a pervasive feature at late modern Asian frontiers.

A *fifth* contributor to frontier violence does not spring so much from anything inherent in the frontier – for instance territorial conflicts that so often accompany frontier expansion –, but from deeply contentious structures and processes at the heart of the society occupying it. In a number of countries of the developing South, violence is an intrinsic part of the routine conduct of electoral politics. “Entrepreneurs in votes and violence” (Fegan 1994), provincial politicians in the Philippines as a rule employ armed force to secure wealth and power (McCoy 1994:15). On the wings of

their armed retainers, political hopefuls rise to uncontested warlord status, whereupon they can start to barter votes which will win them immunity from prosecution and benefits in the form of rents, cheap credits and business licenses (ibid.). The transition from predation to old wealth and respectable politics is imperceptible; while the aging warlord may continue to cultivate an image of ruthlessness, his children will in all likelihood enroll in elite schools in the national capital, become lawyers or professionals and marry into established families (ibid.). In frontier provinces, the use of political violence tends to be even more liberal than elsewhere: in Sulu, for instance, a part of the country’s “Wild South”, “competing political clans fight pitched battles with hundreds of heavily armed men on the streets of the provincial capital” (Rocamora 1995:xiii).

A number of scholars of the frontier are proposing that their study subject is saturated with violence not – as has frequently been argued – because of its *distance* from the moderating institutions of the state, but to the contrary because that state – or rather its in-born social inequities – has reconstituted itself far too faithfully in these new places (see e.g. Schmink 1982:341 on the Brazilian Amazon). Thus, the exploitative agrarian structures which frequently characterize the densely-settled core areas usually follow the pioneer to the frontier, turning it into an arena of class conflict with large and well-connected landowners in one corner and materially and politically marginal homesteaders in the other (ibid.:341f.). Land-related violence on a large scale becomes likely where land can be had cheaply, its ownership is uncertain and the state committed to the defence of the interests of landed elites. Clashes between antagonistic class actors within settler society represent the *sixth* type of frontier violence, manifesting itself in the forced removal of small farmers from land claimed by landlords, the murder of peasant union leaders, but also – often violent – land occupations by masses of rural have-nots (Foweraker 1981, Branford and Glock 1985, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005a).

A few remarks on what I take to be the logic underlying frontier violence are now in order if we are to gain insights from this pageant of frontier actors and types of violent contest in which they are involved. Contrary to what Marianne Schmink (1982:341, see above) believes, there is no question in my opinion that the peculiar institutional conditions and moral conventions of the frontier are of great importance for understanding the ubiquity and frequency of violence in these places. Thus, the institutional vacuum in this zone permits members of settler society⁷² to interact with indigenous people according to their private behavioral norms rather than the law (see point (a) above). These private norms again are drawing on an ideology of conquest typical for frontier interlopers which deny possessory rights to original frontier inhabitants on the grounds of the latter’s lack of civilizational credentials (see point (d) above).

If the frontier is, as Little (2001:8) justly contends, “a highly unstructured field of power (...) where the rules of interaction are not clearly established (...)”, this is due to the fact that laws regulating frontier affairs are often inconsistent, law-enforcing agents of the state are few and the few are lax in enforcing the laws. The institutional vacuum of the frontier makes for *legal ambiguity and insecurity*, conditions which have widely been found to further conflicts and violence (see e.g. Tyler 1999:266). The situation is compounded by the fact that indigenous institutions of conflict-resolution have come under pressure in the process of frontier expansion, as state authorities in many cases attempt to discourage or forcefully dissolve them. Increasingly, disputes within local society – not to speak of those between its members and settler individuals – have become resilient to mediation by means of local-level traditional judicial procedures (ibid.:264), and state courts are either not available or lack legitimacy on the part of the locals (ibid.:268), giving rise to a situation of *legal anomy*.

Most importantly, at the frontier, the state relinquishes control to powerful private citizens (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:590). As it proclaims itself unable to extend protection in a reliable and durable manner, the latter seek to safeguard and promote their interests autonomously, by employing private armies and gunslingers, or by buying the support of the police and military (see e.g. Monbiot 1993:152-157 on Brazil, Fried 1995:154-224 on East Kalimantan, Indonesia). Consequently, a high number of loose firearms are in circulation, and many of those with martial skills make a living from selling protection and firepower to ranchers and landlords. In support of stakes in the predatory frontier economy, goons and vigilantes are traded on open “markets of violence” (Elwert 1999), as if to dramatize that economic wealth and direct, physical force remain the most important bases of power at the frontier (Schmink and Wood 1992:14).

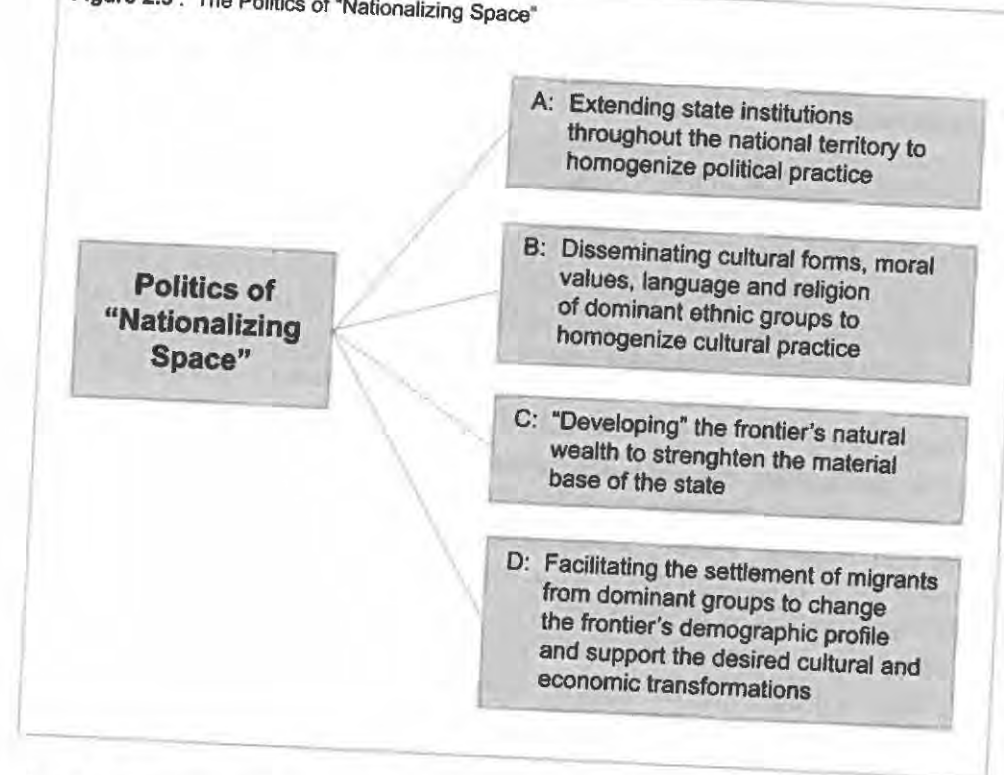
“Nationalizing space”: The state’s agenda at contemporary frontiers

The foregoing section gave a description of what happens at contemporary frontiers in the developing world; the present one is about the state policies that produce frontiers in the first place.

It has become fashionable to point to globalizing forces as the main originator of change in remoter corners of the globe. Undeniably, global regimes of power and taste have been a deeply transformative factor at most world frontiers (see Lewellen 2002); side by side with them, however, the more parochial designs of the nation-state continue to make themselves felt with equally, if not more compelling force.

The agenda of the state in frontier regions differs significantly from the one it pursues in the national heartland. At the frontier, state sovereignty is contested, as

Figure 2.5 : The Politics of “Nationalizing Space”



local indigenous communities cling on to their – albeit precarious – autonomous existences, setting limits to the state centre’s ability to freely access and exploit the zone’s resource potential. Other than in areas over which it has established more or less stable hegemony, at the frontier, the state finds itself locked up in stubborn conflicts that center on the control of meaning, space, territory and power (Hvalkof, this volume, p. 277). In what comes, I will try to outline the state’s agenda for the frontier in broad strokes (see Figure 2.5).

With the end of colonial rule in the Southern hemisphere, the peripheral indigenous frontiers of the formerly colonial dominions came to constitute new and exciting horizons for the novel “national projects” with their promises of autochthonous “progress” and “civilization”, and an alluring opportunity to re-energize national economies which were often left in shambles by the departing colonizers. It became economically and symbolically imperative to “nationalize” frontier spaces which the post-colonial elites deemed “incompletely structured” and underexploited (Becker 1996:77). While there is some variation as to how individual states have combined policy aspects and accentuated their “handling” of the frontier and its inhabitants, a surprisingly homologous policy pattern emerges for the de-colonized South; borrowing a term from politologist Sanjib Baruah (2003), I propose to call it the “politics of nationalizing space”³. In essence, it includes the following elements:

(a) Extending state institutions throughout the national territory in order to homogenize political practice

The processes we study are essentially those of state- and nation-building, or more precisely, their geographical completion at the margins of the nation-state. "State-building" – the notion of concern in a discussion of the *political* aspects of state expansion into indigenous domains – refers to practices which elites employ to consolidate and centralise power within a defined territory (Rae 2002:4); the main challenge to state-builders is to cut back on and finally eliminate the power of rival power centres so that they can determine local political processes within the claimed territory (see e.g. Tilly 1975, Helms 1982:259, Mann 1986). "Nation-building", on the other hand, refers to state-building elites' practices of forging a unified political community through reference to an imagined community of bearers of a shared culture and language. For all practical purposes, given the reality of the pluri-ethnic composition of virtually all post-colonial nation-states in the South, nation-building means the modelling of the nation on the image of the numerically dominant or most powerful ethnic group (or collection of groups). By proclaiming the cultural forms and norms of that group as the "natural" standard for the nation, nation-building often entails the denial of the reality of ethnic pluralism and the imposition of hegemonial cultural and moral values on recalcitrant local and regional populations (see Migdal 1988, Gurr 1989). As it involves the production and manipulation of cultural rather than political materials, I will turn to the matter of nation-building later in part B).

State-building is achieved through extending institutions of governance and conflict resolution – devised by the centre – throughout the national territory, thereby filling the "institutional vacuum" (Kopytoff 1987) as which the frontier is perceived. The introduction of the offices and functions of local government and the "routine practices that reproduce the consent of the governed" (Baruah 2003:921) in the core areas of the body politic – notably voting and the adjudication of conflicts – is intended to create a channel for the transmission of orders of the centre and the means to incorporate local leaders in national political circuits⁷⁴. Thus, diffusing national political institutions throughout the indigenous hinterland equips the state with powerful resources for surveillance on one hand and cooptation on the other. Out of necessity, traditional juridical systems, forms of leadership and norms for holding leaders publicly accountable have to give way; in many countries, they have either been forcefully dismantled or emasculated and re-instated as a farce (see e.g. Guinness 1994:272-276 on New Order Indonesia). In border regions, such state-building measures may target the local indigenous populace and the governments and military leaders of an adjacent country in equal proportion. In such cases, the replication of institutions of governance at the margins seems to be motivated in addition by the

desire to dissuade potentially hostile neighbours from annexing "empty" tracts of the national territory (see e.g. Little 2001:88; 106).

In sum, by increasing "stateness" (Tilly 1975) in this way, developing states hope to achieve or at least project exclusive political/military control within their territories; the generation of political legitimacy within them; and their defence against possible claims from outside (Hettne 1996:19). Because the expansion of national political institutions is not possible without marginalizing, deforming or destroying local indigenous political institutions and systems of conflict-resolution, it is an inherently conflictive process which may be actively and violently resisted by indigenous communities (Bodley 1990:60-81).

(b) Disseminating cultural forms, moral values and possibly language and religion of politically dominant ethnic groups in order to homogenize cultural practice

Faced by the challenge of attaching areas of only nominal sovereignty to routinely-controlled state domains, state- and nation-building projects usually rely not only on institution-building, but also on extending the reach of cultural forms, mores, values and lifestyles of the nation-bearing group(s). The way to the nation is paved with the debris of the linguistic practices, cultural heritage and ethnic allegiances of all those citizens who do not belong to them – among them, of course, frontier-dwelling indigenous people. In the manner in which it is carried out in most post-colonial nation-states in the developing south⁷⁵, nation-building is an exercise in cultural homogenization as the assertion of ethnic and cultural difference is discouraged or actively combatted⁷⁶.

Assimilationist programs of "national integration" in the cultural and linguistic domains are the standard means for fostering this homogenization of the realm (Dove 1988, McCaskill 1997, Harrell 1995, Duncan 2004). As applied to indigenous frontier-dwellers, the repertory for producing cultural subjects who have internalized the national narrative of a single, cohesive identity includes enforcing the exclusive use of the national language in schools and government institutions (Duncan 2004:3); conversion to the dominant religion (or, in some cases, at least one recognized world religion; Atkinson 1988, Clarke 2001:26); forced adoption of majoritarian dressing and housing styles (Meiselas 2003:124-142); sedentarizing mobile populations – notably pastoralists and hunters-and-gatherers, but also shifting cultivators –, often through forced resettlement (Scott n.d., 1998b:185-189, Duncan 2004:11ff.); and facilitating people's entrance into the market economy, among others by stimulating the conversion to cash-crop production and the generation of consumer needs (Duncan 2004:3). In the centre's gaze, frontier space and everything that is found there is "disorderly" and has to be brought in line with "proper" forms and practices.



Photo 2.16: "Nationalizing space": Indonesian stamp showing the national flag over Aceh and West Papua (photo: Susan Meiselas)

Therefore, besides its auspicious political and economic ambitions, the politics of "nationalizing space" also aim to bring about new forms of order in daily life, as Anna Tsing (1993:92) has noted with characteristic sensibility. The "disorderly" nature of indigenous living is often measured – as is the case in Indonesia – by supposed low levels of personal cleanliness and assumed poor dietary standards. Resettlement programs for the Meratus of South Kalimantan were, among others, justified by claiming to bring their lives "in accord with the norms that operate for the Indonesian people" (Hamda 1979:2, cited in Tsing 1993:92). "Progress" of the program beneficiaries was evidenced by the higher percentage of villagers who had learned to bathe twice or even three times a day, and taken to eating rice, the lowland staple, on middays and evenings (Tsing, *ibid.*).

The re-organization of cultural practice at the frontier along national standards involves, of course, massive social engineering as native belief systems and cosmologies are eradicated and a broad range of other "undesirable", "uncivilized" traits of indigenous culture⁷⁷ replaced. State elites will not deny that such interventions may entail high costs for those to whom change is administered, but they are to be stoically borne by the populations concerned until the transition to the national role model is completed (Schmink and Wood 1992:30, note 10). Many indigenous societies break apart from this assault on traditional culture, exposing their members to a life without the protection of networks of social solidarity and the consolations of a customary world view and ancestral religion (see e.g. Eder 1993 on the Batak of Palawan, Philippines). In the aggregate, the homogenizing effects of assimilationist state policies resemble the effects of the green revolution in the field of agriculture, where "the spread of new hybrid species increases uniformity of genetic stock, making crops at once more productive and more vulnerable to pests. Through the self-confident modernism of national governments, monocultures extend in the social domain with vigour and the same double edge" (Stange 1999:203)⁷⁸.

The resulting threats to the collective identities and cultural survival of indigenous communities are at least as potent causes of communal rebellions as are threats to their livelihoods and resource bases (Horowitz 1985, Gurr 1994). As indigenous people came to realize that the politics of claiming frontier space for the nation include a direct attack on their cultures and ways of life, aggressive state attempts to homogenize cultural practice throughout the national territory have greatly increased the complexity of frontier conflicts which otherwise may have been fought as mere resource contests (Suliman 1997).

(c) "Developing" the frontier's natural wealth to strengthen the material base of the state

By and large, state development strategies for the frontier are geared towards strengthening the material base of the nation-state, with the revenues from natural resource exploitation going to the political centre (Hettne 1996:20, 24; Clarke 2001:424, Duncan 2004:7). At the state periphery, entrepreneurs, civil servants and army officers are busy disengaging nature from local ecologies and livelihoods, commoditizing it and, thus processed, redirecting it to national priorities such as patronage, profit and export production (Tsing 1999:166, 2005:28). The prevalent development model used to "nationalize" frontier space can be called "developmentalist" (Baruah 2003:916, Becker 1996:75) or "mainstream development" (Hettne 1996:20). I propose to use the first term, because it has the advantage of connoting a powerful discourse which "captures imaginations, unleashes passions and comforts societies" (Sachs 1992:1, cited in Baruah 2003:917). Development in the mould of "developmentalism" has as its dominant imperative progress, understood as infinite economic growth and prosperity, based on the ever-increasing exploitation of infinite natural resources (Becker 1996:74). As such, it is identical with modernization (Hettne 1996:20). The policies pursued to "modernize" local economies at the frontier include the promotion of industrial agriculture and forest plantations (Tyler 1999:66, Li 1999:29) and extractive industries which exploit the areas' mineral wealth, timber and possibly oil resources (Howitt, Connell and Hirsch 1996:3-17; Ballard and Banks 2003). Intense pressure is brought to bear on indigenous communities to utilize their land more "efficiently" and give up their typically non-intensive production systems in favor of irrigated fixed-field cultivation of wet rice and other "majoritarian" staples (Dove 1988:19f., Duncan 2004:4). Particular opprobrium attaches to shifting cultivation which – contrary to the scientific evidence – is said to be the main factor in deforestation and the destruction of watersheds (Dove 1988:15ff., Clarke 2001:425, Duncan 2004:13ff.). Another priority of developmentalist state planning at the indigenous periphery is infrastructure building in order to link local economies to national and international markets and consolidate the control of the centre (Rutherford 1996:583, Baruah 2003:928f.).



Photo 2.17 : Homogenizing cultural practice: Hinduist Shiva shrine in Itanagar, the capital of the largely tribal state of Arunachal Pradesh, 2004 (photo: Christian Ermi)

“Nationalizing space” along developmentalist precepts requires a frame of laws on land ownership and resource use which facilitates the state’s appropriation of indigenous ancestral domains. In most cases, colonial legal systems were retained which classified indigenous lands as state domain (Lynch and Talbott 1995:65; Colchester 1995:66-69). Mostly on colonial foundations, governments have claimed indigenous lands and resources as fundamental elements of their own territorial integrity and economic and political sovereignty (Howitt, Connell and Hirsch 1996:15). Only a handful of them recognize indigenous communities’ rights to the utilization and ownership of natural resources or their contributions to the sustainable management of local ecosystems, and most countries give local resource users no meaningful say in decisions on national land and resource-use policies (Lynch and Talbott 1995:135). As a consequence, indigenous communities have lost control over most of their land to government agencies. In Southeast Asia, for instance, forest departments control between 40 and 74% of their countries’ total land areas and are invested with the power to lease them to logging concessionaires, plantation owners or agroforestry businesses (Colchester 1995:67). In a tendency that is reflective of developmentalism’s policy bias against subsistence-oriented smallholders, “the more intrusive the interlopers, the more the state supports their activities” (Lynch and Talbott 1995:66). In prioritizing “national” over local interests, the great majority of developing countries refuse to recognize indigenous customary rights to land which, characteristically, had mostly been communal. Thus, even where indigenous

communities were able to hold on to their lands, traditional concepts of custodianship and resource allocation were undermined by the fragmentation of territories into individually-owned plots, a trend that has facilitated mismanagement and the partial alienation of former community lands (Colchester 1995:65).

When a state considers it useful to increase control over or lay claim to a frontier by opening it for settlement, a *fourth element* can be added to the formula:

(d) Facilitating the settlement of migrants from politically dominant groups in order to change the frontier’s demographic profile and support the desired cultural and economic transformations

Many developing nations rely on settler-colonizers from politically dominant ethnic groups as a cheap and supposedly efficient means for advancing the “nationalization of space”⁷⁹. By opening “frontiers of settlement” through guided population transfer schemes or aiding the influx of spontaneous migrants through a range of official and non-official policies (“state-sponsored” and “state-facilitated” settlement), states hope to assist the processes listed above under (a), (b) and (c). The distinct disadvantage of the strategy of advancing “nation-building” and the extension of territorial control by settling migrants is that it often triggers nativist reactions on the part of local indigenous communities (see e.g. Weiner 1978 and 1995:88ff., Nietschmann 1986), and comparative evidence from the study of civil wars shows that migration-induced conflicts are especially likely to escalate violently, and, once escalated, to last long (Fearon and Laitin 2001:1, 3).

Abolishing the frontier

Implanting the political institutions that secure domination in the heartland, diffusing majoritarian ethnic symbols and cultural forms, and incorporating the territories and resources into the wider national economy are conflict-prone strategemes. These state designs bring frontiers into being, modelling them as less than serene places where governance is particularly arbitrary, legal codes are biased or, in the absence of bias, unenforced, strategies of accumulation are predatory, and violence is the preferred means of conflict management. State agency at the periphery is, I have contended (see section ‘Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier’), of an inherently antagonizing quality; other than in the heartland, it is not aimed at winning the allegiance of the local citizenry and securing its loyalty, but wants to secure control over the territory and resources of ethnic groups who are defined as standing outside the “moral community” of the nation, if not outside the moral universe altogether. As concerns for state- and nation-building outweigh considerations for

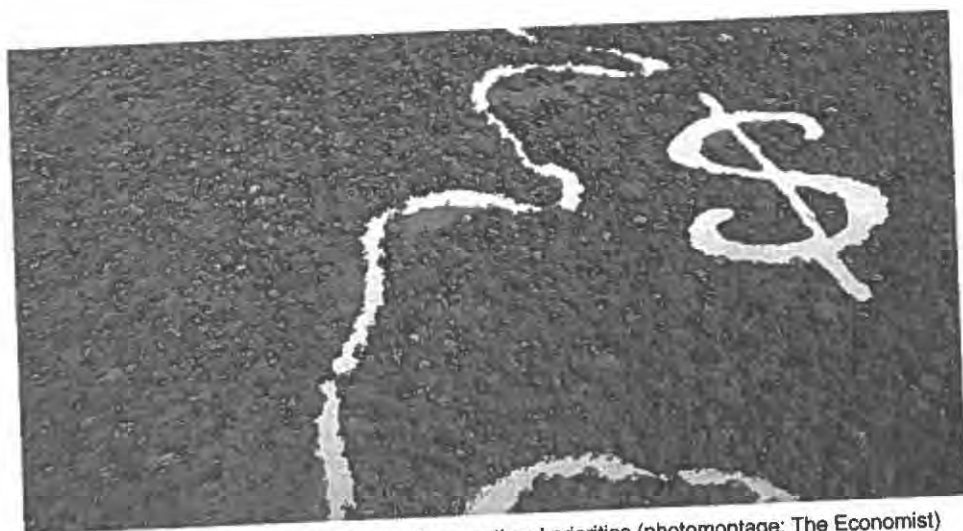


Photo 2.18 : Redirecting the forest's wealth to national priorities (photomontage: The Economist)

local communities' rights, biodiversity conservation and even political stability, the "politics of nationalizing space" are calculated to bring about high levels of violence (see *ibid.*).

It is in the interest not only of frontier-dwelling indigenous communities, but also of the more vulnerable social groups in settler society, that frontiers yield to zones of *regularized* state control. As states shed their loosely-controlled edges, transforming them into more firmly-administered domains, the emphasis should be on legitimacy rather than the unilateral increase of control. Legitimacy at the indigenous fringe comes through respect for difference, and difference is best protected by strengthening autonomy. While frontiers are defined by an expansive move that meets indigenous autonomies, these autonomies exist by default rather than by design. If and where indigenous communities have succeeded in maintaining control over the bigger part of their territories, it is because the states and private interests involved lack the capacity to invade and overtake them, or find that the areas' resources do not warrant the effort. The balance of forces is delicate, however, and any change in the accessibility of the territories or the financial potency of the governments involved can alter it and lead to the disintegration of the indigenous communities in question (and thus to the disappearance of the frontier in that area). Rather than through a catastrophic process through which the world loses its cultural diversity, the elimination of the world's frontiers should come about through legislating the efficient protection of indigenous communities, and the concomitant control of the rapacious and violent economy of settler society. In other words, the *de-facto* autonomy of not-yet encapsulated groups would need to be replaced by the *negotiated* autonomy of groups which are recognized as a valuable part of the nation's patrimony.

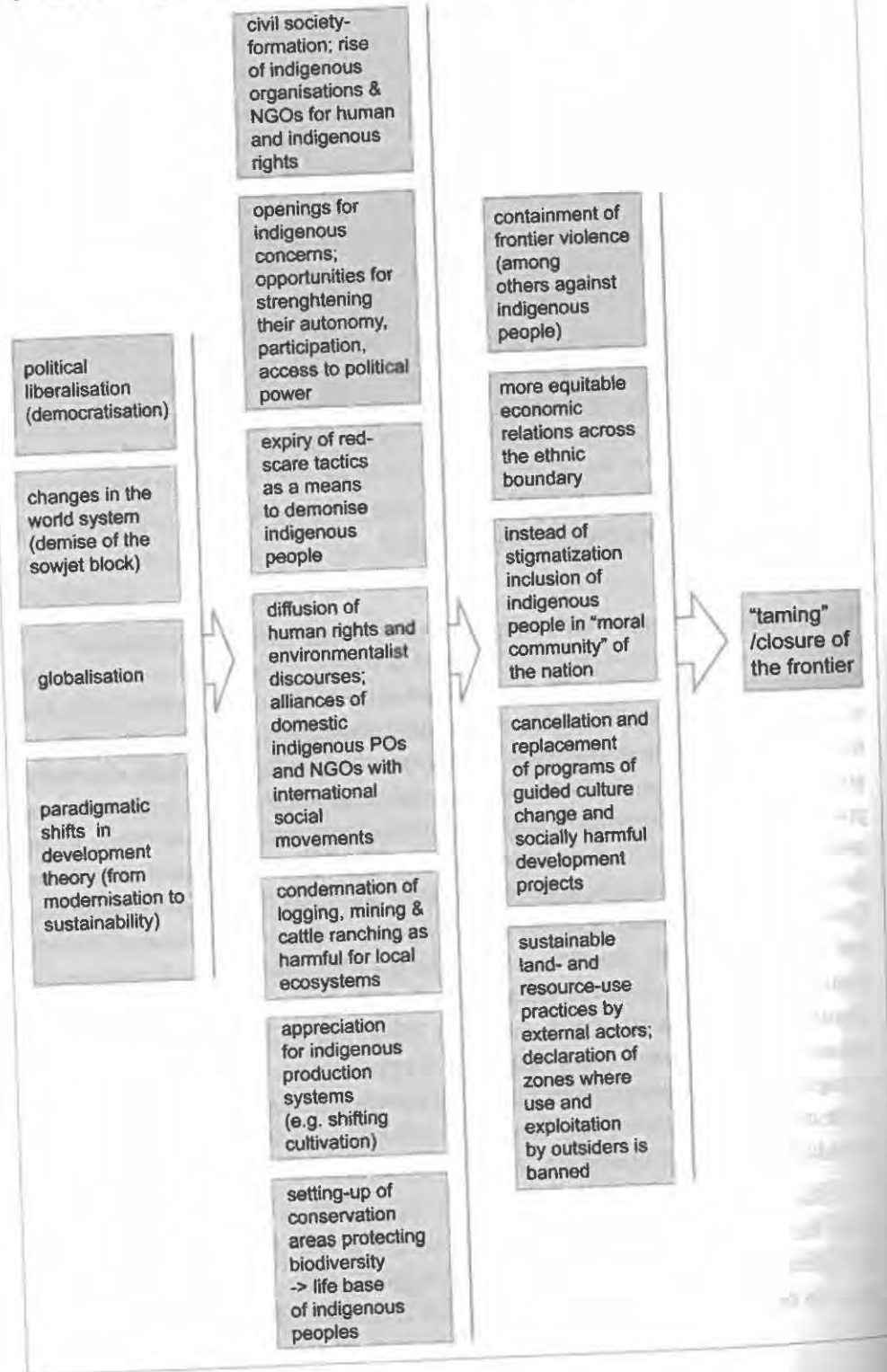
To do away with frontiers, conflict transformation in frontier spaces should strive to eliminate the set of mainly destructive frontier traits outlined above (section 'How to Recognize a Frontier:...'). A policy priority is the expansion of *individual* civil rights, and the *collective* empowerment of disenfranchised groups, among which indigenous communities stand out (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:5; 299ff.). The introduction of special measures for the protection of indigenous collective rights to land and resources (e.g. through autonomy provisions or community-wise delineation and titling of territories) or the re-invigoration/consolidation of earlier regimes of separate administration for indigenous communities should be considered. The strengthening of civil rights in general and the introduction of community-based titles or more far-reaching autonomy statutes can be helped through a general process of democratization, which, through raising the public accountability of officials, will curtail the tendency of local government to put itself at the service of the locally powerful. Finally, a re-evaluation of the usually mono-ethnic and culturally hegemonic character of the nation-state to include the frontier-dwelling "minor parts of the nation" (Trankell 1998) can help subvert prevalent frontier stereotypes of indigenous peoples as primitive and sub-human.

The adventures of the frontier in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

Yet is this not exactly what we have witnessed in the course of the past two and a half decades – a groundswell of democratic transformations all over the globe, massive inroads on the subject of human and, more importantly, indigenous rights, the mono-ethnic, culturally hegemonic nation-state model going out of fashion, and extractivist practices "softened" beyond recognition? Has not, therefore, the frontier expired without us noticing it? Indeed, there is no dearth of voices who have pronounced the frontier as we know it "closed" (or "tamed") for good (Welch 1996:45f., Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:5; 299-308) or declared it to lie in its death throes (Schmink and Wood 1992:353f., Nepstad et al. 2002:631) while others who do not use the frontier notion have advanced propositions that amount to a suggestion of frontier closure (Maybury-Lewis 2002a, b, Clarke 2001:413ff.; 427-434). The composite argument of these proponents of the recent disappearance of the frontier is rendered in Figure 2.6; it is compelling enough to reward a brief recapitulation of some of the more momentous recent changes in global politics and ideas in as far as they may have had a bearing on frontier affairs.

Starting in 1989, in the spate of a few years a world order that had held for more than four decades gave way, forcing leaders around the world to warm up to new principles of governance and concede a bigger role to a citizenry that henceforth came to be known as "civil society". Even earlier, at the beginnings of the 1980s, the

Figure 2.6 : The Argument for the Successful "Taming" of the Frontier



growing evidence of catastrophic global climate change had started to convert ordinary people, development thinkers and the occasional politician to new ideas about resource consumption and economic development that would no longer be premised on the rapid depletion of the planet's biological and, as a consequence, cultural diversity. And, finally, as part of a longer trend, a fast-growing body of international standards on the rights of human beings to physical integrity and well-being, and the entitlement of cultural and ethnic minorities to difference in dignity, has started to circumscribe the possibilities for state rulers and local power-wielders to mistreat the populace at will. Democratization and the ascendancy of the discourses of nature conservation and human and minority rights have led to a noticeable shift in power relations between indigenous people and outsiders on many state peripheries, with the result that frontier processes concurrently do not continue in an untrammelled manner.

Probably the most conspicuous force for change in frontier politics has been the trend towards political liberalisation and more democratic and politically-inclusive systems of government which swept away a series of autocratic regimes in Latin America in the 1980s⁸⁰ and transformed insular and parts of mainland Southeast Asia in the 1980s and 1990s⁸¹. Some authors at least posit that the wave of democratic transitions has made governments in these two regions more sensitive to the plight of indigenous peoples and led to efforts to involve them more fully in local and national politics (Clarke 2001:428, 433, Maybury-Lewis 2002a:xv). Heeding donor countries' calls to make government more effective and accountable, many states of the developing South introduced decentralization – a policy principle which has been hailed as resulting in the empowerment of indigenous constituencies (Duncan n.d.).

Political liberalisation was made possible in the first place by the end of the cold war. The demise of the socialist block and the military defeat of a great many – though by no means all – communist insurgencies in the developing world after 1989 has made it more difficult for authoritarian states to persist in their habitual branding of indigenous peoples' organizations and their domestic allies as communist subversives (Duncan 2004:7f.), thus depriving them – as well as their "democratized" peers – of a convenient justification for the politics of "nationalizing space".

A corollary of political liberalisation has been the proliferation of NGOs, many of them concerned with the plight of indigenous peoples (Clarke 2001:428), and of people's organizations (POs) which directly articulate the latter's grievances and political agendas. As a result, international collaborations have come into their own, at least in part phrased in the language of the right to self-determination, making a powerful appeal to community sovereignty with rights that even transcend nation-states (Adelman and Aron 1999:841).

During the late 1980s and the 1990s, many states have taken a less confrontational view of the dangers and merits of cultural diversity at their margins (Jonsson 2001:10),

a trend that expressed itself in the passing of a number of autonomy statutes for ethnic minorities in parts of Asia (examples being Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines and Aceh in Indonesia) and the strengthening of existing arrangements in Latin America (in the case e.g. of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, but also that of the Shuarä of Ecuador, the Kayapó of Brasil and the Kuna of Panama). What is more, in some world regions, at least, the idea of cultural and ethnic pluralism seems to have taken hold among policy makers and the general public alike, signalling a departure from the time-honed practice of excluding indigenous frontier-dwellers from the "moral community" of the nation. Thus, David Maybury-Lewis (2002a), a leading South Americanist with an admirable record in indigenous rights advocacy, sees evidence of a profound and fundamental rethinking of the centuries-old relations between states and indigenous peoples in most Latin American countries. States like Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia are no longer insisting that the indigenous peoples within their borders relinquish their separate identities and assimilate, and have proclaimed themselves pluri-ethnic (Maybury-Lewis 2002a:xv; Levi 2002, Ramirez 2002, Macdonald 2002, Gustafson 2002). In Mexico and Ecuador, furthermore, spectacular indigenous protests⁸² have elicited much sympathy among a considerable part of the non-Indian population in whose eyes their indigenous compatriots had taken the lead in redefining democracy and the state (Levi 2002, MacDonald 2002). In 2001 and 2005, finally, Peru and Bolivia have for the first time in their national histories elected presidents of indigenous descent, in Bolivia's case even a leader of an indigenous grassroots movement.

Both in Asia and Latin America, racist representations of indigenous people as lesser kinds of humans – notorious at the frontier – are increasingly contested. While these are admittedly tenacious and refuse to go away completely, two or more notions of the indigenous are today competing for hegemony over the collective imaginary of most majoritarian societies in the developing world. Characteristic for the mindset of the average citizen, today, is a basic "ambivalence (...) towards indigenous peoples", and there is a "pendular movement between distance and proximity", as environmentalists and indigenous rights advocates have come to celebrate native communities as "keepers of the forest" and stewards of the planet's biological diversity (Ramos 2003:367, speaking of Brazil).

Most significantly, unrestrained natural resource exploitation as a major feature of the "politics of nationalizing space" has given way to a "more complex discursive agenda" which revolves around the notion of biodiversity conservation (Bryant 2001:11). In pursuing these agendas, appeal is made not only to the national, but even the global "common good" (ibid.). In the mid-1980s, parts of the elites in developing countries discovered the ecological and esthetic value of untouched forests, whereas earlier elite generations had primarily viewed them as a commodity or an obstacle to development (Lohmann 1993:186 on Thailand). Environmentalists in developed countries and the South began to share a new discourse that lent visibility and

legitimacy to both traditional livelihood systems and the alternative views of needs fulfilment and human development which they represented (Schmink and Wood 1992:8). By the end of the 1980s, indigenous communities in many parts of the tropical forest had successfully established links with international lobbyists, alliances which were buttressed by domestic coalitions with NGOs and sympathetic political parties. Whereas acquiescence or armed resistance had been the main options in the past, indigenous movements now discovered the possibilities inherent in the "politics of embarrassment" (Paine 1985), a strategy of subaltern collective action that turns the massive power imbalance between grassroot communities and the state into symbolic capital for the former, and tries to exploit the moral high ground which small-scale producers – and, in particular, indigenous communities – have conquered with the paradigmatic shift to conservation and sustainable development. The net result of these changes was a rather tangible empowerment of indigenous communities, as material resources and credibility became available to them to an extent never known before (Schmink and Wood 1992:8). Quite clearly, the increasing salience of notions of sustainability and development that are more respectful of indigenous communities' needs altered the character of frontier confrontations, and introduced fresh ideas into the debate over appropriate development strategies for frontier areas.

If the battles fought over land between indigenous communities, settlers and private investors still had a clear tendency of being one-sided in favor of the latter in the 1970s and the bigger part of the 1980s, the balance of power began to shift by the end of the decade. Indigenous movements formed, showing villagers how to organize themselves and protect their interests more effectively against the threats posed by settlers, land speculators, mining companies, and bureaucrats. As Schmink and Wood (1992:9) point out quite rightly for the Brazilian Amazon, the odds remained staked against the indigenous communities, but the likelihood that they could win major contests against their adversaries rose. Broadly speaking, by 1990, the terms of the debate over frontier development had changed significantly. With the exception of the most notorious dictatorships (Burma, Indonesia), the environmental and human rights consequences of conventional development policies for tropical rainforest areas had become the target of headline stories in the domestic press of the developing countries concerned, and were a constant news feature in the developed world. Mining, logging, and cattle ranching – in many countries the mainstay of the modernization program – were increasingly condemned in favor of modes of forest use which would leave the latter intact (ibid.:9). Subsidies to the ranching sector were cut back, and the wisdom of dividing large tracts of forest into small farming plots for colonists was challenged by the press as well as the more respectable part of the academe (ibid.:352). The equity and sustainability of the developmentalist model were questioned, prompting a new appreciation of traditional modes of production and the lifeways associated with them. Indigenous cultures came to be viewed as repositories of practical knowledge, and

indigenous resource management systems were now treated as credible alternatives in the search for new policy directions (ibid.:9f.).

As a result of this paradigm change, forestry policies have in many parts of the world progressed from earlier priorities that supported forest conversion both for commercial and subsistence purposes (in the latter with settlers as beneficiaries), to an explicit concern for the protection of remaining primary forests and a recognition of the supreme value of preserving the world's heritage of biological diversity. Thus, legislation from the past two decades has started to reflect changing public images that attribute a positive and necessary role to indigenous people, casting them and their resource-use practices in a more favourable light (Dove et al. 2003:23).

Last but not least, the re-orientation of development and land-use priorities at the frontier expressed itself in the creation of nature reserves for the protection of endangered animal species or entire local ecosystems identified as "biodiversity hotspots". In many cases, these protected areas were established on the initiative of foreign conservationists whose international organizations funded and co-managed the reserves together with local civil society counterparts or government agencies. As ecology became a new parameter in global geopolitics, state frontiers became also frontiers of a global order which fragmented nation-state territories, thus imposing spatial limits on the pursuit of the environmentally harmful politics of "nationalizing space" (Becker 1996:83-86). In some instances at least, wildlife conservation areas and national parks have largely successfully kept settlers out of the bounds of ecologically-sensitive areas, with the side effect that the erosion of the land base of resident indigenous communities was also halted (see e.g. Dressler and Hughes McDermott n.d.:5 on the island of Palawan, Philippines).

Still, as we try to take account of the *changes* in frontier politics over the past two and a half decades and demonstrate how momentous they were, we must not forget that these trends neither went unchallenged, nor gloss over the *continuities* in the management of the frontier – some disturbing enough to make us doubt that there were inroads made at all. For the remainder of this concluding section, the floor belongs to those authors who have argued that policy changes towards indigenous peoples and the environment – though noisily advertised – were limited in effect, thus leaving the frontier alive and well (Bryant 2001, Little 2001, Tsing 2005:27-54, see also Duncan 2004 for a similar position, yet without the frontier terminology). Their arguments are summarized in Figure 2.7 below. As behooves someone who has devoted a 150 page article to a sketch of something said to be of burning relevance for the present, I myself tend towards this second, more pessimistic proposition, but would ultimately like to leave it for the reader to judge the plausibility of the two arguments.

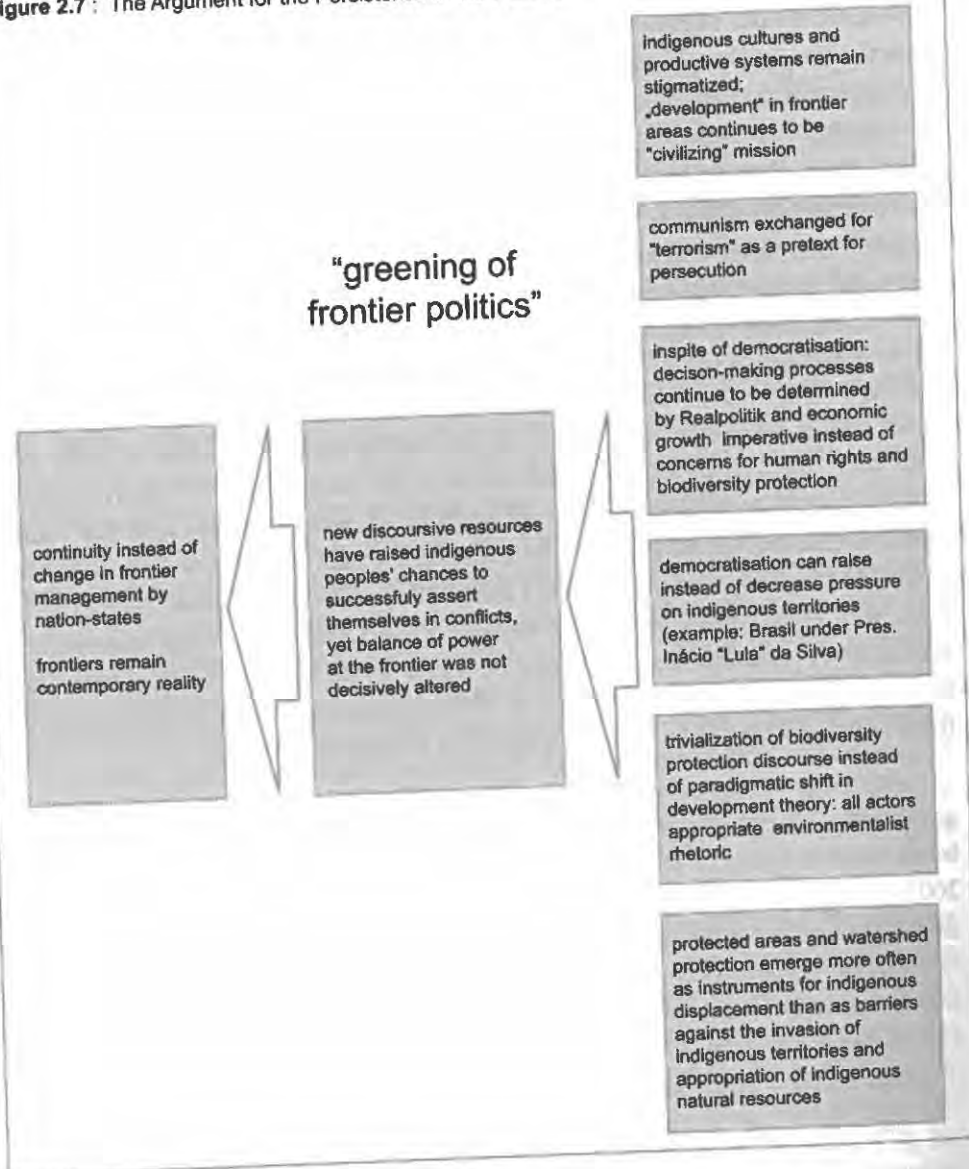
Even though democratisation has changed some of the formal rules of the political game and brought a new generation of politicians to power (many of them educated

abroad, and conversant in environmentalist and human rights discourses), the latter are not impervious to the imperatives of *Realpolitik* and the promise of high economic growth rates. In the new millennium as much as in the old, the environment and the rights of indigenous minorities tend to take the back seat in decisions on controversial development projects (see Duncan 2004:4 on Southeast Asia). An example from Brazil under President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, the country's first president of non-elite background and a champion of human rights, will bear this out. In spite of criticism by local activists and foreign observers (who warn of a repetition of earlier social and environmental disasters), the Brazilian government recently signed a road-building (or, respectively, -upgrading) agreement with Peru that will help connect its far-western state of Mato Grosso – the centre of the country's booming soja industry – to Peru's Pacific ports and from there to the lucrative Chinese market. So far, these goods had to be carried to Atlantic ports or trucked across Argentina to Chile. By June 2006, the difficult dirt track that ran from the border town of Inapari to Lima and the coast was supposed to be replaced by an all-weather tarmac road that could accommodate the 400 40-tonne trucks which, as officials expected, will ply the route daily. The road will cross one of Peru's most biologically-diverse areas, the Madre de Dios, with three national parks, a nature reserve and a reserve for indigenous peoples such as the Amarakaeri. Locals fear that the trucks will be followed by settlers seeking to clear forest for soja and cattle like in numerous previous cases, spelling doom to flora, fauna and Native Amazonian tribes (*The Economist* 2005:53).

Brazil also exemplifies that a political shift from a centre-right to a leftist government, an exciting new scenario in the post-Cold War era, need not be for the better when it comes to indigenous rights policies. Since the ascension to power in 2003 of President "Lula" da Silva of the Workers' Party, the land rights situation in Brazil has become more tense and the pace of delineation and titling of indigenous reserves has slowed down. Observers interpret this as a reflection of the fact that the settler population is an essential part of the political base of Lula's government, and that the latter has to make concessions to the colonists if it wants to get re-elected (Pierrette Birraux, personal communication, March 2005).

Another supposed trade-off of the end of the Cold War, the elimination of redscare tactics from the repertory of state authorities, in some cases has materialized very tardily. Thus, in 2000, more than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall and over thirty years after the extinction by massacre of any organized form of communism in the country, Indonesian government officials still invoked the looming presence of communist insurgents as a rationale for resettling indigenous people (Duncan 2004:8). Other governments have dropped the label, only to replace it with the "terrorist" tag which has become the currency of the day in the game of criminalizing dissidents of any shade. Today, the threat of being associated with "terrorism" as a justification for state violence is limiting many indigenous communities' ability to resist frontier

Figure 2.7 : The Argument for the Persistence of the Frontier



depredate with dreadful efficiency (see e.g. Indigenous Peoples Rights Watch-Philippines 2006 on the Philippine Cordillera).

To continue with, some of the hallmarks of democratic reform and “better practice” in the field of governance are often not delivering the expected results, and may accentuate rather than eliminate contradictions at the frontier. Taking decentralization as an example, many studies bear out that unless indigenous peoples and other traditionally marginalized groups manage to make themselves heard both

regionally and nationally, change will fail them as decentralization has the tendency to strengthen rather than weaken existing asymmetrical power relations at the frontier (see e.g. Duncan n.d.:17 on Indonesia). Talking of Peru and the present situation in the Ashéninka territories of the *montaña*, Søren Hvalkof (this volume, pp. 277) makes a powerful case for the advantages of a centralized political structure, as decentralization may deprive indigenous communities of important political and financial resources that can be had from the central bureaucracy, delivering them instead entirely to local cultural biases and frontier entrepreneurs from the region. In the Gran Pajonal, impressive initial gains from the demarcation and titling of Ashéninka territories were reversed towards the middle of the first decade of our millenium when the centre, following the precepts of neo-liberal adjustment policies, stopped many of its services in the region, “outsourcing decision-making on frontier issues” to settler-controlled local administrations with a vested interest in indigenous territories (ibid.).

Collective soul-searching with the result that the nation explicitly owns up to the indigenous parts of its heritage, as it has occurred in Latin America over the past decade, seems to be a particularity of that world region. If insular and mainland Southeast Asia, for instance, are any measure, the existence of self-conscious tribal peoples in the midst of national populations storming towards modernity is still seen as a reason for shame, not for pride (Duncan 2004:5), and no re-formulations of the cultural and ethnic bases of nations in the region have taken place. Upon close inspection, even the evidence for Latin America is checkered: Maybury-Lewis and his co-authors have to concede that the regional revolution in ethnic relations has so far only seized those countries with significant indigenous minorities (or, as in Bolivia’s case, majorities). The re-definition of citizenship is being resisted where indigenous people are comparatively few in numbers, as evidenced by Brazil, the region’s most populous country, which continues to drag its feet over issues of indigenous rights. Mention is also made of the seemingly intractable conflicts related to the drug trade which are retarding the implementation of policy changes in Colombia, Panama, Peru and Bolivia (Maybury-Lewis 2002a:xv, xxii).

While changing perceptions of the indigenous “Other” among the political class and urban professionals are certainly important, only if they filter through to settlers and other non-native actors at the frontier itself will they alter the exploitative and oppressive relations which have characterized the zone for so long. I do not mean to deny that “grassroots” representations of indigenous peoples may have changed for the good in recent times, but would like to point out that such shifts in attitude seem to reflect the global rise of new ecological or human rights paradigms more in an *indirect* than a direct sense: Rather than appreciating the merits of cultural diversity for their own sake, local settler populations in the developing South have often come to exploit it pragmatically. As adventure tourism has turned tribal lifeways into a valuable commodity, neighbouring settler communities may develop an economic

interest in the preservation of the cultural integrity of frontier-dwelling indigenous populations. As Gerard Persoon (2003:446), a scholar working on Indonesian affairs, argues for the Mentawaians of Siberut and their Minangkabau settler neighbours, it is economic opportunity which gradually gives rise to an increased appreciation of a culture once widely despised as “primitive” and thus inferior. The implication, of course, is that backlashes in racial attitudes are inevitable if respect for the “Other” depends on fickle economic incentives.

No claim to the “taming” of the frontier can be made without demonstrating that the notorious violence of that zone shows signs of subsiding. The pacification of the frontier is usually attributed to the reduction of sharp conflicts over land and other assets, and the rising acceptance and efficiency of the law-enforcement agencies and the judicial system of the state (see e.g. Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:5). However, I would contend that in many world regions, the facts belie the hypothesis that frontiers are slowly turning peaceful; again, I am offering the Brazilian Amazon as an example. Not only is the incidence of violent clashes and deaths between landless migrants and large landowners rising (de Almeida and Campari 1995:4), but also that between native Amazonians and settlers or gold panners: In 2005, more Indians were murdered in land-related incidences than any time before in the last ten years (*The Economist* 2006a:47). If the paid murder in February 2005 of Dorothy Stang, an American missionary and courageous supporter of small farmer opponents of large landowners in the state of Pará, highlighted the fact that the frontier was as life-threatening as ever, at least its speedy resolution by the courts seemed to underscore that state institutions were reformed and working in ways that signalled the impending disappearance of the frontier as a “land of impunity”. Barely 10 months later, a Belém court sentenced the two gunmen who had committed the murder to 27 and 17 years imprisonment, while the *latifundista* who had ordered the assassination awaited his own trial and a still stiffer verdict. Many observers were surprised by the unusual zeal with which the authorities investigated the murder and brought the assassins and their influential backers to justice, and wondered whether the case might indicate a break with the dismal record of Brazil’s law enforcers and judicial institutions⁸³. Others, however, cautioned that the speedy resolution of Dorothy Stang’s murder was exceptional and not likely to be repeated in future cases where the victim was not an American national and thus would not arouse international media interest (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005f; see also Campos, this volume, pp. 436f.). The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, while admitting that the Stang case seemed to show that Brazil availed now of a growing number of competent and honest policemen, judges and politicians, noted that the latter still represented “islands of correct administrative practice” in Brazil, and argued that it would be “naive” to give the matter wider significance as a landmark in the struggle against legal impunity, the destruction of the rain forest and the inequities and inefficiency of the Brazilian judicial system (ibid.). It remains a



Photo 2.19 : Resilient enemy images : anti-communist banner admonishing citizens to be vigilant, Ambon, Maluku province, Indonesia, 1995 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

fact, says the newspaper, that “the state – its courts, police forces and environmental protection agencies included – assumes its tasks especially in the rainforest region but in a deficient manner” (ibid.).

The much-heralded paradigmatic shift in development theory from modernization to conservation and sustainable development has often been difficult to detect in practice. In a large number of countries, “developmentalism” has remained popular with economists and policy makers (Nicholas 2000:46). Policies for Amazon and Southeast Asian frontier regions for instance continued to invoke the precepts of development-as-modernization, have often remained coloured by national security doctrines and only occasionally moved away from the preference for capital-intensive projects (Schmink and Wood 1992:352, Duncan 2004:3ff.). A string of major regional development schemes in these two regions have remained explicitly hostile to indigenous rights (Schmink and Wood 1992:353, McCaskill and Kampe, eds., 1997). New extractivist cycles have replaced old ones, inaugurating new rounds of partially ferocious territorial struggles on indigenous domains. Under such circumstances, frontiers are constantly reproducing themselves and become “perennial” phenomena (Little 2001:233-239). At the time of this writing, the rapidly-expanding cultivation of soja in the rainforests of Amazonia and changing parameters in the global politics of oil (at present with a bearing on Africa) appear especially worrisome. Because of the boom in large-scale soja production, the pressure on Brazilian rainforests has, if anything, grown over the past half decade: In the state of Mato Grosso in 2004, no less than half of that year’s forest loss was due to the expansion of soja cultivation. The large profits to be reaped by dedicating cleared forest patches to the cultivation

of this latest cash-crop have resulted in rampant land speculation; probably a larger percentage of newly-cleared land was cleared by pioneers with the aim of a later re-sale to soja growers than for subsistence purposes (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005c; see also *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2003a). With respect to oil, it has been noted that the rise of China as a major world power with a resource-hungry economy has not improved the prospects of frontier environments and frontier-dwelling indigenous peoples. As consumer protests “at home” forced large American- and European-owned oil consortiums to mend their ways and use “softer” and more sophisticated strategies of securing their access to oil, China has moved into many of the world’s insurgency-ridden exploration and production areas – most notably in Africa –, exploiting to the full its competitive advantage of not having to conform to the ecological and human rights standards of a critical domestic citizenry (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2006a).

To the degree that the notions of sustainability and biodiversity protection have become ubiquitous, nauseating slogans in the conduct of development and international relations, they have lost a substantial part of their original, subversive power. Over the past two decades, ecological and conservationist themes have ceased to be the exclusive preserve of groups with the respective credentials (among them indigenous peoples and their supporters) and were appropriated in one form or another by nearly all of the actors present at the frontier – even by rather unlikely candidates for environmentalist sainthood such as ranchers, sawmill owners and military strategists (Schmink and Wood 1992:352)⁸⁴. Especially conspicuous in their reckless adoption of “green” imagery is the metropolitan oil industry (Haller et al., eds., 2000:574-577). Thus, far from seeing the discourse of concern for frontier environments becoming more binding for governance and development practice, we are witnessing its irresistible trivialization.

Indeed, many scholarly observers remain deeply sceptical in the face of the sudden “greening” of frontier politics, and indigenous movements the world over insist that the quest for self-determination is different from and sometimes even antithetical to the cause of biodiversity protection. Raymond Bryant (2001:11), for instance, a specialist in the political ecology of frontier areas in Southeast Asia, casts doubts on the conservationist track record of many governments in the region, calling their newly-found conservationist creed “born-again environmentalism”. In spite of the new rhetorics, he explains, decision-making and administrative processes in Southeast Asian countries remain elitist, disabling governments to record, for instance, signs of increasing, painful contradictions between conservationist priorities and the human rights of indigenous frontier-dwellers (*ibid.*). Furthermore, states Bryant, environmental mimicry abounds when opportunistic policy measures are packaged in ways that make them look as if they were part of a principled policy based on new-found values. A case in point is the government of Thailand which, after a series of devastating landslides in the uplands, decreed a much-publicized nation-wide logging ban; the losses in

revenues for the national logging industry, however, were compensated by allowing the operations to shift to Burma, showing the measure to be, at its core, a calculating externalization of environmental costs (*ibid.*; Bürgin 2005:31f.).

That the rise of the new ecological paradigm has merely added an “environmental twist” to traditional frontier politics (Bryant 2001:11) is also Anna Tsing’s (2005) contention, who explores the discourse’s potential for cynical manipulation by governing elites. In her furious indictment of the ravages of the “frontiers of capitalism” in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, she points out that, far from hindering development aggression against forests and forest-dwelling communities, the arrival of notions of biodiversity protection in the late 1980s and the 1990s actually *strengthened* the existing regime of predatory resource extraction. “The frontier”, writes Tsing, “arrived in Kalimantan *after* environmentalism had already become established not just among activists, but also in government and corporate public relations” (*ibid.*:32). Fully aware of the environmental disaster in, among other places, the Amazon, Suharto’s New Order regime and its cronies proceeded with plundering Indonesia’s natural resources under the pretext of conserving them. Giant mining conglomerates were granted licences in the name of saving the land from the depredations of wildcat miners, yet everybody knew that legal and illegal prospectors were inseparable (*ibid.*:32; see also Collison 2002). Logging companies diversified to include profit-oriented reforestation in their operations; replanting clear-cut primary forest with fast-growing tree species that could later be ground to pulp, they were officially hailed as virtuous allies in the struggle to halt the disappearance of the forests. Plantation timber was certified as “ecology-friendly”, earning the companies new concessions in primary forest areas. To make matters still more grotesque (and profits for the loggers yet more extravagant), the production costs for plantation timber were shouldered by the state who financed pulp plantations through the national reforestation program. Indonesia’s most notorious lumber baron, Suharto family friend Bob Hasan, was made minister of the environment and – in the late 1990s – offered three environmental awards in the United States (*ibid.*:32; 36, note 6). Thus, rather than being an instantiation of Turner’s legendary and archetypical “savage” frontier where “civilization” meets its “barbarian” antithesis, Kalimantan in the late 1980s and 1990s represents the “salvage frontier” – the frontier in the age of environmentalism, where the destruction and salvation of resources, in Tsing’s words, are systematically mixed up and zones of limitless extraction overlap with zones of care and conservation (*ibid.*:32).

Short of reaching the standards of nihilistic opportunism set by the now-departed Suharto regime in Indonesia, many Southeast Asian governments nevertheless make rather shrewd use of novel environmentalist arguments for the pursuit of old policy obsessions. Prime among these are the tying-down of mobile populations (shifting cultivators and hunters-and-gatherers) and the replacement of “primitive” by “modern”

and “rational” forms of resource use. In Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, the international concern for the protection of watershed areas serves quite clearly as a pretext for the forced resettlement of indigenous communities to locations where control by and dependence on the government is ensured (Rossi 1998, Laungaramsri 2000, Mi Dze 2005). Speaking on Vietnam’s policy towards the indigenous uplanders, the *montagnards*, Georges Rossi (1998:400) laments the fateful complicity of Western donors and a rather ruthless state government in a concerted assault on shifting cultivation, which is – against scientific evidence – still portrayed as the main culprit for deforestation:

“The recurrent [stereotyping] discourses about the *montagnards* (...) are a smokescreen that deflects attention from the true problems, which lie elsewhere. The pioneer fronts and commercial exploitation, conducted or tolerated by the authorities for political and financial reasons, are by far the leading causes of deforestation. The official declarations of the need to consider the environment are rather an expression of the wish to satisfy the fund-givers than a sign of a genuine conviction”. (...)

“The true reasons for the strange unanimity with which swidden cultivators have everywhere and through all times been denigrated, are not to be found in scientific reality. They, too, belong to the states’ interior politics. The currently-purported concern for the protection of the environment provides them with favorable circumstances for trying to achieve – in consent with international opinion and under the gaze of the funders – what the state has failed to achieve for a century: To fix in space, control and assimilate those who are eternally suspected of ‘irrational’ land use”.

Of all aspects of the new politics of the environment, the creation of nature reserves for the protection of local ecosystems or endangered animal species shows clearest the basic ambiguity of the present situation. Being a regulatory instrument for frontier spaces which characteristically suffer from a lack of sensible restrictions on opportunistic forms of resource-use, protected areas can make significant contributions to the goal of “taming” the frontier. However, as their defining interest is biodiversity rather than cultural diversity and minority rights, protected areas can turn into a weapon of exclusion, victimizing vulnerable indigenous frontier-dwellers who have come to be seen as hazards to more highly-priced natural capital. In that second scenario, rather than being domesticated, the frontier as a site of contention and often violent contradictions is infused with new life.

Indeed, orthodox protected area concepts – unchallenged until the 1980s – assume an irreducible antagonism between nature protection and human extractive and productive activity. According to the precepts of modernization, “traditional” societies jeopardize biodiversity and natural resources through their demographic growth and – so it is assumed – notorious “poverty”. Conventional notions of nature protection through nature reserves therefore include the resettlement of indigenous societies found

within and around the proposed boundaries of a reserve. This strategy has performed very badly; disappointment with its results⁸⁵, together with the resistance of a growing number of indigenous groups affected by such policies, have since the 1980s led to the rise of a new, more utilitarian approach. This newer approach advocates protection through utilization, and tries to accommodate what it describes as the legitimate interests and rights of resident populations. However, as Bürgin (2006:n.p.) observes, “the practice of establishing and managing protected areas is frequently oblivious of the standards of the revised protected areas concept, and is notably in Third World countries in most cases still following the ‘classical’ model”.

Developing nations’ refusal to adopt protected area concepts in their more enlightened version, and international environmentalist organizations’ failure to unequivocally cast their weight with the latter, is costing indigenous peoples dearly. In numerous cases, national parks which were recently established on indigenous lands have denied local rights to resources, “turning local people practically overnight from being hunters and cultivators into ‘poachers’ and ‘squatters’” (Colchester 1993b:78, citing examples from Indonesia and Sri Lanka). Thailand and Botswana offer especially glaring illustrations of how state-espoused environmentalism can degenerate into a strategy of displacement in the familiar frontier mould.

Thailand’s national park system was largely put in place since the mid-1980s; these protected areas cover at present no less than 1/4 of the country’s land area. The doctrine followed by the administration is to free the parks of human habitation; most – if not all – of them coincide with or cut across indigenous territories. Resident indigenous groups either face outright relocation, or see their use of the forest and its resources severely curtailed by park authorities and the military (Bürgin 2005:28f.). The expansion of protected areas in frontier areas of the country’s northern part has led to the enclosure of hundreds of tribal communities. Although the enforcement of the laws that ban, among others, shifting cultivation within the protected areas, is uneven, depending on how remote the concerned villages are (Laungaramsri 2005:9), foresters in many areas crack down mercilessly on villagers who have chosen to ignore the new realities. Thus, for instance, in the case of the Doi Suthep-Pui National Park of Chiang Mai Province, patrols by forest guards and arrests of recalcitrant locals have become common since the park’s establishment in 1981. In 1987, eight Karen women were arrested while planting their swidden fields. As one victim recalls:

“The head of the regional office (who came from Bangkok) wouldn’t listen to our explanation that it was the Karen traditional practice of communal labour exchange in rice planting. He insisted that all of us worked for a businessman to clear the land. Until the head of the reforestation project⁸⁶ came to the forest station and saw that we were all women with small children. It was such a pathetic scene when he ordered each of us pay 250 baht⁸⁷ before releasing us” (Laungaramsri 2005:9).

Botswana, on its turn, has made headlines for its expulsion between 1997 and 2002 of over 2000 people – in their majority San Bushmen – from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, a protected area of some 53,000 kilometer² in the middle of the country (*The Economist* 2006b). Claiming that the San's traditional hunting has given way to poaching for profit and livestock-rearing, the government has transformed the reserve – created by the British in the early 1960s for the explicit purpose of protecting both bushmen and wildlife (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005b) – into a pure wildlife protection area. The relocated population was resettled in two desolate places outside the reserve where they received a few heads of livestock, a small plot of land and some money. The San say they were moved from their ancestral lands against their will, and raise charges of physical abuse and torture against the park rangers who enforce the hunting ban in the reserve (*The Economist* 2006b). While one of their organizations has filed a court case against the government, many ordinary San are voting with their feet against their relocation: In spite of the threat of armed force from police and rangers (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005e), an estimated 200 of them have sneaked back into the reserve. Observers cite two reasons for the government's zeal to remove the San from the area: diamond prospecting, and the "civilizing" of a people whose lifeways are felt to tarnish the sparkling reputation of a swiftly-modernizing country (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005b)⁸⁸.

Benedict Kingsbury (1999:369) best summarizes the views of those in the scientific community who feel that the new politics of the environment are, in fact, old wine in new bottles – traditional frontier politics in disguise. Today, he states, indigenous communities may have as much cause to feel themselves "victims of 'conservation'" as they had to perceive themselves "victims of development" before the onset of the "greening" of the frontier. If he and his fellow sceptics are correct, the subject of this article is still going to stay with us for some time.

Summary

Through an analysis of the special spatial setting in which conflicts between indigenous communities and settlers take place, the frontier concept helps us understand their dynamics and underlying logic. Frontiers are spaces whose richness in natural resources is only matched by the paucity of administrative control to which they are subjected. Being areas of limited state presence, the capacities and, indeed, the willingness of the state to defuse tensions, enforce laws or restrain predatory forms of resource accumulation, are reduced. As a consequence, frontier-dwellers have maintained (in the case of indigenous peoples) or developed (in the case of settler society) unique cultures of dispute and collective action, informed by the primacy of direct forms of power (notably the threat or use of violence) at the fuzzy edges of state authority. States, however, are not just passive bystanders in frontier conflicts, but do actively

contribute to them. Resorting to the "politics of nationalizing space" – the diffusion of national political institutions to minority areas, their subjection to schemes of cultural assimilation, and the re-direction of the areas' natural resources to national priorities – , national governments jeopardize indigenous communities' resource sovereignty and livelihoods and catalyze the often violent politicization of ethnicity among them. To further these ambitions, states have in many instances organized or tacitly supported frontier settlement by colonists, and often throw their weight behind the settler part when nativist uprisings challenge the colonists' presence.

To render the frontier concept fertile for the study of contested state peripheries in the contemporary South, however, I first had to reclaim it for comparative analysis and uncouple it from exclusive association with the person of Frederick Jackson Turner, who had provided an account of the rise of American democracy and national character by pointing to the nation's frontier heritage. I showed Turner's narrative to be narrow in explanatory concern, strongly parochial, and hampered by his times' ethnocentric and social Darwinist views which let him cast the injustices visited upon Native Americans in terms of Manifest Destiny. Furthermore, Turner made only statements on a fraction of all frontier phenomena – those usually typologized as "frontiers of settlement" –, at the expense of two equally important other types – "frontiers of extraction" and "frontiers of control" which tend to follow different trajectories and entail different demographic scenarios. I concluded that on balance, Turner's particular notion of the frontier may now be discredited, but the broader subject that he dealt with is not: If recast in less loaded terms, the frontier concept can serve us well for the study of *conquests* not only in colonial but also in present-day, post-colonial contexts.

Frontiers are, I contended, durable and resurgent phenomena and do not owe their existence to a particular world-historical constellation. They develop in cyclical rather than lineal fashion, "closing" and "(re-)opening" in response to a twin logic. First, they are made and unmade in keeping with the expansion and contraction of states and the force they can muster to control the fringes of their influence. Second, they flourish and disintegrate in tune with the cycles of exploitation of valuable resources, undertaken by actors who operate on their own or in loose association with the state. In their double capacity as, on one hand, loosely-controlled space suspended in tension between hegemonial state designs and indigenous autonomies, and, on the other hand, areas of high resource potential coveted by non-residents, frontiers are a continuing reality in the post-colonial world. I then set out to describe that reality in comparative terms, and delimit frontiers from more common modalities of state territoriality.

The diagnosis for the presence of a frontier, I argued, is better not tied to a single criterion, but depends on multiple variables. In the contemporary South, frontierism is indicated by the presence of a majority of the following eight characteristics: relatively low populations densities; absence of full-blown civil administration

and routine state control; the pronounced presence of non-native private actors; the tendency to deny indigenous inhabitants' ownership claims to land and natural resources; the tendency to define indigenous inhabitants as standing outside the moral universe by symbolically associating them with "untamed nature"; wasteful and destructive forms of resource management by outsiders; exploitative/predatory economic relations across the ethnic boundary; and the state's failure to establish or credibly assert its claim to the monopoly of violence.

Apart from specifying the political, economic, social and cultural characteristics which distinguish present-day frontiers from core areas of state control, I tried to convey my understanding of how power works and influences the outcomes of conflicts at the fringes of state authority. Direct forms of power – economic wealth and direct, physical force – are complemented by "softer" modes of power, such as access to and control over the state apparatus, as well as the use of legitimizing discourses. While the first three favor the most powerful groups within settler society, recent developments in the ideological field have tended to improve the position of poor colonists and, even more pronounced, indigenous peoples. With regards to the latter, the ascension in the 1980s and 1990s of the notions of minority rights and environmental protection balanced out – to some extent – their economic weakness and exposure to violence by all sorts of outside actors. Insights into rival indigenous notions of power were added, reminding us that things at the margins must be seen through the prism of both the expanding, modernizing *and* the traditional local societies. These notions center, for instance, on the ability to harness cosmic forces through shamanic knowledge, and may, the general dominance of settler society notwithstanding, influence the outcome of inter-ethnic struggles.

Another concern in my exploration of comparative frontiers was the question of how to assess the role of the state and, correspondingly, that of the enterprising individual at the frontier. It remains a major challenge for critical frontier studies that we account for the parallelism of interests which so often unites the state and para-state actors (e.g. settlers), without completely collapsing the distinction between the two. Conversely, conventional frontier narratives posit that governments lack the means to reign in settlers, miners, loggers and other private intruders to the frontier, and cannot therefore be held accountable for ecological depredations and human rights violations that occur in the zone. Arguing that we should guard ourselves against blanket judgements, I present evidence that both implicates and absolves the state from responsibility in frontier developments.

Further into the text, I expressed my wish for a world without frontiers. Being places of suffering, exploitation and violence, they will, or so I hope, yield one day to zones of *regularized* state control. However, rather than through a catastrophic process in which indigenous peoples are extinguished or culturally obliterated, the

elimination of the world's frontiers will have to be brought about through legislating the efficient protection of indigenous communities. Provisions for territorial autonomy, for instance, are a privileged means to that end. Frontiers will only wither away, I concluded, if the *de-facto* autonomy of not-yet encapsulated groups which is integral to the frontier's definition is replaced by the *negotiated* autonomy of groups which have, by force of an unprecedented break with the policies of the past, been recognized as a true part of the nation's patrimony.

In the concluding section, I examined the possibility that just such a major political change has actually occurred recently, leading to the silent, serial expiry of frontiers all over the globe. Since the beginning of the 1980s, and in accelerated form after 1989, a wave of democratic transitions and the ascendancy of the discourses of nature conservation and human and minority rights have resulted in a noticeable shift in power relations between indigenous people and outsiders on many state peripheries, guaranteeing that frontier processes do no longer continue in an untrammelled manner. Many states have adopted a more relaxed view of cultural diversity at their margins, and autonomy statutes for ethnic minorities have become more. At the same time, racist representations of indigenous people as lesser kinds of humans have been reported to be on the wane. And finally, the paradigmatic shift in development theory from modernization to conservation and sustainable development led to a re-appreciation of indigenous modes of production and the lifeways associated with them, and prompted the creation of protected areas from which indigenous communities – or so it is said – stand to benefit, as well.

Having laid out the arguments of the proponents of the recent "taming" of the frontier, I turned to those scholarly voices who have stressed continuities rather than changes in frontier management. Among the evidence that they cite is the continued importance of the calls of *Realpolitik* and the promise of high economic growth rates among many post-authoritarian politicians, indigenous peoples' sobering experiences with some of the hallmarks of democratic reform (such as decentralization), the rise to prominence of China and other ecologically-irreverent eastern powers, and widespread environmentalist mimikry among most governments. Furthermore, a plausible claim has been made that the new ecological paradigm may have *strengthened* rather than weakened existing regimes of predatory resource extraction. By continuing to outlaw traditional indigenous livelihood systems and displacing people to make room for national parks, many countries across the globe give the lie to the notion of a new dawn for the erstwhile victims of frontier expansion. Maybe, therefore, the fact that we are living in an age of democracy, human rights and environmental protection does not make all that much of a difference for people and things at the margins of the state. It may not be the silliest idea, after all, to assume that the frontier's past is at the same time also its present and its future.

Notes

- 1 For a more detailed definition, see section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier'.
- 2 The formulation is Patricia Nelson Limerick's (1987:20).
- 3 Prior to 1893, the story of the settlement of North America had emphasized the European tradition, which ascribed the nation's foundations to the "germs" of European, specifically Teutonic, society. In the forests of bronze-age Germany, so the theory went, the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons had developed forms of social and political organization that influenced the development of England and, by extension, the American colonies (Nobles 1997:5f.).
- 4 Not coincidentally, among the most famous lines of Turner's article was his definition of the frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner 1963:28).
- 5 Besides the fact – often overlooked in appraisals of Turner's significance – that the ideas which the Wisconsin professor broached were very much in the air in his time, it deserves to be mentioned that before him, non-American scholars had already theorized on the effects of an open settlement frontier on the national "mentality" and developmental history. Notable among them is above all the Russian historian of Zarist times, Sergei Mikhailovich Solo'vev (1820-1879), who – interesting enough – arrived at conclusions that were radically different from Turner's. Solo'vev proposed that the opportunity for easy movement to the steppes of Inner Asia and the tundra of Siberia had worked to the detriment of the intellectual and social evolution of Russian society, and the constant confrontation with hostile natives had helped the institutionalization of serfdom and led to a pervasive militarization of the body politic (Bassin 1993).
- 6 In defence of Turner, however, it should be pointed out that from the outset, his piece had been layed out as an impressionistic essay rather than a full-blown analytical edifice with a testable hypothesis and easily operationable definitions; in their zeal to disprove (or support) his concepts, many scholars lost sight of that fact (Savage and Thompson 1979:4).
- 7 Thus, nature often conspired against the settlers, as when droughts in the Great Plains sent many homesteaders back to the Middle West or East (Simonson 1963:18). More often, unscrupulous land speculators and railroad monopolists forced them off their land. By 1890, 24% of all American farmers were tenants on somebody else's land; in 1900, the figure was already at 35% (ibid.). A large number of North American settlers had to realize that "grim realities had turned their daydreams into nightmares" (Fite 1966:285), leaving them no freer than penniless mill workers or indentured rural labour. They shared this experience with pioneers on many later settlement frontiers (see e.g. Edgerton 1983:156 on Bukidnon province, Mindanao, the Philippines, and Cowell 1990:122-128 on the Brazilian Amazon).
- 8 Two loose "schools" of American historians are connected with the attack on the ethnocentrism and racism of Turner's master narrative. The so-called "New Indian History", whose main works appeared in the 1960s and 1970s (see e.g. Forbes 1962, Jacobs 1971 and 1973, Jennings 1975) endeavored to present a Native-American perspective of events. It prepared the ground for the "New Western History" which embraced a multitude of themes, yet hesitated to endorse subaltern advocacy as explicitly as the "New Indian Historians". Today, "New Western History" is the dominant paradigm in American frontier studies (see Limerick 1987, 2000, Limerick, Milner and Rankin, eds., 1991, Cronon, Miles and Gitlin, eds., 1992).
- 9 The fact that from an Indian point of view, the savage lands of the Turnerian narrative did not get savage until the white folks arrived, is nicely captured in Nobles' (1997:12) ironic suggestion to redescribe Turner's frontier as "the meeting point where otherwise civilized people often exhibited savage behavior". Note, however, that neither before nor during the conquest, Native Americans qualified as saints of non-violence and passive resistance, and brutality – like nobility – was hardly the exclusive property of any side in the Indian Wars (Limerick 2000:44).
- 10 Looking back on millenia of well-documented history in his study area, China scholar Owen Lattimore quipped: "Communities with short histories (...) seem instinctively to seek to compensate for the shortness of their history by emphasizing the particularities of their society" (Lattimore 1962d:489).
- 11 "Manifest Destiny" was a political catch phrase coined in the middle of the 19th century, expressing the belief that by expanding from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean, the United States were fulfilling some sort of historical calling (see Borden 1970). Later administrations used the slogan to justify other territorial acquisitions of the young nation, e.g. on Cuba and the Philippines towards the end of the 19th century.
- 12 In fact, the environmental consequences of mobility and "development" went not unremarked by Turner, either, when he explored the dynamics and characteristics of the American settlement frontier. He rightly stated that the allure of the frontier was the availability of natural resources – beasts for the hunter and trader, immense grasses for the rancher, and virgin land for the farmer – and the financial windfalls to be made in a situation of limitless abundance, when only production costs, but not replacement costs of the respective resource had to be taken into account. While he felt no sense of berievement about the destruction of Native American societies in the course of frontier expansion, there are indications that Turner bemoaned the fact that the formative years of American history came at the price of irreparable environmental destruction (Turner 1920:18-22; Colombijn 1997:315f.).
- 13 However, recasting frontiers as sites of mutually shrewd interaction across porous ethnic boundaries, and thus "common worlds" of natives and colonists (see notably White's [1991a] notion of the "middle ground" and Aron's [1994] idea of the "intersection") carries the serious danger of downplaying the element of force, the unequal distribution of power and the larger context of conquest and colonization. As sane as it may be to refashion indigenous people as actors in their own right, we must not lapse into thinking of frontiers as "neutral, bicultural borderlands of peaceful give and take" (Friedmann 1996:14f.).
- 14 Other helpful sources on the etymology of the frontier notion are Kristof (1959) and Febvre (1973).
- 15 This formulation should not obscure the fact that such local processes of subjugation and exploitation are embedded in a context of global markets and the transnational forces of late capitalism.
- 16 The failure to notice the family resemblance between metropolitan and autochthonous "Southern" forms of colonialism, as Stevan Harrell (1995:36) points out, has serious political and moral implications. As most scholars have chosen to reserve the label "colonial" exclusively for the study of European colonial domination, the destructive consequences and problematic ideological foundations of autochthonous imperial projects are usually underrated by policy makers and the general public. Scholars working on lesser-known varieties of colonial processes, Harrell contends, must help prevent that the academic community prematurely close the case on the indictment of colonialism as a form of rule over the periphery: "[We] have it incumbent upon ourselves to begin making our voices heard in the growing scholarly community discussing civilizing projects generally; it would be ironic if a community dedicated to deconstructing the ethnocentric formulations behind its own colonialism ended up excluding colonialisms of other centers" (ibid.).
- 17 For a contrary point of view, see e.g. Klein's (1996), Limerick's (1987, 2000) and Nobles' (1997) argument for the persistence of the frontier in the American West.

- 18 Though I am aware that it is rather unusual for the author of an edited volume's introductory essay to base the definition of his central term on another contributor's article in the same volume, I decided to sacrifice established conventions for the sake of substance. Søren Hvalkof has simply said it better than all the others – myself included – whose definitions I considered using at one point or another during my long involvement with the frontier theme. I, however, took the liberty of adding a geo-political dimension to his stress on the rich resource endowment that makes frontier spaces attractive for outsiders.
- 19 Equally pertinent here is Norman Whitten's (1984:50) formulation according to which a frontier, while also being an area unto itself, is in essence "a region defined by a distant centrality. Today that distant centrality has two dimensions: nationality and statehood".
- 20 See e.g. Li (1999:12), stating that frontiers – while lying clearly within national boundaries – are areas "not fully enmeshed in state-defined institutions and processes". Somewhat less precise and less convincing when applied to the age of the nation-state, Ferguson and Whitehead (2000:3) refer to areas "continuously affected by the proximity of a state, but not under state administration". The *autonomy* with which I am crediting frontier-dwelling indigenous communities is indicated by 1) the perpetuation of autochthonous notions of power undergirding local leadership practices and social control (Whitten 1984:55-60, 1985:179-187); 2) the persistence of local systems of conflict management; 3) the limited penetration of market relations, or, put differently, an incomplete process of "peasantization" (Helms 1969); and 4) the persistence of collective identities rooted in distinctive lifeways, cosmologies and ontologies.
- 21 Frontiers have also been classified according to the dominant commodity exploited ("agricultural frontier", "mining frontier", "coffee frontier", "soja frontier", "logging frontier", etc.), or defined in terms of their dominant institutions ("military frontier", "mission frontier", etc.) or occupational type ("trapper's frontier", "farmer's frontier", "miner's frontier", etc.) (see e.g. Hennessy 1981:11).
- 22 Indeed, contemporary development planners often open frontiers of settlement with the more or less explicit purpose of providing a labour pool for existing or planned extractive ventures in the colonization area. A notable example for such "multi-purpose" frontier colonization was (and still is) the Indonesian *transmigrasi* programme (see e. g. Hoshour 1997, 2000).
- 23 Thus, the long list of natural resources extracted between the 17th and 21st century by invaders in indigenous territories of the Brazilian Amazon includes (in chronological order) gold, quinine, rubber, Brazil nuts, petroleum and kaolin, and gold again (Little 2001:234).
- 24 Inasmuch as, in this instance, the frontier is managed in ways that enhance its qualities of deterrence against a neighbouring state, it becomes a "frontier of separation". If, on the other hand, an area's physical qualities and a state's way of managing it enable trade, commerce and social relations between adjacent state polities, it is referred to as a "frontier of contact" (see Prescott 1987:43 and Haines 2004:548).
- 25 This tallies well with Aihwa Ong's (1999:217) observation that contemporary states of the developing South deploy power differentially across the national territory, and do not invest equally in all of its parts. Sovereignty is, in her words, "graduated", as different sectors of the population are subjected to "different regimes of valuation and control" and are accorded "different kinds of rights, discipline, caring, and security" by the ruling state elites. For present-day Malaysia, she identifies – beside the frontier ("aboriginal periphery" in her diction) –, five more "zones of graduated sovereignty": The low-wage manufacturing sector, the illegal labor market, the refugee camp, the cyber corridor, and the growth triangle (ibid.:218).
- 26 However, this formulation should not be taken to imply that the unity of purpose and overlap of interests between the state and settler society are absolute, unconditional and unchanging.

- For more on this, see my discussion of agency and accountability at the frontier in this section below.
- 27 It should be noted, however, that the authors, while suggesting a similar meaning to the one advanced here, prefer the term "tribal zone" to the notion of the frontier.
- 28 See also section 'How to Recognize a Frontier when You Meet One', part e), for a more detailed account of Fulcher's findings.
- 29 See also section 'How to Recognize a Frontier...', part h), note 71.
- 30 For a more detailed discussion of the role of settlers in territorial expansion and other state designs, and a closer look at the debate on migrants and deforestation, see section 'How to Recognize a Frontier...', part c).
- 31 In American measurement units 2 persons/mile².
- 32 Just how vain it is to tie frontier conditions to an absolute demographic threshold, is indicated by the fact that the US census authorities themselves moved that threshold from one census report to the other. While in 1890, they considered densities of 0-0,8 persons/kilometer² as indicative of frontiers, for the period 1870-1914 2-5,4 persons/kilometer² were deemed appropriate (see Wishart, Warren and Stoddard 1969, cited in Lamar and Thompson 1981a:8, note 17).
- 33 At least for shifting cultivation, the dominant mode of cultivation under traditional circumstances. In his influential study on integral shifting cultivation systems, Harold Conklin (1961) estimated the carrying capacity at 27-34 people/km².
- 34 Thus, Paul Little (2001:1) for instance has population expansion built into his very definition of frontiers, characterizing them as "areas (...) that experience accelerated rates of *demographic*, agricultural, or technological change" (*italics mine*).
- 35 A case in point would be the Rio San Juan at the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. One and a half centuries ago, the Rio San Juan – situated at the isthmus between the Caribbean and Pacific coast – was the fastest connection from Europe and the southern and eastern parts of the United States to the Californian gold fields. At the time, state-of-the art steamboats plied the route several times a day, transporting hundreds of would-be gold diggers. Today, travelers on the river have to see to it not to miss the lone, half-weekly, run-down boat. While it takes a contemporary traveler 56 hours to cross the isthmus, Mark Twain, traveling at the heels of the fortune-seekers, needed only 40 hours for the same journey (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005g). In frontier days, then, the Rio San Juan was probably more densely populated and more "developed" than it is today.
- 36 Numerous, of course, are cases where the region attracts extra attention of the military authorities because of the presence of indigenous resistance movements or daily range wars between settlers and indigenous people. Where political or territorial conflicts are seen to present a challenge to "national security", military and police presence may be raised to extraordinary levels. Militarization is also common at frontiers in proximity to state borders (see below).
- 37 Although millions of citizens worldwide would rather see fewer than more civil servants in their lives, their absence at the frontier impairs the state's chances of achieving legitimacy among frontier dwellers. While in military terms, the state "may be a significant force to reckon with" at its margins, writes Sanjib Baruah (2002:4178) of Northeast India, "it remains a remote entity, of limited relevance to urgent everyday needs, (...) and with little claim to the hearts and minds of the people".

- 38 The fact that their construction is often sponsored by private interests is only one among several things that makes roads an excellent indicator of frontiership. Roads that have been driven into the indigenous periphery often continue to bear the signs of frontier expansion long after they were built, epitomized in the customary practice of naming settlements along their course prosaically after the number of kilometers (or miles) that separates them from the road's point of origin. Thus, people get born and die in settlements such as 'Kilo 13' ('kilometer 13'), or '100 Mile'. My thanks for having drawn my attention to this point go to Irina Wenk.
- 39 Virtually all settler nations trace their origins (and national mythologies) back to the exploits of such frontiersmen. Among the more famous specimen are the trackers and pathfinders of the US-American West, the French-Canadian *coureurs de bois*, the *voortrecker* stockfarmers of the Cape Colony, the *cosacks* who spearheaded the advance of Tsarist Russia into Siberia, the *gaucho* cattlemen of the Argentinian pampa and the *bandeirantes*, the Brazilian expeditionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries who sought slaves and gold.
- 40 Thus, when anthropologist Søren Hvalkof (also represented in this volume) made his first appearance in the town of Atalaya on the Tambo river, the owner of the hotel where he stayed received him with the exclamation: "Welcome to the Republic of Atalaya!" (Hvalkof 1998:88).
- 41 Interestingly, the suggestion that colonists were historically indeed pawns in the game of state rulers is for example supported by the etymology of the French word '*pionnier*' which seems to derive from old French '*pion*', the lowest of chess figures (DeKoninck 1996:233).
- 42 The estimate is based on figures from one of the best-evaluated programmes of guided population transfer, the Indonesian *transmigrasi* scheme, which is held to be representative for such programmes in general (Colchester 1993a:6).
- 43 See e.g. Gray (1987:311ff.) who documents "hardline" and "soft-line" perspectives among the colonists pushing into the ancestral domain of the Harakmbut of the Madre de Dios area in the Peruvian *montaña*. The latter, for instance, does not outrightly deny indigenous rights to land and resources. It holds, however, against ethnohistorical proof that the Harakmbut had migrated to the area quite recently, and therefore their claims to the land were not automatically superior to those of the colonists.
- 44 The quote is: "I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from them, if that's what you're asking. Our so-called stealing of this country from them was just a matter of survival. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it from them" (John Wayne, in Lewis 1971:82, quoted in Fleming Mathur 1979:121).
- 45 For reasons of space, I have not listed here those cases where state authorities misread – with equally serious consequences – social and ergological traits of indigenous cultures; the subject of traditional housing styles may exemplify this. In Suharto-time Indonesia, the state targeted the traditional longhouses of the Dayak – where these still existed – for elimination, on the grounds (among others) that they were reminiscent of "communism" (Dove 1985:29). In Vietnam, where the state is pursuing a policy of sedentarizing shifting cultivators, the authorities have classified many groups' traditional bamboo or thatch houses as "shabby" and "provisional" structures, with the result that the groups in question were enlisted in resettlement programmes. The background to this seemingly bizarre consequence of administrative prejudice is that the official definition of "nomadism" hinges on the "permanence" of a group's vernacular house type (McElwee 2004:208, note 21).
- 46 It is in fact possible to argue that not only indigenous ways of life are invisible to the eye of state elites and the average citizen, but indigenous societies as a whole, and, indeed, the

- frontier zone as a region. Because frontiers are "zones of not yet" (Tsing 2005:28) which still have to be made to resemble the national core, they usually fail to be represented in the iconography of the state, as Little (2001:47) demonstrates for Ecuador. The country's national flag shows a snow-covered Andean peak that represents the ancient civilizational centres of the altiplano; its waters flow down into the wide coastal plain, the country's principal agricultural and industrial region. The Amazon Basin which is located behind the Andes range and makes up the largest – if most despised – part of Ecuador's cultural diversity, is strikingly absent on that stylized map of the nation (Little 2001:47).
- 47 Throughout the Brazilian Amazon, the practice is known as "double baptism".
- 48 *Grilagem* is a related trick which consists in leaving a land deed to crickets who in time will make it look venerably old.
- 49 *Posse* is a tenurial right guaranteed by the Brazilian constitution; it stipulates that a squatter (*posseiro*) has the legal right to any land he has cultivated and lived on for more than five years, regardless of the fact that he lacks a title deed (Cowell 1990:139, 145).
- 50 Foweraker's account is by no means outdated; in 2004, the *Economist* ran an article (*The Economist* 2004) that suggested that the land frontier in the area has lost none of its momentum in the two decades since.
- 51 In fact, the literature on many colonial frontiers shows that negative stereotypes were not only attached to indigenous people, but to certain groups among the non-native frontier society, as well. On Latin America's cattle frontiers, for instance, the *llaneros*, *gauchos*, *charros* and other frontiersmen shared the Indians' precarious moral and legal status as the landed elites and urban middle class regarded them as outcasts who did not belong to civilization (Duncan Baretta and Markoff 1978:593-599). Their later celebration as early incarnations of national virtues often stands in sharp contrast to the reality of their social exclusion at the heyday of frontier expansion.
- 52 The conclusion, however, that only when state elites embrace ultimately western notions of "development" will they cast indigenous peoples as "uncultured" and "primitive", is erroneous. Orientalisms – phantasies about the mysterious otherness of non-western peoples – are not necessarily of European making. "Barbarians" – that is, societies constructed as being of lesser civility – have long peopled (and are very much still peopling nowadays) non-Caucasian frontier imaginings (see e.g. Tyler 2003:xi-xii and Harrell 1995 on China).
- 53 Historical parallels impose themselves. Many of the famous names in the history of colonialism experienced a phenomenal rise from dregs to kings thanks to their exploits overseas; the list includes, among others, Claudio Pizarro who, before leading the conquest of the Inka empire, had been a pig herdsman, and John Sutter, the domineering figure in the early phase of the settlement of California, who had left his native Switzerland a bankrupt merchant.
- 54 Ironically, from the perspective of the "savage" autochthones, it is often the intruders who appear "savage" and dangerously anti-social. Thus, the Buhid of Mindoro (Philippines) suspect Christian lowlanders of secretly devouring human flesh (Gibson 1986:199), and the Waorani of the Ecuadorian Oriente have long held that mestizo settlers are cannibals (Yost 1981:697). Many Dayak in Indonesian Kalimantan periodically experience headhunting scares following rumours that government authorities have commissioned killers to hunt for heads (Tsing 1996:199-202). To many of the less warlike indigenous frontier-dwelling groups, outsiders are by nature predators who threaten them with irrational violence, leaving dispersal, hiding out and appeasement as the only options for survival (ibid.:190-195).
- 55 To some authors, the combination of a frightening natural environment and scary native inhabitants is the core criterion for the presence of a frontier. Thus, as Patricia Limerick

- (1987:25) has formulated, the moment when a physical frontier environment starts to attract rather than deter people, and the local "savages" are reconstructed as fascinating and picturesque, the frontier has expired.
- 56 Contemporary examples of savage settler strategies for frontier expansion are recounted in von Graeve 1989:46-59, 81-135; and Cowell 1990:93-135.
- 57 Yet, racism itself is still a phenomenon to be reckoned with in many places. In South America, for instance, racist contempt for indigenous people is rife in the bureaucracy and the general population alike. In Colombia, white urbanites can be heard regretting in private that the Spanish conquerors stopped short of exterminating indigenous peoples wholesale, confiding that they consider the survivors a liability for the country's "development" (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2006c). In Ecuador, local-level civil servants of the Ecuadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform and Colonization (IERAC) refuse to carry out demarcation and land titling activities on behalf of the Shuar although required by law, justifying their obstruction with the argument that native "animals" are unworthy of any kind of state attention (Corry 1985:65).
- 58 On the notion of the "moral community" in general and exclusion from access to it as a basis for differential treatment, see Opatow 1990.
- 59 For a South American example for the leveling of power differentials as a result of settler beliefs in indigenous magic, see Salomon 1983 (quoted in Atkinson 1992:315).
- 60 Forest conversion by soja planters is so rapid that the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama estimates that by 2020, the forests in the Amazon may be diminished by 40% on account of it (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2003a). The indirect fall-out of the soja boom may be just as fearful, as the main producer, Brazil, seeks a road connection through so-far untouched areas that will link it with coastal ports at Peru's Pacific coast, and thence to China, the main consumer of Brazilian soja (*The Economist* 2005:53).
- 61 While this is the general trend, counter-examples do exist, concerning indigenous peoples involved in protracted rebellions, such as a number of Burmese minorities and certain sections of the peoples of the Cordillera in the Philippines. In these cases, it can be argued, we are presently still witnessing state campaigns of military conquest motivated (at least partly) by the desire to secure access to so far uncontrolled land and natural resources. For such an argumentation, see Bryant 1996, 2001 on the Burmese Karen.
- 62 Cowell investigated in the Serra dos Pacaas Novos in Rondônia, and the people concerned were the Uru Eu Wau Wau.
- 63 Tellingly, an often-quoted single-criterion definition of frontiers is Duncan Baretta's and Markoff's (1978:590) who describe them as "places where no one has an enduring monopoly of violence".
- 64 For America's Trans-Mississippi-West, Richard White (1991b:328-351) has provided an overview of prevalent types of violence which can serve as a guidepost for the systematic research of forms of violence at contemporary frontiers in the developing world; he distinguishes personal violence; vigilante violence; social banditry; race riots; economic conflict; class conflict; and ethnic genocide. In a clear break with conventional frontier historiography, he stresses the central place of institutionalized violence by the military against Native Americans at the cost of violence between pioneers (and between pioneers and criminal outlaws) in defence of rights, person and property. For critical studies of the subject, see also Slotkin 1973, 1992; Hine and Faragher 2000, Hoefle 2004.
- 65 A civilian auxiliary force recruited and armed by the military, known for its gruelling human rights record.
- 66 The armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), fighting since the late 1960s against unequal land distribution and political oppression.
- 67 An automatic rifle, the standard army weapon in the Philippines in the 1980s.
- 68 Corresponding to US\$ 30 at today's rates.
- 69 The same, of course, holds true for the violence perpetrated by the insurgency movements. Indeed, in the view from the state's margins, anti-state violence and violence by soldiers and police are often merged and their respective operators lumped together in the same moral category. The perspective from the frontier, then, may stress that armed outsiders, irregardless of their mandate, are unpredictable, predatory interlopers who can only be placated or fled (see e.g. Tsing 1996:190-195).
- 70 According to one count, the three states of Manipur, Assam and Tripura all report between 30 and 35 active militant organisations (Baruah 2002:4178).
- 71 The authorities' reluctance to reign in overbearing, violent wildcat miners or illegal loggers is more difficult to explain, as the state has not made any investments in their presence at the frontier. In an especially appalling case of state negligence in the face of atrocities committed against indigenous frontier-dwellers, thousands of *garimpeiros* (freelance gold miners) were tolerated for months inside the reserve of the Yanomami in Roraima (Brazil) in spite of evidence that they were leaving a trail of disease and violence. *Garimpeiro* depredations peaked in July 1993 when the village of Hashimu was attacked by miners, leaving 16 people dead (Albert 1994; see also my foregoing discussion of the issue in the section 'Two or Three Things I Know about the Frontier').
- 72 Although it almost seems too trivial to mention, violence at the frontier is, of course, gendered violence, as Anna Tsing (2005:41) has correctly observed. Commenting on the South Kalimantan (Indonesia) logging and mining bonanzas, she states that frontiers bring an inpour of men who seek quick profit, reveling in the enactment of "wildness". The clandestine, predatory and violence-ridden economy of frontier extractivism begets a climate of exalted masculinity, "a masculinity that spreads and saturates itself with images and metaphors, amulets, stickers of naked women, stories based on the confusion between rape and wild sex" (ibid.:40). Logging camps, the compounds of mining companies and frontier towns in general are brimming with men "forever talking deals, opportunities, and prices in the sped-up time of the chase" (ibid.:39). To survive in an arena thus charged with wildness, masculine magic and charisma are required, and illicit sex with native women or nights with prostitutes are the prizes which sojourning on these frontiers holds out to those who dare brave them.
- 73 In his spirited analysis of Indian state policies in the remotest northeastern parts of its territory, the former North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA), Baruah describes how New Delhi, energized by Chinese territorial ambitions, undertook to tie the territory closer to the Indian body politic. The strategy it chose to "nationalize" that frontier space was essentially two-pronged: implanting national political institutions and infusing "development" and a "developmentalist" mentality among leaders and common people. I am twisting his concept somewhat by adding two more sets of policies which, as I would contend, can often be detected in nation- and state-building endeavours at the frontier: cultural assimilation and sponsored or facilitated settlement (colonization).
- 74 I would like to stress here that the extension of institutions of governance across the periphery is not necessarily predicated on the use of force; indigenous elites are often given stakes in this process. Through rents that buy their consent, symbolic incentives or genuine participation in local decision-making processes, indigenous leaders learn to picture themselves from the perspective of the national centre rather than that of their immediate kin or larger ethnic groups (Rutherford 1996:583).

- 75 Not all forms of nationalism recur on shared historical memory, tradition, mores, religion and language as the basis for membership in the nation (so-called "cultural nationalism"). An alternative model which liberal democracies in the North are claiming to have espoused, is "civic nationalism". Under "civic nationalism", the state refrains from making the adoption of certain cultural patterns the criterion for entry into the nation, demanding a commitment to shared political institutions, political practices and values instead (Ignatieff 1993:185; Fine 1999:149f.; Sabhlok 2002:33).
- 76 At a rhetorical level, however, many nation-states in the developing South acknowledge and even celebrate cultural diversity, as evidenced by national mottoes such as Indonesia's "*bhinneka tunggal ika*" ('unity in diversity') (see e.g. Rutherford 1996:583). Still, most of these official confirmations of pluriethnic and pluricultural realities concentrate on the picturesque and folkloristic aspects of indigenous culture, and do rarely imply the granting of political concessions on the basis of cultural difference.
- 77 High on the state index of reprehensible customs and other cultural forms are, for instance, polygyny, life in large communal houses instead of single-family dwellings, the communal, potlatch-type feasting of the type common in rank societies, and the ceremonial consumption of alcohol (see e.g. Dove 1988 on Indonesia).
- 78 To the extent that the homogenization engineered by the state produces human suffering on a vast scale (among indigenous communities), destroys valuable resources of humankind (cultural diversity), and damages the state's body politic, it may justly be called "pathological". Heather Rae's (2002) notion of "pathological homogenization", coined to describe violent politics of exclusion from Spain's expulsion of the moors in the 15th century to the ethnic purges in the Balkans of the early 1990s, fits well the indigenous experience of forced assimilation and exclusion from membership in the nation. As I have tried to show in point (e) above, frontiers resonate universally with racist ascriptions of "primitivity" and "savagery" to those about to be displaced by the intruders, and it is these ascriptions which are at the bottom of the cultural and ethnic hierarchies put in place as the "politics of nationalizing space" unfold.
- 79 See section 'How to Recognize a Frontier:...', part c).
- 80 Thus, the monopoly of power which Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) held since 1929, was broken in 2000, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was denied another presidential term in 1988 (but stayed on as Army Chief of Staff until 1998), and the region's longest-serving dictator, Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay, was deposed in a coup in 1989. Throughout Latin America (with the possible exception of Guatemala), the influence of the armed forces in politics was substantially reduced during the late 1980s and 1990s.
- 81 In chronological order, the Marcos dictatorship fell in the Philippines in 1986, Vietnam and Laos adopted the economic and partially political *Doi Moi* reforms and the New Economic Mechanism after 1986, Thailand received its first fully-elected democratic government in 1988, Malaysia started to evolve into a multi-party democracy with the appointment of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2003. Indonesia saw the collapse of the autocratic Suharto regime in 1998, and East Timor won its independence from Indonesian occupation in 2002.
- 82 I am referring to the Zapatista uprising in early 1994, and the blockades by Ecuadorian Indians of streets and the national parliament in Quito which led to the ouster of President Mahuad six years later, in early 2000.
- 83 According to Church investigations, only a handful of cases from among the hundreds of murders of agricultural labourers, small farmers, peasant organizers and NGO activists who

had come to their aid in Pará between 1971 and 2004 were properly investigated. In only nine cases were the murderers brought to court, and just three of them were found guilty and sentenced (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2005f).

- 84 Thus, for instance, indigenous discursive positions stressing the singularity of indigenous modes of relating to the environment have not gone unchallenged. In metropolitan settler societies, their claim to be natural-born conservationists practicing healthier forms of environmental management than other groups, has increasingly come under fire. Similarly, the claim to a spiritual connectedness with the land, another standard of contemporary indigenous self-representations, has been openly contested in the past two decades. White Australians, for instance, who objected to the transfer of Ayers Rock to aboriginal ownership – effected in 1985 – denied that the site was any more sacred to aboriginals than it was to the average non-aboriginal Australian, alluding to the "mystical and sacred communion" which many of the latter felt connecting them with the rock (Whittaker 1994:317ff.). In post-colonial states of the developing South, environmentalism and the indigenous rights discourse have never climbed to a similar, near-hegemonic position as in the developed North.
- 85 The experience of recent years has shown that without creating stakes for the local population, protected areas cannot be defended against encroachment and defilement (Gawora 1999:43f., quoted in Bürgin 2006:n.p.).
- 86 Reforestation projects are a regular component of park management practices in Thailand.
- 87 Corresponding to 7,5 US \$ at today's rate.
- 88 As I was rushing to complete the article, on 13 December 2006, a local Botswanan court surprised the world by declaring the government's eviction of the San illegal. While the San organisation that had fought the case celebrated the decision as a historical victory, it seems unclear at present whether the relocated population will indeed be allowed to return to the area of the game reserve, as the national government might appeal the ruling (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 2006d).

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- 2005c. "Brasiliens Regenwald weiterhin bedroht: Schönfärberische Darstellung der Regierung", 30 August, p. 5.
- 2005d. "Brasiliens Atombombenpläne: Enthüllungen über Projekte der Generäle", 31 August, p. 5.
- 2005e. "Die Buschmänner müssen die Zentral-Kalahari verlassen: Ultimatum der botswanischen Regierung", 14 September, p. 4.
- 2005f. "Urteil zu Auftragsmord in Brasilien: Grossgrundbesitzer räumt Missionarin aus dem Weg", 14 December, p. 3.
- 2005g. "Abenteurer zwischen Nord- und Südamerika: Wie einst Mark Twain auf der berühmten 'Gold-Route' quer durch Nicaragua", 15 December, p. 11.
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3 COLONIZATION AND CONFLICT ON THE AMAZON FRONTIER: Dimensions of Interethnic Relations in the Peruvian Montaña

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photo: Søren Hvalkof

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Introduction

The present essay attempts to demonstrate how a frontier is constructed through time and how the historical imperatives of interethnic relations and social relations of production prefigure the way in which all social interaction and dynamics take place. As the frontier concept is scrutinized by Danilo Geiger in his respective chapter in the present volume, we will limit our discussion of the same to a summary of its denotation in the present context. A frontier is based on difference – social difference and confrontation, to be precise, between two (or more) social and cultural systems articulated in a physical space holding certain contested values. In our case we are dealing with a frontier of colonization characterized by:

- a geographical space holding natural resources and economic potentials for human exploitation and contested by two major and different social formations, i.e. a dominating expanding national society and culture and a locally-situated, non-dominant indigenous society.
- a conspicuous asymmetrical and unequal power relationship between the two social groups and societies: the invaders and the invaded.
- a constant attempt by the dominating part to take control of the physical space and its resources, i.e. to take over territorial control by colonizing it and subduing the local indigenous society.
- a latent social conflict as result of the colonization effort, the inequalities it produces and the indigenous society's reaction against it as it attempts to defend itself and uphold local control

- the persistent attempt by the colonizing society to dehumanize the local indigenous society and culture and rationalize its expansion and domination.
- recurring social and interpersonal violence and the lack of moral and ethical accord.
- a cyclic pattern of production and reproduction of the frontier characteristics.

And in the contemporary historical context we could add:

- malfunctioning state institutions or their total absence as a result of a weak, disinterested or failed state, giving way for local power elites' control over decentralized state institutions.

The article revolves around a specific case study, sketching the history and changing contexts of indigenous - settler relations in and around the Gran Pajonal in the Central Peruvian Amazon¹. The case illustrates the ways in which power relations between particular indigenous groups and non-indigenous settlers have been changing over time through Spanish colonization in the 18th century and Peruvian expansion in the 19th, 20th and early 21st centuries. The case also highlights the ways in which these relations were radically altered as the impact of international rights discourses generated new local adaptations in the accelerating process of globalization and international integration.

Although an outline of the Gran Pajonal's history since the Spanish conquest will be given, a particular emphasis is put on the processes of modernization as they have been unfolding during the last century. I try to show the cyclical pattern of attempted conquest, collapse and reconstruction which seems to spiral through history, creating a latent frontier of colonization, a continuum of discontinuities, hence establishing its own rationale. It is the intention to identify some of the parameters of change in this dramatic history, making it possible to outline some of the strategic options we have at hand for intervention and resolution to the growing conflicts on a global scale between indigenous groups and encroaching settlers in tropical forest environments.

The background

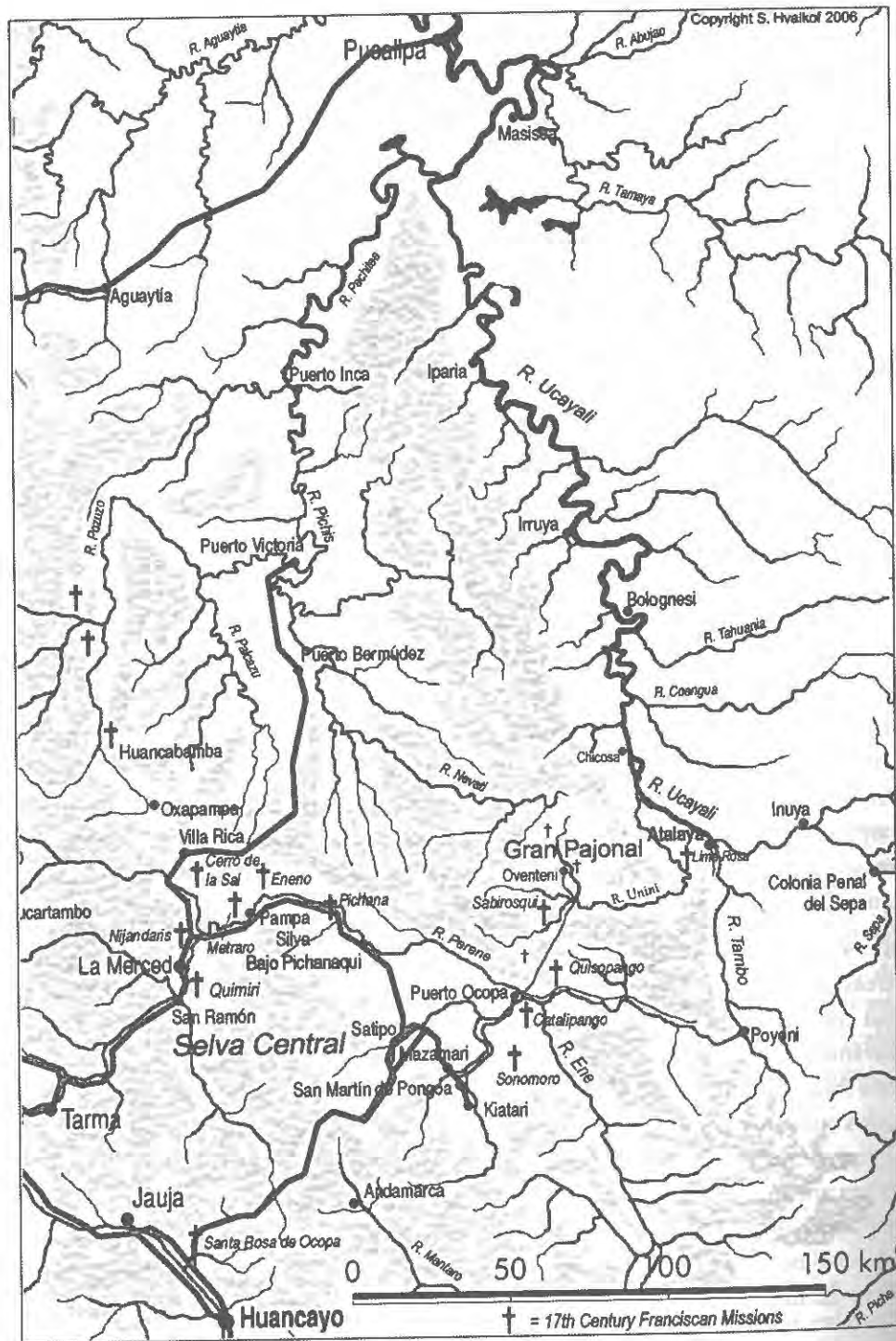
The setting

The case focuses on the relationships between the indigenous population, the Ashéninka, and the peasant settlers of mainly Andean descent, so-called *colonos*, in a tropical forest area in Eastern Peru known as Gran Pajonal. Gran Pajonal is a high-lying montane tropical forest area, sharply bounded on all sides by fast running

tributaries to the main Amazon river system. The area rises like a plateau with average altitudes between 1.000 and 1.300 meters, but with mountain peaks on the edges reaching above 1.800 meters. It forms part of the vast *montaña* region, which is made up by the eastern slopes of the Andean mountain chains that stretch out into the Amazon basin, forming a U-shaped transitional area, extending from Colombia in the north to Bolivia in the south, between the high Andean mountain ranges to the West and the enormous low-lying Amazon river basin to the east. The *montaña* forests are characterized by the highest diversity of indigenous peoples in South America; the region's social dynamics are determined by the compounded influence of the agricultural colonization frontier expanding from the Andes in the west, and the extractive frontier pushing into the Andean foothills from the lower Amazon to the east, creating numerous conflicts over land and control of natural resources.

Situated in east-central Peru, Gran Pajonal forms one section of this geographical formation, covering approximately 4.000 km². The plateau of Gran Pajonal is not conforming to the usual image of a flat tableland, but has a very rugged appearance, caused by fast-running rivers and streams cutting deep gorges and ravines. None of the rivers draining the area is navigable, and Gran Pajonal is difficult to access. Until very recently, no roads penetrated the mountain forests, and the only logistic solutions were to either walk in or go on horseback on cattle trails, or fly in with small planes to the settler colony of Oventeni which has a long airstrip, or to one of the smaller airstrips in the indigenous communities. A new logging road has been constructed in 2004, connecting Oventeni to the agricultural frontier of the *montaña* to the west and another pushing east, linking the area with the larger navigable river systems of the upper Amazon at the town of Atalaya, a former rubber trading station. The roads are only passable in the dry season from April to November.

The name Gran Pajonal means "Great Grassland" or "Grand Savanna", referring to the most peculiar characteristic of the zone, the existence of open natural grass areas in the forest. The grassland (*pajonal* in Spanish), is not one continuous area but consists of many hundred glades of varying size in the forest and a few larger savanna areas of several thousand hectares. Still, the natural grass only constitutes less than 5% of the total coverage of the major Gran Pajonal area (Hvalkof 2006). The grasslands are a result of a combination of acid soil quality, altitude and low seasonal temperatures and human practice through centuries (cf. Scott 1979). The *pajonal* zones are concentrated in the central and most densely-settled sector on ridges and hill areas above 1000 m. The indigenous Ashéninka maintain the savannas open by seasonal burning of the grass for reasons of esthetics, to keep pest and snakes away from the houses and to sustain an open view for security reasons.



Map 3.1 : Selva Central



Map 3.2 : Study area

The people and the community

Two different populations inhabit the Gran Pajonal: The indigenous Ashéninka who are the native inhabitants of the area and a group of settlers, so-called *colonos*, of mixed ethnic backgrounds, but mostly from Andean rural society. Although these settlers come from different geographical regions, they generally identify themselves as *colonos* or, alternatively, *serranos*, (Andean) highlanders. As will be discussed below, the Peruvian *colono* category embraces qualities, identities and values quite different from those of the Brazilian *colonos* as presented in Marina Campos' article in this volume.

The Ashéninka form a subgroup of the larger Arawakan-speaking² conglomerate of the central montaña of Peru, composed of 7 ethno-linguistic groups. The core of this conglomerate was termed "Campa" in the earlier historic and ethnographic literature, jointly referring to several dialect subgroups of which the Ashéninka is but one, and closely related to the more numerous Asháninka (cf. Hvalkof and Veber 2005:99-113). The generic term "Campa" has gradually gone out of use due to its derogatory connotation and is today considered politically incorrect. No new generic term for the Campa core has been invented, thus each dialect group is referred to specifically by their auto-denomination. The Arawakan conglomerate totals around 110.000 persons today³ characterized by a rapid population increase, and is the largest ethno-linguistic group in the Peruvian tropical lowlands, and possibly in the entire Amazon. The Gran Pajonal Ashéninka count around 6.500 persons today (2002 estimate), distributed across some 36 Native Communities (Comunidades Nativas)⁴. The communities' territories are all demarcated and collectively titled in the name of each community, all relatively autonomous as guaranteed by current Peruvian legislation and the country's constitution. Most of the communities now have their own bilingual primary school, a small health post and several have their own multi-channel short-wave radio for communication with neighboring indigenous communities and organizations in adjacent areas. Together the communities constitute the Ashéninka Organization of Gran Pajonal, the OAGP, one of the best-functioning of regional indigenous organizations with a strong and continuous leadership. The communities are all adjacent to each other, forming a large, unbroken territory.

The *colono* population is concentrated in the center of the area in and around the old mission and settler colony of Oventeni. Today there are around 650 settlers representing some 120 families. While most of these settlers migrated to the area in the 1960s, a second generation of settlers born in Oventeni is now gradually taking over. These *colonos* are mostly of Andean descent, with their roots in Quechua-speaking peasant communities of the Central Andes. From an objective point of view this would imply that they themselves were of indigenous background, although with a quite different culture. However, they would never self-identify as indigenous. Most



Photo 3.1 : Ashéninka family having supper (Catoteni, Gran Pajonal), 1985 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

of the settlers would be classified as *cholos* in Peru, an ambiguous term with many meanings depending of the context of its use. The term can be anything from derogatory and racist over neutral and synonymous with the average lower class Peruvian, to a positive, almost loving term when put in diminutive or *femininum*. Basically, a *cholo* is a person with Andean peasant background who has defected from the constraints of the traditional Andean peasant community (which by definition is indigenous) and as an individual attempts to get integrated into mainstream national society. We could say that the person is a de-indigenized Indian. Because of the ambiguity of the term, most *colonos* would opt for the more neutral term *serrano*.⁵ However, it essentially has the same connotations of a rural Andean background. A smaller section of the settlers would rather be classified as Peruvian *mestizos* with backgrounds in Lima or other urban centers. A third group of *colonos* are the children of mixed marriages between Ashéninka and settlers. Their identities and loyalties vary, but they exhibit a growing tendency to support the indigenous cause. Thus the colonist society is not homogenous and there is a clear economic stratification with many poor and humble peasants and a few dominating and relatively wealthy cattle raisers. The *colonos* have no common organization, no union, no cooperatives and do not participate in any social movement as a group; they, however, take part actively in party politics before and after election, where public posts are filled by the winning party.

The village of Oventeni is the administrative center of Gran Pajonal, with a registrar's office, a primary and secondary school, a health clinic, potable water



Photo 3.2 : Lord of the Miracles: *Colono* procession in frontier town (Satipo, Selva Central), Oct. 2005 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

supply, a satellite TV dish, a 1.600 m airstrip and several small shops and trading posts. Most of the settlers live in or around the center, with their land scattered in the immediate vicinity. Today the political control with Oventeni is, interesting enough, in the hands of the Ashéninka organization, the OAGP. The center of the OAGP is in Ponchoni, a small community also with a small airstrip, situated only 15 minutes walk uphill from Oventeni, on a *pajonal* overlooking the colony.

Economy and production

The Ashéninka practice traditional rotational slash-and-burn horticulture, also characterized as “native agroforestry” (cf. Denevan and Padoch 1988). The system is based on the establishment of small swidden plots of an average size of 1/2 – 1 1/2 hectares which are planted with a variety of edible, commercial and utilitarian species in a very advanced intercropping system. The structure and composition of such a garden plot varies over time as the plot gradually reverts to forest. Thus every season has its specific composition of crops to harvest ending with perennial tree crops such as avocado trees, peach palms and nuts. The fallow cycle varies with different soils, locations and uses, but an average fallow period requires around 25 years before the

plot can be cleared again for a new garden. Normally a family prepares one new plot a year, always having several gardens in different stages in production in a cyclic pattern, in this way securing a permanent and varied food supply for household consumption. I have counted over 75 edible species and variants in one 1/2 hectare plot at a given point in time. Repeating the exercise 6 months later would have yielded another count and combination of species. The nuclear family constitutes the basic production unit for planning, clearing and sowing new garden plots, as well as for cultivating and maintaining them over time. There is obviously a gendered division of work and of ownership, but it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss these aspects in further detail (cf. Hvalkof and Veber 2005:173-179).

The primary production, i.e. the staples, is harvested within a two to three years period, after which the garden is allowed to re-grow gradually into secondary forest. The main staple is manioc, *yuca* in Spanish, supplemented by several starchy tubers like taro, sweet potato, lilac yams and plantains, most of which end their production cycle after approximately two to three years. Manioc is of enormous importance to the Ashéninka. They love it, and besides growing it in many different varieties, they process it into the “essence” of Ashéninka social life, the *masato*, the fermented indigenous manioc “beer”, which is the pride of any household and can be brewed in innumerable ways in combination with other ingredients. The fallow plot in regeneration, called *purma* in Spanish, is, however, still regarded as owned by the family member who first cultivated it. The fallow plots are still harvested for several perennial crops while regenerating to forest and are considered to be part of the system of production by the Ashéninka, whereas most non-indigenous observers just categorize it as non-productive forest re-growth.

A relatively new tendency of market-oriented production is the cultivation of high-quality coffee for export. The Ashéninka have adopted coffee as their favorite cash crop and have succeeded in adapting it to their integrated rotational cultivation system. As an integral part of their subsistence cultivation system, they produce it at costs which are quite low compared to neighboring *mestizo* coffee producers, making the Ashéninka not only much less vulnerable to market fluctuations, but also quite competitive. The income from coffee production is growing, but it still remains to be seen if it is viable in the long run. An interesting new initiative provides technical and organizational support for the production of organic “bird-friendly” indigenous coffee in four selected communities; the project was launched by the World Bank as part of a larger environmental program funded by the Global Environmental Facility. The substance and idea of this so-called bio-investment project is mostly an indigenous creation, promoted by the Ashéninka’s local organization, the OAGP.

The garden production is supplemented with hunting and gathering, which procures quite a significant percentage of high-quality protein. Fishing yields little

due to the lack of major rivers in Gran Pajonal, but does present an important supplementary source of protein at certain times of the year, when the fish migrate to spawn in the upper tributaries that originate in the area (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:182-217).

Besides cash income from coffee export, the Ashéninka barter or sell some of their subsistence produce to the settlers in Oventeni, from whom they get an extremely low price and are often cheated or lured with trinkets, cheap alcohol or other junk. They also work seasonally for the *colonos*, clearing forest for their cattle. Generally speaking, the traditional Ashéninka are very healthy people with few nutritional problems due to a varied diet and a very well-developed subsistence production. However, the closer they live to the colony, the more nutritional problems can be observed (cf. Hvalkof 2002, 2004; Torres 2004). Although cattle raising has been the driving force in all cycles of colonization in Gran Pajonal, cattle has never caught on as an alternative economic activity in the Ashéninka communities. Some families own a few heads here and there, but the activity is of no major economic importance. Curiously enough, however, horses seem to become new and growing production in the communities, and some individuals own a considerable number, representing a saving capital.

Unlike the indigenous economy, the settler economy of Oventeni is primarily based on cattle-raising on planted pastures. Tropical forest is cleared and pasture suited for cattle grazing, generally consisting of *Brachearia* species, is planted. Most of the heavy work of clearing forest, planting pasture and maintaining it to avoid re-growth into shrub forest, is done by underpaid Ashéninka labor. This exploitation has been going on since the first *colono* settlements were set up in the 1930s, but for several reasons this practice has changed over the recent years.

The cattle is either taken out overland to the nearest town, a trip of several days by foot, or slaughtered in Oventeni and flown out to the nearest market some 25 minutes flight time away. Cattle has also been transported by truck on the logging road, but the risk of injuries to the animals is high. Whichever way, the transportation costs are very high, and it is therefore not a booming business. Still it pays off due to the extremely cheap labor available. Part of the daily *colono* food consumption is produced in garden plots by Ashéninka peons or purchased from the indigenous producer. Payment may be in kind or cash, the former being the most common. Otherwise, groceries and other provisions needed by the settler colony have until recently been flown in by small planes, causing a high price level in Oventeni. This has now changed with the construction of the logging road connecting the colony with the larger Peruvian road network, making it much cheaper to transport food and merchandise in and out of the area. The drawback of this is that it is no longer viable for the small commercial air service companies to fly to Oventeni. Thus the air strip



Photo 3.3 : The colony of Oventeni (Gran Pajonal), Nov. 2005 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

has not been maintained for some time now and was recently closed by the national air traffic authorities. So, the irony is that because of the new road connection, a long-time *colono* dream, Oventeni remains isolated for almost five months every year, and completely inaccessible from December to February. Although the connectivity has improved for at least part of the year, the viability of the settler economy is still highly dependent on indigenous labor and production.

There is quite a marked economic differentiation and stratification of the *colono* society, with only 10 or less families owning larger herds of cattle, whereas the rest may have a few animals, but survives on a combination of subsistence production for household consumption, the cultivation of coffee and other cash crops, and trade with the indigenous population. The lowest stratum has intermarried with indigenous families, and often have an obvious indigenous background in the highland Quechua culture. This stratum increasingly identifies with the indigenous movement rather than the upper levels of the settler hierarchy. However, this tendency is ambiguous. The settler economy is much more vulnerable to market fluctuations and access to cheap external labor than the indigenous economy, the latter being geared towards self-sufficiency, with several buffer mechanisms in times of crisis.

Creating a frontier: The history of colonist-indigenous relations

The pre-conquest frontier

Viewed over time, the relationship and interaction between the two populations follows quite remarkable cycles, molded by a repetitive pattern of conquest, colonization, resistance, failure and abandonment, a pattern that can be traced up till today. The history of the frontier in the Peruvian Amazon presently seems to enter into yet a new cycle of aggressive extractivist activities, reflecting a reconfigured strategy of savage capitalism, but still following the well-known boom-and-bust cycles so distinctive for the Amazon frontier scenario (cf. Fisher 2000). In many regards the *montaña* offers almost ideal geographical conditions for the emergence of a frontier: It is an evident transitional zone between the Andean highlands, a dramatic mountainous landscape with snow-capped peaks, temperate climate, vertical rock walls, plateaus and deep valleys, and the Amazon lowland basin, with its lush tropical forest vegetation, its complex navigable river systems, its vast, flat and swampy floodplains, torrential rains, and hot and humid climate year round. The *montaña*, then, separates and at the same time connects two very different macro-ecosystems, each with its own environment, biologically as well as socially; each with distinctive social and cultural formations adapted to the environmental characteristics and with economies of completely dissimilar nature, as if they were almost two incompatible worlds. And in between you have the *montaña* representing the interface between the two worlds, shaped by the eastern slopes of the Andes, with the steepest and most rugged topography imaginable and at the same time covered with dense tropical rain forest, a combination that through history has appeared as an almost impenetrable barrier for explorers, *conquistadores* and missionaries, a marked frontier blocking the integration of the two different worlds. As the centers of power for historical and economic reasons were situated in the Andean complex to the west, the east with its mysterious jungles and manifest otherness remained a latent challenge to exploration, conquest and incorporation, establishing a perpetual frontier condition in the *montaña*.

However, there has always been contact between the two worlds. Archaeological evidence shows that migration, contact and trade between the two regions date back to pre-Columbian times (see e.g. García Jordan 1995, Lathrap 1970, Myers 1970 and 1983, Oberem 1967, Reeve 1994, Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988, Roman and Zarzar 1983, Santos-Granero 1987 and 1992, Taylor 1999). The Inka Empire made several attempts to colonize and incorporate the *montaña* region and establish logistic connections to the Amazon river system. We know that coca plantations for the production of the leaves which were central to both labor and ritual in the Andes, were established by the Inka in the *montaña* of southern Peru. Most of the pre-Columbian trading routes between the Andes and the *montaña* were established north and south of central Peru following lower mountain passes and river valleys running east. The central Peruvian

montaña had few penetrating routes; however, there was one notable trail, highly relevant for our context, leading to the so-called *Cerro de la Sal* (Salt Mountain) in the heart of the central *montaña*. This rock formation, famous for its rich salt deposits, constituted a center of exchange and trade with luxury items and salt and the focal point of trading routes connecting the Andes with the rest of the Amazon region. This salt mountain is situated relatively close to Gran Pajonal, a zone constituting a traditional trading nexus between the higher *montaña* and the Ucayali River connecting with the lower Amazon. There is historical and ethnographic evidence that one of the main salt trading routes passed through the grasslands, giving the indigenous inhabitants a privileged position in relation to the traffic (Bodley 1970, 1973; Schäfer 1988).

Yet none of the expanding pre-columbian states or political formations in the Central Andes succeeded in incorporating the *montaña* and its peoples in their realm. The indigenous *montaña* groups successfully resisted any attempts to subjugate them and in certain areas even expanded upwards towards the Andes (Taylor 1999:209). Over time a myth developed of inaccessible terrain blessed by hidden riches and cursed by fierce inhabitants of almost non-human character, a myth that was well-established before the Spanish conquest. The relationship between the Andean and Amazonian peoples in pre-conquest Peru has apparently been rather ambiguous, characterized on one hand by trading relationships which created social bonds and constructive exchange, and conflicts that generated enmities and cultural differentiation on the other hand. These ambiguities of complementarity and opposition, of cooperation and rejection, have been reproduced in other forms after the conquest and have up till today molded the social and cultural relationship between the highlanders and the lowlanders. The Spanish *conquistadores* and later the colonial regime easily adopted and manipulated these antinomies, and they came to be conceived as a challenge to European civilization. The frontier was there already, albeit in a rudimentary and mythical form, when the Spanish colonizers and missionaries arrived.

The colonial history of the western fringe of the Amazon has been described as an "... overall trend toward increased cultural homogeneity, a breakdown in macro systems and regional networks to the benefit of intermediate or purely local levels of organization, and a growing spatial, sociological, and symbolic distancing between upland and lowland societies" (ibid. 1999:208). This also applies to the central *montaña* of Peru, where the unfolding of this process gradually took the shape of recurrent cycles, a pattern to be described in the following sections.

First cycle: The colonial experiment

Spanish attempts to effectively penetrate the Andean foothills in central Peru, later known as the *Selva Central*, did not take place until well into the 17th century, a

100 years later than in the northern and southern *montaña*, an area explored early on by numerous gold seeking expeditions, and where the first Spanish colonies and missions were already established by the mid-16th century (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998:15). One of the reasons for the lack of early interest in the central Peruvian *montaña* may be explained by the absence of major population centers and economic activities in the neighboring Andean highlands. With the opening of silver mines in Cerro de Pasco in 1630, however, all this changed as these mines assumed an importance in South America which was second only to the famous silver mines in Potosí, Bolivia (ibid.:17, quoting Fisher 1977), attracting people, labor, capital and trade to the area. The missionary orders followed. According to a decree of 1550 by the Spanish viceroyalty, efforts for the colonization of the new lands to the east should be the responsibility of the catholic missions, not the military.

From the 1630s onwards Franciscan missionaries made several attempts to establish mission posts in the Chanchamayo Valley in the *montaña* east of the mining area. They all failed due to resistance from the local Asháninka and Yánesha. The Franciscans received competition from the Dominicans who invested in road construction that would allow access from the eastern Andes to the *montaña* and the Chanchamayo valley. The Dominicans eventually succeeded in setting up a mission station close to the Salt Mountain to facilitate the conversion of the indigenous groups living there. A few military expeditions were undertaken at the same time, but the soldiers abused the indigenous converts at the missions, causing much unrest, and the armed adventures were stopped by the viceroy after complaints from the missionaries. The intervention from Lima came too late, however. Sufficiently angered by the increasingly intrusive presence of the strangers, the Asháninka forced the Dominicans out in 1669 (Santos-Granero 1986:129). The colonization effort was continued by the Franciscans, who too failed after a few years, due to continued uprisings by the indigenous inhabitants of the area.

The process of early mission efforts was characterized by some of the same ambiguities which had already characterized the pre-conquest era. On the one hand, the Asháninka and Yánesha were interested in the resources and trade items that the strangers brought with them, particularly iron tools, but at the same time they resented the missionaries' attempts to take political and economic control, forcing native families into servitude at the missions. At the same time they were wary of the religious and moral impositions, and, not least, the epidemics which the new colonizers brought along (Santos-Granero 1987). It was not until the first decade of the 18th century that Franciscans backed by the Viceroy's soldiers succeeded in establishing themselves in several missions in the central Peruvian *montaña*, the Selva Central. These missions had Spanish colonists, *mestizos* and indigenous highlanders attached as settlers who operated in various trades and functions. *Haciendas* were established to secure a staple food supply and develop a plantation economy based on coca,

cocoa, coffee, annatto and sugar cane for export to the highlands. All this helped to secure territorial occupation and control. Maps were made and places renamed. The conquest of the central *montaña* seemed to be succeeding at last, the resistance tamed and the frontier consolidated. Gran Pajonal was next in line.

Rumors of great grasslands further to the east nourished Franciscans' dreams of establishing a cattle production center supplying the entire area and beyond with beef, and initiating an extended civilizing process through modern agro-colonization. The first attempt to colonize the Gran Pajonal came in 1732 following a general expansion of the colonial state into the *montaña* of Peru. The driving force in this colonization process was the Franciscan order and mission. The Spanish Crown and the Viceroy in Lima had granted exclusive rights to the Franciscans to explore and colonize the vast tropical woodlands in the Selva Central and eastward and Christianize and civilize the area's "savage tribes", backed by the colonial army. It is a very dramatic history of which we fortunately have a number of excellent records at hand from the different missionaries who worked there (e.g. Amich 1988; Izaguirre 1922-27)⁶.

With several mission stations and trading posts established, among groups of "Campa" (Asháninka and Yánesha) in the Upper Perené, rumors reached the Franciscans that told of large numbers of potential proselytes living in the grasslands behind the mountains and rocky barriers rising in the eastern horizon. The driving force behind several of these missions was the Franciscan father Juan de la Marca. Originally he was an industrious French engineer supposed to build a new, fortified harbor to serve the colonial capital of Lima, but the Viceroy changed plans and cancelled the project. His dismissal forced Juan de la Marca to join the Franciscan Brotherhood to survive. It is important to note that he was not just a missionary equipped with a Christian zeal, but an extraordinary and enterprising personality, fascinated with modern development, which to him was an integral part of Christian civilization. He had two main interests in the Gran Pajonal: one was to find a safe overland route of access to the main Amazon River to the east, and the other was to establish a center for food production and cattle-ranching in the rainforest, which would boost the mission's civilizing and colonizing endeavor.

Thus armed with information and contacts, the first Franciscan expedition entered the Gran Pajonal in 1732 with a local headman and trading partner as a guide. The first contact turned out to be a tremendous success, with several local headmen and their followers accepting baptism. Over the following few years several mission posts and cattle stations were established and foreign colonists contracted to establish themselves in the area now named Gran Pajonal, a designation symbolizing the potential for large-scale development which would reinforce the Franciscan fundraising effort in the colonies and in Europe. More Franciscan fathers settled in the Pajonal, and the local headmen began to feel that control was slipping to the

Europeans. From the records of the missionaries it is obvious that disagreements between the local Ashéninka and the colonists who included not only Europeans, but also highland peasants of indigenous and mixed background and Afro-Peruvian craftsmen, quickly became articulate (Izaguirre 1925, Ortiz 1961). The Ashéninka wanted access to metal tools, merchandize and technical innovations, horses and cattle in exchange for their conversion to Christianity, but they were not willing to be enslaved and abused in the process (Santos-Granero 1987, 1988).

The grand rebellion and the end of the first cycle

Discontent with the missions and the colonists increasingly spurred local uprisings and skirmishes throughout the Selva Central. Several transit routes were being closed and mission stations were attacked and burned by local indigenous groups through the first three decades of the 18th century. However, the Franciscans in Gran Pajonal kept passing positive reports on the situation to the colonial administration up to 1742, when the situation changed drastically (Ortiz 1961).

That year, a charismatic *mestizo* personality by the name of Juan Santos, escaping from a murder charge in the highlands of Cuzco, turned up in the Selva Central. Finding much indigenous discontent, he immediately organized a mass meeting at the fringe of the Gran Pajonal. Several thousand "Campa" joined the meeting, including Yánesha, Yine and even Pano-speaking Conibo from the Upper Ucayali, much to the surprise of the missionaries. During the meeting Juan Santos put himself in charge of a rebellion against the missions and colonizers. The Franciscans and their followers were given an ultimatum to leave the Gran Pajonal within two weeks, a request they followed immediately. Juan Santos soon adopted the surnames "Atahualpa Apu Inka" as his *nom de guerre*. We have only sparse information about him. He claimed to be of royal Inka descent and heir to the Inka throne. He was also a devout Christian, presumably raised by the Jesuit mission in Cuzco, the old capital of the Inka Empire. He had been traveling in Europe and Angola, and had a political vision of seceding from the Spanish crown and establish an independent, pan-Andean indigenous-*mestizo* state. He promised to help the indigenous population regain control of its territory, get rid of the Spaniards and secure a more reliable supply of iron tools and other merchandize than the Franciscans had been able to offer. His role as a provider of material goods seems to have been a strong factor in his success (Benavides 1986, Hvalkof and Veber 2005:126f.).

The rebellion spread like a wildfire. Soon, a well-organized indigenous militia was operating. Juan Santos moved his headquarters to the center of foreign colonization in the Chanchamayo valley outside of Gran Pajonal. In a short time the entire central Amazon of Peru was cleared of missions and colonists, and the entire

area came under the control of the indigenous communities under the leadership of Juan Santos Atahualpa and his indigenous militia. Several attempts were made by the colonial army to confront the rebels and re-conquer the region, but all military campaigns failed, and Juan Santos was never captured. His army even crossed the central Andean highlands and laid siege to several towns, apparently attempting to establish connection with another simultaneous uprising in Lima. Failing this he eventually withdrew to the Amazon forest.

Juan Santos disappears in the mid-1750s, leaving the central forest under indigenous control, impenetrable and uncolonized for another century. The indigenous movement which he led may be considered a precursor to the national war of liberation from Spain more than half a century later. It included successful efforts on the part of the indigenous population to establish a number of forges where the Ashéninka produced their own iron tools and weapons, thus reflecting their ideas about development and political agency (Santos-Granero 1988). In the Gran Pajonal, the Ashéninka apparently continued keeping the colonists' cattle in a semi-domesticated state on the natural grasslands (Samanez y Ocampo 1980). Similarly, they had gained important experiences with newly-introduced crops and the ideas and intentions of the white man, the *wiracocha*.

Obviously there is an aura of mystique around the person of Juan Santos. Several historians and ethnographers have attempted to interpret the rebellion as a reflection of indigenous millenarianism and as a messianic movement (e.g. Brown and Fernández 1991, Castro 1973, Loayza 1942, Metraux 1942, Varese 1973, Zarzar 1989). Critique of these interpretations has been put forward recently, questioning the readiness of earlier studies to uncritically reproduce an unproven hypothesis as "common knowledge", and pointing instead towards a more political interpretation of the events (cf. Veber 2003). In any case, the rebellion of Juan Santos Atahualpa and the "Campa" militia gave rise to a popular image of the Ashéninka from Gran Pajonal as a particularly hostile group, wary of strangers and violently opposed to any colonization and modernization efforts, a myth which is, in fact, far removed from reality. Nevertheless, it has been manipulated both by the Ashéninka and the colonists in the course of their mutual struggle for social and territorial control (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:79-88).

The 1742 rebellion in the Selva Central terminated the colonial attempt to incorporate, colonize and control the *montaña* of Peru. The first cycle of Western expansion had ended and the experiment failed. Yet its long term effect on the indigenous populations was obvious. They had gained important experience and knowledge about the way the Peruvian colonial system worked, about the Catholic missions, and about the way colonization schemes operate. They had learned something about highland and Spanish culture and about the different ethnic groups under Spanish

tutelage, their political identifications and loyalties. They had gained access to and familiarity with new metal tools and firearms, as well as new agricultural produce and techniques. And they had learned that the European colonizers and patrons, the *wiracocha*, were not invincible demiurges, but earthly mortals that could be beaten – contrary to their own hero Juan Santos who later became an emblematic myth. From a Peruvian point of view, the failed conquest was lamentable, but the economic and political crisis of the late colonial period diverted attention and resources from the distant frontier theatre, and soon the war of independence from Spain and the turmoil of the creation of the new Peruvian Republic in the 1820's all but obliterated the memory of the colonization failure. Those who had suffered most from the debacle were perhaps the Franciscan missionaries who not only had lost several brothers' lives in the attempt to establish a proselytization frontier, but had also lost their entire mission infrastructure, investments and years of work in the *montaña*. To make things worse, they were expelled from Peru by the new republic that upheld a secular state philosophy for over a decade. When the Franciscan Mission returned to Peru in the 1830's, they had to start all over again.

The frontier of colonization had been pushed back up into the Andes, and the *montaña* territories were back in the hands of their indigenous inhabitants, who remained in control for almost a century before a new cycle of conquest began. Santos-Granero and Barclay (1998:34) describe the effects of the retreat of the frontier to the eastern highlands where "(...) the fortification of the adjacent Andean towns and the prohibition of dealing with the rebels interrupted the demographic, economic and cultural flow between the highlands and the lowlands, acting as a physical barrier that was to have repercussions in the attitudes of the pioneer colonists of the 19th century". The *montaña* re-emerged regenerated, a frontier no longer. The rebellion of Juan Santos Atahualpa in many ways had more effect on the colonist imagery of the "Campa" than on indigenous identity and self-perceptions, a fact that manifested itself in a constant fear of new "Campa" rebellions during the re-colonization in the late 19th and 20th century, with obvious consequences for indigenous-*colono* relationships.

Introducing a second cycle: Savage capitalism in rubber and slaves

The Selva Central began to be re-colonized in the mid-19th century. New colonization attempts in the Gran Pajonal were not made until the mid-1930s, almost 200 years after the start of the grand rebellion. However, the victorious outcome of the indigenous rebellion did not mean a lasting break for peace in the area's history, whereafter indigenous society and culture could flourish free from Western imposition. The world economy continued evolving, and a growing interest in the natural products of the Amazon followed suit (Hvalkof 2000). Disappointingly, we only have sporadic information from the first century after the expulsion of the Franciscans from Gran

Pajonal and the *montaña* in 1742, but there is nothing indicating that the indigenous inhabitants were not in full control of their territories in the intervening period. We know that although the area remained uncolonized in the strict sense of the term, the Ashéninka of Gran Pajonal and the Upper Ucayali had plenty of contact with indigenous groups in neighboring areas as traditional trading routes between the Ucayali River and the western foothills forests of the Andes which led through the Gran Pajonal were operative. However, before long the Ashéninka population on the grasslands became exposed to the current of events in adjacent areas, precipitated by the new extractivist economy of wild rubber that was expanding from the lower Amazon floodplains in the east and north, an economy and relations of production that were to frame indigenous-settler relations for the next century, with an effect that can still be felt today.

The Peruvian viceroyalty had given up its colonizing ambitions in the central Amazon at an early point in time. After the war of independence, a new, secular Peruvian state emerged in the mid-1820s. Meanwhile, a booming new economy was rapidly engulfing the entire Amazon basin beyond the regulatory reach of the state, one that harbored no moral scruples over the way the extraction and export of wild rubber was operating. It came on the heels of the logistic revolution when steamboats were introduced on the river systems in the 1850s, and the invention of the vulcanization technique and the pneumatic tire, which let the demand for rubber soar. Simultaneously, new liberal geopolitical treaties between Peru and Brazil in 1851 and deregulatory legislation introduced in Peru in 1853 effectively promoted Amazonian trade, mobility and colonization (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:11-17). Rubber was big business in Europe and the USA. European investors and commercial enterprises in particular invaded the upper Amazon, establishing a hierarchy of rubber barons, local patrons, subcontractors and indigenous peons and slaves. The extraction of wild rubber was almost exclusively done by indentured or enslaved indigenous labor. The main rubber boom lasted from the mid 1880s to 1915, when new British plantations in Malaysia took up production, causing a dramatic drop in world market prices that put an end to the most horrifying chapter in Amazon history. The atrocities committed during these three decades for the purpose of extracting a few thousand tons of rubber are unbelievable. The best-documented case of such crimes is from the Putumayo river between Peru and Colombia, where in only two decades British-financed rubber extraction cost some 30,000 Huitoto and Bora Indians their lives. The unveiling of the Putumayo scandal prompted a parliamentary hearing and investigations by both Britain and the USA, followed by the publication of a white book and investigation reports (see Casement 1913, Hardenburg 1913, U.S. Department of State 1913, Taussig 1984, 1985; Hvalkof 2000).

During the rubber boom, the Ucayali river area and the Gran Pajonal came under the influence of the notorious rubber patron, Carlos Fermín Fitzcarrald.⁷ The

indigenous labor needed to tap the rubber trees was initially provided through debt-bondage and chattel slavery, based on the old feudal system known in the Andes as *enganche* – hooking up a person in perpetual debt through advance payments in kind –, and *habilitación*, a notion that refers to chains of asymmetric relationships in a complex hierarchical structure. At the top of that labour arrangement were the investor and trading house contracting agents who sub-contracted local patrons. The latter worked through local indigenous headmen who were responsible for recruiting and putting to work the necessary contingents of indigenous labour. It has been shown that the system worked in a way that only the upper levels in the hierarchy were able to make capital gains, while ensuring the accumulation of debt at the production level (Hvalkof 2000:89, San Roman 1975:129; see also Chibnik 1994). However, as the system consolidated after some years, regular slave raids, so-called *correrías*, came to supply the local patrons with women and children who would be socialized into servitude living with the patrons. These *de facto* slaves did not provide instant labor to the rubber industry, but secured in the long run a supply of loyal laborers and a certain degree of control over their fellow tribesmen working in chattel slavery. The *correrías* were often conducted by indigenous groups whose headmen had been contracted by the rubber patrons to assault more isolated communities. The indigenous raiders would kill adult males and older persons, capturing only younger women and children who were brought down to the patrons' settlement. Raiding reached frightening levels with the emergence of an interregional trade in slaves, primarily women and young children of both sexes. In the context of that parallel economy, a patron who had incurred debts could sell or hand over entire families to another patron to come even. Trading in slaves had existed before the rubber boom, and it continued well beyond the end of the golden days of extractivism, with incidents documented up till as late as the 1980s (cf. García Hierro 1998, Gray 1987, 1998; Hvalkof 1998:85-87). The slave raiding practice devastated the indigenous communities in the Gran Pajonal, leaving behind a fractioned and split-up indigenous society. It created a patchwork of local headmen and followers, with each group indebted to its patron, and most of them at war with their neighbors. Catastrophic viral epidemics followed, particularly measles, resulting in an abrupt decline in indigenous population numbers at the beginning of the 20th century. Slave raiding was not limited to the Ucayali River basin, but reached all the way westwards to the Selva Central and the foothills of the Andes; like the trade which it alimented, it continued to be active for a long time after the rubber economy finally collapsed in the 1920s.

The rubber boom set the moral standards of conduct between the indigenous population and the colonists which are still in effect today. It left the area of the Gran Pajonal almost depopulated, many of its communities burned down and deserted, and a legacy of hatred and enormous internal conflicts and distrust between the different local groups of Ashéninka (Sala 1897), rendering any effort at regionwide political

self-organization impossible. With a weak and amputated indigenous society, the Gran Pajonal was an easy target for re-colonization, which the returning Franciscans already had planned and recommended to the Peruvian government at the turn of the century (ibid.).

The second cycle of economic penetration and microbiological conquest had come to an end, creating a new frontier scenario characterized by a disrupted, dislocated and fractioned indigenous society, prone to a second attempt by now-independent Peru to colonize the area from the Andes.

(Re)introducing modernity: The third cycle

As the rubber entrepreneurs and slave raiders had penetrated every corner of the Upper Amazon of Peru, information about the region had reached the now well-established Peruvian government. A new interest in the development potentials of the Amazon region had emerged, and a desire to connect the region to the rest of the country was on the agenda. Survey expeditions had been made at the turn of the century to determine the feasibility of establishing a railroad from the Andes down the *montaña* and across the Gran Pajonal to the Ucayali River. Grand colonization schemes were designed, faith in the technological revolution being the driving force. The railroads were never built due to lack of finance and similar insuperable difficulties. But large colonization schemes were soon carried out in the Selva Central closer to the Andes.

The new Peruvian republic had decided to push the frontier back down the *montaña* from the Andes, this time under the leadership of the republican army. Legislation and policies favoring pioneer colonist economies were issued, all in a coordinated effort to incorporate the *montaña* and the Amazon into the national economy. The first colonies were established in the Chanchamayo, one in San Ramon in 1847 and one in neighboring La Merced in 1869, both essentially military endeavors (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998:43ff.). The initial intention was the expansion of sugarcane plantations for *aguardiente* (distilled spirits) production and coca plantations, but later coffee production became dominant. The new colonization schemes caused a lot of tension within the colonist groups as land acquisition policies favored large corporations and patrons speculating in landholdings. The new colonists were of different origin. Some belonged to Peruvian landowning elites from the highlands who brought along farm laborers from the highland peasantry they controlled; others were part of the considerable influx of European immigrants searching for a new life, escaping from a Europe in economic crisis. Large groups of Italian, German, Tyrolian, eastern European and Chinese settlers took possession of land in different areas of the Selva Central, pushing the frontier eastwards and often coming in conflict with Peruvian land speculators. In 1891, after the Peruvian State had gone bankrupt

and ways had to be found to repay British creditors, a large concession covering some 500,000 hectares (to be expanded to 2 million hectares) was granted to a British enterprise, the Peruvian Corporation. The new concession gave the Peruvian Corporation exclusive rights to extensive territories in the central *montaña*, including all indigenous territories, communities and labor. The corporation established its infamous Perene Colony which soon became a major coffee producer exploiting both indigenous and imported Andean peasant workers, the latter being confined to the colony under concentration camp-like conditions (Barclay 1989). A social and economic hierarchy embracing the different types of colonists soon developed, reproducing the ethno-racial structure of national Peruvian society (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998:48). Before long, the Andean peons working as seasonal laborers at the different plantations began to invade accessible land all over the area, creating numerous conflicts. Spontaneous land invasions were numerous and the government gradually lost control of the colonization process, one that had initially been planned as an orderly venture led by the state. The indigenous inhabitants, the Asháninka and Yánesha, suffered innumerable abuses and were literally thrown off their land with military force and pushed eastwards into the more marginal areas of the *montaña*. Hastily, legislative measures were taken to secure certain land rights for them, but these were of limited use. There were many clashes between the local Asháninka population and the colonists, and a few local rebellions broke out, but the Asháninka never succeeded in regaining the momentum they had had during the rebellion more than a century earlier (Santos-Granero 1992). In their majority, the dispossessed Asháninka moved away to avoid falling into serfdom and servitude to the Europeans, the *wiracocha*. The Franciscan mission played an active part in the entire process of re-colonization, but unlike a century earlier was not the driving force this time. Large capitalist interests were at play now and the mission searched for new frontiers where it could make a difference. One such place was the Gran Pajonal where the mission station had been abandoned in 1742 and which subsequently was ravaged by slave raiders serving the rubber patrons in the Ucayali.

Since the late 19th century, the Franciscan mission had harbored an ambition of re-colonizing the Gran Pajonal, reintroducing their mission along with cattle ranching schemes. This dream started to become real in 1935 with the establishment of the Oventeni colony and mission, 200 years after the first attempt. The Franciscan mission contracted peasants from the highlands to help build and populate the new colony. The attempt almost failed. The contracted colonists had difficulties adapting to the tropical environment, and many of them deserted the project. The economy was ailing, the logistic conditions intolerable, and the Ashéninka far from cooperative, at times even hostile. To secure easy access to military assistance in the event of an Ashéninka uprising against the colony, the Oventeni Mission had to ask for support from the Peruvian army in constructing a 1,600 m long airstrip at the colony. Besides,

the airstrip would ensure civic logistic support from the air force for transporting provisions, passengers and produce. The airstrip became the lifeline of Oventeni. But the development was long in coming, and the Ashéninka remained few, fractioned and haunted by epidemics that devastated the indigenous settlements in successive waves.

In 1950 the Mission succeeded in finding Italo-Peruvian investors willing to finance a large cattle ranch in the interior of the Gran Pajonal. A *hacienda* was built, air photo surveys and maps were made, managers, veterinarians and other specialists were contracted, as well as workers and colonists recruited to the *hacienda* through advertisements in Lima newspapers. Cattle, breeding stock, horses, mules, donkeys and other animals were introduced and coffee was planted as a supplement. The Ashéninka were contracted either as workers or as food producers for the *hacienda*. As new colonists began to move in, the future looked promising for the Oventeni colony. Along with modern agricultural development, the *hacienda* also reintroduced mortal viral diseases. Particularly measles epidemics ravaged the Ashéninka communities time and again, causing a decrease in the indigenous population of an estimated 65% in a few years time (Bodley 1970, 1972). When interviewed in the 1980s by the author, *ex-hacienda* workers still living in Oventeni confirmed the extremely high death toll among the neighbouring indigenous communities (see Denevan and Chrotowski 1970:58 and Chrotowski 1966:5 for similar observations).

Despite all the investments and the organized efforts to make the cattle *hacienda* a success, the economy overstretched itself; productivity was low and the experiment eventually failed. The fiasco was caused by a combination of factors: bad management, over-investment, serious logistic problems in marketing the cattle, and the fact that the cattle were grazed on the natural grassland, which for pastures had a very low nutritional value.

The final blow to this modern cattle ranching and colonization scheme came in 1965–66 with the appearance on the scene of a Marxist inspired guerrilla, the MIR (Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario), under the leadership of the legendary Guillermo Lobatón. The guerrilleros took control of Oventeni, the mission and the *hacienda* for several weeks. They were targeting the *hacienda* administrator, but not finding him present, they instead killed (and barbecued) the best bulls and breeding stock. The guerrilleros withdrew from Oventeni and the *hacienda*, but were run down by special anti-guerrilla forces of the army a few days after at the community of Mapitzeviari, where they lost their last battle and Guillermo Lobatón was captured and later executed. The incident scared the Franciscans so much that they decided to close down the mission and boarding school in Oventeni and evacuate the priests, nuns and other personnel. The mission was never reopened and the *hacienda* was finally shut down and abandoned in 1968 (Brown and Fernández 1991, Hvalkof 2000, 2002; Hvalkof and Veber 2005).

For the third time in history a cycle had come to its end, once more demonstrating the same pattern of attempted colonization, enclosure and elimination of the frontier, ending in failure, collapse – and reconstruction. With the disappearance of the *hacienda* and the intruders' loss of control over the territory of the central Gran Pajonal, the area was open for recapture by the Ashéninka and the reconstruction of their livelihoods and culture. But it was also open for spontaneous settlement by the *colonos* from Oventeni or neighboring areas where rumors of new and possibly equally shining opportunities soon spread, tempered, though, by the mythical reputation of the Ashéninka of Gran Pajonal as savage “*chunchos*”⁸. Hence a project meant to eliminate one of the last frontiers in the central *montaña* ended up reproducing it in a new form, with all its idiosyncratic characteristics accumulated through history. Yet another cycle could begin.

The fourth cycle: International development

The immediate effect of the failure of the cattle venture and the withdrawal of the Franciscan mission was that many of the workers and colonists also left Oventeni. Yet some decided to stay and try a new life as settlers on their own, producing coffee and raising cattle on a small scale. For that purpose, the colonists took advantage of the presence of the Ashéninka, who would provide the bulk of the labor input, ensured through the traditional patron-client debt relationships, instituted since the rubber boom. The central areas of the Gran Pajonal, where the *hacienda* had grazed its cattle, were now open to resettlement by the Ashéninka who had fled the areas during the epidemics. Gradually they were moving back, re-occupying their old territory.

Other actors also appeared on the scene in 1968: US Adventist and protestant missionaries. Particularly the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) came to have an important impact on indigenous self-organizing and conscientization for years to come (Hvalkof and Aaby 1981). The SIL introduced health services and vaccination campaigns, gradually eliminating lethal diseases, such as measles and whooping cough that previously had cost the lives of numerous Ashéninka. Henceforth the indigenous population began to increase and continued to grow fast through the 1970s, a prerequisite for later political mobilization and the resumption of territorial control. Yet exploitation also increased. The colonists of Oventeni had experimented with different alternatives for cattle raising, and had found that grazing cattle on planted pastures was much more feasible than on the natural *pajonal* plains. A new boom in cattle raising came when Peru formally returned to democracy in 1978 and the multilateral development banks decided to launch gigantic colonization and integrated development programs in the Selva Central, immediately east to the Gran Pajonal, offering cheap loans and credits for small-scale cattle raising.



Photo 3.4 : Ashéninka loading *colono* coffee on a foggy morning (Ponchoni, Gran Pajonal), May 2006 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

The effects spilled over into the Gran Pajonal. Thousands of hectares of land were cleared, grass was planted and new cattle introduced at an alarming rate. A new influx of colonists was noticeable and the pressure on the indigenous population grew. All work was executed with indigenous labor procured through chattel slavery and debt bondage, arranged through well-established patron-client relationships. Ashéninka who did not comply with their “labor contracts” were punished by the *colono* authorities in Oventeni. The punishments for not complying with the patron’s demands or for eschewing work were severe. Armed colonist squads would capture the wretched and bring them in for detention at the shabby jail hut in Oventeni, where offending Ashéninka at times were maintained for days without food or drink. Eventually they would be punished by flogging with a dried bull’s penis (*chicote*), on Sunday mornings before mass began (Hvalkof 1986). These methods for squeezing indigenous peons had been in use since the rubber boom, but the over-exploitation caused by the cattle boom and the availability of new credits made the situation explosive. The reactions from the Ashéninka were various. Some individuals who had been humiliated by abusive colonists committed suicide. In at least one case an entire family killed itself after having been subjected to the horrors of the Oventeni jail, and threats and intimidations by the *colono* authorities. The tragedy remains uninvestigated and those responsible unpunished (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:155). Others reacted by killing or attempting

to kill their patrons, for which some served long prison sentences. No colonist was ever tried for any of the innumerable abuses (see also Schäfer 1988). The horror was paralleled by similar or even worse situations in the neighboring Ucayali river area (García Hierro 1998, Gray 1997, 1998; Hvalkof 1998).

It is most absurd that the servitude, slavery, and abuses were all a result of the investments and the aid offered by international development agencies (e.g. the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, USAID, and the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, GTZ). Promoted as integrated development and road construction schemes, the investments merely boosted existing structures of inequality in the targeted locales. These so-called "Special Projects" failed clearly as no economic growth followed the roads. On the contrary, the production fell in relative and later in absolute figures. The perverted end to this under-development saga is that when the development agencies finally withdrew from Peru, the still-uncolonized areas of the central *montaña* had been opened for colonization, but with no production, no developed markets, no social services, leaving simply deforestation and ecological disaster on the agricultural frontier, a growing social conflict between the encroaching settlers and the indigenous population, increasing coca (and cocaine) production, criminalization and the presence of the Colombian drug mob. Last in the series of these developments was the appearance of two subversive organizations, the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru) and the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*, or SL), who went to fish in troubled waters, and were followed by three different army corps and special counterinsurgency units, including the DEA's subsidiary in Peru. The largest social and human tragedy in modern Peruvian history was unfolding, framed by international development aid financed by taxpayers in Europe and North America. A new and more aggressive cycle of colonization, enclosure and elimination of the frontier was about to begin.

The global impact: Organizing and resisting

The need for action to halt the colonist expansion and abuses in the Gran Pajonal was undeniable. A new indigenous leadership was emerging, comprising mostly young people trained by the SIL missionaries as bilingual teachers, and persons who had served in the Peruvian army. In the early 1980s, benefiting from exposure to a wider world where other indigenous peoples were organizing and claiming their territorial rights, these emerging new leaders decided to organize the Ashéninka in the Gran Pajonal into communities and demand that their land be titled. They founded the Organización Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal, the OAGP, and backed by the SIL missionaries they succeeded in getting the first four communities demarcated and titled in 1984. The action provoked the colonists of Oventeni, who responded by stepping up repression and exploitation, obstructing any kind of indigenous initiative and

accelerating pasture expansion. Furthermore, in an attempt to have the titles annulled and get the administrative jurisdiction transferred to another department controlled by highlanders sympathetic to and identifying with *colono* interests and culture, they mobilized their allies among the officials of the regional administration.

As the conflict escalated, the new Ashéninka leadership responded by mobilizing the few personal resources they had at hand – anthropologists, missionaries and school teachers. Through common effort they succeeded in convincing the World Bank and its Peruvian counterpart in the "Special Project" (the integrated development program previously mentioned) that they had a responsibility for the conflict situation in Gran Pajonal, and that their "Special Project" should be obliged to take action immediately and register, demarcate and title all the indigenous communities in Gran Pajonal (Hvalkof 1985). Much to the surprise of the anthropologists, the World Bank investigated the case and responded positively by committing their Peruvian counterpart. The much-criticized "Special Project" agreed to undertake the demarcation and titling of all remaining Ashéninka communities in Gran Pajonal. Despite the protests and manipulations from the colonist network, some 26 Native Communities were demarcated and titled from 1986-1988. The settlers in Oventeni were outraged, but the World Bank-backed national development program overruled the regional *colono* power elite's influence and attempts to obstruct the process.

It is interesting to note that the regional administration fully identified with the colonist interest and, pretending to be ignorant about indigenous rights, did everything possible to circumvent the legalization of indigenous collective landownership. In a desperate attempt to de-authorize the OAGP leadership, *colono* elements in the regional administration co-opted a better-educated indigenous leader from a neighboring area. Presuming that the Ashéninka would be obedient to "more powerful" indigenous "chiefs", they presented him as the "*jefe máximo de los ashaninka*" (supreme chief of the Ashaninka) – a non-existent position and title –, and made him speak out against the titling. The attempted manipulation was based on *colono* misinterpretation of indigenous leadership and hierarchy, and unwittingly reproduced the old arrangement of patrons using "civilized" Indians as foremen and leaders of raiding parties against their own people. The attempt was decidedly rejected by the indigenous leadership in Gran Pajonal, and the intervention failed¹⁰.

The special development program carrying out the demarcation and titling of indigenous community lands was a centralized entity, answering directly to the President of the Republic, and administering the large multilateral funds behind. The officials and technical staff were all from Lima and had no stakes in local cattle prospects or interests in the land. But as employees of a World Bank-financed project, they had an interest in complying with both national laws and international conventions and other norms favoring indigenous rights, including land rights. Hence,

the overruling of the regional colonist administration was not based on sheer political imposition, but on law.

This new rights-oriented approach from the central administration baffled and paralyzed the regional administration that had no previous experience in handling indigenous rights. Although clearly-defined and stipulated in Peruvian legislation, indigenous rights was not a concept acknowledged by the regional authorities. But as they had no ready legal arguments against it, they had to accept the land titling process. Inspired or provoked by the Ashéninka land titling, the *colonos* also started demarcating their individual possessions. However, they had to pay part of the expenses it required. The regional authorities had no budget for demarcation and titling of individual private land holdings, so they charged the *colonos* for the work. Not all *colonos* could afford or were willing to afford these costs, so only a portion of the settler community had their claims measured and demarcated. To get the actual title deeds was quite another matter involving travel, red tape and payment of bribes. Not all have their titles as of today, but after some years, many *colono* families in Oventeni did eventually succeed in getting legal documentation of their ownership of the land they were cultivating.

The result of the titling and land ordering process was striking. Contrary to what one might have expected, the interethnic tensions in the Gran Pajonal lessened considerably and many of the conflicts simply withered away or were converted into legal discussions. The Ashéninka and their organization were greatly empowered in the process, and began to play a much more proactive role in local politics. Now they went for other types of rights: education, health and political participation. More communities were registered and new titles were issued. The colonists gradually accepted the fact, basically respecting the private collective property rights of their former peons. It looked like a new and more balanced social order was taking shape, and one had the impression that the changes in land tenure had been effective in radically altering the unequal power relations between the two contending groups.

The process of land ordering and intervention by central state authorities in favor of the indigenous communities changed the indigenous - *colono* relationship. The *colonos* had to reconsider their image of the savage, unorganized, anarchistic, naive, primitive and stupid Ashéninka. To their astonishment, the OAGP leadership had been able to connect to an important national network of contacts to ministries, organizations and important institutions, generating conspicuous results. The Gran Pajonal had suddenly been incorporated into the Peruvian nation and in the global system, too. Now the two population groups were fighting over legal rights enshrined in the legislation of the country, carrying on their fight in ways entirely new to both groups. Appeals to commissions were made by one or the other side, and a profound alteration of the conception of the Gran Pajonal and its indigenous inhabitants started a transformation that would lead the area away from its frontier status.

Titling of indigenous community lands was also underway in other areas in the Selva Central, undertaken by the same "Special Projects", but with varying success. The positive outcome of the model used in the Gran Pajonal now inspired other indigenous groups and communities in neighboring areas in Atalaya province to organize and apply for the titling of their communities through other channels. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, demarcation and titling of indigenous communities became a big issue and the most important item on the ethno-political agenda of the emerging indigenous movement in Peru. Several large scale projects were launched in the central *montaña* and the upper Amazon through indigenous initiatives and supported by international NGOs through cooperation agreements with Peruvian state agencies responsible for land tenure issues. A new and more democratic development seemed to have taken hold.

From the 1980s onwards, the impact of changes in global development discourses, rain forest and biodiversity conservation interests and, last but not least, a growing acceptance of indigenous rights in the international policy arenas, all contributed to a change in the World Bank's and other multilateral donors' policies towards a more attentive attitude to indigenous peoples and issues, a change which was followed by new World Bank directives and impact assessments in development programs affecting indigenous peoples (World Bank 1982). This had a direct effect in the Peruvian case. The process of global integration had set foot in the grasslands and apparently occasioned a change for the good. It looked like the frontier at last had been tamed (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000), but this time by using the global toolbox of international law and human rights in a form that for the first time in history was balancing out the interests of indigenous peoples and *colonos* in a civilized way. It soon turned out, however, that the new state of affairs was short-lived.

Closing of the cycle or freezing of the frontier?

The indigenous optimism was soon challenged by disturbing developments in Peru. The Shining Path guerrilla, the *Sendero Luminoso* (SL), relocated their war against the state to the central Peruvian Amazon, in competition with the MRTA guerrilla movement. They laid siege to a large part of the Selva Central and expanded rapidly eastward towards the Upper Amazon floodplains. For several years, indigenous communities as well as *colono* settlements found themselves caught in a crossfire between the guerrillas and Peruvian special forces, suffering numerable abuses and atrocities from both sides (CVR 2003). The first incident in the Gran Pajonal took place in 1988, when an armed group entered and looted Oventeni, terrorizing *colono* shop owners and merchants, and threatening to kill the non-cooperative indigenous leaders of the OAGP; but shortly they withdrew with their loot. In the neighboring areas, several Ashéninka leaders were murdered after they had refused to cooperate

with the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolution, and death threats were issued against the surviving leadership of the OAGP. Apparently, the SL's strategy was one of converting the Gran Pajonal into a food-producing center for the guerrilla. However, in 1989 the killing of a famous Asháninka leader by the MRTA guerrilla in the Pichis Valley north of the Gran Pajonal precipitated an Asháninka uprising and armed take-over of the valley for eight months (CVR 2003:303-306). At this point, the Pajonal Asháninka decided to take control of Oventeni and the entire Gran Pajonal. The indigenous leadership was aware that a Peruvian Army intervention against the Shining Path was imminent, and that such a situation would mean the suspension of all civil rights in their territories. Under these circumstances, the Asháninka might lose everything they had gained after years of struggle. In February of 1990, several hundred Asháninka armed with shotguns and bows and arrows took over Oventeni, demanding that guerrilla infiltrators and sympathizers leave Oventeni within 24 hours. It took two days of constant flights out of Oventeni to evacuate all those who wanted to flee. The OAGP declared the Gran Pajonal to be under the military control of the "Asháninka Army", the name of the indigenous militia which they had organized. They immediately set up a system of surveillance and patrolling of the outer borders of the Gran Pajonal. The Asháninka succeeded in avoiding major problems in the Gran Pajonal and had only a few fatal incidents with the *Sendero Luminoso*. Much worse was the situation in neighboring areas, where thousands of Asháninka were killed or disappeared, and many more fled the extreme violence of the rebels, surviving as refugees in a few overcrowded communities, and putting severe pressure on local food production systems. The swift, armed and unified action by the OAGP prevented the development of a similar situation in the Grasslands.

The Asháninka organization of Gran Pajonal and their militia have kept control of the area ever since. Subsequently, the communities of the area came out opting for entering civil politics and got their representatives elected for all major posts in Oventeni. The key to this success was the registration of all indigenous voters, who form the absolute majority of the population of the area. It came as another surprise to the colonist cattlemen. Several gave up and left, others just refused to cooperate with their indigenous adversaries who had taken over control of local politics by democratic means. The Asháninka local government succeeded in securing the extension of hitherto unavailable social services and other benefits to all inhabitants, indigenous as well as colonist. This included new school buildings in most of the native communities, a secondary school with vocational training in carpentry, a large health clinic with permanent staff (including nurses and a physician for some time of the year), the operation of their own indigenous health service program, potable water for Oventeni and a satellite dish allowing the colonists to watch Latino soap operas, just to mention some of the more visible achievements.

The *colono* population in Oventeni took a more ambiguous stance in the new situation. In general they had to get used to the idea that their former subalterns were now in a very different position, as landowners, citizens, voters and public authorities with the same access to formal powers as themselves. They also had to acknowledge that the Asháninka now had an officially-recognized organization representing indigenous interests, which meant that the *colonos* henceforth would have to share resources and access to decision-making with them. Part of the *colonos* – mainly people from the lowest strata in the settler hierarchy, and younger persons of mixed Asháninka-*colono* descent – opted for supporting the OAGP and their bid for political offices. Gradually, also some of the more influential *colonos* became more supportive of the indigenous leadership and organization, based on pragmatic realization of the OAGP's potentials. However, the old power elite of Oventeni cattle ranchers remained staunchly opposed to the OAGP and their leadership and never lost an opportunity to complain or obstruct their work. After the defeat of the guerrilla, and allegedly to counteract the indigenous militias' increasing power and influence in the colony, the *colonos* – among other initiatives – formed their own patrol system in Oventeni. Nevertheless, the general situation in Gran Pajonal had considerably improved, and most of the disagreements between the major ethnic groups could be interpreted as reflections of normal Latin American political dynamics. The state of affairs that earlier had been characterized by debt bondage, chattel slavery, constant abuses and *tristesse*, had turned into an incipient process of democratization. The fourth cycle of colonization seemed to be coming to a close, finally removing the Gran Pajonal from the category of a pioneering borderland. The frontier indeed appeared as tamed. But yet a new threat to the process of seeking a productive socio-cultural *modus vivendi* between the colonists and the indigenous population was about to appear, confirming that a frontier is not a static situation or a stage in history or a linear development with some finite aim, but rather a latent process of production and reproduction of antagonisms, incompatible interests, conflict and difference. The frontier was indeed alive and gave eloquent proof of its remarkable resilience.

The return of the ogre: Roads, timber extraction and corruption

The apparent success of the indigenous movement and the local organization in the Gran Pajonal was not an isolated incident. During the 1990s, all over the Peruvian Amazon, indigenous organizations succeeded in getting the territories of their member communities titled. The process had generally strengthened their organizational capacity, and the regional *colono*-dominated administration and interest groups were forced to recognize the indigenous groups not only as new landowners controlling large tracts of tropical forest¹¹ (and potentially a large number of new voters, too¹²), but also as important players in the local political power game. Of particular concern

was the control of access to natural resources, of which the timber resources were of crucial interest to the old regional power elite of lumber patrons and entrepreneurs.

The most powerful economic sector in this frontier region is the extractive industries, particularly the logging business and the oil industry.¹³ Whereas the oil industry is not directly dependent on access to the native communities, as the Peruvian state owns and controls all subsoil resources regardless of valid ownership titles to the land on top¹⁴, the logging companies and contractors are directly dependent on access to tropical timber resources inside the native communities, who are now the legal owners of these valuable resources. The contractors are also dependent on access roads to be able to get to the stands and extract the timber. This is of course a problem as logging roads have to pass through various titled community territories, and the communities and supposedly their umbrella organization have to approve of this. It took a few years for the extractivist companies to actually recognize the new territorial situation and the new political status of the indigenous communities and their representatives, but once the new realities had settled in, the companies adapted and remodeled their strategies of access and extraction to fit the new scenario.

The logging activities in the Upper Amazon and *montaña* of Peru have exploded during the last decade. The price for tropical hardwoods, particularly mahogany, has risen steadily on the international market, and the export volume is sky-rocketing, but also manufactured products such as plywood have been booming on the export markets. The USA is the largest buyer of sawn mahogany from Peru, with imports in 2005 of some 88% of the total volume of 23,649 m³, at a value of \$34.5 million. Statistics show that Peruvian exports of timber and timber products in 2005 alone were up 28% from the 2004 level, reaching \$168.3 million; still, with a projected \$180 million of exports, the expectation in the industry was even higher (see www.globalwood.org). Iquitos, the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon and once the center of the upper Amazon rubber trade, is completely dependent on timber exports, which comprise 99.5 % of the city's total exports! Still, this is only 16% of the country's total exports, the rest being shipped from Lima's harbor in Callao (*ibid.*).

Logging and timber trading is big business these days, and the logging contractors are bringing their heavy machinery and portable sawmills to the remotest corners of the Amazon, establishing logging and access roads to lift off every piece of valuable timber they can get their hands on. Although the companies and individual contractors must have an extraction permit and a concession, illegal logging comprises a large percentage of the total volume. The authorities have no control over the operations and the quantities of the products extracted, and the sector has an unequalled reputation for corruption and mafia-like methods.

In the case of the Gran Pajonal, large-scale logging actually did not take off for many years, for a variety of reasons. Although most of the area is covered with dense



Photo 3.5 : New logging road to Oventeni (Gran Pajonal), Nov. 2005 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

tropical forests, due to the high altitude and relatively low temperatures, the volume of the average tree is smaller, and precious redwoods like mahogany and cedar are scarcer than in the Amazon lowlands (ONERN 1968). For this reason and because of the fact that the most valued species are scattered in gullies and inaccessible lower-lying areas inside this rugged zone, production costs were high enough to keep the logging industry away. The areas in the Upper Ucayali River basin were until recently much more accessible. The heavy equipment and tractors could be brought in on barges, and the timber was transported back downriver on the same waterways to the big sawmills in Pucallpa and Iquitos. However, improved machinery, the enormous demand for tropical hardwood internationally and rising market prices changed this situation. Local lumber patrons in the Selva Central and in the Upper Ucayali joined forces with the regional administration and decided to build a road connecting the Andean foothills with the provincial town of Atalaya in the upper Ucayali. Such a connection – albeit along the Tambo river – had long been planned by the Peruvian government, but problems with public funding stood in the way. The lumber industry was more interested in a road that cut through the Gran Pajonal, which would give them access to the area's mahogany stands. Thus, around the year 2000 they decided to start building the road themselves, backed by local and regional authorities and allied politicians. By 2003, the connection between the old Franciscan mission of Puerto Ocopa on the lower Perené in the Selva Central and the town of Atalaya in the Amazon was a fact. The road followed the course of the fast-running Unini River, the

only major water system draining the Gran Pajonal. Subsequently, parts of the road were improved on public transportation budgets. The lumber industry soon retrieved its investments through logging along the way, opening smaller logging roads and side tracks to get access to hidden gullies and valleys. As no major growths of mahogany or cedar trees are found in the core grassland area where Oventeni is situated, the *colono* population as well as the OAGP were worried that they would not get an access road connecting Oventeni to the new transport network and infrastructure.

The concern of the Ashéninka was the marketing of their excellent coffee, their principal cash crop. Without a road connection they would have to continue to rely on air transport for bringing the crop to the market, which is expensive and difficult to organize. Hence many families have chosen to sell their harvest to the *colonos* at a very low price, a solution that at least spared them complications and uncertainties. A road would solve this logistic problem, facilitate marketing, and hopefully lead to a considerable improvement in the family cash income of the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal. The OAGP had opposed a road connection before the territory was titled and consolidated, but confident of its ability to control the expected colonist influx, they now changed their stance.

The colonists have always wanted a road, and in the course of the past four decades pressed their point through petitions and representations to regional and national authorities. However, the economic significance of the Oventeni colony never justified such a large investment in infrastructure, involving the construction of several bridges. Thus, the OAGP contacted what they considered to be the most reliable of the three lumber companies with concessions in the area, and proposed a road with provisional bridges. In return, the OAGP accepted that the contractor accessed the community territories on which it planned to log, on condition that it payed the communities a fair price, undertook reforestation and supported the OAGP. The logging company accepted, and in 2004 the road reached Oventeni. It is not a quality gravel road that will last long under normal maintenance, but an improved logging road with improvised bridges made from large trunks, a so-called *camino carrozable* ("car-carrying track") – a qualified truth as only 4x4 trucks will make it. As mentioned earlier, it is only operational in the dry season because of the quality of the road itself. Moreover, swollen rivers and streams wash away the provisional bridges in the rainy season. To make things worse, the Oventeni airstrip has fallen into disrepair and is not operational any more. Thus the inhabitants are completely dependent on the logging company's willingness to maintain the road in the dry season and repair the bridges. In any case, during the rainy season they are now completely isolated for several months, whereas air transport previously operated during most of the year. What will happen with the road when the timber resources are exhausted and the company withdraw, something likely to happen in the near future?

The opening of the area thus has caused a timber extraction bonanza with serious ecological, social and political consequences. Heavy lumber tractors and logging machinery are penetrating every corner along the main road, working day and night to extract all the red hardwoods they can find. The logging companies have contacted the community leaders, directly offering them money and benefits in exchange for logging rights. The payment they offer is ridiculously low compared to the value of the timber, particularly mahogany. But to an Ashéninka who was never used to cash and basically lives in a subsistence economy with minimal income from coffee, 5,000 or 10,000 dollars offered up front by the company is a fortune. In a few cases, the companies have paid such amounts for unlimited 40 years extraction agreements. These are the highest offers the author has seen, and most often the payment is lower. As the money never goes into a community fund but to the elected "chief", it has been the cause of much discontent and internal division in the affected communities. As the OAGP leaders have observed: "People go crazy when they see that kind of money. It is like drugs, they loose their minds and senses, and we can do very little" (author's interview, Oct. 2005).

In order to avoid interference from the OAGP and their local chapters, the companies have run a consistent propaganda campaign against the indigenous organizations. If they cannot buy off their leadership directly, they attempt to undermine their authority. The mantra they are propagating for the moment is "community autonomy". Insinuating that the organizations (i.e. the leaders) receive large amounts of NGO project money and keep it to themselves, and reminding the people that the member communities are autonomous and do not have to follow any directions from their organizations, the companies have succeeded in creating division and the withdrawal of several communities from their organizations, declaring themselves independent and autonomous. In one case in an adjacent area, a timber consortium even paid a former local leader for creating an alternative indigenous organization to weaken the opposition to their logging practices.

To speed up the extraction process, the companies operating in and around the Gran Pajonal have encouraged illegal loggers, so-called "*caoberos*" (a derivation from the Spanish word for mahogany, *caoba*) to target the mahogany stands in areas of difficult access. The scheme used is the old habilitation system, known from the rubber boom. These individual loggers are often accompanied by gunslingers. They live in camps along with the logging companies' hired workers, and are characterized by the Ashéninka as "*gente de mal vivir*", people with a non-respectable lifestyle. They carry off what is left and sell it to the concession holders, thus legalizing the produce. Inside the grassland area, where no mahogany or other valuable species are found, the company is pushing their logging roads through to the last community, taking everything that may be marketed, including undersized trunks, paying the communities laughable sums (10 cents per foot is normal). In the footsteps of the

extractors and the *caoberos*, adventurers and colonists follow. As coca cultivation is up again after a few years' of low production, and remnants from the Shining Path are actively seeking to resume their operations in the area, the future does not look good. The OAGP leadership admitted that they had lost control of the situation and in November 2005 declared an emergency for the entire OAGP territory, activating their militia, suspending all logging activities in the inner areas and calling for the revitalization of the OAGP and their community work – probably a last-minute call. However, the heavy logging of *caoba* in areas adjacent to the main road between Puerto Ocopa and Atalaya has continued uninterrupted, and one could see stacks of mahogany lying along the road and in the communities through which it passed, constantly meeting heavy tractors hauling enormous trunks day and night.

Another factor facilitating this new bonanza, so characteristic for the boom-and-bust economies of the extractive frontier, is the general liberalization and deregulation of the Peruvian economy and society, which was carried through during the Fujimori regime (1990-2000) and continued under the government of Alejandro Toledo to the present. What the newly elected government of Alan García (2006) will bring remains to be seen. There are so far no signs of changing policy. A milestone event in this respect has been the signing of several free trade agreements and the decision to build two inter-oceanic highway connections in partnership with Brasil. The new highways will cross the entire Amazon basin from the Andean foothills to the major Brazilian road network and on to the Atlantic ports; at least the northern road is advancing fast. The cutting of public expenditures and the closing and downsizing of public institutions and services, all part of the neo-liberal recipe, made it easier for the timber companies to operate, as logging activities are now hardly subjected to controls. There are a few control posts, but I have never seen any of them being manned. Besides, it is very easy to fix the needed documentation, and if that does not do the job, bribery will. Given public employees' extremely low salaries and the habitual acceptance of bribing, corruption is rampant, destroying any attempts towards constructing a democratic and more just society. Whenever necessary, the logging companies are buying judges, police, army officers, politicians, indigenous leaders, local community heads, the colonist authorities and whoever may try to reign them in. In the course, most of the area's wealth in timber, the only real value the indigenous communities had for an uncertain future, is being siphoned off. The result includes irreparable environmental and ecological damages. Apart from the cooptation and the corruption that accompanies the extractive industry, the lumber patrons do not fall short of more aggressive means if necessary. I experienced myself two cases where forestry extension officers from the National Institute of Natural Resources (the Peruvian environmental facility which is not only responsible for issuing timber extraction permits, controlling the production and certifying the timber, but also for enforcing environmental controls) were threatened into stopping

their work and pull out. In one case the young forestry officer complained to a lumber boss about his men's cutting of small-sized trees. In response he was threatened with a pistol and forced to leave the precincts. The other case involved a young female official who was to give a small seminar about the forestry law in Oventeni to *colonos* and community members, but had to cancel the meeting at the last minute "because the lumber company was opposed to that kind of information meeting", as one of her colleagues explained. According to the locals, such cases are common, and the demoralized officials seldom report the incidents to their superior, in fear of reprisals and harboring the suspicion that their superiors may be involved, too. This latest chapter in Gran Pajonal's socio-environmental history shows free market forces and the spirit of free enterprise on the loose, and gives us a glimpse of the workings of second-generation savage capitalism and primitive accumulation, this time carried forward by economic globalization. The frontier has reemerged with all its idiosyncratic characteristics, accumulated through a long and violent history.

Extractivist-colono concurrence

The new situation of extractivist expansion and aggression in the Gran Pajonal was not directly associated with colonist interests in Oventeni. Like the Ashéninka, the *colonos* also expressed their concern with the environmental destruction taking place, and the fact that they saw no economic benefits from the logging activities, although they were quite satisfied with the road connection. Colonist land holdings have long been cleared of forest, giving way to pastures for grazing, and the remaining forest growth here and there was of no interest to the lumber industry. Yet *colonos* noticed that the OAGP was debilitated in the actual situation. This weakness was partly an outcome of its leadership's contract with the logging company, which put them in an ambiguous and compromising position, and partly a result of the fact that the most prominent OAGP leader who had also headed the militia, had been elected to the town council of the provincial capital of Atalaya, to which Oventeni is but an administrative annex. As a consequence, he had moved to Atalaya, which now is a day away in the dry season by the new road. The *colono* elite in Oventeni did not wait long before they took advantage of the situation. Prompted by the OAGP's crisis after some of their communities' "autonomy" proclamations, they sensed an opportunity for damaging and possibly ditching the OAGP once and forever. In a first move, they succeeded in denouncing the indigenous leadership for having collected toll fees from ranchers who took their herds out to the market during the conflict with the *Sendero Luminoso*, and not keeping proper records. Indeed, the OAGP had collected the equivalent of some 700 US\$ during several years of conflict, money they used to finance their travel costs and other expenses while organizing the self-defence system. The *colonos* of Oventeni succeeded in convincing the judge in Atalaya that this

money belonged to the town of Oventeni and that the lack of book-keeping showed irresponsibility and possibly embezzlement on the part of the Ashéninka leaders. The president of OAGP was handed a conditional sentence of four years imprisonment, which meant that he had to appear in Atalaya once a month to sign a document at the judge's office. On top, he was fined 2,000 soles (some 600 US\$). This weakened his position in the public opinion and inflicted heavy travel expenses on his household economy.

Considering the fact that the OAGP had saved the entire area from being taken over by the guerilla, and possibly from entering into a permanent warlike situation, the denouncement and trial were an ungrateful act, motivated by the *colonos*' desire for vengeance for their loss of political control. This small victory encouraged the *colonos* to hit the indigenous leadership even stronger. Any minor conflict between a *colono* and a native community or one of their individual members was immediately blamed on the OAGP leadership. The latest case was a trivial instance of a *colono* whose bean plot had gone up in fire, and who accused his Ashéninka neighbor of arson, demanding an absurdly high indemnification. The local justice of the peace in Oventeni, a notorious cattle rancher and exploiter, immediately denounced the OAGP president as the ringleader behind the fire and took advantage of the situation by adding an accusation of his own, according to which the leader had also commissioned the murder of one of the judge's own Ashéninka peons, who had been found dead in the judge's field two years earlier – an obscure and strange case that had no connection whatsoever with the OAGP or with the bean field fire. Although the case is absurd and will probably not stand legal scrutiny even by Atalaya standards, it does put additional pressure on the indigenous leadership, as they have to follow the summons of the regional judge in Atalaya, and then defend themselves in court. The action's only purpose is to harass and intimidate the indigenous leadership.

In the colony of Oventeni, a new anti-indigenous rhetoric has now developed, adding fuel to the latent interethnic conflict. When talking to the *colonos* about the present situation in the colony, one hears constant allegations to the OAGP's supposed malicious intentions to "kill off all the colonists", made out as being the true hidden agenda of the Ashéninka leadership. These allegations are growing into some sort of collective paranoia in *colono* society, orchestrated by colonist cattle ranchers who take advantage of the declining fortunes of an indigenous leadership caught off-guard by the extractivist expansion. It should be emphasized that there has been no concrete events or threats that might justify such fear, nor have any *colonos* been killed in acts of collective violence by the Ashéninka since the reestablishment of the Oventeni mission and colony in the 1930s¹⁵. On the other hand, many Ashéninka have lost their lives in arguments and clashes with colonists in the same period or have died as a consequence of *colono* abuses and intimidations. Nevertheless, the dangerously opportunistic *colono* rhetoric is now setting the stage, reproducing a centuries-old

relational pattern, which, if allowed to escalate into a fully-developed scenario of frontier hostilities, may end up repeating itself, and thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Unfortunately, the re-emergence of such an antagonising settler discourse is not coming as a surprise. Over the last couple of years there has been a consistent increase in denunciations and police reports against indigenous leaders all over the *montaña* and Upper Amazon for violations no matter how minor, as well as denouncements filed by local patrons and *colono* authorities in what looks like a consistent attempt to dislodge the indigenous movement. In one extreme case, an indigenous leader was sentenced to two years in prison for defamation against a logging company. He had publicly accused the company of cutting and stealing an indigenous community's timber (which they did), using insulting vocabulary. But as the company had an extraction permit from the National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) in Atalaya, they could claim to be operating on a legal basis, and denounced the leader's arguments as libelous. When – in protest against this development – the local indigenous organization in Atalaya together with the OAGP picketed the permit issuing office in Atalaya, the accused was sentenced to yet another year for being the mastermind behind the protest and thus responsible for blocking the entrance to a public institution. Eight other counts were added to the indictments, which could result in a cumulative sentence of up to 20 years in prison. No one was killed, hurt, or even touched, and no lives were endangered, nor were there any material damages worth mentioning.¹⁶ As I found out during a visit to the regional penitentiary in Pucallpa, 25 of 49 indigenous prisoners had never been sentenced. One had spent as many as 8 years in jail without a sentence. Around 90% of the cases were incidents of domestic violence, family conflicts or arguments among neighbors which could have been dealt with easily by customary law, but were (or rather: were supposed to be) referred to the national judiciary system by local *colono* authorities.

From the neighboring Selva Central, at least one case has been reported where the logging operators have registered their extraction permit in the name of the indigenous community, thus registering the volume extracted with the tax number of the community, but never paying the tax. Consequently, tax authorities now attempt to collect large dues in the community, who had no idea of what was going on, and no money to pay. As a result, the fiscal department initiated a distress procedure upon the community's titled land, which the state now may sell. This means that the community is now running the risk of losing their land title, their homes and their livelihood. If they resist, they may be prosecuted and possibly accused of "terrorism". Although the validity of the tax claim is obviously questionable, there is no legal aid available to these communities; no one seems to care. Undoubtedly more cases of this kind will be coming up in the near future.

The logging industry presents not only an ecological problem, but is becoming a direct threat to the indigenous peoples' livelihood and future, and although the settlers have no direct responsibility for these developments, colonization often follows extractive operations, as previously inaccessible land tracts are being opened up. With native land titles suspended, *colonos* are going to invade community territories. Already now, there are constant conflicts over illegal *colono* settlement activities in indigenous community areas. So, even if there is a certain discontent among *colonos* with the way the timber industry is operating, there are no signs of an alliance or common front of *colonos* and Ashéninka against the lumber patrons. The *colonos* generally side with the lumber tycoons, entrepreneurs and other powerful patrons, one reason being that they have the habit of always looking for opportunities and new land. A second and equally powerful reason, however, is that the *colonos* feel the pull of cultural affinities which are much stronger between them and the extracitizens than with their indigenous neighbors.

Environmentalism and conservation: Globalization's other face

The access to, rights over and control of lands and territories is the pivotal point of most *colono*-indigenous conflicts that are so characteristic for frontier situations. Contested space is one of the central factors in the constitution of a frontier – in fact, it is an inherent characteristic. Indigenous peoples who have to endure serial cycles of colonization, attempted closure and eventual restitution of the frontier are obviously interested in finding durable solutions in their quest for control and consolidation of their territories. One of the new topics emerging from the international environmental discourse which has influenced national regimes of governance since the beginning of the 1990s, has been the protection of biodiversity and the development of community-based strategies for managing and protecting areas of concern. In Brazil, for instance, the alliance between indigenous groups, other forest dwellers and domestic and foreign environmentalists has resulted in the establishment of different types of reserves and protected areas. Central to the alliance was the attempt to satisfy both the social and economic needs of the indigenous population and the need for biodiversity conservation (Conklin and Graham 1995, Little 1999). Although the environmental movement in Peru never had the same political clout as the one in Brazil, the indigenous organizations in the 1980s and 1990s were sober enough to identify and foreground the new “environmentalist” potentials in their quest for reconstructing and controlling their territories.

The Peruvian government responded early to the new international environmental priorities, particularly those coming from the World Bank, and measures were taken to protect tropical forest habitats with resident indigenous populations. Ironically, the Peruvian legislation has always been at the forefront when it comes to establishing

indigenous land rights and community-based management of protected areas. As early as 1974, in the agrarian reform period under the left-leaning military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, years before the Brandt-Report (1980)¹⁷ and the Brundtland Report (1987)¹⁸ famously set the tone, the Peruvian “Forests and Forest Wildlife Act” (D.L. 21147) defined a new matrix for protected areas called “*reservas comunales*” (“communal reserves”), “to allow the local populations to preserve the fauna.” The 1974 law, however, did not define who qualified for such nature stewardship, nor where and how the respective hot spots could be identified, with the consequence that the law could not be implemented until it was regulated in 1977, specifying that the only beneficiaries of *Reservas Comunales* could be the Native Communities and that there may be no human settlements inside the reserve nor any type of logging or agriculture (Newing and Wahl 2004). The intention of the law that defined the concept of “Communal Reserve” was to protect biodiversity, while simultaneously leaving options for a so-called “rational exploitation of wildlife” and other subsistence activities that made it possible for indigenous populations to “improve the quality of life of communities within or adjacent to the communal reserve and contribute to local and regional socio-economic development”¹⁹ (Arbaiza et al. 1998).

After the relative success of the land titling projects for native communities in the central *montaña* in the 1990s, it became obvious to the indigenous organizations that they had to find a format for consolidating their territorial gains, create more unbroken territories and block further advancement of both the settlement and the extractive frontiers in non-titled areas adjacent to their communities. Their eyes fell on the *reserva comunal* as the most obvious and suitable form and model for such territorial consolidation. However, only one small communal reserve had hitherto been established in Peru, the *Reserva Comunal Yanasha* created in 1988, covering only 34,744,70 hectares, as a buffer zone to the National Park Yanachaga Chemillén in the Selva Central. Ironically, it was funded by USAID as part of their grand colonization scheme package. The creation of this small communal reserve had had little impact on the overall frontier scenario, nor did it generate experiences with stakeholder co-management of protected areas.

Over time the indigenous organizations of the Gran Pajonal and the Selva Central presented several plans for securing large indigenous tracts of land, reconstructing what they regarded as their legitimate territories. One of the areas binding the indigenous communities of the Gran Pajonal, the Upper Ucayali and the Pichis-Pachitea of the Selva Central together in one coherent block is the Shira Mountains, a triangular rocky area between the mentioned zones. The area is largely uninhabited, but the neighboring Ashéninka go in there on hunting treks. As a continuation of the land titling projects in the same areas during the first half of the 1990s, the technical teams of the indigenous organizations worked out a proposal for the establishment

of a large communal reserve in this area. In March 1996, a very elaborated proposal for the creation of the *Reserva Comunal El Sira*²⁰ was handed over to the National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA). The proposal included a 400 page report complete with biological, ecological and sociological surveys, inventories, history, ethnography, documentation etc. After long and difficult negotiations with the environmental authorities, the Sira Reserve covering 6,164 km² was accepted and finally established in June 2001, as the largest communal reserve established so far in Peru.

The Sira Communal Reserve was subsequently included in a larger package of conservation projects funded by the GEF (Global Environmental Facility)/World Bank, the "Indigenous Management of Protected Areas in the Amazon (PIMA)" project. The history of the genesis of this project is interesting, as it demonstrates what we might term "the post-modern exploitation of cultural capital". The short version is that a World Bank representative during the bank's poverty diagnostics of the Andean countries during the late 1990's – which put indigenous peoples into the center of the Bank's poverty alleviation strategies – became enamoured with the Sira Communal Reserve proposal, and urged the indigenous organizations to present it to the World Bank. As he deemed this single project too small for a project portfolio for the Bank, he prompted the indigenous organization to add other community-based conservation projects and reservation proposals in one bundle. Such a package was submitted and the expectations were high among the indigenous leaders. To win the recognition of the World Bank and get funding for the realization of the old dream of the restitution of lost territories seemed too good to be true. In fact, it was.

When the proposed project was returned to Peru after processing in Washington, it had undergone an institutional metamorphosis. It was now a 10 mio. dollar affair handed over to INRENA to execute. In the package they had bundled 5 projects, of which only one is a *reserva comunal* of its own, the Reserva Comunal El Sira, while the others are mere buffer zones to conventional protected areas. While the INRENA initially had been reluctant to comply with the petition for the creation of the Sira Communal Reserve, the million dollar gift from the GEF helped them oblige. Whatever was the motivation, the indigenous organizations had little to say, and control with the multi-million dollar project were firmly in the hands of INRENA and the Peruvian government, much to the disappointment of the indigenous leadership. They felt, and still feel, that their idea and work was expropriated by the World Bank and handed over to the Peruvian government, whose bureaucracy within INRENA has become the main beneficiary. Nevertheless, the Sira Communal Reserve became a fact in 1991 and the indigenous organizations are obviously an integral part of the project setup. The PIMA project in charge of establishing the reserve set up a management structure where the indigenous communities in the immediate neighbourhood of the reserve were supposed to assume the responsibility of "contract-

executing entities", meaning that they should form a project-bearing organization with the aim of relating to INRENA and performing specific functions (yet to be defined) in relation to the surveillance, control and administration of the Communal Reserve. This new indigenous entity was named ECOSIRA, set up with by-laws, a board of elected indigenous representatives from 70 member communities bordering the Sira Reserve – and no funds! When the indigenous representatives complained about the lack of funding, the Bank representatives answered that they would not fund ECOSIRA as they did not want to create dependency on the World Bank (an absurd proposition given the fact that the rest of the bureaucratic construction of INRENA-PIMA depends entirely on GEF/World Bank funding, and has been living quite happily for five years with their 10 million dollar grant). Thus the indigenous "contract-executing entities" will have to find other external sources they can depend on for funding their work in ECOSIRA. This is what is called co-management: the government (i.e. INRENA) decides, controls available funds, defines regulations, sets up guidelines, and has the powers to enforce the law against illegal extractors and other trespassers. The indigenous "co-managers" have no powers, no budget, no economic support, yet are supposed to control, inspect and monitor the reserve, as well as take care of certain administrative duties – for free, unless they can raise funds themselves. The "co" disguises a very unequal relationship and a gross imbalance of decision-making power.

It took several years before legislation to regulate the administration and governance of the communal reserves in Peru was approved. The regulation known as the *Regimen Especial* (Special Regime) was not issued until June 2005, before which date it had not been possible to set up the reserve administration. The delay in these formal and bureaucratic exercises by the Peruvian state put the World Bank under time pressure, as the PIMA project was scheduled to end by the end of 2006, but the transfer of the project to INRENA would take place only in July 2006.

One of the initiatives in the PIMA package is the so-called Bio Investment Project, targeting the communities adjacent to the Sira Reserve. In each local area (corresponding to each local indigenous organization), the project has identified the alternative production potentials of particular interest to the indigenous producers. Based on this diagnosis, eight "Bio-Investment Projects" have been formulated to be developed in selected communities. These cover production projects such as fish farming of aquarium fish for export, consumption fish farming, agro-forestry, medical herbs and plants, gold washing (placer gold mining) and organic coffee, to mention a few. In the Gran Pajonal, our case study area, the organization opted for coffee, a product with which the grassland dwellers were already familiar, yet this time in the form of "indigenous bird-friendly coffee", emphasizing a production method that leaves most of the forest trees untouched as the coffee is cultivated under shade, to the benefit of bird life and other wild animals. The project proposal had

been elaborated by the OAGP who expected that a niche production with a branded, specialized product would offer better market opportunities as the general market was already saturated with organic coffee, and therefore highly competitive. Towards the end of 2005, at the beginning of the rainy season (obviously the worst possible timing), the delayed PIMA project sent a consultant to start the coffee project in four communities. Despite all odds, thanks to the enthusiasm of local indigenous extension workers, they did succeed to plan and prepare for the production activities after the rainy season, convincing the project to donate over 40 coffee peeling machines for the 2006 spring harvest. Due to logistical problems caused by a prolonged rainy season, the machines did not arrive before May 2006 and still needed technical adjustment to be operative. When that finally happened, the harvest was almost over, but the mere fact that outsiders had shown interest in their produce created a lot of optimism and motivation for the coffee project among the Ashéninka communities.

However, the PIMA project and the World Bank input has ended in July 2006, and no second phase of the project has yet been designed nor approved by the funding agency, leaving an unfinished job behind. As Peru elected a new government and president in April and June 2006, it is very doubtful that the transfer of the PIMA project portfolio to a government institution where most officials and officers are going to be changed will mean anything but a stop to the project. The other Bio Investment Projects are even further behind schedule and there is an enormous frustration and disappointment in the indigenous communities, where some are blaming their ECOSIRA representatives for being liars and not fulfilling their promises. This creates division, distrust and disruption in the indigenous organization, undermining its cohesion and facilitating the co-optation, penetration and corruption of the communities by extractivist interests who seek access to valuable timber resources and mineral deposits.

Without continued economic and technical support, the GEF/World Bank-funded PIMA project may well end up being counterproductive relative to its purpose, opening the doors for illegal extraction and access to the communal reserve. Illegal logging and gold-panning is already taking place in various sites inside the Sira communal reserve, and the official park guards from INRENA are ridiculously few, have very limited resources and limited means of river transportation. Furthermore, the guards have no executive powers to confiscate illegally-cut timber or to intervene against the loggers. That is the forest police's jurisdiction, but they are not present. The indigenous organizations and communities are left with the clear impression that the state apparatus' sudden interest in the Sira Communal Reserve is only motivated by their interest in the lavish World Bank funds, and has evaporated with the end of the PIMA project, thus confirming the communities' deep distrust of any government institution. This is not a healthy start for a project supposed to help end the frontier logic and start a process of democratization towards a state governed by law.

The GEF/World Bank and other development institutions should be encouraged to continue supporting the communities in the Sira Communal Reserve Project, a project which could yet become a success despite of the negative start; otherwise, the multilateral development institutions will have given renewed evidence of what critics have called the irresponsibility towards poor indigenous communities in the central Peruvian Amazon. May they prove otherwise!

In the Gran Pajonal, the coffee project also took another turn. The Ashéninka "bird-friendly coffee" project was also promoted by the OAGP to the Regional Government of Ucayali. The organization succeeded in getting the project accepted and included in the regional 5-year budget. But when the project materialized in the fall of 2005, it had completely changed. It had become a standard eco-coffee project, with the sole aim of maximising the production output of coffee in the province, and not distinguishing between Ashéninka producers and *colono* producers. The project profile had been altered beyond recognition; the *colonos* of Oventeni had been put in charge of the administration and there was no marketing strategy, nor was there any indication that specialists in ecological coffee production would be supervising and guiding the process. The implications of this for the Ashéninka were so obvious that the OAGP withdrew from the project and filed a protest with the regional administration. They would not accept *colono* directorship nor would they abandon their idea of branded organic coffee with a history that could not be shared with the *colono* producers. The regional government responded with an invitation to re-submit the "bird-friendly indigenous coffee" project and apply for funding next year. By May 2006, there had been no response that far.

Much worse was the fate of the *colono* organic coffee project. What could have been a sensible reorganization of settler production, away from destructive cattle raising and towards a more intensive and ecologically better-adapted production in the tropical forest habitat of the Gran Pajonal looked like a failure even before it had really started. To initiate the project, the regional agricultural extension office sent in a specialist with insufficient knowledge of organic cultivation methods. It took a long time to find suitable seeds to sow, since it was very late in the season. Next, they started sowing three small beds with *Arabica Catura* seeds, a high-yielding variety that needs no shade but requires heavy fertilizing, and is therefore absolutely unsuited to organic and ecologically-sound coffee production in a forest environment like the Gran Pajonal. Anyhow, it did not matter much in the end, since most seeds – having reduced germination ability and having been planted far too late in the season to produce seedlings – rotted anyway. Seeds are normally harvested in April or May and seedlings produced in nurseries in the subsequent months. One need not be a studied agronomist to realize the impossibility of starting this process in November! Despite the disastrous results, the budget for the kick-off of the project was almost used up, causing disagreements and accusations among the *colono* project participants. They

may start once again in 2006, but it is more likely that the Ashéninka will score an earlier success with their branded coffee project, creating envy and new contradictions between the two groups of grassland dwellers.

The story may be trivial, but even in a relatively innocent attempt to introduce organic coffee production, the predictable antagonisms of *colono*-indigenous relationship structures are reproduced and determine the way things develop. It is not a simple task to undo the “perennial frontier” syndrome, to borrow a phrase from Paul Little (2001).

Elements of the frontier conflict

Colono villains, rogue patrons and indigenous victims

In her article in this volume, Marina Campos addresses the problem of the way Amazon migrant *colono* farmers are being portrayed in much of the literature from the region, and mostly as villain forest destructors with neither knowledge of nor concern for the environment they live off. She proposes a much more nuanced and dynamic picture of the *colono*, arguing that such stereotypes are based on biases, rather than on *de facto* empirical knowledge. She also argues that recent *colono* social movements are incorporating environmental issues in their discourse, subverting the negative image of the *colono* who is represented instead as a creative agent of social change, reconciling forest conservation with rural development (Campos, this volume, pp. 431–436; 441). Her point is well taken, and it is encouraging to hear that the Brazilian peasantry in the Amazon forest has developed new systems of production, and forms of settlement and colonization that are sustainable, i. e. compatible with the tropical forest environment. We would just wish for a similar development among the Andean immigrants in Peru’s Amazonia. So far there has been no indication that it will happen.

Considering the information available on the history of the Peruvian colonization frontier over several centuries, the *colonos* and local patrons indeed appear as the “bad guys”, as the agents of conflict and destruction, while the indigenous inhabitants of these forest-covered foothills remain victimized, however not necessarily the losers, and certainly not passive objects of a historical teleology. It is difficult to arrive at any other conclusion given the historical data, as well as the author’s first-hand experiences from research and fieldwork over more than thirty years in the Peruvian Amazon, being a witness to innumerable abuses and injustices committed against the indigenous population. These observations and experiences may have created certain biases, in so far as any analysis and presentation is subject to the author’s moral and political choices and preferences; yet, this should not permit the easy conclusion that the depiction of the asymmetrical relationships between the settlers and the indigenous inhabitants of the frontier is a result of preconceived imaginaries created

in a biased academic setting. For the benefit of comparison between the Peruvian frontier situation and the Brazilian colonist frontier discussed in this volume, we would like to emphasize some of the major differences in the two scenarios. Taking off from Campos’ main arguments, we will try to reflect on them in our Peruvian context.

First of all, the discourses to be encountered in Brazil and in Peru regarding the problems of the Amazonian frontier are very different. In Brazil the discussion is very much focused on the question of the destruction of the “rain forest” (e.g. Hecht and Cockburn 1989, Schmink and Wood 1992), and, as Campos argues, the *colonos* are being pointed out as the culprits in this process, made into scapegoats for decades of failed government policies. The antagonism “settlers vs. the rain forest” was for a long time one of the driving forces in the build-up of a strong and influential environmentalist movement in Brazil, with strong allies in North America and Europe. Hundreds of new NGOs were born during the peak period of the 1980, positioning themselves within this discourse. The indigenous movement had its own political agenda and was never able to gain a popular momentum of similar magnitude. Instead, indigenous leaders saw their advantage in a pragmatic (some would say opportunistic) alliance with the environmentalists in Brazil²¹. This was never and still is not the case in Peru. Although the Peruvian discussion of environmental problems in the Amazonian region (comprising more than 60% of the total area of the country) reach the media, it has never gained the same importance in the public consciousness as in Brazil, and, in addition, is very rarely focused on the human impact of colonization; indeed, the concerns tend to be focused on oil and gas exploration and exploitation, gold mining, timber extraction and contamination from such activities.

The environmental problems caused by the advancement of the agricultural frontier were rarely on the front pages of Peruvian daily papers. Only when there is a violent conflict between settlers and indigenous people, the problem of colonization may reach the news media; here it is likely to be presented as a social and political problem rather than an environmental issue. Thus the Peruvian discourse on the Amazon frontier was and is focused on the social and political problems, the interethnic conflicts and the rights of the indigenous peoples. In Peru, the contradiction is not one of *colonos* vs. nature but of *colonos* vs. natives, which creates a very different context for the politicization of the issue. In the public imagery in Peru, *colonos* have played a very different role in the history of the nation. As a social category, the *colono* is not identified solely as a small-scale agriculturalist and peasant, although such people do constitute the majority today. *Colonos* are basically all settlers or entrepreneurs from the Andes or the coast who make their living in the *montaña*, including larger patrons, *hacendados*, and cattle ranchers. The category has developed and changed in keeping with the twists and turns of Peruvian history. The first *colonos* were pioneers, often of

European descent, seen as national heroes who defied savage nature and its hostile and uncivilized inhabitants. Later on in the process, the social background of the *colonos* shifted as more and more Andean peasants joined the ranks, but the image of grand civilizers propelled by a pioneering spirit continues to be reproduced, not only in the national imagery, but also in the identity construction of the *colonos* themselves. In the *montaña*, the *colono* category does not refer to a homogenous ethnic or social group; rather, *colonos* are divided by numerous differences and conflicting interests, even if they may seem to form a separate social group that in certain contexts acts as if it were a coherent social unit. Campos mentions in fact that Brazilian *colonos* do not cultivate a particular ethnic identity as such, and accordingly the problem of colonization is not an identity issue. In Peru it is much more an identity issue than anything else. The majority of contemporary *colonos* in the *montaña* are poor peasants with roots in the indigenous culture of the Andes, but by redefining themselves as *colonos*, they join the historical category of national pioneers and civilizing heroes, thereby transcending the parochial local context and making an ascent in the social and ethno-racial hierarchy of Peruvian national society. This renders them distinctly anti-indigenous, as they must distance themselves conspicuously from anything associated with the indigenous objects of the civilizing project that define their identity. I will discuss the identity issue in the following section, restricting myself at this place to pointing out that the *colonos* on the frontier of the Peruvian *montaña* have never been ascribed the position of the “disembedded other” (ibid.:426) in the national discourse on Amazon development and environment – but the Native Amazonians (the Ashéninka being among them) indeed have.

Another difference from the Brazilian context is the fact that the indigenous populations in many of the rural areas of the Peruvian *montaña* are still a (vast) majority; in the case of the Gran Pajonal, the indigenous population constitutes 90% of the total population, a fact that obviously gives them a tremendous political advantage as voters and as a social movement. The indigenous populations are the ones who have created social movements in the Peruvian Amazon, not the *colonos*. There are no new social movements or conventional peasant unions to absorb *colono* interests in the Peruvian *montaña*, nor are there any NGOs working with the colonists, be they environmentalist or other. There are local associations of agricultural producers of different kinds, but a strong and unifying movement is not present. Only recently have there been attempts from environmentalist NGOs to address the topic of timber extraction and the way the lumber patrons operate, apparently in the optimistic hope that they may be able to control extraction to some degree, ensure reforestation and preserve protected areas in exchange for helping with FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)²² certification and export. So far the attempts look hopelessly naïve given the record of these patrons, and it does not divert the conflicts over logging away from the indigenous communities. On the contrary, it rather legitimizes the activities

of notoriously exploitative patrons, now turned “green”, and thus helps disguise the actual social and environmental destruction taking place on indigenous territories.

In addition to the extractive industry’s unscrupulous destruction of natural resources, habitats and ecological systems – including local human-biotic relations –, the colonist production system also takes its toll on tropical forest ecosystems. Campos argues that the *colono* agricultural system has been used in a blame game to cover up faulty and deficient government policies in Brazil, and as a result, *colono* knowledge of the forest has been completely neglected as a potential for developing alternative ways of organizing production on the Amazon frontier. That irresponsible, reckless or simply absent public policies for the development of the Amazon territories is contributing greatly to environmental destruction on the colonization frontier, is obviously also the case in the Peruvian Amazon and other *montaña* regions of the eastern Andes. However, this does not absolve the *colono* production system *per se* from the charge of having a negative impact. In the Brazilian case it was possible to exchange a potentially destructive and inefficient system for a more adaptive and presumably sustainable one, making it possible to implement regional environmental and productive planning in the tropical forest environment. However, such a turn to better practice necessitates a focused national political discourse, a well as an organized peasant movement, resourceful NGOs with international linkages, and a government with strong planning capabilities. None of these conditions are present in Peru. Here, we are dealing with spontaneous colonization, and if any government policy exists at all, it is likely to be a slow and reactive one. Most *colono* peasants in Peru have a background in Andean production systems adapted to a completely different geographic and ecological context. Among their agricultural activities, cattle raising is the most prestigious. Thus one will find thousands of small cattle breeders with small herds of less than 50 heads or maybe only a handful of animals. If you own 300–400 heads of cattle, you are big in the local settler context. Cattle raising puts a lot of pressure on tropical forest systems, and the accumulated effect of many small cattle production units may be as environmentally harmful as the large cattle ranches of Brazil, and much more difficult to control and divert into other types of production because of the numerous individual players.

Comparing *colono* and indigenous land use patterns, a GIS (Global Information System) analysis based on air photos and satellite images taken over a period of 40 years in the Gran Pajonal shows that while a native community in that time period had tripled the number of inhabitants, it had not altered the grassland/forest ratio in the territory, at least not in the sense that could be predicted; to the contrary, there was less grassland (5%) in 1996 than in the mid 1950s (7%) and, even more surprisingly, the forest cover had increased from 87% in the 1950s to 90% in 1996, due to the Ashéninka’s coffee production system! Over the same period of time, the forest cover on *colono* territories had decreased from 87% in the 1950s (identical to that

of the indigenous zone) to 47% in 1996, and the grass-covered areas had increased from 7% to 28% (the rest being land for agricultural and other uses), but against the background of a *colono* population stabilizing and leveling out in the 1980s. Accelerating, however, was the deforestation rate²³ (Hvalkof 2006).

Villainization or not, in the Peruvian Amazon the *colono* production systems, when not regulated or supported (or even subsidized), have disastrous results, not only for the forest environment as such, but also for *colono* production itself.

Indigenous and colonist identities

In order to understand the entrenched ethnic and cultural contradictions in the Peruvian frontier conflict, let us return to our case study of the Gran Pajonal, a case that illuminates nicely the dynamics of indigenous–*colono* identity-making.

The settler society of Oventeni is the offspring of the process of modernization. The *colonos*, ignoring their Quechua background in the Andes, fully identify with the ideology of modern development and progress, an ideology imported from the industrialized nations after World War II and propagated in the Andean region through structural reforms of the agrarian sector in the 1960s and 70s. In this period the terms “*indio*” and “*indígena*” were removed by law from the official vocabulary in Peru and substituted with the term “peasant” (*campesino*) to emphasize the grand project of creating a single national *mestizo* identity and eliminate any connotations to ethnic pluralism, an old project that was put back on track accompanied by the “subsidized” import of used and worn-down development models from Europe and the U.S. A large portion of the indigenous peasantry in Peru bought the idea of national progress, motivated by their extreme poverty, lack of prospects for a better future in the traditional communities, and a desire to escape the yoke of the ethno-racist classifications which kept them at the bottom of the national hierarchy. As mentioned already, the *colono* category and identity offered a way out of “the indigenous” conceived as the local, the rural, and the marginal; it was a way in and up within “the national”, urban-based and centralized ethnic and social hierarchy.

In this process, the modern Peruvian “*cholo*” was re-born as a new and self-reproducing social category. As de-indigenized individuals or families detached from their roots, *cholos* are looking for a better future as individualized entrepreneurs with high mobility. They are characterized by not belonging to any defined geographical space, seeking opportunities wherever they may be found. They constitute the bulk of migrants to Lima and other urban centers, spaces that hitherto had been considered *mestizo* and white “territory”, and they typically constitute the majority of the new colonist population in the eastern woodlands of the Amazon. It was also deeply frustrated *cholo* youth from Andean towns and cities that were recruited as members

of the Shining Path guerrilla movement. Failing to improve their social positions and quality of life through education and suffering a deep social identity crisis, the *Sendero Luminoso* offered these young people identity, ideology, and justice – indeed, a new beginning. As one such young revolutionary once explained to me: “We want to rewrite history, beginning with year zero!”.

All of the *colonos* of the Peruvian *montaña* may hardly be identified as “*cholos*”, but the majority of the *colono* inhabitants of Oventeni would certainly qualify as such; and as already mentioned, they tend to be distinctly anti-indigenous. Because of their own indigenous roots, it is of central importance to them to point out their distance from anything indigenous as conspicuously as possible. In this way, they hope to succeed in their individual projects of self-transformation into modern Peruvians and world citizens. One might state that the *cholo* identity is not only characterized by being anti-indigenous, but as being the negation of the indigenous – the essential non-indigenous. The *colonos* see themselves as the vanguard of Peruvian civilization, contributing to the progress of the nation by domesticating the jungle and its savage inhabitants. In order to fulfill this aspiration, Oventeni needs to be made into a real town, and most important, it must be connected to the “developed” parts of the country by a road. The quest for the road connection is as old as the colony. The road is not primarily seen as a rational means of transporting or marketing products, but as a quasi-magic symbol, a spell which will make progress and development appear by themselves. Thus it is seen almost as an insult to mention that despite generations of *colono* dreams and efforts, it was the local indigenous organization, the OAGP, not the great *colono* civilizers, that succeeded in bringing the road to Oventeni. On the other hand, there will be no doubt in the colony where to put the blame when logging is over and the dirt road begins to deteriorate due to lack of maintenance – the germ of yet another round of interethnic conflict on which anti-indigenous interests may feed.

The *colono* identity system is almost exclusively based on an ideology of modern progress. Ideological systems are goal-seeking, specific, have a direction and a sequential time dimension, and explicitly refer meaning and reason to well-defined logics, as tautological as they may be (Turner 1993). Colonist ideology is expressed in terms of economic performance, production, accumulation, and secular qualities embedded in the Peruvian state. The moral attributes embedded in this developmentalist ideology define and validate colonist behavior and relations with the Ashéninka “savages” (Hvalkof 2003:29f.).

Contrary to this stands the Ashéninka identity system, which fundamentally is of a cosmological rather than an ideological order. Ideally speaking, their cosmology is an ontological and spiritual system that has no goals, no direction, no specificity, no logical time, and no sequence. It is upheld by ritual, the structure of the physical space,

and the landscape and the performance of Ashéninkanness. It is a system that basically is non-hierarchical, but anyway refers all meaning and reason to the “ultimate sacred”, the blurred existence of God and the godly above (ibid.). The Ashéninka do not have any “mission”; they do not embark on an ideological quest for converting other people into Ashéninka, an utterly absurd idea since it would entail a metamorphosis requiring magical transformations, and basically be meaningless, as people are what they are. They only want to be what they are, namely grassland-dwelling Ashéninka, a state of existence that was, according to their belief, allotted to them by God and is regarded the best of all possible worlds. They would adopt and try out any new and innovative element that would reinforce this existential position. Thus their openness to establish themselves as state-recognized legal personae (*comunidades nativas*), to take up organic coffee production, their acceptance of the road, their interest in bilingual education, are all choices they have made in order to maintain or improve their control of their cultural and social reproduction as Ashéninka. Their system is dynamic and open to changes, yet with the ultimate goal of preserving a specific indigenous identity; in their case, conformity is being reproduced through dynamics of social adaptability and change.

To the Ashéninka, the aggressive and domineering behavior of the colonists is idiosyncratic – clearly unpleasant and unwanted, but within the natural order of things not really to be questioned. The *chori*, as they call the highlanders (see note 5) have these characteristics. That they, in consort with the white *wiracocha*, have usurped space and power which originally belonged to the Ashéninka, and even tried to exterminate them, is deplorable but cannot be explained. To be sure, it may be resisted, but not in terms of an ideologically-based or programmatic action. The Ashéninka have no need to understand or rationalize the behavioral characteristics of other ethnic or social groups with which they interact. They have no ideological or moral preferences as to whom they want to relate to or negotiate with. Basically they regard any other ethnic group, be it white, *mestizo* or indigenous, as a potential source of material or symbolic wealth which needs to be tried out. This explains their extremely pragmatic political strategies over time, the at times ambiguous relationship between the indigenous population and the *colonos*, and the indigenous ability to adapt to any reality and also react rapidly when new structural options or situational possibilities emerge.

Another fundamental difference and expression of these two incongruent but in certain ways also complementary systems is their relation to the landscape and the particular value ascribed to the grasslands. The Ashéninka (as well as any other indigenous population in the *montaña*) write their mythology out in the landscape. All toponyms and particular geographical features, including the *pajonales*, refer to myths or specific events in the narratives they all share. Hence their perception of a sacred coherence in the universe and their place in it is constantly reconfirmed as they



Photo 3.6 : Participants in adult literacy program celebrating the “Day of Bi-lingual Education” (Gran Pajonal), Nov. 2005 (photo: Søren Hvalkof)

move around in the landscape on a daily basis. The colonists regard the very same landscape and the grasslands as a potential resource for their cattle ventures and a cipher for potential wealth, progress and economic success, which may confirm their development discourse and self-ascribed social status. Thus the Ashéninka-*colono* conflict contains a contradiction between land/territory as a symbolic locus of identity, an ontological space for the Ashéninka, and land/territory as productive material for the colonists. This entails radically different mechanisms of identity formation for the two groups (cf. Hvalkof 1989, 2003, 2006; see also Santos-Granero 1998 regarding Yanesha place naming).

Interpreting failures and successes

When the colonists of Oventeni began accelerating cattle raising around Oventeni, they followed the logic of institutionalized development mechanics, paying allegiance to a discourse that had dominated their thinking and that of the elites of their country for generations and had come to seem like an unquestionable truth. Their system of accumulation followed the only model they knew: exploiting indigenous labor through chattel slavery and debt bondage, a quasi-feudal system they had learned from the former *haciendas* of the highlands, themselves or their parents having been peons of indigenous descent. It could be argued that such seemingly anachronistic conditions were unique for the frontier of the Gran Pajonal and its immediate surroundings, but unfortunately, this is not the case. From the Upper Urubamba River in the southern

Peruvian *montaña*, French anthropologist France-Marie Renard-Casevitz (1980:250) notes that

“at the end of the migratory chain, colonists in Amazonian areas often display the most ethnocentric attitudes of all. In the Urubamba River, I have observed again and again over ten years poor Quechua-speaking Andean peasants presenting themselves to forest Indians as “bosses” (*señor patron*) and agents of civilization. In some cases, these landless immigrants have reproduced the same linguistic domination from which they suffered in the highlands as they imposed upon Indians the use of their own language, Quechua”.

On a similar note, Renard-Casevitz (*ibid.*) remarks:

“Denying forest Indians the capacity to farm efficiently, Andean colonist have expropriated their best lands in the Urubamba Region; as estates were constituted on the few alluvial plains along the river, Indians were recruited as laborers by their new masters”.

The *colonos* saw no other way of changing their former lives as poor Andean peasants, and they probably did not have other options, either. The *colono* alternative was their best choice.

The perversity of it is that when the settlers were finally about to succeed in the Gran Pajonal, the very same ideological system they had tried so hard to live up to, turned around pointing fingers at them, making them aware of the ridiculous caricature of Western civilization they had created in Oventeni. To the settlers and the rest of *colono* society in the frontier region, it came as a sudden blow that the Ashéninka of the Gran Pajonal, of all groups, had succeeded in establishing officially-recognized communities and getting them demarcated and titled. No one had expected that this indigenous group would ever have the ability or the “intelligence” to get themselves organized, and even if they did, this would never have given them practical advantages, because the *colonos* controlled the public sphere as well as the interpretation and implementation of legislation at the local and regional levels.

But the international discourse had changed, and so had the rules of the game, even in the Amazon rainforest. The international breakthrough for new standards on environmental protection, human and indigenous rights, sustainability and biodiversity favored the Ashéninka. Choosing to directly focus on control of land instead of entering into endless legal battles over land rights in biased Peruvian courts was an intelligent move on the part of the Ashéninka. By being receptive to new impressions and ad hoc contacts with outsiders such as researchers, missionaries or travelers, they had learned that there was in fact legislation that guaranteed their territorial rights and power hierarchies that reach beyond the regional level, and in fact hold the potency of overruling the regional colonist elite network. Given their ethnocentric, non-ideological and non-hierarchical worldview, the indigenous

people had no fear of directly contacting each and every potential power brokers that came within reach and could be expected to take an interest, ranging from bored officials in the central administration, over four star army generals and the President of the Republic, to the World Bank in Washington D.C., always acting as if they were dealing with equals, an attitude which often impressed their counterparts, but baffled and provoked *colono* society. By pragmatically reinterpreting and using the very same international development agencies that had been the cause of their recent problems, they succeeded almost over night to gain the power of landownership. This happened at a point in history when a tiny little opening presented an opportunity, which they immediately exploited, thanks to their extraordinary ability to adapt and mobilize, an ability that comes from operating within a cosmological rationality and from accumulated experience from a long history of survival in a hostile frontier setting.

When the first indigenous community titles were issued, the *colonos* saw it as the illegitimate result of external political manipulation or simply an administrative misunderstanding; but when the Special Project Program, known for its grand colonization schemes, continued to demarcate and issue indigenous land titles that gave priority to the Ashéninka, they regarded it as a natural disaster, seriously threatening their dreams of the ever-expanding cattle adventure. As we have seen, the Ashéninka had to go through yet another tumultuous period during the conflict with the Shining Path guerrilla before their position as landowners was finally consolidated and accepted, and before they were recognized as new players on a political scene that had hitherto been the exclusive playground of *colono* patrons. Some of the settlers gave up and moved back to where they came from, others stayed and tried to defy the new realities, while others with a more pragmatic attitude accepted the facts and attempted to make new allies with the indigenous leadership.

There is no doubt that a more equal relationship between peasant colonists and the indigenous people of the area is taking shape as a result of the regulation and reordering of the structure of land tenure. Both parties now participate in the same political system and civil society structures, political decisions are being fought over and taken, and there are new forms of social and human interaction between the two groups that had been unknown in the past. For some years it did look as if a *modus vivendi* between the two populations had been established and the frontier finally was closing down, giving way to a democratic, peaceful development at last. But as so many times before throughout the history of the Peruvian *montaña*, the cyclical pattern of the “perennial frontier” (Little 2001) showed frontier conditions’ extraordinary ability to reappear, both reproducing and feeding upon old structures of inequality and cultural antagonism. Marina Campos (this volume, p. 415) describes this cyclical pattern as waves of struggles over power and resources. In the Peruvian *montaña* a new such wave presented itself in the form of yet another extractive boom,

this time in timber exploitation, belligerently led by the old entrepreneurial colonist elite, threatening the fragile peace and stability achieved.

Closing the frontier: Concluding remarks

In a long retrospective look at the history of colonization of the Peruvian Amazon, it is evident that the process forms a cyclical pattern of capture – consolidation – collapse and recapture. This cyclic phenomenon seems to have become an inherent characteristic of the frontier situation. What initially looks like a simple process of colonization and takeover by an expanding nation-state, subduing and absorbing previously existing social systems, increasingly becomes a complex, interactive process where the outcome of the colonization attempt becomes less obvious. At certain points in a cycle, it may even look like a state of social equilibrium was reached between the colonizers and the colonized and that the frontier at last may vanish, giving way to a socially-balanced and more equitable development; however, this optimism only lasts to the next aggressive attempt to take over control by the dominating party. The phenomenon is partly driven by boom-and-bust economies, particularly in the extractive industries, all dependent on the whims and fashions on the world market, but also less material motivations, such as culturally-framed production preferences, seem to have been a driving force behind recurrent attempts at colonization. In our case of Gran Pajonal, cattle raising as a prestigious occupation in the Andean world has been a repeated motivation for the colonists, quite independently of the market situation and the historical record of failure of such endeavors in this location.

The most noticeable moment in history where this cyclical pattern seemed to have been broken up, the frontier closed and a new scenario emerging, was when the successful process of demarcation and titling of indigenous community lands had been carried out and the native communities were consolidated in the process. One of the main reasons for the initial success of the land titling process was the growing international integration of the frontier in the *montaña*. In the globalized world, highly efficient communication systems, improved logistics and a growing public interest in environmental and human rights issues made it possible for the indigenous people on the frontier to establish new connections and political alliances that reached beyond the local and regional contexts, bypassing and neutralizing local power hierarchies. International human rights discourses and emerging global rights standards had created a common platform for interethnic and cross-national dialogue and connectivity. Indigenous peoples no longer needed to relate to malfunctioning state institutions and exploitative patrons at the frontier in their attempt to defend their rights or get access to resources, but were now able to hook up directly with foreign NGOs, international aid agencies, UN institutions, and central government

agencies, juggling with international rights legislation like the ILO conventions 107 and 169. New spaces for power brokerage were created overnight and the conventional asymmetries in local interethnic relations were smoothed, creating new scenarios of interaction. Studying the frontier situation in the Ecuadorian Amazon, American anthropologist Paul E. Little (1998, 2001) has appositely called this postmodern phenomenon “fractal relations of power”, a situation opening to local actors a whole new world of political and territorial options. But fractal alliances are fragile, ever shifting, ephemeral and *ad hoc*. If they are not maintained, they will fade away. And once the new territorial rights were in place and the leadership had gained political influence through participating in local politics, the focus got blurred and the indigenous agenda appeared less sharp. With the indigenous leadership resting on their laurels, feeling secure with their new territorial guarantees, other agents, the old lumber patrons, were reconfiguring their strategies to fit the new situation, taking advantage of other global tendencies, including the general neo-liberal de-regulation of national economies, leaving the free market forces unbound, the downsizing of public institutions and the fact that demand and prices for tropical hardwoods were sky-rocketing on the international markets. The small-scale agricultural and cattle-breeding *colonos* in the Gran Pajonal are probably the ones in the least favorable bargaining position in this new globalized setting. They cannot take advantage of a rights-based international discourse as they have no shared identity story to tell, nor will they benefit from the new timber bonanza, as they mainly control deforested grazing land, basing their economy on indigenous labor in outmoded semi-feudal relationships. Finally, acknowledging that cattle raising may not be the most promising future as expansion of their land holdings is no longer possible, pastures are exhausted and indigenous labor neither as easily available nor as cheap as hitherto, they look towards organic coffee as an alternative source of livelihood, still without visible results. They now hope for something to happen as the sudden expansion of extractivist activities is shaking the frail social and political balance achieved through the land titling and territorial reordering process. The *colonos* react with automatic cultural bias, stepping up their anti-indigenous rhetoric, taking advantage of the lumber patrons’ aggressive attitudes and making bogus denunciations against indigenous leaders, responses which all contribute to the re-creation of the frontier scenario with multiple and simultaneous negotiations of power and territory and often violent conflicts.

It seems manifest that closing the notorious frontier for good is a prerequisite for any positive human and democratic development in the region, and a must if a more balanced relationship is to develop between the indigenous populations and the different groups of colonists. It is also evident that a closing of the territorial dispute and consolidation of the territorial order achieved is an indispensable requirement for avoiding the cyclical outbreaks of the frontier syndrome that feeds on multi-layered

territorial disputes. Paul E. Little (2001:237) has argued that there is no historical evidence for the idea that the Amazon frontier could be put to rest – at least in the near future:

“Given the turbulent history of the region, there is little reason to believe that laws, parks or even countries are eternal. The lesson of perennial frontiers seems to lead to the conclusion that all territorial claims can be contested as historical situations change and as new social groups, with new interests and power, emerge and migrate. (...) A further lesson seems to be that the natural and social effects of the past, present and future frontier dynamics in Amazonia will continue to generate intense debate and struggle well into the twenty-first century”.

Although such a pessimistic and fatalist prediction may be justified given the historical facts and the experiences of most scholars of Amazonian history, there are also positive signs in the present situation. To dismiss the possibility of long-term stability and positive future developments in the Amazon on the historical grounds given by Little would be tantamount to giving up the quest for democratic states governed by the rule of law as such – a defeatist and ultimately suicidal proposition which probably few scholars would support. But here is obviously a choice to make. If we look at the profound social changes that have taken place in the Gran Pajonal and the Upper Ucayali as a result of the recent land titling processes, considerably altering *colono*-indigenous relationships and the general frontier dynamics, it is clear that the *status quo* can be changed and a more equitable social order established. From a local perspective it may well look as if the frontier scenario were a regional idiosyncratic syndrome that just will not go away, yet to the practitioner of comparative frontier history it is evident that it is as much a result of international developments and global policies.

Globalized problems need global responses. The indigenous organizations, now assertive political players in the regional and local contexts, present the only guarantee that the new territorial order based on indigenous collective landownership is not easily turned over by profit-seeking extractive entrepreneurs. The history of the Gran Pajonal also suggests that international conventions, legislation and other normative initiatives may have profound impacts on the world's remaining frontiers. The post-modern fractal relation logic is not the only condition for such successes today. The entire complex of international law and human rights and states' amenability to accept such elements of global governance is another factor that tempers conventional frontier politics. It is quite an eloquent gesture when an Ashéninka man wearing his *cushma*²⁵ during a community meeting discussing encroaching lumber workers and *colono* border conflicts, draws a tattered booklet from his bag which turns out to be a pocket version of the ILO Convention 169; he then holds it up in the air and with great authority starts quoting articles related to the discussion. He has read it

all, knows it by heart and his audience is apparently quite familiar with its existence and aim, making the Convention (along with the Bible) probably the most widely-read piece of “literature” in indigenous communities in the area. And this is not a solitary incident, as I have happened to notice in several instances within and outside Peru. International rights conventions and norms have become part of indigenous consciousness and identity.

When the spontaneous colonization process in the Peruvian *montaña* ran amuck and the extractive industries were given *carte blanche* to level the forest, it was not a result of an overdeveloped state and overpowered bureaucrats making headless planning and losing control, as Stephen Bunkers (1985) suggested in the case of the failed colonization schemes along the Trans-Amazonian highway in Brazil. Rather, it was the result of a malfunctioning state, with weak institutions, deficient funding, and non-existent extension services. The Peruvian state has been cut down to the bones, and worn down further by corruption and nepotism. It is a state that has outsourced decision-making on frontier issues to local *colono*-controlled administrations, calling it “decentralization”. The initial land titling and territorial ordering process of the 1990s, creating the precedents which the indigenous movement utilized in years after, was only made possible and carried through because of the existence of centralized special development programs, funded by international development agencies, manned with well-educated technical staff, and with sufficient powers to overrule local colonist bureaucracies.²⁶ And, more importantly, they had no particular interest, vested or ideological, in the disputed territories of the Amazon forest. As soon as these offices ceased to exist and the staff was scattered to the four winds as a result of the neo-liberal adjustment policies, and the administration was handed over to the regional governments in frontier lands, it became quite an uphill struggle to get anything done.

Closing the frontier and ending the numerous and agonizing disputes over the control of meaning, space, territory and power, will only be possible if the state starts to live up to its responsibility and guarantees the rights and integrity of all citizens. To make the state live up to such ideals, international legislation, norms and monitoring instruments must be in place, as well as economic support to develop sufficient capacity, strength and interest to create a democratic and stable society in the frontier regions. We may somehow envision a postmodern version of the old social-democratic project, adapted to a strange brew of Amazon economies of combined subsistence production and high-tech resource extraction. It is not possible to enforce a consolidation of the territorial ordering and to guarantee the territorial and tenurial integrity of all parties on the basis of their local or regional position without a general legal and regulatory framework in place, a hierarchical order of enforcement and sufficient resources. The local cultural biases and particular political and economic interests make it impossible to close the frontier from within

a decentralized political structure. Thus no NGOs or other organizations will be able to solve the frontier problem without addressing the problem of fundamental asymmetries in the *colono*-indigenous relationship, and these cannot be equalized without a major institutional framework strong enough to impose a rupture of the status quo in accordance with the norms of the state and the international regulatory systems. Following the stabilization of the tenurial and territorial reorganization, the necessity of supporting the establishment of viable and environmentally sustainable production systems is high on the agenda. However, this is not achieved by simply reorganizing the agricultural production as was the case with the Brazilian migrant peasants. The profound cultural differences between the indigenous and the settler production systems, livelihoods, and economies, require differentiated interventions. As long as the *colonos* insist on being natural-born patrons and the indigenous people to a certain degree perceive this as an idiosyncratic characteristic of the "*chori*" and therefore pertaining to the natural order of things, there will be a latent basis for conflict, buttressing the conditions for the permanent frontier syndrome, which any third party interest may feed on. This cannot be altered by appealing to better will on the part of the involved parties or campaigning for moral rearmament. It may only be accomplished through outside intervention targeting the structural asymmetries that also permeate the production systems. Making this possible requires an international effort, strengthening the development of democratic state institutions and establishing and implementing international rights and norms with sufficient determination.

World-wide persistent frontier situations are the breeding grounds for all kinds of socially destructive dynamics that reach far beyond the local level, with impacts that increasingly reverberate in our own societies, threatening our stability and challenging our democracies. Thus, with the acceleration of globalization it becomes evident that the plight of the poor *colono* and the question of indigenous livelihoods in a remote corner of the Amazon should indeed be of our concern. Not only do we have the institutional and economic possibilities to intervene, we also have an obligation to attempt to close the frontier permanently.

Notes

- 1 This article is based on data and experience from long-term research in the Peruvian Amazon, which has been developing since I first did fieldwork in the area in 1975. Subsequently I spent 2½ years in the field from 1985-1987, and again a longer period in 1996. I have followed up by visiting the area many times, often several times a year. The extended fieldwork in the 1980s was carried out together with my wife and colleague, Dr. Hanne Veber. I am presently carrying out a new research project on territorialization, governance and natural resource management in the Peruvian Amazon, involving 22 months of new field research in 2005 and 2006. All research has been funded by the Danish Council of Development Research and the Danish Social Science Research Council.
- 2 More precisely, they belong to the Maipuran language branch, often referred to as pre-Andean Arawak (Hvalkof and Veber 2005:99-104).
- 3 According to a conservative estimate based on official census data (Chirif 2006: Annex).
- 4 The term "Native Community"/"Comunidad Nativa" may seem somewhat outmoded, but is the official name used in Peru for indigenous communities in the Amazon.
- 5 The Ashéninka, though, see no need to obviate such connotations of deculturalization when they refer to the *colonos*. The generic term "*chori*" for settlers is in all likelihood a distortion of the word "*cholo*".
- 6 The missionaries' diaries, travel accounts and status reports have mysteriously survived both wars, natural and other disasters, carelessness and oblivion, and are accessible at various national and special libraries in Peru, Spain and other countries.
- 7 Much later, in 1980, the man was immortalized as a harmless dreamer by the German filmmaker Werner Herzog, with Klaus Kinsky as Fizcarrald and Claudia Cardinale as his mistress. The movie was shot on location on the Camisea River with a large number of the Ashéninka from the Gran Pajonal as extras.
- 8 "Chuncho" is a derogatory term for lowland Indians used by *colonos* and highlanders in general. It originated in early colonial times in the Cusco area, where it referred to the tribes in the far east of the Inca capital, probably the Matsigenka of the upper Urubamba, who had a lot of interaction with the Inka state. Later it became a generic term for "savage lowlanders" of the eastern montaña. According to Peruvian anthropologist Alberto Chirif (personal communication, May 2006), "Chuncho" is the name in Quechua of a yellow flower with a bad smell, and frames as an expression the Andean highlanders' conceptions of their indigenous neighbors in the Amazon.
- 9 The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has played a very active role in Peru, combating the illegal production of coca leaves and cocaine and the trafficking of these drugs. Its work in Peru is part of the US' global war against drugs, links up with the infamous Plan Colombia and aims as its second purpose at containing the influence of the subversive movements in Latin America and cutting their links with the drug mafias. Today, it is all wrapped-up in the US War on Terror. The DEA works closely with the CIA and other counter-insurgency agencies. The agency played a very dubious role during the aggressive expansion of the Shining Path in the indigenous territories of the Peruvian montaña (Cagnon et al. 1993). Coca growing and chewing for personal consumption is legal in Peru, and coca leaves are marketed for this traditional consumption. This, however, has nothing to do with illegal production and drug trafficking.
- 10 The person referred to here was a young ambitious Ashéninka leader from a neighboring river area. It later turned out that he was deeply involved with the Shining Path guerrilla, and had

had his own political interest in de-authorizing the OAGP leadership who was unsympathetic to the guerrilla. He was later killed in his own riverine combat zone.

- 11 In reality the new titled areas make up large indigenous territories. Although each community has its own collective and private title, the titling model adopted, initially inspired by the process in Gran Pajonal and the Upper Ucayali, was to let all community territories co-border, leaving no free space in between communities. In this way, colono penetration and settlement in the interstices between communal territories was efficiently blocked.
- 12 As part of the land registration and titling process, all members of a community have to be registered as Peruvian citizens, which requires birth certificates and for adults, electoral identification cards. Until recently, it also required military IDs, as Peru had compulsory military service for all male citizens. Before the titling, very few persons with an indigenous background in the Amazon were ever registered as citizens or possessed personal ID papers. Legally, they did not exist as Peruvians. These community members have now registered as voters, and present an important political challenge to political parties and local power brokers.
- 13 The main extractivist interests in Peru today are placer gold mining, tropical hardwood logging and hydrocarbon exploitation, i.e. natural gas and crude oil. As gold mining plays no role in our study area (in contrast to other regions in the Peruvian Amazon such as the Madre de Dios), and geological and seismic surveys apparently have yielded negative results for the Gran Pajonal, the main industry left is timber and logging.
- 14 Although the oil industry is not directly dependent on the native communities' approval for oil exploration and exploitation on community land, they have to abide by a number of international norms and rules of conduct concerning, for example, the building of access roads, water contamination and damage to surface resources. Oil companies have also become aware that their international image depends on their operations record in the socially-sensitive indigenous areas. A well-known case in point is the Texaco class action claim in the Ecuadorian Amazon, where the company is being sued for a multi-billion dollar indemnification for damages caused to people and environment through 25 years of careless oil exploitation. Earning Chevron-Texaco a negative public image as villain capitalists, the case has cost the company huge losses. In the montaña of Peru there are several recent cases with indigenous communities protesting and blocking oil companies from operating because of carelessness and damages. In September 2005 in our case study area, the Gran Pajonal Ashéninka and their fellow Ashéninka and Asháninka in nearby Atalaya in the Upper Ucayali blocked all operations of Shell and other companies because of continuous liquid gas spills from the Camisea exploration site and pipeline, 80 km upriver, and because they wanted a fair share of the royalties paid to a trust fund for regional investments. Thus, even with respect to oil, the legal status of the indigenous communities as private collective landowners has caused a tremendous difference in their bargaining position vis-à-vis the companies and state authorities.
- 15 In the Gran Pajonal there appears to have been less than five such incidents during the last half-century, and all of them were individual reactions to abuses or other provocations. There are no statistics, and no systematic information is available. The author bases his estimate on the information gathered during fieldwork in the years of fatal incidents and clashes.
- 16 This incident is part of the very complicated case of the native community of Chorinashi which involves a long-standing conflict between a logging consortium, the community and the local indigenous organizations. The poor man spent two years in jail in the regional capital of Pucallpa in the central Peruvian Amazon, but was released in December 2005 after the intervention of a process lawyer supported by the International Work Group for Indigenous

- Affairs (IWGIA) and a Danish foundation. His health was seriously damaged by his jail term. Finally, after pressure from the logging consortium, the regional prosecutor appealed against the leader's release at the high court in Lima.
- 17 The Brandt Report, presented in early 1980 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, was the work of a special commission of the G-7 countries. Chaired by Willy Brandt, the commission was asked to design visions and recommendations for a more just world order, as well as a redefinition of what "development" might mean. The ground-breaking report focused on world peace, disarmament and economic leveling in the development process, demanding that the poor South become integrated in the economic growth process of the industrialized North. The document also concerned itself with the destructive use of natural resources and the need to focus on the environment, ecological sustainability (though still phrased differently), alternative energies and conservation.
 - 18 The Brundtland Report, entitled "Our Common Future", was published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the successor body to the Brandt commission. Chaired by the Norwegian ex-prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the commission in its report stated that critical global environmental problems were primarily the result of the enormous poverty of the South and non-sustainable consumption and production patterns in the North. It called for a strategy that reconciled development and the environment, coining the now-famous term "sustainable development".
 - 19 Other interesting aspects of this piece of environmental legislation besides conservation is its aspiration to "the protection and development of cultural values, and "the contribution to the defence of other, stricter protected areas in a broader integrated regional planning" (Arbaiza et al. 1998).
 - 20 "Sira" is a misspelling of Shira, which until the establishment of the reserve was the name for the area. "Shira" is a Hispanification of the Ashéninka word shirantzí, the name of flat and slippery white lime stone rocks found in abundance in the reserve.
 - 21 See Conklin and Graham 1995 for an excellent analysis of this phenomenon.
 - 22 Forest Stewardship Council is an independent international organization, promoting sustainable forest management through certification of timber and wood products.
 - 23 Unfortunately, I was unable to undertake a follow-up GIS comparison of the impact of the two systems since the late 1990s, due to lacking research resources and access to GIS/RS laboratory facilities in Denmark. It would be interesting to compare the data with more recent ones to see if the tendency continues. Ground observation and information from the local extension officers from the Ministry of Agriculture clearly indicate fast-increasing deforestation and substitution with pasture for cattle grazing, although the total number of heads has decreased.
 - 24 ILO Convention No. 107 is the International Labour Organisation's Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention 1957. ILO Convention 169 bears the title 'Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries'. The latter was adopted on 27 June 1989 by the ILO's General Conference, and entered into force on 5 September 1991. Convention No. 169 has so far been ratified by 13 countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Norway, Netherlands, Paraguay and Peru); a number of other countries are currently considering ratification.
 - 25 The cushma, the traditional dress of Ashéninka men and women, is a long cotton tunic.
 - 26 This does not imply that the projects implemented through these programs were per se a success. As we have mentioned earlier, they failed in their majority, but they did establish

independently-functioning administrative and operational units that worked quite efficiently, given the right project. The projects helped develop a core of skilled officials, some of whom are still to be found in the central administration.

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4 NON-VIOLENCE IN A FRONTIER: The Strategy of Avoidance and the Struggle for Indigenous Control over Land and Resources on Mindoro Island

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photo: Christian Erni

4 Non-violence in a Frontier: The Strategy of Avoidance and the Struggle for Indigenous Control over Land and Resources on Mindoro Island

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Since centuries the hinterlands and uplands of Southeast Asia have been inhabited by peoples who are often referred to as as “tribal”. Throughout history, these peoples of the periphery have maintained rather ambiguous relationships with the centres of political and economic power – the state societies in the riverine valleys and coastal plains. In fact, it has been argued that the very existence of “tribal peoples” in the region is a result of the emergence of these centralized polities (Benjamin 2002:8). In the course of this “civilizing process” (Benjamin 2002), the “tribal peoples” constituted themselves as a third category, outside the duality of rulers and the ruled (ibid.:9). As a result, their very identity often coalesced around the assertion of difference to – if not outright rejection of – lowland culture and mores. James Scott (2000:15) calls it the “cultural refusal of civilizational projects in the valleys”, and he quotes Tanya Li (1999) who concluded: “People who lived in the uplands did so not by default, bypassed by history, but for positive reasons of economy, security, and cultural style formed in dialogue with lowland agendas” (Scott 2000:16).

By means of avoidance, withdrawal or armed resistance, these communities were able to retain a fair amount of political autonomy. Across the dynamic and porous frontier formed by state and “tribal” poles in the pre-colonial field of forces, complex and multi-dimensional relationships were maintained, at the core of which stood trade. Thus, resource use patterns in the hinterlands and uplands have long been influenced by lowland demands. But pre-colonial lowland states had no intention – nor did they have the means to – directly exploit and control resources in the hinterlands.

The situation has however changed dramatically with the emergence of nation-states and the creation of clearly-demarcated and fixed state boundaries during

decolonization. The people who see themselves as the heirs of the region's ancient kingdoms – the Thai, Lao, Kinh, Khmer, Malay, Javanese or, in the Philippines, the hispanized majority population – are controlling these newly-formed nation states while the peoples in the “hills” have had no part of power and the shaping of national identity. In the early years after decolonization little has changed in these remote areas, and the tribal peoples were to a large extent able to retain control over their land and communal lives, but the consolidation of state power and the rapid technological development over the past five decades allowed the state to expand its control into ever remoter areas. In its wake came large-scale resource extraction, land conversion and settler colonization of what were considered “frontier areas”. This often resulted in the dispossession, displacement and marginalization of the original inhabitants of these areas. Realizing that they shared these experiences with peoples elsewhere in the world, a growing number of tribal communities in Asia have in recent years come to articulate their grievances and demands within the international discourse of “indigeneness”.¹

In the Philippines, two decades of activism and lobbying by civil society organizations have resulted in the official adoption of the concept of indigenous peoples and the passing of a comprehensive law that aims at protecting the rights of these peoples. This has considerably altered the context for local resource competition in frontier areas as it provides legal mechanisms for securing communal ownership for communities recognized as being indigenous.

This article tries to depict the trajectory of the changing relationships between the Buhid, one of six resident indigenous ethnolinguistic groups, and lowland frontier society on Mindoro island in the central Philippines. Departing from a discussion of the general historical processes that have led to the emergence of the socio-cultural dichotomy dividing today's population of the Philippines into indigenous and non-indigenous, I will proceed to describe the characteristics of Mindoro island's zones of interethnic cohabitation and contention as a frontier, and examine in particular the mutual perception of and general relationships between the indigenous Buhid and their settler neighbours. The main intention of the article, however, is to look into the impact of the settler-frontier situation on resource use, management and control of the Buhid communities studied.

The article is based on the findings of field research conducted during three months in 1985, nine months in 1989 and five shorter visits between 1992 and 2004. The main research was done among nine communities in the Upper Fay valley. Regular visits were made to neighbouring valleys, and several weeks were spent during repeated visits to Fanuban community in Siyángi in the eastern foothills, an area of great importance as an entry point for lowland markets and traders which is connected to the Fáy through multiple kinship relationships.

The magic of colonial alchemy: the “creation” of indigenous peoples in the Philippines

When in March 1521 Spanish explorer Magellan set foot on Limasawa island in the Western Visayas, the archipelago that later came to be named “Philippines” was inhabited by an extremely heterogeneous and highly fragmented population. A number of large and interregionally powerful polities, like Manila, Cebu, or the Islamic sultanates of Sulu and Magindanao, had evolved as a result of the rapidly expanding maritime luxury-goods trade in the 15th and 16th century (Junker 2000:5, 17, 232f), and hundreds of smaller-scale chiefdoms engaged in trade were found in the coastal plains of most of the larger islands of the Philippines (ibid.:233). The mountainous, often rugged interior was populated by ethnically highly diverse and politically autonomous peoples “ranging from small bands of hunter-gatherers to tribally organized swidden cultivators and emergent ranked societies practicing intensive agriculture” (ibid.:221).

Like elsewhere in insular Southeast Asia, the highly fragmented geography and diverse landscape resulted in the ecological specialization of different ethnic groups linked to each other through trade and – among coastal and riverine chiefdoms – political alliances. While the coastal and lowland trading societies were engaged in intensive farming and were able to produce agricultural and other goods for the inter-island trade, they were dependent on regular supply of those products sought after by the Chinese and other traders from overseas: forest products like lacquer, wax, animal hides, or hardwood from the shifting cultivation communities or hunters-and-gatherers in the interior, pearls, sea cucumbers and birds' nests from economically-specialized fishing and pearl-diver communities (ibid.:239 ff.).

In the larger chiefdoms more intensively engaged in regional trade, social stratification emerged, with a chiefly aristocratic upper class, a commoner class and a class of dependents at the bottom, mostly war captives and slaves. The politically and economically most powerful chiefdoms were those of the islamized regions in the South, in the Sulu archipelago and western Mindanao. Manila itself was the northernmost outpost of Islam in the Philippines. Its ruler, Raja Soliman, was the son-in-law of the Sultan of Brunei, and his subject. While the emergence of hierarchical societies and the proliferation of maritime trade predated the arrival of Islam, the model of social organization (more than the religious ideas) which the latter carried along had a considerable impact on the trajectory of political developments in the areas under its influence.

The first and throughout its existence most powerful Sultanate of the Philippines was founded around 1450 on Jolo in the Sulu group of islands – 70 years before the first Spaniards arrived in the archipelago. Islam quickly expanded into western Mindanao, and would probably have spread throughout the Philippines if its expansion were not halted by the Spanish in the 16th century.



Map 4.1 : The Philippine archipelago

Except for the coastal and some interior trading chiefdoms by far most of the people of the archipelago lived in small, autonomous communities, whose headman – if they had any at all – had very limited power. Although expanding maritime trade in the 15th and 16th century led to a proliferation of the number and a strengthening of the power of Philippine chiefdoms, they remained only weakly centralized and retained a segmentary structure (ibid.:59f.). They consisted of a network of continuously shifting, instable alliances, which were maintained above all through large-scale gift exchanges of luxury goods obtained through foreign trade. The ability to produce or get hold of the products needed for acquiring these luxury goods was therefore of crucial importance for the political economy of these polities.

Extracting tribute from subjected populations was one of the sources of the wealth needed to sustain chiefly households. Another was slave labor. At the time of European contact, slave-raiding was common throughout the Philippines (Gibson 1990, Junker 2000:339 ff., Warren 2002), and from the 16th century to the 19th century some chiefdoms and sultanates in the South like Sulu, Magindanao, and Maranao specialized in large-scale slave raiding and trading which affected much of insular Southeast Asia (Junker 2000:342).

The challenge for the coastal chiefs was to ensure regular access to the essential trade goods from the uplands that were so important in maritime trade. Due to the remoteness of these areas and the mobility of the people living there, direct subjugation and economic control was not a viable option. “Instead, lowland polities and adjacent upland tribal peoples generally formed extensive interactive networks that were often loosely integrated through political and social as well as economic ties” (ibid.:221).

The populations of the interior of the larger islands and the remoter corners of the archipelago, however, mostly consisting of politically weakly-integrated societies with inferior military capabilities, were also the main source of slaves for the polities engaged in raiding and slave trading (Gibson 1990:129).

Thus the relationships between the coastal centers of power and people of the hinterlands were complex and shifting. In some cases, they were rather symbiotic as a result of mutual dependence on trade (Junker 2000:221), although even these trade relations were probably not always balanced, and not always voluntary either (Gibson 1990). In other cases, relationships have been outright antagonistic, as slave raiding polities regularly preyed on settlements in the interior.

A quantum leap in the relationship between lowland coastal and highland or interior communities however occurred as a result of Spanish colonization. Although Magellan has made his first – for him ultimately fatal – step on Philippine soil already in 1521, it took another 44 years until Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, after four failed attempts, managed to establish Spanish rule.

The strong Muslim Sultanates of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago as well as the dominant position of Brunei in the Manila region were a major challenge to the Spanish.² Only 30 years had passed since they had managed to drive the “Moors” off the Iberian Peninsula when Magellan, on the other side of the globe, encountered communities professing the same faith which to the Spanish had become the epitome of all evil.

In the beginning the Spanish were quite successful. The “Moors” were driven off Mindoro island, and in 1571 Manila was captured. Only now the colonization of the Philippines could really take off. But the Spanish neither managed to subdue the Sultanate of Brunei nor did they ever conquer the Sultanates in the South, and thus failed in their ultimate goal of establishing control over the trade with the Spice Islands further south. What was worse, the Muslims didn’t leave them alone either. During much of the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines, the Iberians were engaged in a low-intensity warfare with the Muslim sultanates who were not willing to simply step aside. Mindoro island, right at the doorsteps of Manila, became one of the main battle grounds for the two competing powers.

To the Spanish, the Philippines became important only as an entrepôt for the China trade. Mexican silver was traded for Chinese silk, and the galleon trade

soon formed the economic bedrock of Spanish colonial rule over the Philippines. The colony was administered by the Viceroy of Mexico, and Spanish presence was concentrated in Manila. Only a few of the smaller towns had Spanish civil administrators. It was the various catholic monastic orders that emerged as the main agents of Spanish colonization. To provide them with better access to the "blessings of Christianity", but above all to bring them under administrative control, the monks tried to concentrate the often scattered population in nucleated settlements grouped around the local churches ("*reducciones*").

In collaboration with the indigenous elites, the clerics managed to establish a tribute system similar to the one in use in their Latin American colonies, and within only a few generations fundamentally remolded the local social systems. What emerged was a class of indigenous favorites who, during the second half of Spanish rule, developed into a class of powerful landlords, a process that laid the foundations for an oligarchic political-economic order that has not changed much ever since.

Unlike in Latin America, there was, however, no attempt to establish Spanish settler colonies, and the *mestizo* population never became numerically strong. But in spite of the small numbers of Spanish colonizers – there were never more than a few hundred present at any given time –, their cultural influence was more determining than in any other Southeast Asian country brought under colonial rule. Catholicism and Spanish manners became quickly and firmly established among the subdued populations.

The conquest, however, remained incomplete. Other than in the lowlands, the Spanish never managed to subjugate the people in the uplands and impose on them tribute, *corvée*, and their culture and religion. The small number of Spanish *conquistadores* may partially explain why this has never happened. Other decisive factors were the inaccessibility of the hinterlands, the fierce resistance of some, and the elusiveness of other groups that inhabited these areas – much the same factors that had earlier prevented the emerging chiefdoms from extending their control over these peoples.

After the US took control of the Philippines in 1898, it was estimated that far over half of the territory of the former Spanish colony remained unconquered. And it was not until they embarked on a protracted campaign of "pacification" and conquest that the Americans finally managed to subdue the wayward tribes in the Cordillera or the "Moros" in the South.

Characteristic for the Spanish colonial era was a continuous flow of people from the plains to the uplands who sought to avoid *corvée* labor, tribute or forced resettlement. In many places, this led to a visible reduction of populations in areas under Spanish control, and a corresponding increase of the populations in the hinterlands. Writes James Scott (2000:16f.):

"In the Spanish Philippines, the flight to the hills from Christianization and labor-bondage mimicked and overlapped a still older pattern of flight from the Malay slaving raids that plagued the coasts. The Christian faith and baptism were inseparable from settled life in villages and labor bondage, and the flight from one was flight from the other. Keesing, in his pioneering ethnohistory of Northern Luzon, concludes that the hills were only lightly populated when the Spanish arrived and that they were by a flight from lower elevations and from the Spanish civilizational project. Living in the hills was a political and cultural choice".

Aside from the avoidance of forced labour and taxation, Scott identified two other reasons for this phenomenon which has been so common throughout Southeast Asia. One are epidemics and famines, occurrences that were more frequent in the plains than in the hills (ibid.:14). The other is the rejection of lowland civilization:

"To this point, political economy and epidemiology would seem to explain the 'reflux' of population to the hills. If it were entirely so, the hill population might more closely resemble the valley populations except for their elevation and the shifting cultivation that such elevations required. But they don't. The hill peoples are different: they tend to be animists who do not follow the 'great tradition' religions of the lowland peoples; they produce a surplus, but do not use it to support kings and monks. What is missing from the story thus far is the cultural refusal of civilizational projects in the valleys that characterizes hill populations" (ibid.:15).³

The radical transformation of lowland societies as they were brought under the control of the Spanish colonizers had a drastic impact on the relationships between the hill and lowland peoples. It established and entrenched a powerful cognitive boundary that separated those considered "civilized" – called *indios* – and the "heathens", called *infeles*, or, when they were Muslim, *moros*. This conceptual division was internalized by the Christianized lowland people, who henceforth treated the highlanders as supposedly cultural inferiors with contempt. By the end of Spanish colonial rule, "minorities" and "majorities" had been created where none had existed before. As William Henry Scott (1985:41) writes:

"By the end of the Spanish regime, this divergence had created a real Filipino majority for the first time in history – those Filipinos who had the same king – the Spanish King. And those who did not were just cultural communities. Thus by the magic of colonial alchemy, those who changed most became today's Filipinos while those who changed least were actually denied this designation (...)".

In the terminology of the US-American colonial administration, the uncolonized people in the uplands figured as „non-Christian tribes“. Under the independent Philippines, a range of official designations were used over the years: "Non-Christian Filipinos",

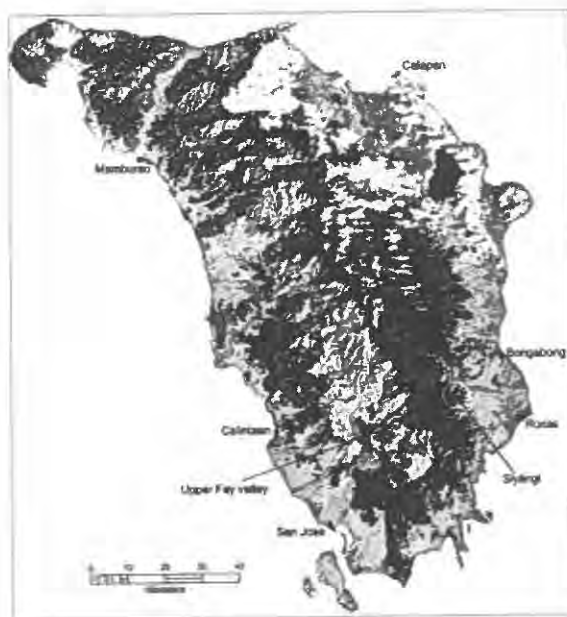
“National Cultural Communities”, “National Minorities”, “Tribal Filipinos”, “Cultural Communities” and, after the passing of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997, “Indigenous Cultural Communities” and “Indigenous Peoples”.

The Philippines is the only Asian country that has officially adopted the term “indigenous peoples”. According to estimates of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), between 12 and 15 million of the total population of 70 million are indigenous (not including the Moros). Roughly 60% of them live in the southern island of Mindanao, a third on the main island of Luzon, and the rest scattered over the central islands of the archipelago. Only guesses exist for the total number of indigenous ethnic groups; estimates range from 70 to over 100.

The Buhid of Mindoro

Of the central islands group, Mindoro has one of the largest indigenous populations. With 10,244 sq.km., Mindoro is the seventh largest island of the Philippines. It is about 150 kilometers long and 80 kilometers wide and divided into two provinces, the boundary following more or less the watershed created by a rugged mountain range with peaks up to 2500 meters above sea level. Coastal plains in the West and Southeast are narrow; only the one in the Northeast extends up to 20 km into the interior.

“Mangyan” is the collective term commonly used for the six indigenous ethnolinguistic groups living in the interior of the island. They are the Iraya, Alangan



Map 4.2 : Satellite picture of Mindoro. Dark areas are secondary and some primary forests; bright white areas in the North are cloud cover.

and Tadyawan in the northern half of the island; the Taubuid (Batangan), Buhid (Buid), and the Hanunoo Mangyan in the southern half.⁴ Until recently they all have been subsistence farmers practicing swidden agriculture. Some local communities closer to the lowlands have become more closely integrated into the market economy.

Available population figures for the Mangyan vary considerably. In 1981, the Philippine Statistical Yearbook, based on projection, put the population of the Mangyan at 123,000. The same year, PANAMIN, the government agency at that time in charge of indigenous peoples, reported a total of 36,842 only. The Mangyan Heritage Centre in Calapan presently gives a figure of 100,000 (see www.mangyan.org), which would correspond to about 10% of the island's total population of 1,062,068 (Populations Census 2000).

The Buhid are one of the six indigenous ethno-linguistic groups of Mindoro. They are an egalitarian segmentary society with small, kinship-based local communities of only a few households who traditionally live in small hamlets or single households dispersed over their mountainous territories. A local community refers to its territory as *banwánan* (“the place where one resides”) whose boundaries today are fairly well defined. Across the entire Buhid settlement area, there are 116 such communities with a total population of about 12,000 people (IPEX/Anthrowatch 2005: 16). The territory delineated as the Ancestral Domain of the Buhid covers 94,000 ha in 13 municipalities of both provinces of the island, i.e. Oriental and Occidental Mindoro (*ibid.*).⁵

“Buhid” (pronounced “Buid” among some dialect groups) means “upriver”. It is both the autonym and the term used by the neighboring Hanunoo Mangyan to whom the Buhid in turn refer to as “Mangyan Patag”, meaning “flatland/lowland Mangyan”. While there are clear-cut linguistic and territorial boundaries between the Buhid and the Hanunoo Mangyan, ethnic boundaries between the Buhid and their northern neighbors, the Taubuid (Batangan) are more fluid. “Tao Buid”, the autonym used by the Taubuid, in fact also means “people from upriver” and thus basically the same as the term “Buhid”.

The most clear-cut ethnic boundary drawn by the Buhid themselves is that between themselves and the hispanized Christian population in the lowlands, whom they usually refer to as *luktánon* (in the Western Buhid areas sometimes as *sigánon*). The *luktánon* are conceived as a category of people that stands in fundamental opposition to all indigenous highland peoples, and among many Buhid one finds still a deep-seated distrust of all things *luktánon*, a distrust that has been passed down over generations and is rooted in centuries of negative and fearful experiences with outsiders.



Photo 4.1: Buhid women taking a break from work in the new swidden field. Fay valley, 1989 (photo: Christian Erni)

Mindoro as a frontier

The “frontier” as it is used here is a political concept, denoting “an area remote from political centers which holds strategic significance or economic potentials for human exploitation, and is contested by social formations of unequal power” – usually, in our historical era, nation-states and indigenous peoples (see Geiger, this volume, p. 94). The dynamics of the contest referred to in the definition are largely configured by the former’s attempt to increase and consolidate control over the domains of the latter, thereby threatening to reduce or eliminate the autonomy of such peripheral polities (ibid.:94f., 154-161).

Geiger points out three types of frontiers as basically relevant to all eras of contentious interaction between states and indigenous societies: “frontiers of settlement”, comprising all those cases where settlers are being sent to the indigenous periphery or move on their own initiative in substantial numbers⁶; “frontiers of control”, in which settler colonization is not a major objective of the state in question, which confines itself instead to the control of major towns, infrastructure and trade through what is essentially a pragmatic system of indirect rule; and “frontiers of exploitation” where the prime purpose of outsiders’ presence and agency is to secure a share in the economic windfalls generated by the exploitation of one or more natural resources (ibid.:96ff.).

The three types of frontier often succeed each other in a particular place, they are as categories not mutually exclusive and in fact frequently overlap. Especially

frontiers of settlement are often at the same time frontiers of exploitation, in which settlers may represent a crucial labour pool for the exploitation of natural resources by state and private enterprises. Furthermore, it is important to stress that frontiers are cyclical rather than lineal phenomena in that they “move back and fro, ‘close’ and ‘(re)open’ as a function of the expansion and contraction of states” (ibid.:93); their creation, advance and eventual closure, therefore, is not an irreversible process. Driven by the aim of establishing control over territory and resources in frontier regions and expanding its nation-building project to these areas, while at the same time lacking the power and resources for effective administration, the state is willing to “compromise” and accept lawlessness and conflicts as inevitable, if not necessary (ibid., pp. 100; 149-154).

States are undoubtedly powerful and central frontier actors, but they are not the only force determining the character and trajectory of frontier histories. Often, their presence has been and is preceded by enterprising individuals or corporations trying to tap and seize the zone’s unexploited resources. Changing commodity prices are often a key determinant in the history of frontiers. Little (2001:3) for example has shown that frontiers in the Amazon follow cycles of boom and bust, constituting and re-constituting themselves in response to the ups and downs of commodity prices, the corresponding change of priorities of frontier actors and the shift of the resources exploited. These “cycles of conquest” (Hvalkof, in this volume, p. 231) have not been disrupted by the emergence of independent nations in former European colonies, and they prove to be remarkably resilient even in the present era of globalization.

In spite of the presence of – sometimes only temporary – overlaps of frontier types we can identify distinct periods in Mindoro’s frontier history during which one or the other type was clearly dominant. From the 16th to the early 20th century Mindoro was exclusively a frontier of extraction (wax and other forest products being the prime resources extracted), while from the early 20th century until today it acquired the distinctions of a frontier of settlement. With the onset of logging under the US colonial government before World War II it reverted to a frontier of extraction again, a trend which reached its peak in the 1940s and 1950s. During this period, migration rates rose rapidly and over the subsequent two decades Mindoro experienced a veritable migration boom, growing into a full-blown frontier of settlement, while continuing to witness some measure of resource extraction. Migration has been ebbing off since the 1970s, and with the discovery of lucrative deposits of minerals it is likely that in the near future, the island’s fate will be to serve as a major frontier of extraction again.

As I will try to demonstrate, the uplands of Mindoro island today possess many of the characteristics found to be typical for frontiers areas (Geiger, this volume: 109-154): thin administrative presence of the state, counterbalanced by the presence of a multitude of private interlopers over whom the state can claim to have no control; failure to recognize indigenous ownership claims over ancestral territories; construction of

the indigenous as savage tribesmen, thereby justifying intruders' denial of empathy with them; intruders' environmentally destructive forms of resource appropriation and predatory economic relations with indigenous communities; and the state's non-enforcement of its monopoly over legitimate violence.

In Mindoro's upland areas, the state is virtually absent, while private entrepreneurs and agricultural pioneers are the main agents of resource exploitation and land conversion. The Mangyan's ownership claims to land and resources have (at least until very recently) been largely ignored by both the state and private actors. The Mangyan are treated with contempt, are discriminated and thus seen as "standing outside the moral universe" (ibid. p. 133). Resources have been exploited with little concern for the environment, and the relationship of the intruders to the Mangyan has been largely predatory. Only state-tolerated acts of physical violence on a scale typical for frontier regions have not occurred on Mindoro. As we will see, settlers on Mindoro only rarely had to use violence "in order to prevail over the original inhabitants" (ibid.:152) – a fact which is largely owed to the particular way in which Mindoro's indigenous peoples have usually responded to settler incursion.

At the time of the arrival of the Spanish, the Manila-Batangas-Mindoro region was the actual trading hub of the archipelago. During their first expeditions to Mindoro, the Spaniards found large and rich settlements along the coast which, according to early Spanish accounts, were inhabited by "Moros". Peopled by followers of Islam, they were described as being culturally "advanced", wealthy, well-armed and fortified with elaborate defense systems (Lopez-Gonzaga 1976:23f).

The same Spanish account mentions other people, living further in the interior, "naked people like the Chichimecos" (as the indigenous people of Mexico were called by the Spanish in those days) (Anonymous [Hernando Riquel ?] 1570, in: Blair and Robertson 1962, Vol 3, p. 74). And in a document of 1577 for the first time the designation "Mangyan" was used for these people (Postma 1985:6).

As was the case elsewhere in the Philippines at that time, the coastal population of Mindoro was closely integrated into the network of political and trade alliances characteristic of the more complex polities that evolved during the 15th and 16th century⁷, while the peoples of the interior, the Mangyan, remained outside direct political control and maintained only loose trading relations with the regional hegemonial powers.

What the coastal and interior populations of Mindoro however had in common those days was the recurrent threat by slave raiders. The coastal people tried to defend themselves and fortified their settlements, or sought temporary refuge in the interior, depending on the strength and determination of the raiding party.⁸ The Mangyan knew only one strategy: permanent withdrawal to the interior, a strategy which a few other peoples in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world have chosen, too. Dentan

(1992:220) has coined the term "refugees" for such peoples. They represent one pole of a relationship across a frontier, the other pole being the "invaders", relatively powerful people who "force themselves into the milieu of relatively powerless people", the refugees, in the form of raids, typically to capture slaves (ibid.).

The frontier on Mindoro at the advent of Spanish colonization was very much the same as elsewhere in mainland and insular Southeast Asia of that time. It was a zone of diminishing cultural influence and lack of political control by states or chiefdoms, in which interaction with largely autonomous tribal societies was confined to trade and sporadic predation by slave-raiding polities. This pattern basically remained the same during much of the Spanish colonial era. What changed was that overall trade decreased drastically as a result of the "Moro wars", and the relative weight of the two basic forms of coastal-interior interaction shifted towards predatory raids.

Until the last quarter of the 19th century, Mindoro suffered from recurrent attacks and slave raids of the Muslim from the South. The Spanish managed to keep only the northern tip of the island free of enduring Muslim influence, but even these coasts were regularly attacked by what the Spanish considered "pirates". Thus, the once flourishing island with its bustling trade and prosperous agriculture became a destitute, depopulated province.

Due to the retarded and at times reversed growth of Mindoro's coastal and lowland population during the Spanish colonial era, the Mangyan's numerical majority position went unchallenged for many decades. Even by the end of the 19th century, Mindoro was only thinly populated, possessed rich resources and offered ample room for Mangyan withdrawal from predatory intruders. Interaction with outsiders was minimal, and only very few Mangyan ever paid tribute to the Spanish, and if they did, it was in modest, rather symbolic amounts (Postma 1985:28).

In the second half of the 19th century, however, developments set in which were to fundamentally change the situation. During the last quarter of the 19th century, the introduction of steamships tipped the military balance in favour of the Spanish, and the Muslim could be driven off Mindoro for good. The last recorded raids occurred in 1870 and 1874 (Gibson 1989:70).

While earlier attempts by the Spanish to repopulate the island had failed, the prospect of security under the tutelage of the colonial navy and changes in the political-economic structure of colonial society resulted in an initially hesitant, later massive migration to Mindoro. The increasing concentration of land in the hands of the *mestizo* elite and the Church inevitably led to widespread landlessness among the rural population elsewhere in the colony. Those among them who did not want to end up as tenants or agricultural laborers sought a new life in hitherto untilled land in thinly populated provinces like Mindoro. Such areas also became the refuge of what the Spanish termed *tulisanes*, "bandits" or "rebels" who had come into conflict

with Spanish law and authorities. In the 19th century, thus, Mindoro gained the rather dubious reputation as a haven for outlaws.

Overall population figures recovered significantly after the second half of the 19th century, and in the course of the last quarter of the century, the Mangyan found themselves quickly outnumbered by settlers. From now on, and even more so during the ensuing 50 years of American colonization and also the post-colonial era, the character of the frontier began to change fundamentally: it became a "frontier of settlement".

The "civilizing mission": Government policies and settler migration to Mindoro

The 50 years of US American colonization had as profound an impact on the majority Filipino population as the previous 400 years of Spanish rule. Like elsewhere in the Philippines, resistance in Mindoro against the American occupation was fierce, and the Americans retaliated with brutal force. After the resistance was broken and they had established control, the American colonial administration embarked on a comprehensive program to speed up the development of Mindoro. It started with a health and hygiene campaign, the creation of basic infrastructure such as roads, a telegraph network and harbours, and the promotion of export-oriented agriculture. Along with the stable social conditions and vast land resources which the island offered to the enterprising homesteader, these measures led to the desired upswing of settler immigration (Schult 1990:111). Land scarcity in the densely-populated agrarian centers of Luzon and the Visayas – the combined result of general population growth and the uneven distribution of land holdings – forced an increasing number of the underprivileged rural population into the underdeveloped and thinly-populated peripheries.

The opening of Mindoro for settlers was accompanied by cadastral surveys of what was considered State Land, and the issuing of so-called homesteads to both newcomers and old settlers. This allowed the latter to obtain proper land titles to the land they cultivated (ibid.:112). The homestead program however started off rather hesitantly since only few farmers were aware of the law and an application implied complicated bureaucratic procedures and the payment of considerable fees, for which many small farmers lacked the money. It was mainly the local elite that immediately recognized the significance of the law, and knew how to and had the means to use it to their advantage (ibid.:113f). Between 1904 and 1913, only 992 homestead applications were submitted, but by 1920 the figure has risen to about 10,000 (ibid.:113). Still, many more settlers did not apply for a homestead and, in legal terms, became squatters on public land. Others voluntarily entered into the

Figure 4.1 : Population development in Mindoro, 1918-2000

	1918	1939	1948	1960	1970	1980	2000
Overall annual population growth in the Philippines in %		2.2	1.9	3.1	3.0	2.6	2.36
Occidental Mindoro							
Population	28,193	39,039	43,149	84,316	144,032	222,431	380,250
Increase		10,846	4,110	41,167	59,716	78,399	157,819
Growth in %		38.5	10.5	95.4	70.8	54.4	
Growth per year in %		1.80	1.20	8.00	7.10	5.40	2.45
Oriental Mindoro							
Population	43,738	92,530	124,556	228,998	328,364	446,938	681,818
Increase		48,792	32,026	104,442	99,366	118,574	234,880
Growth in %		111.6	34.6	83.8	43.4	36.1	
Growth per year in %		5.30	3.80	7.00	4.30	3.60	2.46

The growth rates of the periods 1918 to 1980 were calculated based on census figures for the total population. The growth rate in 2000 is taken from the official census data and refers to the growth rate between 1995 and 2000 (<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ru4/swprov-latest.htm#ormind>)

Sources: Bureau of Census and Statistics: Census of the Philippines 1960; National Census and Statistics Office: Population Census 1980, Population Census 2000.

traditional patron-client relationship with large land owners. Conditions for tenants were favourable in those days as large areas of agricultural land remained uncultivated, labour was scarce and the Free-Trade agreement with the USA, which was resumed after World War II, encouraged land owners to increase the production of cash crops for export (ibid.:115, 117, 174). Even after the War, there were ample land resources which settlers could claim as homesteads, and the logging industry, which boomed due to a high demand in the 1940s, provided additional employment opportunities.

In the table below, population figures for the period from the early to the end of the 20th century are compiled. They reveal a pattern of steadily increasing growth rates due to immigration, and a subsequent leveling-off as saturation was reached.

The table also shows that immigration to the two provinces proceeded quite unevenly. Compared to the national average, Occidental Mindoro had by the end of the 1940s a lower, Oriental Mindoro a higher-than-average growth rate. Obviously, Occidental Mindoro was at that time no major immigration area, while Oriental

Mindoro already experienced a considerable influx of migrants. Oriental Mindoro's better infrastructure and its proximity to Luzon made this province initially more attractive, while in later years it was Occidental Mindoro that had larger tracts of "empty land" available.

The Second World War led to a nation-wide slump of population growth rates. In Oriental Mindoro, however, the population continued to grow even during these years. After the war, migration increased rapidly. While most of the settlers came on their own initiative, some were brought in by state-sponsored programs. In 1954, the by then-independent Philippine government created the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) which was tasked with the large-scale resettlement of landless farmers to the thinly-populated frontier areas like Mindanao, Palawan and Mindoro. It was also one of the components of the Magsaysay government's strategy to end the peasant uprising in Central Luzon (known as the Huk-Rebellion⁹) along with an amnesty for Huk members and a land reform program. The program as well as the rather trepidly-implemented land reform was however discontinued once the Huk rebellion had been crushed (ibid.:205). Land reform, resettlement and land distribution in frontier areas were continued by subsequent administrations. As Lopez (1986:86) writes, these policies "sought to keep rural unrest at a manageable level and to legitimate the government rather than to redistribute political and economic power".

In the 1950s, the influx of settlers to Mindoro became a veritable flood. It was during this time that Occidental Mindoro became a major destination, too. Here the trend continued into the 1960s and 1970s, while in Oriental Mindoro it already began to ebb off. The majority of the migrants were Tagalog speakers from Central Luzon; the second largest group were Ilocanos from Northern Luzon, with migrants from the Visayan islands to the South following third (ibid.:209). By 2000, both provinces had growth rates that corresponded more or less to the national average, indicating that net-immigration has largely ceased.

Like in other frontier regions of the Philippines such as Mindanao or Palawan, the settlers rapidly outnumbered the indigenous people inhabiting these areas and pushed them further into the interior.

From the very beginning, the government policy towards the Mangyan was subject to – and at times a veritable tool of – the modernization agenda of the state.¹⁰ In 1901, the US colonial government created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (BNCT). It was tasked with conducting general anthropological studies in the Philippines, and to analyze the situation of the "pagan" and Moslem populations and make policy recommendations to the government on how to further civilization and material well-being among them (Schult 1990:133). For that purpose and, at least officially, to protect the Mangyan from exploitation by settlers, a strategy of segregation

was pursued on Mindoro. The Mangyan were to be permanently settled in special Mangyan settlements and provided with education, which would prepare them for eventual integration into Philippine mainstream society (ibid.:134). In pursuance of this aim, the provincial governor was given the power to forcefully relocate Mangyan communities if it served "law and order". In 1903, the first Mangyan settlement was created, and a few more were added in the years that followed (ibid.:135f). The program didn't last long, however, as the schools couldn't be maintained due to lack of finances and teachers, and lack of interest on the part of the Mangyan (ibid.:137). Education programs and especially the establishment of government trading posts for the Mangyan, aimed at protecting them from exploitative trade relations with the Christian lowlanders, were in some areas allegedly heavily opposed by the latter (ibid.:138).

In official rhetoric, segregation and the establishment of reservations were considered to be the best way to protect the Mangyan from exploitation by lowlanders. As Schult (1999:139) has shown, however, such measures were not solely – and probably not even primarily – guided by humanitarian concerns, but rather by political motivations: they were the justification for vacating specific areas for the settlement of migrants. In 1917, the provincial government of Mindoro declared that since all attempts to civilize and educate the Mangyan had so far failed, it was necessary to permanently resettle them in specified areas. In the same year, the Mangyan communities of the entire northern plains of Oriental Mindoro were forced to move to a 800 ha large reservation at Tigbao, east of Lake Naujan. The rationale – though never made public – for relocating hundreds of Mangyan was that they lived where the US colonial government planned to build the new provincial capital and settle migrants who would inhabit it.

89 of the 300 resettled Mangyan, however, escaped and managed to reach the capital of Manila where a certain Attorney Vicente Sotto filed a case on their behalf (ibid.:141). He argued that special laws for the Mangyan were against the principle of equality of all citizens and that resettlement against their will was violating the basic right to protection of individual liberty. The Supreme Court, however, voted in favour of the legality of special laws for minorities. As Schult (ibid.) writes, the justification of the ruling was an assembly of non-specific, rather artificial, and on the whole insidious platitudes. In order to preempt charges of religious discrimination, which would have forced the court to rule in favour of the Mangyan, the term "non-Christian" was simply defined to suit the government's purpose:

"The term 'non-Christian' refers not to religious belief, but in a way to geographical area, and more directly to natives of the Philippine Islands of a low grade of civilization" (Supreme Court, Report of Cases, Vol. 39, 7, March 1919, p. 661; cit. in Schult 1990, ibid.)

Relocations were considered "(...) necessary measures for the protection of the Mangyanes of Mindoro as well as the protection of public forests in which they roam, and to introduce civilized customs among them" (ibid.:668; cit. in Schult 1990:140).

Even more clearly than in the reference to the "protection of public forests" in the quote above, the following excerpt from the court ruling reveals the state's true agenda behind its proclaimed mission to civilize and protect the Mangyan: to take over the land and resources of the Mangyan for national development:

"Theoretically, one may assert that all men are created free and equal. Practically, we know that the axiom is not precisely accurate. The Manguianes, for instance, are not free, as civilized men are free, and they are not the equal of their more fortunate brothers. True, indeed, they are citizens, with many but not all the rights which citizenship implies. And true, indeed, they are Filipinos. But just as surely, the Manguianes are citizens of a low degree of intelligence, and Filipinos who are a drag upon the progress of the State. (...) If all are to be equal before the law, all must be approximately equal in intelligence. If the Philippines is to be a rich and powerful country, Mindoro must be populated and its fertile regions must be developed. The public policy of the Government of the Philippines Islands is shaped with a view to benefit the Filipino people as a whole. The Manguianes, in order to fulfill this governmental policy, must be confined for a time, as we have said, for their own good and the good of the country. (...) Segregation really constitutes protection for the Manguianes (ibid.:719, cit. in Schult 1990:142).

The government's reservation and education policy, however, turned out to be one big failure. After 1933, a new reservation policy was introduced to prevent land conflicts with settlers, which foresaw the delineation of larger areas than just the settlement as reservations. Eight reservations, all on the Eastern side of the island, were created (Schult 1990:145). In 1936, however, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes was dissolved and with it the "specialized rules" for the minorities on Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan (ibid.). While upholding an assimilationist policy, the integration of the nation was to be achieved without dichotomizing the population into Christians and non-Christians, and according to then-President Quezon the "(...) so-called non-Christian problem has been reduced to one of solidification and development" (Lao 1992:166, cit. in Wenk 2007). Only in 1957, under the by then independent Philippines, a new administration tasked with dealing with minorities was created: the Commission on National Integration (CNI). It pursued "a policy of appeasement by providing scholarships, loans and medical and legal services" (Lopez 1986:96). Resettlement continued to be part of its approach, and in contradiction to its mandate of preventing land loss among indigenous communities, the CNI turned out to rather side with migrant settlers, loggers, miners and agribusiness and facilitate land alienation than speak up in favor of its indigenous clients (Lopez 1986:97). The CNI's

successor, the Presidential Assistant on National Minorities (PANAMIN), created in 1979, gained the dubious reputation of being particularly effective in helping others to seize indigenous peoples' lands. To serve the avarice of politicians and the business establishment and to assist the government in its fight against the communist New People's Army (NPA), PANAMIN resumed a resettlement and reservation policy similar to that of the American colonial government, and, with respect to the latter purpose, copied the US strategic-hamletting approach to counter-insurgency among the indigenous peoples of Vietnam's Central Highlands.

Shortly before the downfall of President Marcos in 1986, PANAMIN was abolished in the wake of the disappearance of its director, Manuel Elizalde, Jr., who had secretly fled the country to escape corruption and other charges. The new Office of Muslim Affairs and Cultural Communities (OMACC) basically continued PANAMIN's programs, but was itself dissolved by the new, democratically elected government following the ousting of Marcos. OMACC was divided into three offices in charge of the respective geographical regions they were named after: the Office of Northern Cultural Communities (ONCC), the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) and the Office of Muslim Affairs. Again, like in earlier instances of administrative reorganization, the personnel and the general approach of the new minority affairs offices – if not the programs themselves – remained basically the same. On Mindoro, what also remained unchanged was the fact that all these offices in charge of indigenous communities had very little impact on and certainly did not improve the overall situation of the Mangyan. One of the weaknesses of the newly-formed National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), created after the passing of Republic Act 8371 (known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act), is that it continued with the same staff that it had inherited from its predecessor institution. Thus, while the new legislation on indigenous peoples marks a radical departure from the assimilationist policies of the previous decades, doubts are being raised as to its effectiveness since too many people with the same ethnocentric mindset, disinterest and often arrogant attitude are in charge of its implementation on the ground. Furthermore, the present constitution upholds the Regalian Doctrine, which vests the State with suzerainty over all non-private (titled) land and thereby virtually all land on which indigenous peoples live. At the same time, however, it provides for the protection of the "rights of indigenous cultural communities to their Ancestral Lands" (Article XII, Sec. 5), and the IPRA offers the possibility for the delineation and titling of indigenous communal and individual land, the so-called "Ancestral Domain" and "Ancestral Land", respectively.

Theoretically, the right of indigenous communities to ancestral lands has been recognized already in previous legislations, like the Ancestral Lands Decree (Presidential Decree 410), passed by Marcos in 1974. Like under the IPRA, indigenous claimants were however required to obtain titles to secure these rights. The

difference was that it provided only for the titling of *individual* plots, through a long and cumbersome bureaucratic procedure (Lopez 1986:90). The decree has however never been implemented. Available legal means for obtaining land titles or use rights required first of all awareness of the existence of such laws, and the knowledge of the procedures, connections to the bureaucracy and the financial means necessary for initiating the process which usually are not available to the vast majority of the indigenous. In indigenous areas it has always been mainly the settlers (above all the wealthier and those well-connected) who were able to make use of such legislation. Thus Lopez (*ibid.*:117f.) concludes:

“Registration and titling procedures facilitate the usurpation of ancestral lands by lowlanders with access to bureaucratic decision-makers. Landed interests with wealth, strong political connections, and sophisticated legal expertise can readily avail themselves of incentives provided by the government for agricultural and forest development”.

Today, the IPRA as the first such law in the Philippines, provides for the titling of communal land. However, the process is complicated and costly, and although the NCIP is commissioned with providing these services to all applicants, it does not have the means nor does the government appear to have the political will to allow it to fully live up to its mandate. Thus, by the end of 2005, only 38 Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), covering a total area of 841,148 ha, and 50 Certificates of Ancestral Land Titles (CALT) for a total area of 3,832 ha have been issued (National Commission on Indigenous Peoples 2006:7).¹¹ Many more applications are pending and even the conversion of all CADCs to CADTs, as mandated by the IPRA, is far from being completed. Furthermore, experiences with the CADCs issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in previous years give reasons for doubt that a CADT alone will prevent further encroachment on indigenous peoples' territories (see further below on the Buhid; McDermott 2000 and Dressler and McDermott 2005 on Palawan, and Wenk 2007 and forthcoming, on the Matigsalug Manobo in Mindanao). So far, there is no indication that existing laws have to any significant extent deterred settlers, illegal loggers or mining companies in their attempt to get access to resources in Mangyan territories.

In search of riches, souls and a hide-out: Mindoro's frontier actors

Migrants to Mindoro were composed of the usual blend of people typical for frontier regions: rural settlers, traders, entrepreneurs, adventurers, criminals, prospectors and missionaries. By far the largest portion of them were settlers in search of land.

Loggers and settlers

In a pattern typical for forested frontier areas, commercial logging played a decisive role in opening up Mindoro's frontier. Especially Oriental Mindoro had extensive tracts of forests with valuable timber, and in the 1950s much of the lowland plains was still heavily forested. The Americans began quite soon to exploit these forests and in the 1940s logging boomed on Mindoro. In 1948, 24 sawmills were in operation and by 1951 they still employed over 1000 workers (Schult 1990:171). Municipalities like Bongabong, covering part of the Buhid territory, were at that time heavily dependent on the logging industry (*ibid.*). In the 1950s, logging declined as prices fell, and at the same time it became increasingly costly to access high-value timber which had to be sought in ever remoter areas (*ibid.*:173). Like elsewhere in the Philippines, logging was not conducted in a sustainable way. Already early on, local people expressed their concern over the growing danger from floods along the Bongabong river as a result of uncontrolled logging on its banks. While by 1924 the commercially exploitable forests were estimated to cover about 50% of the island, by 1951 it was already reduced to about 35% (*ibid.*). After the lowland forest had been plundered, logging roads were cut ever deeper into the mountainous interior, in some areas up to 1000 meters above sea level. And it was on these roads that settlers and entrepreneurs moved deeper into Mangyan territories. Gibson (1986:22) describes the developments in the Municipality of Bongabong in Oriental Mindoro as follows:

“Starting in the 1950s the new logging roads began to open up possibilities for wealthy families in the coastal settlements to invest in the interior. Some of these families had come over before the war from Batangas in Luzon and from Aclan in Panay. They brought their tenants with them to clear the forest, often promising them a piece of their own land once the farms were established. Initially these landlords were only interested in the rice and maize land of the littoral, but a few turned their attention to cattle breeding and tree farming in the foothills. There was a rush of applications for pasture and tree farm leases on government land in the mid-1950s under Magsaysay's policy of opening government land to commercial exploitation”.

As profits turned out to be less than expected, most entrepreneurs soon withdrew, but their former employees as well as the former lumberjacks and their families remained. Other settlers soon joined them (*ibid.*).

The years of martial law under Marcos after 1972 proved disastrous for the Philippine forests as logging licenses could be granted by Presidential Decree and Marcos' cronies made ample use of their connections to the President. Thus, in 1974 eleven licenses were granted in Oriental Mindoro, covering 38% of the land area of the province (Schult 1990:196). Protests by local people were often met with intimidation and outright violence by armed goons employed by the companies;



Photo 4.2: Settler hamlets in the foothills of the Siyangi area in Oriental Mindoro, 1989 (photo: Christian Emi)

cases on record concern communities in Magsaysay, Occidental Mindoro in 1982 or the Iraya Mangyan of San Teodoro and Puerto Galera, in the North of Oriental Mindoro, in 1983 (ibid.). In the latter case, 20 armed men employed by Provident Tree Farms Inc. destroyed the crops of 200 Mangyan families and forcefully evicted them from their land (ibid.:224).

Today, 49% of Oriental Mindoro and 73.5% of Occidental Mindoro are still officially classified as forest land (National Statistical Coordination Board 2005a:1; ibid.b:1). This, however, doesn't mean that these areas are still forested in the true sense of the word. As elsewhere in the Philippines and in many frontier areas across the tropics, economic development went along with the destruction of the island's forests. Logging companies extracted the valuable timber, and in Mindoro the methods used were highly destructive. Along logging roads followed settlers who completed the transformation of the already partially denuded forests into agricultural land or pastures. The once-rich lowland forests of the coastal plains have been completely replaced by rice fields, coconut plantations and other forms of agricultural land. Today, Mindoro has probably less than 30% forest cover, most of it secondary forest. According to estimates, only eight percent of the original forest area is virgin forest (www.fieldmuseum.org/vanishing_treasures/Deforestation_5a.htm).

It was during the logging boom of the 1940s and 1950s that the flow of migrant settlers to Mindoro really took off. The population of Bongabong municipality, for example, doubled between 1939 and 1948 (Schult 1990:175). As the common people

became more aware of the existing law on homestead registration and titling, many were able to obtain land rights. Thus, while there were landlords who possessed very large land holdings, inequality in Mindoro's rural population was not as pronounced as elsewhere in the Philippines. And due to the availability of "unoccupied state land" and the relative scarcity of labour, conditions for tenants were favourable (ibid.:120). The situation, however, changed as rural migration reached a saturation point. By 1980 the share of smallholder ownership (with land below 3 ha) dropped from over 80% in the of the early 20th century to 45% in Oriental and 55% in Occidental Mindoro (ibid.:211).

The economic situation of most settlers has been and remains difficult to this day. Settlers received up to 5 ha large homesteads from the government, but no other support. Few had sufficient financial means for the necessary investments, became dependent on local patrons, were forced to seek additional income or had to become tenants (ibid.:205). As we will see further below, the lack of capital for productive investments and the high level of insecurity of poor settlers determines the particular way resources are used at the frontier, often with detrimental impact on the environment.

While rural migration into Mindoro at present seems to be very low, the expansion of lowland settlers into indigenous lands is still ongoing as the local population grows, landlessness worsens or enterprising lowland farmers in the foothills seek new opportunities to increase their income. All fertile land in the lowlands has been occupied already decades ago, so expansion of land use for subsistence farming or small-scale coffee or fruit plantations is only possible by going uphill. Especially in Oriental Mindoro, this has already proceeded far and settlers are now moving along the rivers and creeks ever deeper into the territories of the Mangyan.

For Mindoro's indigenous peoples, the consequences of the state-promoted colonization of their land were devastating. Not only were large parts of their former territories permanently occupied by settlers, cattle ranchers or – although only to a limited extent – plantation owners, but much of the upland forests was destroyed and with it the communities' hunting grounds and the source of a wide range of non-timber forest products on which the latter depend.

Cowboys, entrepreneurs and bureaucrats

Another serious impact on the livelihood of the Mangyan was brought about by the occupation of grasslands by cattle ranches. During the heyday of migration and into the 1950s and 1960s, large areas in the foothills and uplands in both provinces were converted into cattle ranches. For this, renewable lease agreements with a validity of 25 years were issued by the Bureau of Forest Development (BFD). Pasture lease



Photo 4.3 : Cow hands on the way to the cattle ranch in the interior of Oriental Mindoro, Hayakyan river, 1985 (photo: Christian Erni)

holders were usually wealthy entrepreneurs, politicians or professionals living in coastal towns or the national capital. As arable land became scarce, settlers however began to encroach on cattle ranches, which according to local residents led to serious, at times violent conflicts. In the 1970s, the expansion of agricultural land in Oriental Mindoro proceeded parallel to the reduction of pastures, while in Occidental Mindoro, with its extensive grasslands in the uplands, both agricultural land and pasture land continued to increase.¹²

In the mid-1980s, most of the interior of Mindoro, including virtually all of the Buhid territory, was covered by forest lease or pasture lease agreements issued by the BFD. The establishment of cattle ranches proved disastrous for many communities. There are several documented cases in which Buhid communities were driven off their land by force. Where they were allowed to stay, it was done so the locals could supply the needed cheap (de-facto forced) labor. But with cattle invading their fields, the armed farm hands wiping out the game and the regular burning of the pastures destroying fields, fallow and secondary forests, many of these communities were tossed into starvation and ultimately forced to abandon their land, too.

The state authorities were fully aware of what was happening, and the processes and power relations at play in the establishment of cattle ranches in Mindoro are typical for frontier situations which routinely exhibit evidence of a collusion of state and private actors and their conscious ignoring of the indigenous communities' claims over land and resources, sometimes even their very existence (Bodley 1990:25;

Geiger, this volume: 126-133). A concrete example from the Buhid area illustrates this proposition.¹³

On April 6, 1956, Alfonso C. Roldan, attorney and councilor in Manila, submitted application file No. 10258 for a pasture lease agreement for an area at the headwaters of the Myanaw creek to the BFD in San José, Occidental Mindoro. According to the law, the applicant was obliged to report on "improvements and signs of occupancy" in the area where he wished to establish a cattle ranch, and indicate whether the area was "claimed" by someone else. The answer Roldan gave in his report was negative, stating: "I have seen the area, and it is vacant".

The subsequent "Inspection Report on Special Use Application" written by a BFD forester visiting the area to verify the report in 1957 however mentioned that he found "Bananas and *nangka* [Jackfruit trees] (1/4 of the area) planted by Mangyans 6 years ago". The full truth, undisclosed also by the forester's report, was that the area was actually inhabited by more than 40 Buhid families.

The lease agreement was issued by the BFD without any reference to or qualification regarding the Buhid communities living in the concession area. Later, the lease agreement was transferred to Roldan's wife, Pilar Alarcon Paja, and renewed in 1970 with another 25 years' validity.

Pilar's cattle herders proved to be extraordinarily unscrupulous towards the Buhid living within the boundaries of the lease. People from the area seeking refuge in the nearby Fay Valley gave vivid accounts of the hardship they had to endure: they were forced to work for ridiculously low wages, beaten up, their animals were stolen and their fields and fruit trees destroyed by cattle and fire. As a result of this and in addition to constant harassment, they were faced with food shortages and even starvation. As a consequence, many died, and with the exception of four families some of whose members were permanently employed as cow hands, all others were finally evicted from their lands by force.

Before their eventual eviction from the area, the people sought help in Batangan, the large Buhid settlement in Oriental Mindoro where the Buhid had already started to organize in defense of their land. With the help of the Batangan Buhid, they wrote a petition and submitted it to the Commission on National Integration (CNI), the government agency in charge of "cultural communities" (i.e. indigenous peoples). The petition was sent to the CNI head office through the District Integration Office based in Calapan, the capital of Oriental Mindoro. The officer in charge, Fred P. Sumbad, wrote in his endorsement letter: "It is suggested that this Commission should have proper representation with the Bureau of Forestry for the immediate cancellation of the aforesaid pasture application." The CNI, however, failed to take action, even though the Buhid petitioners clearly expressed that they feared for their lives. That

these fears were not unfounded showed a few years later when two elderly Buhid who refused to leave their land were murdered by Pilar's "cowboys" in cold blood.¹⁴

By the late 1970s, the upper Myanaw area was virtually devoid of inhabitants. Decades of indiscriminate hunting had wiped out all game and frequent, uncontrolled burning has turned the once-diverse agricultural and forest landscape into barren land. Pilar, in her seven-year management plan of 1987 submitted to the BFD, wrote: "The whole area is practically grassland interspersed with a few patches of brushes and trees".

Rebels, robbers and priests

The remote uplands, though, continued to serve as a refuge for the Buhid and all other Mangyan groups. Throughout the centuries, however, the very remoteness and inaccessibility of this habitat attracted a different kind of frontier actors – those in search for a hide-out.

As briefly mentioned earlier, by the late 19th century, Mindoro had gained the rather dubious reputation of being a haven for outlaws when the *tulisanes* took refuge in the inaccessible hinterland to escape the reach of the Spanish authorities. The presence of bandits is, however, not a thing of the distant past. Thus, the founding for instance of the large Buhid settlement in Batangan in the 1960s was a response to the "terrorism of small armed groups of Bisayan *manunúlis* (bandits) that seasonally deprived the Buhid of their rice harvests, animals and tools" (Lopez-Gonzaga 1983:73). And even in recent years, the Buhid reported to me the presence of individuals or small groups of bandits that roamed the interior and made a living off small-scale robbery or blackmailing among both settler and Buhid communities.

In 1973, small units of the communist New People's Army (NPA) have, according to army reports, become active on Mindoro. They, however, succeeded to win the support of some among the locals only after the repression and economic hardship under the Marcos dictatorship had become increasingly unbearable (Schult 1990:240). In the early years, no confrontations were reported. Only after 1985 the NPA started armed combat operations which were soon to bring about heavy militarization and visits by government-supported armed anti-communist vigilante groups. As so often in the past, the Buhid, like all other Mangyan, found themselves caught up in a violent conflict among outsiders, this time a conflict among the *luktánon* themselves. The situation did not abate after the toppling of the Marcos regime. After the failed negotiations between her newly-elected government and the NDF – the National Democratic Front whose armed wing the NPA is – in 1986, President Aquino declared a policy of "total war" that had the political and military support of the USA. In the course of large-scale offensives on Mindoro in 1987, 1988

and 1991, hundreds of Alangan Mangyan and Buhid families were forced to flee, and suffered the destruction of property, livestock, houses and whole settlements.

Today, the NPA is still present in the mountains of Mindoro, although the conflict is currently one of low intensity, with the army only rarely patrolling the interior. With few exceptions, the Buhid have rejected any attempt by the NPA to win their confidence and support, and they generally meet their fighters with distrust and fear.

According to Buhid informants, the NPA has in the mid-2000s initiated a "land reform program" in the Haguyay (Kaguray) area in the southwest of the Buhid territory, "distributing" land to landless peasants who had entered the area on the NPA's invitation. There is nothing that the affected Buhid communities can do to stop this. In Buhid eyes, the only advantage that the presence of the NPA had so far was that in some areas of the interior, cattle ranches were abandoned in the 1990s as the fighters started to slaughter the cattle for provision. Until the late 1980s, the NPA commandos present in Mindoro had enjoyed the reputation of being highly disciplined. The high ethical standards that the units observed in their interaction with local people – indigenous or settlers alike – gained them respect also among the Buhid. In those years, the NPA managed to establish a certain degree of "law and order" in the interior as they took action against exploitative ranchers or bands of robbers roaming the hills. Unfortunately, the general weakening of the NPA in the wake of the crisis of the leftist movement that came with the democratic transition seems to have had a negative impact on the rebels' troop discipline and interaction with locals. NPA commands not only in Mindoro reportedly took to robbery and colluded with illegal loggers whose harmful presence in the Buhid area they allowed provided they paid "revolutionary taxes". In some areas, the villagers do not see much of a difference anymore between NPA (or other leftist) commands and the ordinary robbers that have plagued the hinterlands of Mindoro for more than a hundred years.

Aside from a handful of well-meaning government officers – who are not usually found in the agencies in charge of protecting indigenous peoples' right –, missionaries were the only ally that the Buhid and other Mangyan could count on before the appearance on the scene of human rights organizations. In most cases, however, support from them comes at a price, and not always in the form most needed.

Throughout the Spanish colonial era, the work of missionaries among the Mangyan was sporadic and largely unsuccessful. It was only after World War II that both Protestant (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and Catholic (Society of the Divine Word) missions established a permanent presence. Since then, numerous churches of other Christian denominations as well as that of the Bahai'i faith have followed and compete with each other in the effort to convert the Mangyan to their beliefs. This has led to a situation in which most of the Buhid communities near the lowlands have been brought under the influence of different and in various respects diverging religious

ideologies. Communities in the Siyangi-Batangan region in Oriental Mindoro have had the longest experience with Christian proselytization. The presence of missionaries of different and often antagonistic denominations¹⁵ has reportedly led to conflict within Buhid communities by aggravating existing and creating new divisions in their midst, which allegedly even cut across close family ties.

Overall, the success of evangelization can be said to have been rather modest and superficial since the Buhid traditionally entertain a high level of distrust and suspicion towards anything alien, and important parts of Christian symbolism fit badly with core tenets of Buhid culture.¹⁶ Like elsewhere in frontier areas, many missionaries in Mindoro have been more or less conscious and willing instruments in the state's "civilizing project". After all, the missionaries' rationale and rhetoric is strikingly similar to the modernization rhetoric of nation-states. A few of them, however, have considered it their task to help Mindoro's indigenous peoples cope with and mitigate the impact of state-sponsored or -supported settler and entrepreneurial colonialism, and support the Buhid and other Mangyan in their attempt to gain recognition for their land and other rights. Presently, the Catholic Mangyan Mission for example is directly and actively involved in the delineation and mapping of the ancestral domain of the Buhid and other Mangyan groups as part of the bureaucratic requirements for the issuance of a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title.

Frontier interaction and the strategy of withdrawal

Of all the actors at Mindoro's frontier, the agricultural pioneer settlers and traders have had the most regular and intensive interaction with the Buhid and other Mangyan groups. In general, the relationship between the Mangyan and the settlers has been characterized by a discriminatory and exploitative attitude on the part of the latter. The ethnohistorian, Violeta Lopez-Gonzaga (1976, 1983), speaks of a veritable chain of exploitation which developed during Spanish colonial rule and has remained in place up to this date.

The lowland and coastal dwellers who submitted themselves to colonial rule had to pay their tribute to the Spanish crown in the form of wax, for which there was an enormous demand¹⁷, and which was acquired cheaply through unequal and sometimes forced trade with indigenous peoples like the Mangyan. In the main, the relationship of the lowlanders with the Mangyan have since remained exploitative. Thus, the account of the Spanish chronicler, Jordana, is as accurate today as when it was written in 1885:

"Generally speaking, it can be said that the customs of the Mangyans are solidly founded on righteousness and morality. They keep their promises religiously, they do not deceive or cheat, but unfortunately, however, these outstanding

character qualities, and their natural sincerity, are (...) turning them into the victims of the Christian Indios¹⁸, who exploit them at will. They make the Mangyans do the hard work in their fields, let them cut and haul lumber, and all of it for a handful of rice.

In their business dealings, the Mangyans suffer as well from the greedy attitude of the Indios in the villages, considering the fact that they (the Mangyans) trade huge quantities of beeswax, rattan and other products, for some unimportant objects of little value that they receive in exchange. However, the abuse reaches a shocking extreme, since aside from the cheating in business dealings, there is the one of slavery that is quite rampant even among the Christian Indios themselves. It is their custom to give the Mangyans in advance *palay*¹⁹, cloth and other objects, for which they do not request immediately an equivalent exchange, but the arrangement is that these debts can be paid back by means of working in the rice fields of the creditors. This arrangement (...) will turn the Mangyan into a virtual slave, because the owner of the rice fields appraises the work of the Mangyan at a very low value. Moreover he adds an interest to the original capital that has not been paid back yet, to collect this amount as well, by means of labor of the debtor. When the Mangyan comes into financial difficulties and needs again some money, it will proceed in the usual way, so that the debt of the Mangyan increases considerably, instead of becoming less, so that he finds himself obliged to work for the rest of his life for a small amount of money that he received at the beginning.

The amazing aspect of this business is the honesty and the acceptance of the Mangyan, who submits himself with resignation to these hateful abuses without any protest. The only thing he could do would be to escape to the forests and make absolutely sure that no Christian Indio could penetrate there to get him out of his hiding place" (in: Postma 1985:71f; see also de Zuñiga 1973 [1893]:120).

In fact, as will be elaborated further below, escape or the avoidance of direct interaction with lowlanders has been the common response to exploitation and abuse by outsiders. Nevertheless, debt-slavery and forced labor were reportedly quite common until the recent past (see for example the autobiographic account of a Buhid youth in Luna 1975), but aside from cursory accounts of a few individual cases like that of the Pilar cowhands presented above, we have no data that help us determine how prevalent they are today.

In the early days of settlement, the migrants were often totally dependent on the Mangyan. Being poor, landless and without any steady income, the settlers – as Lopez-Gonzaga (1983:73) reports from the Batangan area – subsisted largely on the resources of the Buhid:

Those who did not engage in direct plundering depended on Buhid charity or participation in the seasonal *hurayan*, the sharing of harvested grain proceeds

among participant reapers. The more enterprising lowlanders (*luktánon*) subsisted by obtaining food crops from Buhid in exchange for exorbitantly priced town goods. The land-oriented migrants supported themselves by cultivating short-term crops such as maize and sweet potatoes on the land borrowed from the Buhid cultivator, but they eventually achieved direct control over this land by filing a land declaration to the local land bureau, a procedure whose legal implications often remain unknown to the original Buhid holders. Others give the Buhid a small sum of money and make them affix their thumb mark on a piece of paper which, unknown to the cash recipients, stipulated a contract of sale.

For generations, lowland settlers have legitimized unequal trade, debt bondage and land grabbing by referring to the Mangyan as uncivilized people. The designation “Mangyan” as it is being used in the lowlands of Mindoro and the Philippines at large carries the negative connotation of being backward, primitive, dirty, stupid, and generally inferior. Lowland town and village folk still cherish to tell outsiders – partly jokingly, partly in earnest – that the Mangyan have tails.²⁰

Settlers and petty traders often try to establish enduring paternalistic relationships with the Mangyan in the attempt to secure a more reliable access to their goods and labour. In comparing it with the *compadrinazgo*, the patron-client institution among the Christian lowlanders, Gibson (1989:70) writes on his observations among the Buhid:

“Instead, Christian traders attempt to implicate the Buid in the ancient Filipino institution of blood brotherhood. Christians now use *sandugo*, ‘one blood’, as a universal term of address and reference for the Buid. Like *compadre*, it carries the same moral connotation of diffuse, enduring obligation and the same quality of masking a hierarchical relationship in the mutuality of kinship relations. The Buid resent the use of the term and the attempt to place them in the moral as well as material debt of the lowlanders. The lowlanders are sub-moral beings in Buid eyes, given their aggressive and domineering customs. The poor Christian settlers in the mountains view the Buid as standing in the same relationship to them as they stand to their own patrons. The Buid are sub-moral in Christian eyes because of their refusal to ‘properly’ acknowledge their debts”.

According to Lopez-Gonzaga (1983:154), *sandugo* relationships first emerged in the 1930s among the Buhid in Oriental Mindoro. Before that, the Buhid obtained most lowland goods through trade with the neighboring Hanunóo Mangyan. The *sandugo* relationship was usually established between a lowland settler family and a Buhid local kinship group. The two exchanged seasonal visits between the lowland town and the hills. During their visits in town, the Buhid *sandugo* were employed to clear and cultivate fields in exchange of bush knives, glass beads, salt and other goods, while the lowland *sandugo* would visit their Buhid “bloodbrothers” in the hills to



Photo 4.4 : Buhid men gathering at one of the small variety stores along the highway at Lisap, Oriental Mindoro, 1985 (photo: Christian Erni)

obtain forest products like rattan and beeswax or to secure extra labour (*ibid.*). Before World War II, the Buhid of the Batangan area of Oriental Mindoro had to provide two weeks of labour in the field for a bush knife, or two days labour for an arm-length of glass beads (*ibid.*). The Buhid were aware of the exploitative nature of these relationships and thus tried to avoid them as far as possible, and prior to the opening of the Buhid territory by logging and settlers, the extent of contact with lowland towns was minimal (*ibid.*:155).

The Buhid see themselves and the *luktánon* as worlds apart, as separate and incompatible social universes. As shown earlier, ethnic boundaries among the indigenous groups in Mindoro’s highlands are not always very clearly defined. But the Buhid like all Mangyan draw a very clear-cut ethnic boundary between themselves and the Christian population in the lowlands. The *luktánon* are conceived as a category of people that stands in fundamental opposition to all indigenous highlanders. This conceptual opposition is based on cultural values and ways of life perceived to be fundamentally different. And this opposition is mutual, as Gibson (1986:196) has aptly described:

“The categories of Buid, Bangun and Mangyan may all be classed together as Buid in opposition to the category *luktánon*, ‘lowlander’. In this usage, the term Buid has a positive connotation. The Christians for their part refer to all non-Christian highlanders as Mangyan or *sandugo*. On their lips, the term Mangyan is decidedly derogatory, connoting all that is ‘uncivilised’. These two cover terms

indicate the presence of a sharp social divide, each side of which adheres to a different system of values. 'Buid' or 'Mangyan' in these usages refers to all those who wear loincloths or tubular skirts, practice shifting cultivation and residence, and have a shy and unaggressive disposition. These characteristics all carry a positive connotation for the highlanders and a negative one for the lowlanders. *Luktanon* wear long trousers or skirts, know how to cultivate wet rice, even if they are too poor to do so, and have a violent and aggressive disposition. These characteristics all carry a positive connotation among the lowlanders and a negative one among the highlanders. But the attitude of the highlanders is complicated by a certain envy of the greater wealth and power of the lowlanders. The social norms of the *luktanon* are condemned without reservation, but their material culture provokes a certain amount of admiration".

The Buhid's profound fear and distrust of outsiders and loathing of aggressive behavior has its roots in the long history of exploitation and violence at the hands of alien intruders. As mentioned earlier, already before the Spanish colonial era, and for almost three centuries during the times of the "Moro wars", the indigenous peoples of Mindoro suffered from regular slave raids by members of Muslim polities from Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, from the war between these and the Spanish colonizers, and after that and until today from settler encroachment on their land and the conflict between the government and the New People's Army.

Unlike other indigenous peoples, for example those of the Cordillera of Northern Luzon, who fiercely resisted any incursions on their lands and, to a large extent, managed to retain control over their territories until today, what the Buhid chose in coping with outsiders was a strategy of avoidance and withdrawal. In response to recurrent outside threats, the Buhid preferred to live in dispersed, small settlements of one to three or four households, that are less easily detected by intruders. This has the additional advantage of allowing people to live closer to their fields. In interior areas, this is still the common practice.²¹

Elderly Buhid described how, upon noticing strangers approaching their settlements, they used to flee and hide in the forest, leaving their animals and other belongings behind. Fear of strangers was so commanding that upon the mere smell of tobacco smoke or the discovery of tracks of shoes or rubber thongs, a whole community would take refuge in the forest, if necessary for days, until the intruders had left. They would visit their fields only at night in order to hastily fetch whatever food they needed for survival. Until a generation or two ago, this behavior was common throughout the Buhid territory; is still prevalent among very remote Buhid communities, and it is persistently practiced by the Taubuid, the northern neighbors of the Buhid. If deemed necessary, people took temporary or permanent refuge in other communities. The de-facto free access to swidden land allowed for high mobility, which has been a key characteristic of the residence pattern of the Buhid until today.



Photo 4.5 : Traditional settlement pattern: Small hamlet of the Buhid community of Mantay in the interior Upper Fay valley, Occidental Mindoro, 1985 (photo: Christian Emi)

The strategy of withdrawal and the concomitant ethics of non-aggression and peaceable behavior have been found among other societies in remote areas of Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world, people who also came to experience outsiders as hostile and overwhelmingly powerful.²² For Dentan (1992:216), "peacability" is a "tactical cultural adaptation to particular situations" (...). When it fails to be adaptive, the same people may abandon it, at least temporarily". In his explanation, advanced from a political ecology perspective, the strategy of withdrawal to a "refuge" (as briefly discussed above) is treated as a niche specialization of comparably powerless people confronted by overwhelmingly powerful intruders.

"The general principle is that, given the availability of underpopulated refuge areas, the more devastating the military superiority of the invaders, the more successful the refugee adaptation of flight. (...) The result is a niche specialization: the slavers' search and destroy strategy evokes a run and scatter response (...)".

"The resulting insecurity, 'fear', leads refugees to enculturate children in ways that foster nonviolence and to maintain or initiate a flexible band organization which (1) permits flight and regrouping in response to marauding invaders, and (2) both fosters and requires the nonviolence children learn" (ibid.: 220f).

The fear of predatory outsiders – both human and supernatural – finds its expression in a wealth of stories and legends about slave raiders (called *gubat*) and cannibalistic spirits. As Gibson (1986:186) writes: “The Buid view the cosmos as containing a hierarchy of predators. The higher up this hierarchy one goes, the more unpleasant and aggressive are the beings (...)”. Negative experiences with outsiders led not only to an attitude of avoidance, but also to a radical conceptual demarcation of their cultural boundaries. Only a few generations ago, anything alien, be it metal pots (in the past the Buhid used to cook in earthen pots produced by certain communities) or plants not traditionally grown by the Buhid (like coconut, coffee, even certain varieties of bananas or root crops), was subject to a taboo called *taglí* or *sad*. Some *sad* were imposed by distant ancestors, some by elders only very few generations ago so that their validity is sometimes confined to a still rather narrow circle of descendants. Thus in some communities the construction of wet-rice fields and cemented courtyards or the founding of large, nucleated settlements (*bárrio*) was forbidden. The spirits of the ancestors, the *lábang táo*, are said to watch over the adherence of their descendants to the taboo. Any breach would lead to the taboo-breaker or his or her immediate relatives falling sick, unless the danger is averted by the immediate performance of a ritual (*famaládan*). The introduction of new domesticated plants was allegedly facilitated by the adoption of a specific ritual (*lubúsan*) from the neighboring Hanunóo Mangyan, to be conducted when the alien plant is planted for the first time.

As common among other peaceable societies (ibid.:219), the avoidance of violent confrontation with outsiders among the Buhid corresponds with a general ethic of non-aggression. Even in dealing with conflict among themselves, they rather prefer to withdraw and avoid further contact with the opponent than to seek confrontation. The ultimate withdrawal is suicide, an extreme act of self-aggression which seems to be more common among the Buhid than homicide.²³

Today, the situation has changed drastically, especially in the areas bordering the lowlands. Here, the intrusion of outsiders is not merely a temporary phenomenon anymore; the outsiders are not just “predators” who come, grab what they can and leave again. They have come to occupy land, and they have come to stay. Obviously, under these circumstances, the strategy of avoidance is no feasible strategy anymore.

The Buhid of the foothills are now forced to deal regularly with lowlanders. The changes that occurred over the past five decades have also brought new opportunities, like – although still only to a limited extent – access to services of the state or non-governmental charitable or development organizations. Education offered by missionaries or government schools, and modern health care available in hospitals in the lowland villages and towns are welcomed by most Buhid as attractive aspects of modernity. Integration into the cash and market economy and access to shops and markets in coastal towns have introduced new consumption habits, and regular

interaction with lowlanders as well as exposure to Tagalog video productions – shown for a small fee in virtually every lowland village – have reduced prejudices among the young and increased their readiness to adopt lowland culture, habits and values. Yet many aspects of Buhid identity, customs, values and attitudes are still firmly entrenched also among the young generation, and although a few young Buhid men have allegedly gone with the NPA, confrontational and aggressive behavior is still generally despised, as manifested by a widely-shared, pronounced aversion against arms.

Patterns of resource use at the frontier

Settlers in the early stages of frontier colonization are in a situation characterized by high levels of economic insecurity and uncertainty, and at the same time easy and, at least for a period, seemingly unlimited access to land. Although drawn to the periphery by hope for a piece of land of their own and a future in economic security, if not wealth, during the early years – or even the first generation and beyond –, scarcity of labour and capital is the rule for most of them. As we have seen, early settlers in the Batangan area were reportedly fully dependent on the Buhid’s resources, and to some extent their labor.

The typical response of humans under any situation of insecurity and uncertainty is to try and maximize short-term gains (Margolis 1977:60)²⁴. But it is not only high insecurity and uncertainty due to scarcity of labour and capital that settlers have to cope with; characteristically, they are also confronted with insecurity of land tenure:

The combination of insecure tenure and the availability of cheap land encourages settlers to minimize the cost of occupation by turning to premature deforestation, cattle ranching, and other activities that occupy the cleared land at low cost. (Pichón 1996:365; see also Campos, this volume, p. 416).

In other words: In a strategy that seeks to maximize short-term profit under conditions of scarce available means, there is little room for concern for the environment, for investment in conservation measures and thus the sustainable use of land and resources.

Warner (1979:140ff.) has described the processes and consequences of frontier land use in the wake of a state-sponsored settlement program under the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) in the 1950s in neighboring Palawan island. It was not the program itself, but the unassisted, spontaneous migration in its wake that led to a sharp population increase in the resettlement area (ibid.:142).

In the case of Palawan, years of continuous tilling without any investment in conservation measures led to the loss of nutrients and the destruction of the physical structure of the soil in the immediate resettlement area. The land became infested

with *imperata* grass and useless for agriculture, after which the settlers moved on, into the foothills and ultimately into the watershed area where the cycle was repeated. After 20 years, only 20% of the land allocated to the settlers was used for agriculture (8% for irrigated, the rest for rain-fed farming). 20% was forested, and 60% was unproductive *imperata* grassland. 39% of the settlers had left the area and moved to at that time still undeveloped areas on the West coast (ibid.:147f.). There, they continued with the same agricultural practices: Complete clearing of the forest and the preference for large contiguous fields and monocropping, a combination which makes the fields more susceptible to infestation with *imperata* grass and ultimately renders them useless (ibid.:149f.).

According to Warner (ibid.:147), large-scale land degradation came mainly as a result of the settlers' ignorance of the local soil conditions. Given their background as lowland cultivators of irrigated rice, they applied the same farming methods to the inherently much less fertile and more fragile soils in their new upland environment. Another reason, however, may have been the lack of tenure security to which Warner refers to as well. Settlers brought in under the resettlement scheme were supposed to repay the government expenses for their journey and initial investments on the spot if they wanted a land title, conditions which most could not fulfil. They thus preferred not to apply for a title. Less than 5% of those involved in the project had become owners of their plots (ibid.:148). Thus, it might have been not so much ignorance on the migrants' part, but their situation of insecurity, uncertainty, scarcity of labour and capital, and the easy access to seemingly limitless land resources, which prevented the settlers from investing in conservation measures. This would conform to the typical short-term maximizing strategy reported from other frontier regions.²⁵

The present state of the environment in Mindoro indicates that similar processes must have taken place there. In the lowland plains, settlers followed logging roads and by means of initial, transitory shifting cultivation (or, more aptly, slash-and-burn agriculture), began to turn logged-out forests into farmland. Ample water resources and fertile soils in the plains allowed for the establishment of highly productive wet-rice fields. In the foothills and uplands, however, we encounter a different picture. By the end of the 1980s, the foothills in the east of the Buhid territory which had been appropriated by settlers, were almost barren, mostly covered by *imperata* grassland, with scattered field patches that could only be cultivated by means of the plough. The fragile, inherently infertile ferrallitic soils of these partially steep slopes are however prone to erosion, and signs of severe soil degradation were evident everywhere. In the 1980s, these lands were mainly used for maize. There was a ready market and good prizes as demand from poultry farms in the greater Batangan-Manila area was high. According to Margolis, an opportunistic behavior oriented on short-term gains is more typical for cash-crop than subsistence farming since fluctuating market prices add an additional dimension of uncertainty (1977:43).

The Buhid living in close proximity to the lowland settlers also adopted the cultivation of maize for cash in those years. They, however, pursued a "mixed strategy", continuing at the same time to plant traditional subsistence crops. As Gibson (1986:50) observed in the 1980s:

"It is this 'mixed economy' which allows the Buid, for the time being, to have the best of two worlds. On the one hand, they remain relatively immune to most environmental disasters such as typhoons, which have less impact on root crops than on grain crops. On the other hand, they are now able to purchase a wide variety of lowland goods in addition to maintaining their consumption of rice by purchasing it from the lowlands".

During the same period, the Buhid in the east and in some areas of the interior started to plant on an increasing scale perennial plants like fruit trees, plantains, bananas, tania (*Xanthosoma spp.*) and coffee on their fallow plots, while continuing to grow tubers and grain in their swidden fields, thus further diversifying their adaptive strategy.

In the eastern foothills, the boundary between the settlers and the areas used by the Buhid was very conspicuous: the land of the former was virtually devoid of any vegetation other than field crops, grass and a few scattered bushes or trees, while the land of the Buhid was characterized by a mosaic of swidden fields, fallow secondary forest, agroforests, and residual old-growth forests in the headwater areas and along creeks.²⁶

Today, the maize boom is over, and some settlers have also planted their land with a more diverse range of crops, many of them more permanent, like fruit trees and coconut palms. The livelihoods of these small farmers and tenants, however, remain precarious, and many depend on additional income from petty trade and the extraction of resources from the Buhid territory of the interior.

Changes in Buhid land use

As briefly mentioned before, Buhid communities closer to the lowland markets and traders also took to cash-cropping of maize during the times of favourable prices, and successfully combined it with the production of subsistence crops. In fact, over the past centuries the Buhid have shown considerable flexibility and resilience in their adaptation to varying and changing conditions. Regional adaptive patterns have evolved in response to differences in local environments, and the Buhid have easily switched between them when they changed residence. High mobility, as we have seen, was not only due to a strategy of what Becker and Ostrom called "opportunistic substitution" (1995:126), i.e. the switching to a different resource or the changing of residence once a particular resource has been exploited to a critical level. Mobility has been a response to a social environment that the Buhid came to perceive as

extremely threatening. Thus it was high mobility combined with a de-facto open access to land and other critical resources that constituted the core elements of their adaptive resilience in the past.

Over the past three decades, a fundamental change has occurred in terms of resource management and customary law among most Buhid communities: a transformation of a de-facto open access situation to individual rights to swidden land. Research conducted in the central and eastern Buhid areas revealed the emergence of a land use pattern which was quite different from what has been practiced only two generations earlier. Nowadays, people in many communities rely to a large extent on products from agroforests, both for their immediate consumption and for cash needs. These agroforests have become an integral part of their subsistence system, at the core of which still stands shifting cultivation.

Along with new cropping patterns went the privatization of land rights. In the research areas, all land is now divided into individual holdings. Every adult owns his or her own swidden farm within which the swidden fields are usually cut. Upon request, the right to make a swidden may be granted to others, but today, such rights are granted only temporarily.

The reason behind the intensification of land use and the concomitant changes in customary law was the increasing scarcity of land, in the foothill areas partly brought about by settler encroachment, in the interior by unsustainable land use practices. The related technological change was facilitated by the availability of new and suitable kinds of perennial crops. The technological institutional transformations towards intensified land use and individual land ownership have resulted in a more sustainable use of agricultural land among the communities of the research area.

The "tragedy of the frontier"

However, the exploitation of other natural resources — such as game, fish or other aquatic resources — remains virtually uncontrolled. Under low population densities and with simple traditional hunting and harvesting technologies, over-exploitation has never been more than a local and temporary problem. Nowadays, however, overhunting by lowlanders using firearms and explosive baits, habitat disturbance in the wake of the establishment of cattle ranches and the general population increase have made hunting increasingly unprofitable in large parts of the Buhid territory. In areas closer to the lowlands, deer and even wild pigs are almost extinct. In these areas, even aquatic resources like fish and crustaceans are now hard to get by. Years of overexploitation, again mainly by lowland settlers who use unrestrained and destructive harvesting techniques (like electric shocks produced by car batteries or chemical poison) have severely depleted the more accessible rivers and creeks.

The Buhid in these regions are increasingly adopting lowlander fishing and hunting techniques and equipments, and due to regular interaction with Buhid settlements in these regions, such methods are also slowly making their way to the interior. What can be observed in hunting and fishing in many Buhid areas is the classical case of Hardin's (1968) "tragedy of the commons", resulting from the combination of an open-access situation and — with respect to the much more efficient technology now available —, a relatively high population density.

Similar processes can be observed with respect to the remaining tracts of old-growth forests. In Buhid territory today, such forests are confined to the headwaters of the major rivers and their tributaries at altitudes higher than 1000 meters above sea level. The largest old-growth forest tracts of the Buhid territory are found east and southeast of the Fay river, extending to the headwaters of the Hayakyán, Tuwága and Inundungan rivers. Based on recent observations on the extent of deforestation, today it probably measures considerably less than the 80 sqkm estimated for the late 1980s.²⁷ Among the Buhid, old-growth forests have always been under an open-access regime both with respect to shifting cultivation, hunting or the extraction of any other forest product. The drastic reduction of old-growth forests was however mainly a result of the large-scale commercial logging of the 1950s and 1960s. All valuable timber was removed and many of the remaining trees destroyed in the process. Settlers permanently converted the forests in the plains and foothills to agricultural land and in the uplands it was also easier for the Buhid to use the now-open forests for shifting cultivation. But the cutting of old-growth forest continues. Small-scale illegal logging by lowlanders is ongoing in virtually all headwater forests except for those of the very remote interior. And in these areas some Buhid communities have a preference for pioneer shifting cultivation and thus continue cutting fields in old-growth forests.

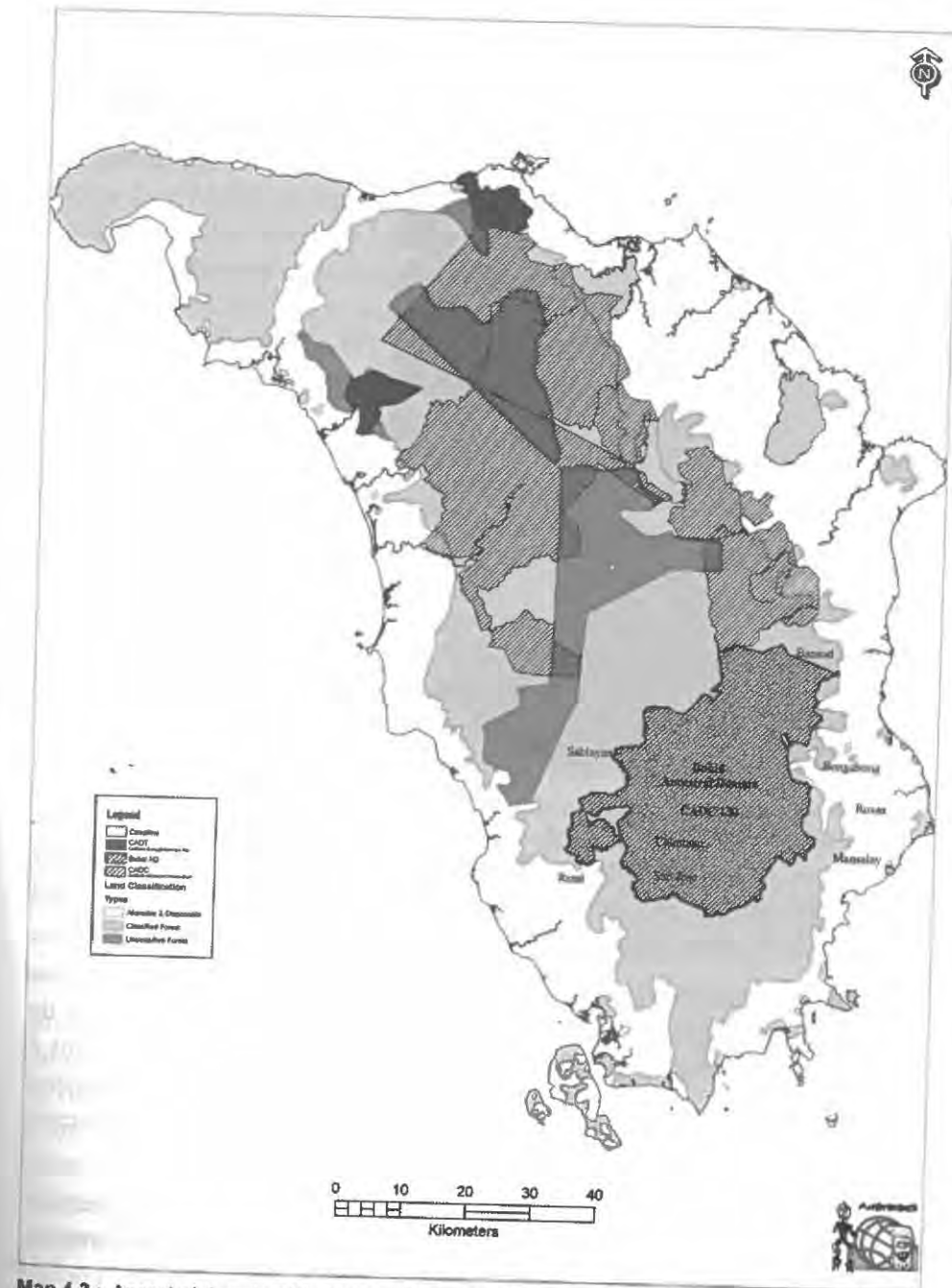
Small-scale logging is done by small teams of loggers with either their own or with rented chainsaws. They slowly work their way up the rugged terrain to reach the last stands of marketable timber. The logs are hauled down with water buffaloes, often by — or with the help of — young Buhid men. Once the raw logs have been brought down to the lowland settlements, they are cut into boards. Although forbidden by law, all this is happening in bright daylight. Only the last step in the process, the transportation of the boards to the road and on to the coastal towns, is done under cover of darkness to avoid detection by the local officers of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). However, local sources insist that the DENR staff are not only well aware of what is happening, but often directly involved, as are local government officials and politicians who also have a share in the profitable business.

A new response: Seeking the recognition of land rights

With increasing pressure from lowland settlers and entrepreneurs, and the traditional non-aggressive strategy of avoidance and withdrawal having reached its limits, the Buhid had to seek other options for maintaining a certain degree of autonomy and control over their land and resources. Such options became available as a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and missionaries started to work in the Buhid areas. Especially missionaries have always encouraged the Buhid – like other indigenous peoples – to settle in larger, compact settlements. While the missionaries were mainly interested in easier access to the people to make the teaching of the gospel less arduous and provide their flock with education and health services, young Buhid leaders propagated nucleated settlements as a strategy to stop further encroachment by lowland settlers. They hoped that the concentration of people in larger settlements and the adoption of the lowlanders' administrative-political model – the *barangay* and its offices, the *barangay consehal* (councillor) and *kapitan* (headman) – would lead to a recognition of their presence and of the fact of their prior occupation of (and therefore superior rights over) their land. Furthermore, it was to facilitate mobilization in defense of local rights. And indeed, the Buhid of Batáangan in Oriental Mindoro, the largest Buhid settlement and so far the only one with official *barangay* status, have used the advantages of a nucleated form of settlement for good measure. Lopez-Gonzaga (1983:175) observed:

“(...) the Batangan Buhid are able to control the *luktánon* trading activities to the extent that they are able to press for price increase in the purchase of their crops. This was dramatically demonstrated in a number of instances in 1979 when the Batangan Buhid (the evangelicals included) agreed to withhold their crops from the *biyaheras*²⁸ and the resident *luktánon* merchants until the latter increased their purchasing prices of the weekly cash crop”.

In the early 1980s, the first political self-help groups emerged among the Mangyan of Mindoro. As Blum and Geiger (1992:2) observed, the first such organizations were, however, structures with little independence, created in connection with literacy, land rights and community organizing programs of NGOs and support groups. Among the Buhid, it was the Sadik Habanan Buhid Inc. that emerged in the Batáangan region in 1985 under the guidance of then-American Peace Corps Volunteer Francis “Kiko” Fisher. Aside from agriculture, marketing, infrastructure and health programs the main aim of the organisation was land tenure security. This they hoped to achieve through entering into a Communal Forest Lease Agreement with the DENR (ibid:3). On 7th May 1992, the then-secretary of the DENR, Fulgencio Factoran, signed such an agreement, which granted use and management rights over an area of 19,675 hectares to 22 Buhid communities numbering 2,700 people for a period of 50 years. Encouraged by the example of Batáangan and the tireless propaganda efforts of the charismatic leader and *barangay kapitan* of Batáangan, Yaom Sumbad, other local peoples organizations



Map 4.3 : Ancestral domain of the Buhid which a CADT is being applied for (courtesy of AnthroWatch)



Photo 4.6: Engaged in illegal chainsaw-logging in Siyangi, Oriental Mindoro, 2001 (photo: Christian Erni)

were founded. The Sadik Habanan Buhid Inc. (SHB), however, emerged as the leading organization representing the interests of the Buhid of all Oriental Mindoro. In Occidental Mindoro, the Catholic Mangyan mission in a similar way helped to give birth to the SHB's sister organisation, the Kalipunan Buhid Inc. (KBI).

As briefly mentioned earlier, in 1992 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued Administrative Order 2, Series of 1992, on the Identification, Delineation and Recognition of Ancestral Land and Domain Claims. It provided indigenous communities with the possibility to apply for official recognition of their claims to their ancestral domains, i.e. for a so-called Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC).

The SHB and the KBI jointly initiated the lengthy and cumbersome procedure required for the application for a CADC that covered all Buhid ancestral territories. In 1998, the DENR issued the CADC, recognizing the Buhid's claim and granting qualified exclusive use rights over an area of 94,000 hectares that spanned the two provinces, Oriental and Occidental Mindoro. The Buhid CADC is the second largest that was issued by the government before the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 became operational in 1998. While a CADC is, as its name says, only a

certificate recognizing a claim over an ancestral domain, the new law provides for the issuance of genuine *titles*, the so-called Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). According to the IPRA, all existing CADC are eligible for transformation into CADT. The procedures are, however, rather complicated, and often additional documentation or a new perimeter survey of the area is requested. Manila-based NGOs like PAFID or Anthrowatch, or church organizations like the Catholic Mangyan Mission have been instrumental in bringing about the issuance of CADC and CADT. Without such outside assistance, few indigenous communities in the Philippines would be able to acquire a CADT, even though the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has the mandate to support indigenous communities in the application process and conduct the survey and titling proper. Thus, in the case of the Buhid-CADC, too, the conversion into a CADT is still pending.

Non-violence and the management of Ancestral Domains

An important part of the requirements for the issuance of a CADC is the drafting of an Ancestral Domain Management Plan. According to the DENR's Rules and Regulations for the Identification, Delineation and Recognition of Ancestral Land and Domain Claims, the claimants have the responsibility, among others, to "restore, preserve and maintain a balanced ecology in the ancestral domain by protecting flora, fauna, watershed areas, and other forest and mineral reserves" and to "protect and conserve forest trees and other vegetation naturally growing on the land specially along rivers, streams and channels" (Article VII, Paragraph B). Consequently, the leaders of the SHB and KBI tried to convince the Buhid communities to declare old-growth forests communal forests that were to be protected, with the aim of conserving bio-diversity, and above all to ensure the continuing availability of vital resources traditionally collected in these forests.

As shown above, over-harvesting in a context of open access has already led to a serious decline of many of these vital resources especially among Buhid communities closer to the lowlands. People have become aware of the long-term impact of these harvesting techniques, however, and some communities like those of the Fay valley in the interior, agreed to ban the use of electricity and chemical poison for harvesting aquatic resources. In the same area, there have also been signs that the populations of wild pigs and deer have recovered on abandoned pasture land. No rules, however, have yet been drawn up by the Fay valley communities for the regulation of hunting.

Not only in the Fay valley, but in many communities all over the Buhid territory, conservation measures that concern old-growth forests have been agreed upon in recent years. This change is a result of the drastic reduction of these forests and the scarcity of resources that can be found only there. But the emergence of conservation rules for old-growth forest, like e.g. the ban on shifting cultivation, was at least

partially – in the case of the appointment of community forest guards probably entirely – inspired by outsiders – mostly NGOs that have worked in Mindoro since the early 1980s and have promoted sustainable land use and forest conservation. The most crucial of these influences, however, was the Ancestral Domain Management Plan (ADMP) required by the CADC procedures.

The Ancestral Domain Management Plan submitted by the Sadik Habanan Buhid to the DENR contains among others provisions on the management and conservation of forests.²⁹ According to the plan, the communities have the right and duty to use, manage and protect these forests (Sadik Habanan Buhid and Kalipunan Buhid 1998:2f.). All forests not yet delineated and excluded from swidden land have to undergo this process, which means: they have to be identified as protected communal forests. Swidden farming is banned in these forests, and so is the felling of large trees for commercial purposes or the peeling of the bark of large trees used for the walling of traditional houses. The Buhid are, however, allowed to cut trees for domestic use (like house building) provided they consult with the office holders of their community or the leaders of either of the two people's organizations that are the official CADC holders. The harvesting of minor forest products is free as long as it is done according to "customary Buhid practices" and conducted in a sustainable manner (*ibid.*). As detailed in the management plan, leaders of the two people's organizations and local office holders are entitled to impose fines on trespassers.

Many Buhid communities have adopted these rules and accordingly delineated old growth forests and declared them protected. Other communities however, like those of the Baháyaw and Alyánon creeks, refused to do that. They ignore the Ancestral Domain Management Plan and continue to expand their fields into old-growth forests. In the upper Fay valley, too, some community members refused to have all of the remaining old-growth forest delineated since they wanted to keep some as a reserve for future swiddening. A compromise was eventually reached by recognizing some individual claims while declaring other parts of the forest in question communal forest and off-limits for swidden farming and commercial logging.

As shown above, Buhid communities like those in the interior Fay valley were able to reach comprehensive agreements on the utilization and conservation of communal resources, and they appear both willing and able to sufficiently enforce these new laws.³⁰ Not all communities, however, were as successful. In other regions, particularly those closer to the lowland settler communities, attempts to protect old-growth forests are facing serious difficulties.

Several conditions have been identified as being conducive to the evolution of institutional arrangements for the sustainable management of common property resources.³¹ One of the key factors is the "backing of values by socialization, standards, and strict enforcement" (Ostrom, in McCay and Acheson 1987:23).

Like all human societies, the Buhid have to deal with the problem of individual deviation which tends to become more acute during periods of transition when new rules have been introduced but are not yet recognized by everybody. Problems have thus occurred among the Buhid with respect to establishing new rules like the Ancestral Domain-wide ban on swidden farming in old-growth forest. This problem is especially pronounced among the pioneer-swidden farming communities at the headwaters of the Hayakyán river. Other examples, however, show that conservation rules for common property resources ultimately have gained sufficient acceptance to make the concept of common property work. And it also shows that the traditional institutions are sufficiently strong to ensure enforcement.

A much more serious problem with regards to the enforcement of conservation rules – and the recognition of the CADC, for that matter – are the settlers. An example is the community of Fánuban in the Siyángi region of the eastern foothills. While by and large the ban on swidden farming in the remaining old-growth was successfully enforced among its members, small-scale illegal logging by lowland settlers continues unabated. The problem is compounded by the fact that Buhid men are increasingly getting involved in the operations. They sometimes provide raw logs, or help with hauling felled logs with their buffaloes down to the lowlanders' settlements where they are processed into marketable boards. For young Buhid men, this is one of the few possibilities to earn cash money.

As we have seen, the Buhid have no history of violent resistance against outsiders, and in their society any form of physical aggression is utterly despised. While their preferred strategy of avoidance and withdrawal has allowed them to retain a largely self-determined life in the past, the situation has dramatically changed in recent decades. Now the lowlanders are increasingly encroaching on their land and resources in the interior. Scared by the guns of the loggers, the "environment guards" that have been appointed in some communities do not dare to interfere. The uncontrollable illegal logging by lowland migrants now undermines attempts to enforce rules and regulations for communal resource conservation among the Buhid themselves. More and more Buhid are implicated in illegal logging themselves, their argument being an all too familiar one: since they cannot stop lowlanders cutting their forests, they say, they may as well do it themselves and thus get a share of the benefits.

The right to exclude outsiders is maybe the most important precondition for establishing effective common property management systems. Communities of resource users may be able to deal with the problem of outside encroachment themselves if they are given the right to exclude others and take affirmative action when necessary. Although, as we have seen, the Buhid as CADC holders do formally have this right, they have difficulties asserting it, given their non-confrontational and non-violent disposition. In their attempt to close the gap between legal pretense and the reality on the ground, they do not get any support from the authorities.

In the process of and after the delineation and the recognition of the Buhid's claim over their Ancestral Domain by the DENR, lowland settlers have become well aware of the rights the Buhid are now supposed to hold over their land and resources. However, these rights are in many cases either ignored or not recognized. Some settlers have explicitly stated that they do not recognize the Buhid's exclusive rights since the CADC was not a true title.

Although a CADC is not a title, it does impart the right of use and management to specific user groups, and therefore the right of exclusion. In the absence of enforcement, however, this remains empty rhetoric. The municipal level offices of the DENR, the Community Environment and Natural Resource Office (CENRO), are responsible for enforcement of the rules laid out in the CADC agreement, which implies intervention in cases of transgression by outsiders. The Buhid of the Siyáangi area have reported cases of illegal logging to the CENRO, but no action was taken. Illegal logging and processing of logs goes on in bright daylight. Local politicians like the *barrio kapitans* of adjacent lowland villages are allegedly directly involved. And, being representatives of a government agency, the CENRO staff cannot dare to venture into the interior anymore for fear of being attacked by NPA guerrillas. The NPA on their part are not interested in stopping illegal logging either, since they demand and get a tax from those engaged in the illicit activity. In a recent human rights documentation sheet of the SHB, the ongoing environmental degradation in the Buhid area has been described as a result of "a power vacuum where the government cannot enforce the law in the area or uses the presence of rebels as an excuse not to enforce the law" (Sadik Habanan Buhid 2004: 1).

Conclusion and epilogue

While in the lowlands the frontier was "closed" decades ago, this is certainly not the case in the uplands of Mindoro. In spite of legislation that supposedly protects the rights of indigenous peoples, it is still an area where non-state actors – settlers, rebels and robbers – go about their illicit activities largely unimpeded; and it is still an area where non-state actors – like illegal loggers – collude with the state in the successful attempt to extract resources which are protected by valid laws. And finally, indigenous communities still have to live with the consequences of an unbroken tradition of policies and attitudes – widely shared among the general public and the administration – which treat these areas as "uninhabited" and thus open for organized resettlement by the state.

The Buhid territory, like the interior of Mindoro in general, therefore represents what Prescott (1987:36-43) calls a "secondary settlement frontier". "Primary settlement frontiers", according to Prescott, are closed frontiers, areas where the state

has successfully established control. Secondary settlement frontiers are the zones not (yet) settled, and thus usually considered uninhabited by the state (ibid.:36). They are found wherever "an adverse physical environment or inadequate techniques hinder further advances of land use and settlement" (ibid.). But unlike in earlier (mostly colonial) epochs where the state hegemon fought an uphill (and often futile) battle to establish its dominance over the primary settlement frontiers of the day, the absence of state penetration on secondary settlement frontiers is not so much due to lack of capacity to extend and maintain control, but out of convenience. For Prescott "the political authority of modern states extends beyond the secondary settlement frontiers and can be exerted when necessary" (ibid.:36). The case of Mindoro clearly shows that the Philippine state is readily doing this when deemed opportune, even if this contradicts its own policies and laws.

Already in the early 1980s, the then-Department of Agrarian Reform (now Department of Land Reform) conducted surveys in Bansud Municipality, allegedly with the intention of distributing parts of the Buhid territory to landless farmers (Martinez, Rey and Villarante 2007:95). In the early 1990s, Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) on land within the Buhid ancestral domain were allegedly issued to government-sponsored settlers in spite of petitions against the survey submitted by the affected communities and the Sadik Habanan Buhid (SHB)'s representation at the DAR, demanding that the ancestral domain be spared (ibid.:7). In 2004, the DAR again conducted surveys, this time in five communities in the *barangays* of Tawas, Hagan and Lisap in Bongabong municipality, and in *barangay* Malu/Villa Pagasa of Bansud municipality. The DAR did not ask consent from either the communities nor the mayor of Bongabong (ibid.:8). In a joint intervention by the SHB, Oriental Mindoro's provincial-level indigenous peoples' organization Kalulungan para sa Lupaing Ninuno (KPLN), the Catholic Mangyan Mission and a Manila-based NGO, the Philippine Association for Intercultural Development (PAFID), the DAR's violation of various laws and regulations were documented and presented to the provincial officer of the DAR and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). Possibly because the intervention had the support of the Governor's Office of Oriental Mindoro, the DAR admitted shortcomings and clarified that out of the 1,000 ha surveyed, no CLOA had yet been issued. The case is however still not settled, and the authors of the study on the CLOA-CADT conflict in the ancestral domain of the Buhid conclude that "land security is dependent on the owner's ability to defend his or her rights to land" (ibid.:17).

While there can be no doubt that with the passing of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), the Philippines have taken a giant step towards empowering indigenous peoples in the contest for resources at the frontier, the law suffers from the fundamental flaw that it contains a provision acknowledging the state's power of Eminent Domain³² over the claims based on ancestral occupation – "a ruling that

may be utilized by the State to its advantage if it so chooses" (ibid.). In light of the present administration's eagerness to revive the country's ailing mining industry, it is almost certain that this will be the case. The Philippine government believes that mining has the potential for "jumpstarting the moribund Philippine economy", and has thus "embarked on a program to revitalize the industry that aims to balance mining development with socio-environmental concerns." (Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, Washington D.C. n.d.).³³

At the time of writing, a small delegation which includes a Mangyan leader is touring Europe with the hope of gaining support for their opposition against Crew Minerals, a Canadian/ Norwegian/ British joint venture that plans to develop an open-cast nickel mine in the Municipality of Victoria, Oriental Mindoro. The project faces stiff opposition by the public as well as the provincial authorities who have passed a 25-year moratorium on mining in the province to prevent it from happening. The company, however, has the backing of the central government which restored its temporarily suspended license (PIPLinks 2006, Mines & Communities Website 2006).

Thus, we are witnessing the unfolding of yet another cycle in the frontier history of Mindoro. As briefly discussed at the beginning and demonstrated with the example of Mindoro throughout this article, the characteristics of frontiers have been found to change when other or new resources are discovered or become attractive to outsiders. With the (re-)discovered potentials of mining and the new priority it was given in the economic policy, the government was quick in simplifying and streamlining the process to obtain mining permits (ibid.). And, most significant, it opened mining up for foreign investment. "This is expected to open the doors to billions of dollars of foreign investment in the mining sector, which is estimated to be \$10 billion worth that could give hundreds of thousands needed employment especially in the countryside" (ibid.). With this, a new and, due to its monetary clout and backing by the central government, powerful frontier actor arrives on the scene: foreign companies. As the territories of the Mangyan of Mindoro are to be turned into a "frontier of extraction" once more by a new and more powerful set of frontier actors, they are also facing new, and as it stands unprecedented, challenges in retaining control over their land and resources. Indigenous communities throughout the country are faced with these challenges, but those, like the Buhid and the other Mangyan of Mindoro, who have always tried to avoid confrontation and never resorted to an active defense of their territories, these challenges will be even tougher. These challenges, however, are also met with new strategies as the interaction between highland communities and lowland settlers has intensified. On Mindoro, at least, where concerns over the environmental impact of mining in the uplands is growing among the lowland public, the common threat has brought about the formation of an alliance in which upland indigenous communities, lowland settlers and local governments are joining forces.

Notes

- 1 The formal founding in 1992 of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, a regional network of indigenous peoples' organizations, reflects the growing appeal of indigenism as a concept expressing common concerns and aspirations of a wide range of communities in Asia. Case studies presented at the AIPP founding congress are published in Nicholas and Singh 1996. The proceedings of a regional conference on indigenous peoples in 1995 have been published in Erni (ed.) 1996. An early academic treatment of the issue is found in Barnes et al. 1995. On the applicability of the concept of indigenous in Asia see Daes 1996, Bétéille 1998, Kingsbury 1998, with focus on Indonesia Li 2000, on India Xaxa 1999 and Karlsson 2003.
- 2 The strongest adversaries of the Spanish were the Tausug of Sulu. In the early 17th century, a large alliance composed of Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug and other Muslim groups was formed by Sultan Kudarat who led it into successful battles against several Spanish expeditions. The alliance, however, did not last long, and neither did the peace treaty concluded in 1638 between the Spanish and the Tausug (Zoilo Pascual 2003 at: <http://archives.free.net.ph/message/20030817.134052.ad9af8fc.html>).
- 3 Scott emphasizes that the hills "are meant both literally and metaphorically in this context. Literally, they were the destination for those fleeing valley polities; metaphorically 'the hills' represented any space effectively outside the ambit of valley kingdoms: 'the hills' in this last sense could be marshes, mangrove swamps (*sundarbans*), or the sea itself as in the case of the 'sea gypsies' or 'orang laut' of archipelagic Southeast Asia (2000:15)." Groups of so-called 'sea-gypsies' have in fact survived – though sometimes rather precariously – in the Sulu archipelago and adjacent areas in the Southern Philippines and Sabah.
- 4 Some sources mention more than six ethnic groups, e.g the web-site of the Mangyan Heritage Center (www.mangyan.org), which lists in addition to those mentioned here the Bangon, which is elsewhere used as another designation for the Taobuid (Barbian 1977) and the Ratagnon, which are elsewhere not considered a Mangyan group but have been identified as closely related to and being descendants of the Cuyonon in the neighboring Visayas island (Tweddell 1970:201, Barbian 1977:10).
- 5 The Buhid Ancestral Domain has been delineated for the application for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim; more on this further below.
- 6 This type appears in two important varieties: "primary settlement frontiers" comprise a region's best agricultural lands and attract outside settlement early on (usually – but not always – already in colonial times). This type of settlement frontier has today largely ceased to exist, as it has become incorporated into the agricultural and administrative core of the region (and countries) in question. Still to be found in many countries of the developing South, however, are "secondary settlement frontiers", which are both harder to penetrate and less desired by migrants because they are made up of agriculturally marginal land (Prescott 1987:36-43). I will take up Prescott's distinction in the concluding part.
- 7 If anything, the Mangyan were under the suzerainty of and paid tribute to the Sultan of Brunei, even several years after the Spanish conquered Manila and ended the rule of Raja Soliman.
- 8 Reports of the expedition of Spanish explorer and conquistador Juan de Salcedo to Mindoro in 1572 describe the presence of sophisticated forts with high walls, moats and light artillery (Lopez 1976:17f.).
- 9 From "Hukbong Magpapalaya ng Bayan" – People's Liberation Army.
- 10 The following paragraphs are based entirely on Volker Schult's chapter on the US colonial government's minority policy on Mindoro (1999:132-146).

- 11 The number of CADT's has increased to 42 and a total area of 851,849 ha by early 2006 (Padilla, this volume, p. 471 ff).
- 12 The successional pattern of an extensive form of land use like free-range grazing followed by settled agriculture has long been recognized as typical for many frontier regions. The steady replacement of grazing by other, more intensive forms of land use in frontier areas in the Philippines is reflected in national-level statistics for the past 30 years. Between 1971 and 2000, both the number of grazing lease holders and the area for grazing have been drastically reduced. The present numbers of leases and areas under the Forest Land Grazing Lease Agreements (FLGLA) have gone down to 8.9 and 9.3 percent, respectively. Most of these areas have been converted to farm land for food crop production (Moog and Marbella n.d.).
- 13 The official documents on which the following account is partly based and which are cited here were consulted during archival research at the former Bureau of Forest Development in San José, Occidental Mindoro.
- 14 Events very similar to those described in this example occurred on other cattle frontiers all over the Philippines (see e.g. Wenk 2007 and forthcoming on the Matigsalug Manobo of Bukidnon and Duhaylungsod and Hyndman 1993 on the T'boli of South Cotabato, both in Mindanao).
- 15 Especially notorious for Mindoro is the mutual antipathy between the major Catholic and Protestant churches, but also that between the numerous Protestant sects.
- 16 Cannibalism, for example, is a recurrent theme in legends and myths, and it is therefore difficult for the Buhid to accept the concepts underlying Christian symbolic practices that refer to "drinking the blood" or "consuming the body" of Jesus Christ.
- 17 Wax was needed for candles for worship in churches.
- 18 In the Philippines, the Spanish applied the term *indios*, used for the indigenous peoples in their Latin American colonies, to the Christianized population. Those who resisted or remained outside their control they called *infeles* ("non-believers", pagans).
- 19 Tagalog term for unhusked rice.
- 20 In her analysis of frontier processes on neighboring Palawan island, Lopez (1986:108) describes patterns of interaction similar to those in Mindoro. She details how settlers legitimate an ethnic identity that establishes their dominance vis-à-vis the indigenous Palaw'an, and their claims over land and other resources; in Palawan, slander that dehumanizes the indigenous 'Other' is a prominent feature of the presentation of the settler self.
- 21 The bombardment by the Philippine army of Buhid settlements on the headwaters of the Inundangan river in early 1988 however caused panic among the residents of the Fay valley. Some leaders realized that small, hidden settlements were easily confused by the untrained eye of the army with NPA camps, and tried to convince their communities to form one large, compact village that could easily be identified as such. Several families, however, preferred to adhere to the traditional, dispersed settlement pattern, and joined the others only reluctantly and temporarily. The village turned out to be a short-lived creation. Only months after the army operations were stopped, it was dissolved and people again dispersed.
- 22 For a comprehensive discussion of such "peaceable polities" see Dentan 1992; on the strategy of avoidance and flight among peasants in South and Southeast Asia see Adas 1981 and 1986.
- 23 See Gibson 1989 for a more in-depth discussion of non-aggressive behavior and the corresponding ethics among the Buhid.

- 24 See also Bartlett 1980a,b, Ortiz (ed.) 1983, Ellis 1988, Cashdan (ed.) 1990, Netting 1993, Henrich and McElreath 2002 on uncertainty in peasant farming and agricultural decision making in general.
- 25 See e.g. Pichón 1996 for a general model of peasant decision-making in frontier contexts, Margolis 1977 for two historical cases of cash-crops frontiers in the southern USA and Brazil, and Colombijn 1997 for a comparison of agricultural and non-agricultural resource use patterns in a frontier context in Sumatra.
- 26 This appears to confirm Margolis' thesis that subsistence farming does not produce the same opportunistic pattern, is more diverse and more conducive to the introduction of conservation measures than cash-crop farming (ibid.:45). Observations among mainly subsistence-oriented migrant settlers and some Buhid communities in the interior with a largely traditional subsistence economy, however, do not seem to support the proposition of the inherently sustainable nature of subsistence farming. Both groups practice similarly opportunistic and environmentally destructive forms of land use. The availability of land for expansion of extensive forms of land use, resulting in a relative increase of opportunity costs for more conservative forms of land use, is in my opinion a key factor, though not a full explanation of the phenomenon either. For a more detailed discussion of factors leading to opportunistic and environmentally harmful forms of shifting cultivation, as well as the subsequent changes and adoption of more conservative forms of land use, see Erni 1995, 2006.
- 27 The estimate was made based on forest cover maps of the 1980s.
- 28 Itinerant merchants
- 29 The management plan also regulates the use of grasslands (ban on fire), water bodies (prohibition to use poison), mineral resources and agricultural land.
- 30 In the Fay valley, the fine imposed on trespassers is a pig, half a sack of rice and 100 Pesos (today about 2 US\$), which is considerably below the fine imposed by the Ancestral Domain Management Plan (1000 Pesos, a pig worth 2000 Pesos and one sack of rice).
- 31 A vast body of literature related to the subject has been published over the past decades ranging from early case studies among peasants (like Netting 1976), locally and thematically focused documentations and analysis like on community forestry in India (Poffenberger et. al. 1996, Poffenberger and McGean 1996, Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development. 1993) or general theoretical discussions (McCay and Acheson, eds.? 1987, Ostrom 1987, Becker and Ostrom 1995, Dietz, Ostrom and Stern 2003).
- 32 "Eminent Domain" refers to the power of governments to take private property for public use without the owner's consent.
- 33 For that purpose, the President issued Executive Order No. 270 on 16 January 2004, "that provided for a set of principles that will govern the revitalization of the mining industry." (Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, Washington D.C. n.d.) The so-called Minerals Action Plan, approved by the President through Memorandum Circular No. 67 of 13 September 2004, intends to operationalize E.O. No. 270. (ibid.)

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5 THE ARTLESS
“ARTS OF RESISTANCE”:
State Terror and Indigenous Violence
at West Kalimantan’s Frontier

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photo: Philip Blenkinsop

5 | The Artless "Arts of Resistance": State Terror and Indigenous Violence at West Kalimantan's Frontier¹

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Introduction

In the wake of the overthrow of the Suharto regime two years before the close of the millenium, Indonesia witnessed a series of fratricidal communal conflicts that rocked the periphery of this fragile and overstretched empire. As the old autocratic order was swept away and a new one struggled to be born, violent attempts at settling old scores and reorganizing the distribution of power in the regions led to civil war in Ambon and the northern Moluccas (1998-2001, 2004), Central Sulawesi (1998-2003) and Central Kalimantan (2001), while state repression and secessionist sentiments in Aceh and West Papua reached new heights. Some of these wars (Moluccas, Central Sulawesi) involved religion as a central marker, while in others, the tensions were based first and foremost on an opposition between sons of the soil (*putera daerah, pribumi*) and migrants (*pendatang*) (Central Kalimantan). The present article examines a conflict that predated and, as some found in hindsight, also presaged the communal fury that ensued after Suharto's abdication. Between the end of December 1996 and end of February 1997, when nothing yet indicated any regime crisis, West Kalimantan gave the nation the first instance of sustained and bloody ethnic fighting in 31 years. To the tune of more than 500 confirmed fatalities and up to 20,000 people displaced, the violence pitted indigenous Dayak against Muslim migrants from Madura, a small island off northeastern Java with a long history of migration to the frontiers of Indonesia's Outer Islands. To the extent that it was aware of it, the world was baffled not only by the fact that Suharto's mighty armed forces could get no hand on the violence, but also that religion did play no obvious part in it. That latter observation was again borne out when the fighting resumed in February 1999: this time, the Madurese were up against the Malay, the hegemonic group locally, and fellow Muslims. In March, after one of their number had been killed, the Dayak joined the fighting at the side of the Malay. The violence lasted till May 1999, resulting in more than 260 fatalities and an estimated 30,000 refugees, housed in more or less permanent refugee camps

in the provincial capital and other larger towns (see e.g. Petebang and Sutrisno 2000). A third and so far last outburst, reduced in scope and intensity, occurred in October 2000 in Pontianak, involving once more Malay and Madurese (16 dead).

The terrible misfortune that befell the Madurese minority continued elsewhere in Borneo, however. In mid-February 2001, fighting broke out in the port town of Sampit in the neighbouring province of Central Kalimantan, and spread rapidly to the interior. Following Madurese provocations, Ngaju Dayak slaughtered an estimated 500 Madurese and expelled some 50'000 survivors from the district of Kotawaringin Timur. In many ways, the violent Dayak nationalists² of Central Kalimantan seem to have more or less consciously imitated their ethnic cousins in West Borneo – most notably in the strategic deployment of “wildness” (see e.g. ICG 2001, van Klinken 2000, 2002, Bouvier and Smith 2006).

The present article is exclusively concerned with the first riot episode between the closing days of the year of 1996 and end of February 1997 in West Kalimantan. After its original release in 1999, a series of valuable, in-depth analyses by anthropologists, historians and political scientists with partly considerable field experience in the conflict area have been published (Somers Heidhues 2001, Peluso and Harwell 2001, Davidson 2002, 2003; Davidson and Kammen 2003, Peluso 2003, 2006). The Dayak perspective has emerged more forcefully from a series of analytical contributions and compilations on Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak lore related to the violence (Petebang 1999, Bamba 2004), and a gripping, though slightly sensationalist journalistic account (Parry 1998, 2006) has contributed to the international visibility of the events. Most recently, finally, leading scholars on Madurese affairs have captured victims' voices on the slaughter in both affected Kalimantan provinces. Partly relying on data collected from survivors in Madura and Kalimantan, de Jonge and Nooteboom (2006) and Smith and Bouvier (2006) have filled in the gaps left by earlier analysts on the riots – myself included – who lacked access to the Madurese side. I have made selective use of some of these works for the present, enlarged version of the original article. For a good part complementing but in places also contradicting my own findings, these works are highly recommended for further reading.

Telling violence in West Kalimantan

To think and write about political violence is no easy endeavour. The more one immerses oneself in a conflict's tangled history, seeking to understand why it took the turn to violence – and in some cases, like the one discussed here, slaughter and mass killing –, the more the matter seems to slip from one's hand, resist simple conclusions and defy easy telling. “To describe the politics of violence”, as Anna Tsing (1996:185) knew, “is to dip into material that is frightening, confusing, and hotly contested”. It

involves daunting challenges of an ethical sort: How are we to portray violence without encouraging and rationalizing it? How can we be even-handed in our representation of violence, giving voice both to those who have suffered and those who perpetrated it (Nordstrom and Martin 1992:3)? How can we reconcile the need for polyphony and nuance with the brutal clarity of the outcomes of violent events – death, injuries, suffering – which seem to call loudly for brave judgements and determined moral positions? And how can we hope to explain violence without explaining it away?

Mass violence inevitably polarizes, it does not allow for dispassionate observation. Unless we witness it first-hand (which is exceedingly rare for the type of phenomena that I am to discuss here), we have to rely on sources that are wont to be partial and prejudiced. In situations of civil war, both parties make efforts at lobbying public opinion so as to influence the conflict's representation in the media. A serious methodological problem arises where media access and thus the leverage on the hearts and minds of national and international audiences is unevenly distributed between the conflict parties. The case with which I am concerned here exemplifies such a constellation, and the muteness of the disprivileged group – a small, ill-reputed minority with few friends domestically and abroad – has so far disabled any attempt at an even-handed academic analysis of the conflict (Schiller 2001:40; on the virulence of anti-Madurese stereotypes in Indonesia, see de Jonge 1995).

Mass violence, moreover, sometimes originates in unexpected quarters, implicating those who we would have suspected least. Thus, we are used to encounter some categories of human beings on the victim side of violent events rather than among the perpetrators, and may champion their rights for exactly that reason. Similarly, we stereotype others as notoriously inflicting rather than receiving blows, impersonating unsavoury historical forces which we hold responsible for the disenfranchisement of those groups that we have taken to our heart. Indigenous peoples and settlers embody such moral opposites; narratives of indigenous killers and slain settlers do not fit the familiar script, and are politically discomfiting. The events which I have to relate here involve largely one-sided violence³, inflicted by indigenous people on a settler group with the result (and possibly also the intention) of purging it from areas of shared residence. The victims – including defenceless women and children – of this act of ethnic cleansing fell prey to gruesome, terrorist techniques of killing and bodily mutilation, justified locally by reference to spirit possession.

In the face of such an unexpected role reversal, the monstrosity of the killings and indications of the resurgence of headhunting and ritual cannibalism among Dayak rioters, supporters of Dayak rights and their own people in indigenous non-governmental organisations found themselves in a quandary. Above all the latter, mostly graduates from Catholic high schools and seminars, were torn between feelings of shame for what they, too, considered acts of barbarism, and a barely-veiled pride

in their people's new-found self-confidence, the fact that it had finally aroused itself from its lethargy and given warning that it would not tolerate any further injustice. More than anything else, however, they were weighed down by the fear that what had happened would revive old stereotypes, still popular in Indonesian society, of the Dayak as the "Wild Man of Borneo", notorious for his headhunting habits and primitive ways (King 1993:11-16, Peluso 2003:211-219).

In the following, I propose to view the clashes of 1997 as an act of resistance in the context of the drama of frontier expansion. Its script features indigenous communities struggling to avoid being gobbled up, together with their land, by an expansive state and a part of the population of that state's ethnic core. In political, social and economical terms, the Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak who rose up in defence of their territories assume a subaltern position in the context of the frontier's ethnic hierarchy. The form, however, in which the powerless articulated their resistance, the weapons chosen by the weak in the case to be recounted here, have little in common with the cunning and often sophisticated critique of the societal order which the subaltern of all times and places have voiced behind the back of the powerful (Scott 1990), trying to "find the cracks and fissures in the terrible proliferation of power" (Dirks, Eley and Ortner 1994:19) because they cannot challenge the mighty in open battle. It has not been my privilege to account for an instance of those subtle "Brechtian" or "Schweikian" forms of class struggle – feigned submission, deception, slander, poaching and sabotage – to which, for want of better means, peasants have often resorted, and with which to connive a scholar can find so easy. Instead, I have it upon me to describe an agrarian revolt of brute force of which terror formed an integral part. For its understanding, one is tempted to turn to Gustave Le Bon's (2003 [1895]) grim "The Crowd" rather than to James Scott's enlightened "Moral Economy of the Peasant" (Scott 1976), a work which advocates not only solidarity with the oppressed, but also trust in the civility of their struggle for dignified lives.

My account begins with the description of the events that occurred between the end of December 1996 and late February 1997, followed by a brief ethnographic sketch of the Dayak groups of the conflict area on one hand, and the targets of their ire – the Madurese – on the other. I will continue with a summary rendition and critique of the most common explanations for the violence which have so far been offered by academics and the Indonesian press. The narrative then reaches back in time, bringing to memory a critical event in the province's recent history without which, I believe, it is difficult to understand why the conflict has manifested itself in such crude and seemingly atavistic form. In 1967, the Indonesian army made use of Dayak warriors to put an end to Chinese settlement in West Kalimantan's interior and flush out Chinese guerillas from the areas along the Sarawak border. Unwittingly, it thereby revitalized local war cults and headhunting practices. As a result, I will argue, the Dayak groups of the conflict area have managed to reproduce traditional

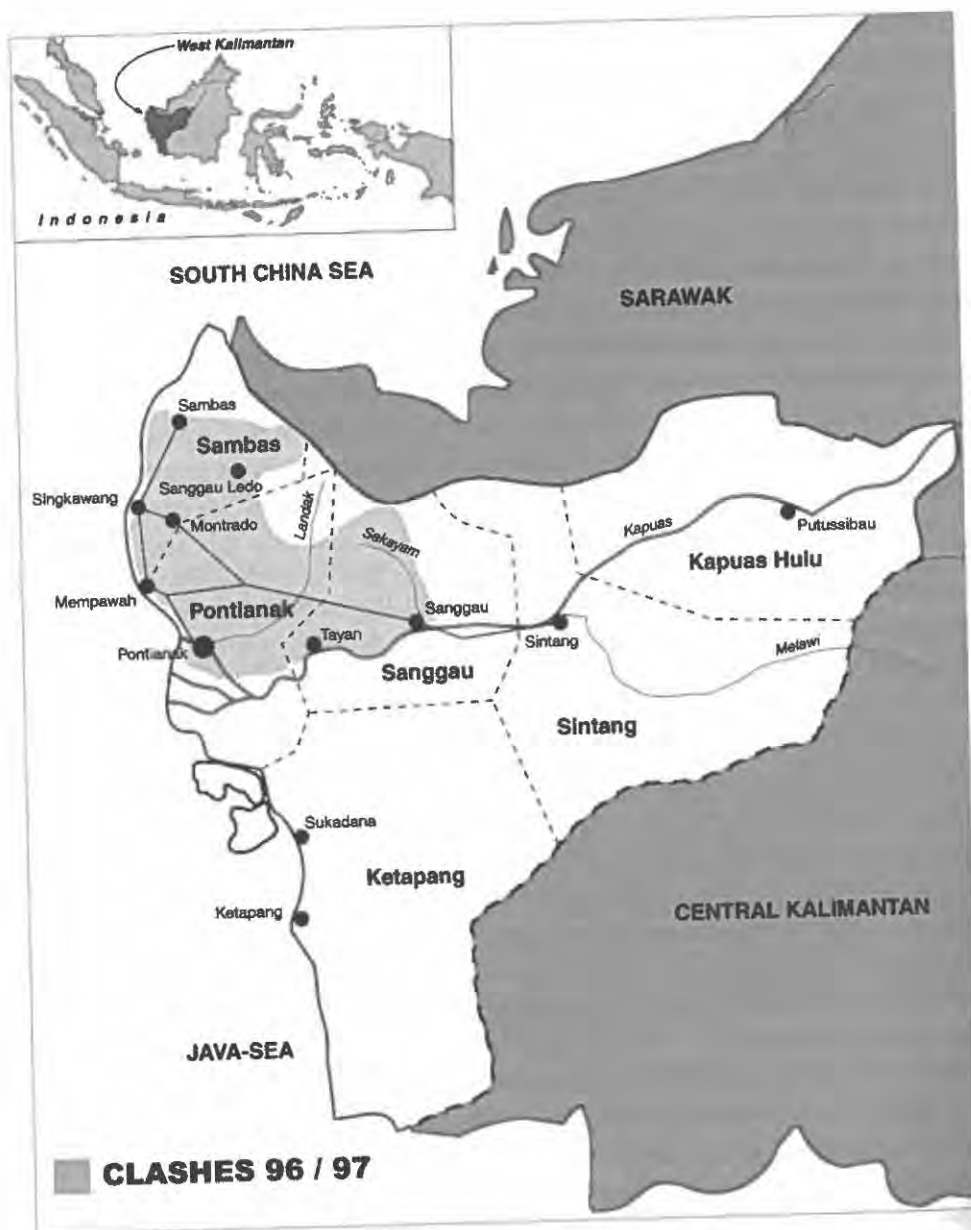
institutions of violence which have elsewhere fallen into disuse, and employed them for good measure when they were challenged by the Madurese in 1996/1997.

Such a perspective will allow us to situate the murderous nativist uprising of the Dayak in the broader context of regional and national "relations of terror", put into place and operated by a succession of state centers, yet on occasion involving Dayak as their instrument. The article's concluding part will make extensive use of the concepts of Michael Taussig (1984, 1987) and proposes to analyze the interaction of indigenous peoples, settlers and the state at Kalimantan's frontiers – as several contributors on the indigenous condition in New Order Indonesia (Tsing 1993, 1996; Fried 1995) have done before me – in the light of the violent strategies of the state.

A minuet for the sword and the sickle⁴

In the early hours of 30th December 1996, two Dayak youths were stabbed and wounded in the aftermath of a *dangdut*⁵ concert in Tanjut, in the subdistrict of Ledo, Sambas, about 150 km north of the provincial capital of Pontianak. The attackers belonged to the small migrant community from Madura, an island off the northeastern tip of Java. The background to the assault was a skirmish between the same cliques a good three weeks earlier in which the Madurese side had been mauled. Before long, there were rumours circulating that both Dayak youths had succumbed to their injuries, prompting a 5000 strong mob of Dayak armed with spears, machetes, *mandau* (war swords) and homemade guns to assault nearby Madurese villages, setting near to one hundred houses on fire and killing an unknown number of Madurese. In the course of four days of arson and killing, an estimated 7000 Madurese fled to the coastal town of Singkawang. Army troops and riot police from inside and outside the province were hurriedly flown to the area of the clashes in Sambas district, and a curfew was declared. On 8th February 1997, the army made community leaders from both camps renounce violence and sign a peace agreement. As the district of Sambas settled for an awkward calm, the military started to escort the refugees back to their homes. The suspense mounted as the end of the fasting month, *ramadan*, approached, and the likelihood of Madurese retaliation rose.

The attack that everyone had expected came in the morning hours of 29th January on the Madurese-dominated outskirts of the provincial capital. Shortly after the prayer calls for sahur, the early morning meal that marks the termination of the nightly fasting break, a large crowd of young Madurese from the neighbourhood of Siantan entered the precincts of a nearby catholic school, setting motor bikes and a lorry on fire and trying to incinerate a dormitory housing several dozens of Dayak students. When the building failed to catch fire and neighbours rallied to the defence of the Dayak in the school, the crowd withdrew, raiding instead the sleeping quarters



Map 5.1 : Area of conflict

of an adjacent supermarket, where they stabbed two female Dayak employees. The revenge campaign culminated in the erection of roadblocks in Peniraman, another Madurese stronghold, 32 km north of Pontianak on the coastal road. On 30th and 31st January, the mob pulled Dayak passengers from mini buses and private vehicles, beating them up or – in five cases – hacking them to death. Further up the coast, in Pinyuh, Dayak houses went up in flames.

Even though the worst had been averted – the death of close to 50 students in a blaze –, it was the attack on the school which most enraged the Dayak population, turning a geographically limited conflict into a wildfire that ravaged nearly the entire Madurese settlement area north of the Kapuas. The school was run by *Pancur Kasih* (“Fountain of Love”), a Dayak-led foundation linked to the Catholic Church which had helped hundreds of indigenous families out of poverty and dependence from moneylenders by offering them credit and other forms of support. In Dayak eyes, the Madurese had not only broken the peace⁶ when they attacked the school – they had also taken aim at a symbol of the cultural and economic resurgence of the Dayak people. Finally, the assault had also demonstrated the vulnerability of the small Dayak population in Pontianak; unless aided by their ethnic kin in the hinterland, they were in danger of being wiped out (Human Rights Watch 1998:21).

As the news of the school attack and the killings in Peniraman spread, thousands of Dayak prepared for war. Because two of the five victims at the roadblocks and both of the wounded salesgirls were from districts which had not been affected during the first round of violence⁷, the second wave of unrest ignited a much larger area⁸ and triggered a general rebellion with the aim of driving the Madurese population out of the province.

On 5th February, the army moved in large reinforcements, and Malaysia closed the border to Sarawak. According to military reports, the ranks of the Dayak mobs were swelled by tribesmen from Sarawak who supplied their ethnic brethren with weapons and war magic⁹. The army closed the road entrances into Pontianak and declared a night curfew for the city. The hospitals filled with the dead and the wounded, in their majority victims of Dayak attacks and, with the army now deployed, increasingly also Dayak rioters killed by the military¹⁰.

During the first week of February alone, close to 300 people in Salatiga, Mandor, Pahauman and Ngabang – all places along the main road from the coast to Sanggau – fell victim to Dayak attacks, while their houses went up in flames and, in a number of cases, their orchards and fields were destroyed. Balai Karangan, a market town close to the Sarawak border, also lost the larger part of its Madurese community under the *mandau*, spears, blowpipes and guns of Dayak raiders. While Madurese houses were razed to the ground and the owners, if captured, killed, the habitations of members of other ethnic groups were spared. In ethnically-mixed areas of Pontianak, Sambas and Sanggau, house owners had indicated their identity through graffiti painted on the fronts of the buildings or by other markers of ethnic affiliation. Spared, too, were mosques and *madrasah* (religious schools) as they were used by all groups professing the Islamic creed.

Warriors – many of them with red headbands and red ribbons tied to their weapons¹¹ – patrolled the roads, stopping vehicles and searching them for Madurese.



Photo 5.1 : Armed Dayak gathering for an attack (half an hour's drive from Singkawang), March 22, 1999 (photo: Philip Blenkinsop)

In Sambas and Sanggau, entire families were wiped out under tragic circumstances; having escaped to the safety of the coast during the first round of violence in January, they had trusted the security guarantees of the military and returned to their villages. Towards the end of February, finally, a Dayak attack on the provincial capital seemed imminent. Convoys of trucks full of warriors keen on getting their hands on the refugees and the urban Madurese community tried to negotiate free passage into the city, but were turned back at the military roadblocks.

Although no fewer than 3000 additional troops – among them elite battalions – were sent in in the course of the second wave of violence, the army could not tackle the full force of the Dayak uprising. For a fortnight in February, it lost complete control over the events in the interior. Outside of the main garrisons, the soldiers had to consider themselves fortunate if they were able to hold the Dayak crowds in check and did not have to deliver to them the Madurese refugees huddling on their compounds.

As most pogroms go, the broad mass of rioters wanted nothing less than the unconditional expulsion of all Madurese from West Kalimantan, giving little thought to the political and practical feasibility of such a demand. Almost all Dayak with whom I talked were convinced that peaceful co-existence between the locals and that particular group of migrants was impossible, citing a long history of Dayak blood spilled by Madurese¹² and the latter's alleged "chronical dishonesty" as a proof. Graffiti adorning the walls of wrecked Madurese houses advocated radical solutions for the problem¹³. Only a tiny minority among the Dayak was open for proposals to allow at least the resettlement of Madurese refugees in those areas in the province which were not settled by Dayak, underpinned by official guarantees obligating the authorities to compel the Madurese to respect local customs and traditions¹⁴ and to comply with the conditions of the truce mediated by the army.

It was rumoured that on the occasion of some of the peace ceremonies which the armed forces staged in different localities towards the end of the first and second phase of the unrest (see below), local leaders had proclaimed lists of Dayak demands, but it was not possible to ascertain their content as none of them was ever made public. Still, if the informations of an important Dayak non-governmental organisation in Pontianak are to be believed, a seven-point list submitted to the military in Senakin (Pontianak district) contained several demands which were not so much concerned with the Madurese enemy than with the sentiment – widespread among the Dayak communities in the conflict area – of being condemned to a life at the margins of Indonesian society, and of not having a say in the politics of the province (interview, Institut Dayakologi, March 1997). Riot participants and Dayak intellectuals alike urged that the pogroms should be viewed in equal measure as being directed against the overbearing Madurese and a negligent provincial and national government¹⁵.

The chronology of the violence ends on 28th February when in Subah, Sambas, the last known raid on a Madurese settlement took place. Besides concluding numerous local truces, the military staged three major public peace ceremonies in Sanggau Ledo (8th January) and Pontianak (18th February and 15th March). Under the solemn gaze of military and political leaders, hand-picked representatives of the hostile groups swore allegiance to the Indonesian constitution, vowed to refrain from carrying bladed weapons in the public (a clause that was addressed to the Madurese), and promised to seek non-violent solutions for future conflicts. In accordance with the Suharto-time doctrine for managing communal conflicts, the peace celebrations were not part of a strategy of reconciliation between the parties, but rituals of submission under the authority of the state, replete with the stiff ceremonialism that bureaucratic power surrounds itself with in Indonesia. For the average Dayak villager, the agreements that flowed from them were hardly binding, as the persons who represented the Dayak in these agreements lacked legitimacy¹⁶, and many doubted the will of the authorities to enforce the agreement's conditions on the Madurese. Dayak informants



Photo 5.2 : demolished Madurese house adorned with hate slogans (near Pahauman), March 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

predicted that it would only take a single stabbing incident by a Madurese to re-ignite the war (Human Rights Watch 1998:23), and the American human rights group that investigated the pogroms concluded a year after the killing had ended that tensions remained so high that another outbreak could be triggered at any time (ibid.:2).

Thus, if the violence finally subsided two months after it had started, this was owed less to clever conflict management on the part of the army and the civilian authorities than to the simple fact that the Dayak had run out of targets. As the smoke had cleared, there were no Madurese habitations left beyond 30 to 50 km outside of Singkawang and Pontianak and inland from the coastline between the two cities. The riots had completely redrawn the limits of the Madurese settlement areas which had formerly extended eastward as far as Sanggau and covered the entire northwestern corner of the province. The only serious and systematic casualty count available (Human Rights Watch 1998:15, 28f.) puts the number of dead at about 520, over 90% of which were Madurese. If realistic, the number of people confirmed killed in the riots would be five to six times lower than the first, dramatic estimates by Dayak organizations and the press indicated; however, a number of well-informed observers maintain that the Human Rights Watch figures are far too conservative¹⁷. More than 3000 houses, in their majority owned by Madurese, were destroyed, and between 15,000 and 20,000 people – again mostly Madurese – were rendered homeless (Akcaya 1997). A large part of them were housed in refugee camps in Singkawang and Pontianak, while a small fraction went to live with relatives in the province or returned to Madura. Plans to resettle the refugees in transmigration settlements outside of Borneo (Sydney Morning Herald 1997b, Human Rights Watch 1998:32) seem to have come to naught.

Borrowing from the past

The slaughter and violent dispersal of the Madurese settler community in the West Kalimantan hinterland shattered the image of the peaceful co-existence of ethnic and religious groups which the Suharto regime had cultivated so carefully and with great success for more than 30 years. Moreover, in hindsight, the fact that the military and police had not been able to stop and discipline the Dayak, dismantled the myth of the invincibility of the regime's security forces, and exposed a weakness in the foundations of the New Order which may have contributed to Suharto's downfall in 1998. Finally, and of immediate relevance to my concerns in this article, it did so in a much disconcerting manner: In the eyes of the world that watched, the idiom of violence in which the Dayak chose to express themselves reached back into their "primitive" past, contradicting the narrative of modernization and development which Suharto claimed to have imparted to the nation.

One of the most perplexing features of the slaughter were consistent reports – corroborated by my own and other anthropologists' interviews in the field – stating that the Dayak rioters had availed themselves of seemingly arcane means of inter-village mobilization, and revitalized a war cult which reconnected them with their pre-colonial warrior past. News of the fighting, along with the call to rally to the Dayak side, was spread by means of runners carrying a bowl – the so-called *mangkok merah*, or "red bowl" – filled with chicken and dog blood, feathers, illuminants and other ritual paraphernalia, from village to village. In the past, Dayak informants explained, the bowl had been used to alert the fighting forces of widely-scattered villages and mobilize them against approaching enemies and other common threats. Great stress was laid on the fact that for as long as the practice had existed, the *mangkok merah* was always used against non-Dayak; the list of enemies that were confronted with its help, or so these sources claim, includes the Majapahit empire in the 14th century, the Chinese of the conflict area in the year 1967, and a police chief four years later who had publicly beaten up Dayak village chiefs who had failed to cast their votes for the ruling Golkar party in that year's national elections (see e.g. Tiras 1997). The origins of the institution are hard to track, as – to my knowledge at least – the ethnographic literature is mute on the subject. Although the appearance of the *mangkok merah* in 1967 is confirmed (Roeder 1967, Feith 1968:134, Jenkins 1978a:26), the lack of older evidence could suggest a case of an "invented tradition"¹⁸.

In their majority, the Dayak crowds that descended on the Madurese in 1997 appear to have been composed of male villagers and townspeople of young or middle age; however, some press reports tell of boys no older than twelve, charged with the task of setting fire to Madurese houses (Sydney Morning Herald 1997a). At least during the first wave of violence in Sambas, the crowds followed the command of local war leaders (*panglima perang*), usually traditional elders in their 50s or 60s,



Photo 5.3: Borrowing from the past: *tempayan* (Chinese jar) marking the place where a large purificatory ritual (*tolak bala*) was held in the aftermath of the first round of violence in 1997 (marketplace, Ledo), September 2000 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

each of whom, as informants asserted, operated independently. There are indications that when the unrest spread after the Madurese counter-attacks in the end of January, the leadership passed from the *panglima perang* to younger men without traditional qualifications, said to be between 20 and 35 years of age¹⁹.

The reports from the war zone all converge on the fact that prior to the attacks, most villages had held rituals with the purpose of securing the support of the *kamang*, the spirits of deified ancestors revered for the war prowess and headhunting skills that they had shown during their lifetime. Contacted by ritual specialists (*panglima taryu*) in the secluded, secret places (*panyugu* or *padagi*) that host their shrines, the *kamang* instruct the priests how to conduct the planned raid or military campaign, whenceupon they are invited to take possession of them and the village's warriors. The performance of *mato*, as this contamination ritual is called, thus enables the *kamang* to obliterate the warriors' consciousness and, equipped with powerful war magic, march to war in their bodies. Until and unless the rituals are conducted which allow them to return to their abodes in the spirit world, the *kamang* demand human blood. It is, said my Dayak interlocutors, this circumstance which explains why many rioters were seen cutting open the arteries of their victims and drink their blood, while others were reported to have teared out and eaten the hearts and livers of their slain enemies. Again, there is evidence of a war cult connected with techniques of frenzy in the ethnographic record. Both 19th and 20th century ethnographic sources – the

British secretary of Sarawak's White Rajah, Hugh Low (Low 1848), the Belgian colonial officer in Dutch services, Marie Schadee, between 1896 and 1931 (see notably Schadee 1931), the Capucin missionary, Donatus Dunselman, in 1949 and 1950 (Dunselman 1949-1950a, b), the American anthropologist Raymond Kennedy a little later (Kennedy 1955:41f., 105f.), and German theologian, Hermann Vierling, in most recent times (Vierling 1990) – describe a cult complex that centers around mythical headhunter heroes who were venerated at special sacrificial places, where in times of peace, the communities invoked the powers of fertility associated with headhunting, and in times of war officiating priests would help the spirits re-embody themselves, lead the warriors into battle and confer the gifts of invulnerability and other war magic on them.

My Dayak interlocutors – among them one *panglima taryu* – were adamant that the uprising was entirely visceral and spontaneous, powered by a general weariness of Madurese “misdeeds”. It was stressed that every village acted on its own initiative when it called on the *kamang* and undertook the ritual preparations for war associated with the cult. However, the very fact that the *mangkok merah* was set into motion, influencing the individual villages' decisions to join the unrest and synchronizing their entry into war, casts into doubt the proposition of the unpremeditated nature of the violence. The question of just how much organizational substructure the unrest had, and how exactly anti-Madurese sentiments were coalesced into focused, deadly crowd action, still waits for clarification (Human Rights Watch 1998:30f.)²⁰.

Careful to reconfirm the entire range of the outside world's stereotype of the Dayak savage, the rioters also decapitated many of their victims. As is the case in most other parts of Borneo, the historical legacy of headhunting is well-documented for the Dayak of the conflict area in West Kalimantan (see e.g. Schadee 1931, Vroklage 1936:79). As elsewhere in Borneo, taking enemy heads was believed to enhance agricultural productivity, avert misfortune and suspend mourning for the recently deceased (Rousseau 1990:275ff.). Besides prestige, the taking of heads conferred extensive duties on the successful headhunters and their kin groups, as custom demanded from them the conduct – often for many years – of expensive rituals (called *notokng* among the Kanayatn/Kendayan, see Dunselman 1949-1950a:339f., Kennedy 1955:105 and Petebang 1999:20) that served the purpose of placating the slain enemy's spirit and maintaining the life-giving force of the skull. It is precisely this ritual care for the head trophy which distinguishes headhunting from other forms of collective violence whereby enemy heads are chopped off for mere sadistic motives or with the intention to defile the dead and spread terror among the living (Hoskins 1996:2).

One of the most intriguing details in connection with the pogroms of the first two months in 1997 are indications that the Dayak had freed themselves of the obligations



Photo 5.4 : Making mass conflict legible: *pasambahan* (small jar with offerings) in front of a Dayak house, indicating the ethnic identity of the house owners and their participation in the collective war effort (near Menjalin, Kab. Pontianak), March 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

incurred by taking Madurese heads through the earlier performance of rituals associated with hunting (*ngasu*) (SiaR 1997b). In this manner, the enemy was defined as non-human game the killing of which is not regulated by the moral rules that guide the conduct towards human beings. Unnoticed by the Madurese or any other party in the conflict, the Dayak thus manipulated the parameters of the traditional headhunting practice, a proposition supported by the observation that in many cases, heads which were cut were either left to rot in the forest or on plantations, or tossed into roadside gutters (Peluso and Harwell 2001:89, note 16). The available evidence points to the fact that the Dayak's resort to this seemingly archaic form of violence was motivated by the wish for a dramatic effect *upon others* rather than by any intrinsic metaphysical benefits of the practice for the community and their braves²¹. By merely *fiddling* with heads, they managed to reinscribe themselves into the mythological narrative of the headhunting Dayak, turning their victims' fear of dying into the horror of perishing in a demonic, savage spectacle.

No strangers to trouble: the Madurese

Madura, a small island off the northeastern tip of Java, is a barren, sun-parched strip of land with no industry worth the name. Its population depends in the main on farming, the raising of cattle, salt production (*salines*) and fishing for its livelihood; goat-breeding, fruit and tobacco cultivation and copra production are other important economic pursuits (Koentjaraningrat 1972:53). For centuries, those who could

not make a living at home emigrated to Java and, since the beginning of the 20th century, also to the Indonesian archipelago's thinly-populated Outer Islands. Current population counts thus show more Madurese living outside Madura than on the island itself (Husson 1995:16).

The Madurese migration to West Kalimantan started in a limited way in the early 20th century when the Dutch pushed the construction of roads to get easier access to the province's rich gold and diamond fields. It accelerated in the 1930s and 1940s when thousands of Madurese found employment in logging and later as daily wagers and contract workers in the development of plantations. Later, in the 1960s, when the Indonesian state connected the middle part of the Kapuas basin with the existing road network, it fell back once more on Madurese labour, and since then that settler community has expanded continuously – between 1981 and 1997 alone from 62,000 to the estimated 100,000 at the time of the outbreak of the riots. Making up a mere 2.67% of the province's total population, the Madurese are one of West Kalimantan's smallest immigrant communities, far less significant in terms of numbers than for instance, the Chinese²². Before the violence of 1997, the Madurese settlement areas were spread out widely across the province, reaching out well beyond the provincial capital and the coastal strip to the interior of the districts of Pontianak, Sambas, the western portion of Sanggau, and Ketapang²³.

Madurese migration to Borneo – known as the “Java of the north” (*Jaba dhaja*) in Madura's villages and towns (Husson 1995:249) – has not or only to an insignificant degree relied on official conduits. In spite of the dramatic demographic situation and the lack of economic prospects that the island offers to its inhabitants, Madurese have until today only made up a small fraction of the peasant beneficiaries of Indonesia's ambitious program of guided population transfer (*transmigrasi*)²⁴. In their overwhelming majority, West Kalimantan's Madurese settlers have come as spontaneous migrants rather than as government-sponsored transmigrants (van Hulst 1992:266, Human Rights Watch 1997:11, Peluso and Harwell 2001:90, note 20); the typical transmigrant to the province is Javanese or Balinese. In her authoritative study of Madurese migration, Laurence Husson (1995) proposes an interesting explanation for the fact that the Madurese are hardly represented in the *transmigrasi* program. For one, the publicly-professed aims of the program – providing better livelihoods for families through permanent resettlement at the rural periphery – are often not attractive for Madurese. Typically, Madurese migrants set out alone or in pairs of young, unmarried men, and will found or bring their families only when they have secured a foothold in their migration destinations. Furthermore, they prefer to keep open the option of returning in case of hardship or failure, and rate a life in towns or cities higher than one in a rural frontier backwater (ibid.:247f., 253). Most Madurese cherish their independence and are loathe to incur any kind of debt with government bureaucrats, as the following testimony of one of Husson's informants demonstrates:

"We do not want to be indebted to the authorities because we have accepted their money. We do not want to become dependent on civil servants. We migrate the way we like, to places of our own choice, and without external help" (ibid.:249).

Thus, the Madurese exemplify almost prototypically the qualities associated with pioneer settlers at the frontier – extreme individualism and hostility to outside control (Baker 2000:173). Intimately related to this, Husson surmises, is a second aspect of the Madurese failure to participate in state-sponsored migration. Not only do they shun government bureaucrats, they are also, it appears, shunned by them in turn. Popular stereotypes of the Madurese have percolated to the political elite and the state bureaucracy, who tend to view them as troublesome, unpredictable and – often – religious fanatics (ibid.:253). This brings them into contradiction with the true, yet hidden objectives of the transmigration program – the social stabilization of the Outer Islands by the mass injection of pliant and loyal settlers from the Indonesian heartland –, and may have made the transmigration authorities lukewarm or openly hostile towards the Madurese. Husson concludes that it is at least debatable if Madurese are indeed welcome in the transmigration programmes, and wonders if there are not maybe instructions to discourage Madurese participation in them (ibid.).

Wherever they settle, the Madurese are known as an energetic, hard-working breed of people who do not shirk heavy labour. In the rural areas of West Kalimantan, those of them who own land are smallholder paddy cultivators, whereas new arrivals seek work in quarries, as rubber tappers or plantation labourers. In the city and the larger towns, they eke out their livelihood as daily workers on construction sites, as rickshaw drivers, ferrymen or street vendors, while women sell fruits and vegetables.

In West Borneo as elsewhere, the Madurese migrant community offsets its weak economic position by a pronounced sense of community. Networks of solidarity and finance connect fresh migrants with ethnic compatriots elsewhere and in their native place; people cluster together and there is a tendency towards ethnic segregation (in the city of Pontianak, for instance, some residential areas are almost exclusively inhabited by Madurese). Family and relatives often follow the successful pioneer settler (chain migration), and to an extent far greater than other groups, urban-based Madurese have organised themselves into closed professional guilds (e.g. Madurese *becak* [rickshaw] drivers, shopkeepers etc. associations, see Avé and King 1986:97).

The Madurese have the reputation of being ardent Muslims and despite (or precisely because) their being scattered over the entire archipelago, they are maintaining a very strong attachment to the traditional local culture of their places of origin. This parochialism together with their penchant – unusual for Indonesia, at least if seen through a Javanese lense – to vent emotions in an unveiled, direct manner, and



Photo 5.5: Military convoy taking Madurese survivors to safety (near Singkawang), March 22, 1999 (photo: Philip Blenkinsop)

the tendency to live apart from other ethnic groups may explain why the Madurese are always scoring high in opinion polls on the nation's most unpopular ethnic groups (see e.g. Human Rights Watch 1998:6). Popular stereotypes describe them as boorish and uncouth (*kasar*), hotheaded and quarrelsome, as notorious troublemakers and backstabbing knifers. An often-heard complaint from both Dayak and non-Dayak in West Kalimantan is that the Madurese have no respect for the property of others, nor do they comply with local rules and customs.

Asked why they never brought themselves to liking the Madurese, Dayak informants usually point out that a Madurese will never part with his *celurit* (sickle), with the result that even petty quarrels easily lead to bloodshed. Indeed, a look at the numerous incidents in the recent past when the Madurese and local Dayak clashed with fatal results reveals that, as a rule, violent confrontations were sparked off by Dayak actions which the Madurese perceived as being insulting, discriminating or injuring their honor, and to which they consequently responded by means of *celurit* attacks. In Madura, acts of self-help in which a man uses his *celurit* to protect his dignity or restore his honour, are known as *carok* (Smith 1998, Wiyata 2002). According to ethnographer Glenn Smith who has studied the practice in its psychological, social and

political contexts, disputes over women are the most common cause for *carok* attacks; arguments about money, irrigation water and land are the next most frequent triggers of *carok* violence. As Smith has shown, *celurit* users have little regard for Occidental notions and, for that matter, Dayak ideas of what constitutes an "honourable fight": Many attacks are made from behind and against unarmed men (Smith 1998:64-67; 69f.). Since the Dayak – as they themselves put it – prefer an open fight over a hidden attack (Adelaar 2005:110-113), these diametrically-opposed interpretations of the correct way of killing constitute a rich source of cultural irritation between the two ethnic groups.

The hatred of the Dayak for the Madurese is shared by many other ethnic groups in West Kalimantan, and the disturbances gave the impression that the Dayak had the – at least tacit – support of other ethnic segments of the settler community. There are reports that amid the general confusion, non-Dayak, too, participated in the rioting and plundering (Human Rights Watch 1998:13).

However, street-level references to an ethnic antagonist's irreverent ways are so ubiquitous in accounts on ethnic riots to make one wonder if they are not maybe post-factum rationalizations of one's own group's previous outrages against the supposed misfits rather than reliable descriptions of the latter's behavior. And indeed, turning to the works of authors with a less biased view of the Madurese, we soon discern factors other than the clash of two incompatible cultural worlds behind the violence in West Kalimantan. Thus, Avé and King (1986:97f.) for instance give credit to the Madurese as being highly adaptable and successful migrants. In the rural areas of Kalimantan, these undemanding farmers have fared much better than other migrants in adjusting their cultivation methods to the nutrient-poor soils; within a short time, many of them adopted shifting cultivation, the single most robust and sustainable form of agricultural production in rainforest ecosystems. The capability to adapt to frugal environments benefited the Madurese with cattle-raising, too, which they had also brought along to their new home at the edge of the jungle. Other than for instance Javanese transmigrants who often capitulate in the face of the problems confronting them in their migration destinations, the Madurese are typically migrants who remain to stay, holding their own even in the remote, Dayak-dominated interior of Kalimantan (ibid.).

What we get, therefore, is a politico-economic corrective to the argument that cites irreconcilable cultural antagonisms. In important respects, the story of the conflict between the Dayak and the Madurese seems to be one of economic conflict between two direct competitors for land. Thus, certain peculiar land acquisition practices of the Madurese²⁵, rather than being a sign of a depraved cultural style, reveal themselves as part of a collective survival strategy in the struggle for scarce agricultural resources. The Madurese's proverbial violent penchant can then be read as a corollary to the



Photo 5.6 : Calculating frenzy: spared mosque surrounded by debris of burnt houses (near Pahauman), March 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

group's expansive settlement strategy: Only by means of terror can the indigenous be brought to accept the proliferation of unwanted migrants which, in Madurese eyes, is the only way to prevail at the predatory periphery.

Terra incognita: The Dayak of the conflict area

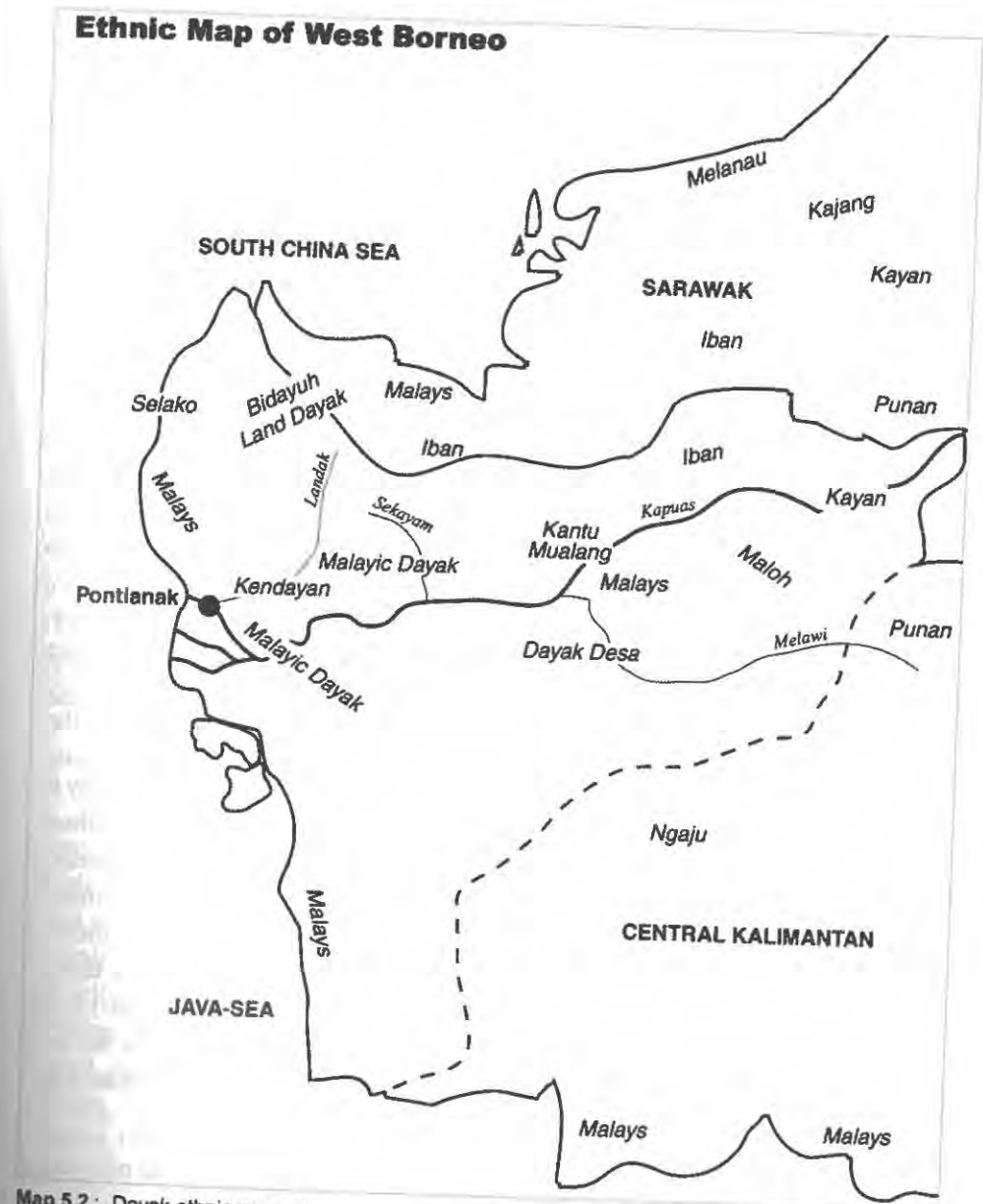
As a result of the long and intrusive presence of pre-colonial Malay states on one hand and incessant raiding – since the 18th century – by sea and land-borne Iban forces on the other hand, the ethnic map of West Borneo (the headwaters of the Kapuas river exempted) is today dominated by small and scattered Dayak polities with blurred boundaries and confused and fragmented historical traditions (Avé 1972:186). Many of them speak languages which are closely related to Malay. Because their atomisation and linguistic and cultural proximity to Malay society was believed to be the result of a pervasive acculturation and because most of them had been subdued militarily at an early stage, the groups of what is today Sambas district and the middle and lower Kapuas basin were spurned by ethnographers who found it more rewarding to study the rebellious Iban both sides of the Sarawak border and purportedly isolated groups in the far interior, like the Kayan and Ot Danum (Kennedy 1955:63, Avé, King and De Wit 1983:22f., Roekaerts 1986:20). Since the first half of the 1960s, when access for researchers to this sensitive border province was restricted, only very few anthropologists have conducted in-depth fieldwork in West Kalimantan (King 1985:1), and the few doctoral dissertations and monographs that were accomplished focused in the main on groups in the region of the Kapuas Lakes in the upper reaches of the

Kapuas basin (Dove 1981, King 1985, Wadley 1997) and the district of Ketapang in the far south of the province (Helliwell 1990). Far more and more illustrious studies have been devoted to the Sarawak-based branches of border-straddling ethnic groups that inhabit the conflict area (see e.g. Geddes' [1954, 1961] famous works on the Land Dayak of the Upper Sadong in Sarawak's First Division).

Recent ethnographic work on the groups of the lower Kapuas basin and the northwestern seaboard – the area with which we are concerned here – is confined to the Selako and Kanayatn (Kendayan), and covers – with one exception²⁶ – rather narrow themes. Thus, Nancy Peluso and Christine Padoch (Peluso 1993, Peluso and Padoch 1996) have focused on environmental adaptation and changing modes of agricultural production in a Selako village between Singkawang and Bengkayang (Sambas), and among a Kanayatn (Kendayan) group near Tayan (Sanggau), respectively. A third piece of work that deserves mention is by Hermann Vierling (1990), a theologian, on Kanayatn (Kendayan) religion. These exceptions notwithstanding, the primary ethnographic reference works on the groups in the conflict area are putting on dust, dating, as they are, from the mid-nineteenth century (Veth 1854-1856), late nineteenth century (Schadee 1896), and the early (Enthoven 1903, Schadee 1903-1908, 1910, 1912) and mid-twentieth century (Dunselman 1949-1950a, 1949-1950b).

The scene of the bloodshed of 1997 – the plains and occasional stretches of undulating hills that characterize the area between the lower reaches of the Kapuas and the Sarawak border – is inhabited by tribal groups which the literature commonly classifies as belonging to either of two vague ethnolinguistic clusters: the Land Dayak and the so-called “Malayic Dayak”²⁷ (Hudson 1970, LeBar, ed., 1975:186f., Avé and King 1986:12, King 1993:49-53). Both categories are makeshift, leaky constructs created to dispose of all those groups that could not be allocated to existing, better-defined ethnic and linguistic clusters. Several authors have expressed their unhappiness with the two labels, but only most recently have there been efforts to systematically re-evaluate and re-classify the languages and ethnic units of West Borneo²⁸. Unfortunately, this fresh material came to my attention only lately and thus has not yet been used for this article.

The dry and meagre entries in the standard ethnographic and ethnolinguistic overviews on Kalimantan Dayak indicate the lamentable state of research on the groups so typified. Thus, we learn about the Land Dayak as an ethnic and ethnolinguistic category that this “vague term” refers to “a number of insufficiently-known Dayak groups”, who distinguish themselves from other Dayak peoples on linguistic grounds and through the fact that in past times, their villages featured a “headhouse” (variously called *baruk*, *ponggo* or *pantja* in the conflict area) with an octagonal ground plan, serving as the bachelors' quarters and the storage place for the skulls of slain enemies (Hudson 1970:301f., Avé, King and De Wit 1983:x).



Map 5.2 : Dayak ethnic groups

Land Dayak groups in the province, estimated to number around 100,000 souls (King 1993:52), can be found in Sambas on and around the Bajang mountains and the hills in proximity of the Sarawak border, where they shade into the Bidayuh, as Sarawak's approximately 135,000 Land Dayak are called. Furthermore, scattered pockets of Land Dayak line certain Kapuas tributaries such as the Tayan, Landak, Sekadau and Sekayam; it is around that latter river where they are especially numerous

(Avé, King and De Wit 1983:28). Among the better-known sub-groups in the conflict area are the Benyadu', Jongkang, Landak, Pandu, Ribun, Darit, Simpatung, Semandang and Sanggau (see Kennedy 1955, Hudson 1970, Andasputra and Julipin 1997).

The settlement areas of the Malayic Dayak comprise the lower reaches of the Kapuas, with the largest concentrations being in the districts of Pontianak and Sambas. They live along the coast northwards from Pontianak, and inhabit the marshes and swamps to the west and north of Sambas town. In the hinterland of the towns of Sambas and Mempawah, and in Landak and Tayan, they reside side by side with Land Dayak communities. Malayic Dayak are also found in the southern district of Ketapang and the middle reaches of the Kapuas basin, where they cluster around Sintang and in the Melawi area (Avé, King and De Wit 1983:22). By far the most populous and geographically extensive subgroup are the Kanayatn (or Kendayan, as the older literature calls them), who were prominently involved in the riots as their core settlement areas are the hinterland of Pontianak and the areas along the main road connection eastward from the coast towards Sanggau. Numbering roughly 300,000 people (Vierling 1990:18), the Kanayatn (Kendayan) divide into a broad number of named sub-groups such as the Bakati', Banyuke, Jering and Lara (see Schadee 1931, Vierling 1990, Djuweng 1997). Besides the Kanayatn (Kendayan), other Malayic Dayak groups include the Selako, Bukit and Kumba (see Schadee 1931, Hudson 1970, Andrasputra and Julipin 1997, Djuweng 1997, Peta Dayak 2000).

The majority of the Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak which were affected by the disturbances practice shifting cultivation and tend paddy fields for their livelihood; this is often supplemented with rubber tapping. Particularly in the plantation areas of Sanggau and the interior of Pontianak district, cash crops also occasionally include palm oil, produced on small plots which the plantation companies offer on a usufruct basis in exchange for land (Dove 1997:13). A majority of Dayak subsistence farmers have long since turned to paddy cultivation (on irrigated or rainfed fields) at the cost of shifting cultivation. In the interior of West Borneo, rubber is by far the most important cash crop, whereas in the coastal areas it was (at least till the 1960s) copra (Seavoy 1980, Peluso and Padoch 1996:125).

Agricultural intensification in the conflict area has responded to the continuous rise in population densities in the course of the second half of last century. With 22 persons per km², West Kalimantan has a low average population density (Biro Pusat Statistik 1993:4). However, conditions along the littoral and the lower reaches of the Kapuas river on one hand and the districts in the interior of Sintang, Kapuas Hulu and Ketapang on the other vary enormously: Population densities in Sambas and Pontianak districts, where the conflict between the Madurese and the Dayak raged most wildly, are at present five to ten times higher than in the three abovementioned districts (Biro Pusat Statistik 1993:4)²⁹.

The Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak have more egalitarian sociopolitical systems than other Dayak communities in Borneo (King 1993:49-53). While lacking inherited ranks or class structures, societies of this type may nevertheless know intense rivalry over status and prestige, as the well-known example of the Iban bears out. In pre-colonial times at least, their repertory of politically-relevant offices and specialisations included shamans and – particularly relevant for the Malayic Dayak who were involved in the pogroms – “war leaders, heroes and very successful headhunters” (Guerreiro 1994:6). There can be little doubt that among the Kanayatn (Kendayan) prior to the *Pax Neerlandica*, prowess in warfare and headhunting formed the basis of male social hierarchy. In traditional society, important criteria for membership in the political elite were martial skills and the control of magical resources; in addition, kin groups that boasted famous headhunters among their ancestors had a high social standing, claiming, as they did, direct descent from the *kamang*, the deified ancestors who had blessed the community with a rich harvest of head trophies (Vierling 1990:153, 362). There are indications that the local war leaders (*panglima perang*) who called the *kamang* at their shrines after the red bowl's arrival in the villages, and who were the first to be possessed by these bloodthirsty spirits, belonged to such headhunting dynasties (interviews, Pontianak, March 1997, Aur Sampuh, September 2000). By taking the lead in the campaign against the Madurese, the *panglima perang* reaffirmed their families' claim to power within the context of traditional, valor-based social and political hierarchies.

Military specialists, a value system which rewards the violent, ancestors with a craving for blood and villagers who on the eve of the third millennium take other people's heads, apparently in accordance with ancient customs: As was to be expected, given the belligerent reputation of most indigenous polities in Borneo, we appear to be dealing with societies who have “made violence an important part of their culture and self-concept” (Hoskins 1996:5). Strangely enough, however, the ethnographic literature is not in agreement with this proposition, or does at least paint an ambivalent picture. According to their main ethnographer, the Land Dayak of Sarawak, for instance, “are certainly not a warrior race, and they have no illusion that they are” (Geddes 1954:21). They are a “timid, retiring, shy and introverted people” (Minos 1993:241), shaped by a bitter and traumatic history which put them at the mercy of Iban marauders and the region's predatory native states (among whom Brunei was the most expansive one). “Far from fitting the picture of big, bad headhunters”, Geddes quips, “the Land Dayaks' only true concern about heads is for the safety of their own” (Geddes 1954:48), and the skull trophies in their headhouses “date from a time which Dayak tradition records as one of defeat and not of victory” (ibid.). Wars were usually fought in self-defence and with no other aim than to secure survival in a world dominated by others (Geddes 1961:52). The mental and cultural dispositions of a large part of Sarawak's Land Dayak were formed in antagonistic dialogue with

the Iban – aggressive tribal migrants from Sumatra who are assumed to have used the Kapuas basin as their gate to Borneo. From the 17th century onwards, they slowly made their way across the mountainous border region into what would later be called Sarawak's Lundu District and, from there, into the First and Second Divisions further east, decimating and displacing the local autochthonous populations in the process (Morgan 1968:141, King 1976:321, Uchibori 1984:216).

Suffering from these ravages were also large swathes of the territories of the Land Dayak's ethnic cousins across the border. During the reign of the first "White Rajah", James Brooke, "Sarawak Dyaks" (who were certainly Iban) undertook recurrent raids against Dayak groups in Sambas in the Dutch *Westerafdeeling* (Irwin 1967:157). Even before the Iban became the scourge of Borneo's less martial indigenous populations, early Bornean states such as Brunei had ventured violently into what is today West Kalimantan, implanting the seeds of terror deep in the collective subconscious of the Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak³⁰. The history of many Kanayatn (Kendayan) groups in the conflict area is one of repeated exposure to the violence and imperial ambitions of others. Throughout the centuries, they were forced to submit to or seek accommodation with different regional and local hegemonies, ranging from the ancient Srivijaya and Majapahit empires to local Muslim Malay principalities and the Dutch; as Vierling (1990:23) explains, this left a deep imprint in the collective psyche of the Kanayatn (Kendayan):

"The Kendayan were forced to submit themselves to everyone (...). Therefore, they had no opportunity to build up a self-conscious and assertive identity, and became used to dealing with their problems in a rather passive manner. Given this situation, it is not surprising that it is often said in West Kalimantan that the Kendayan are particularly weak of will. As a matter of fact, in many areas they are given to alcoholism, and a foreigner³¹ has even diagnosed a 'slave mentality' among them"³².

Their martial lore and the prominence of the *kamang* cult in their traditional religious beliefs notwithstanding, the Kendayan are, says Vierling (ibid.), peace-loving, and even headhunting was "less well-developed among them than among other Dayak tribes". Contemporary Selako and Tara'n, a group on the lower Tayan river, as well, refuse any comparison of their forefathers with expansive and aggressive headhunters of the sort of the Iban or some Kayan groups (Peluso and Padoch 1996:122). Paradoxically, thus, the literature seems to suggest that the Dayak societies of the conflict area and their ethnic cousins across the Sarawak border are "communities of the fearful" (Tsing 1993) rather than the proud heirs of a warrior culture. In the same vein, people's pacifist views of themselves and their traditions are in strange dissonance with the events of 1997 which showed their communities in command of vibrant institutions of violence. How are we to resolve this contradiction?



Photo 5.7 : Grounds of contention: fertile valley floor with wet-rice fields, (near Anjungan, Kab. Pontianak), September 2000 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

Again, the scarcity of reliable ethnographic data allows for little more than informed speculation. It is my guess that the different Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak groups assumed rather different positions in the regional military hierarchies, but that the lightweights who received rather than dealt the blows were allowed to determine the popular and official stereotypes that developed. Thus, the role of the Sarawak Land Dayak as the victims of Iban and Malay aggression had a basis in fact, but it grew over time and was generalized as a part of the "charter myth" of the colonial Brooke regime (Winzeler 1993:231, 1997:227)³³. In reality, certain Land Dayak groups such as the Bisenggi (or Singgi, Singé) in today's Bau district enjoyed a reputation as fierce warriors and avid headhunters and were among the first local polities that openly challenged James Brooke's rule (ibid., Wagner 1972:19). In West Kalimantan, the rich alluvial gold fields of southern and central Sambas and Mandor (today Pontianak district) were the site of relentless armed conflict between the Chinese mining *kongsis* (self-reliant cooperatives that organized production, food supply, trade and defence) and the Malay principalities of Sambas and Mempawah, and between the *kongsis* themselves. In the contest for supremacy in the mining districts, all parties relied on Dayak auxiliaries. Throughout the second half of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century when the struggle for control of the fields raged most intensely, the Selako and Kanayatn (Kendayan) groups domiciled in and around the mining districts underwent an intense militarization during which "traditional" institutions of violence were keenly used and probably further elaborated (Somers Heidhues 1996:103, 2001:139f., Bingling 2000:66-72, 13ff., 102, 265, Petebang und Sutrisno 2000:199). In the accounts of Dayak ethnic soldiering in the gold fields,

repeated mention (see e.g. Petebang und Sutrisno 2000:199) is made of the Songkong, a Land Dayak subgroup residing on the slopes of the Bajang mountains in the tri-border area of Sambas, Sarawak and Landak (Pontianak). Their impenetrable habitat kept them out of reach of the troops and tribute collectors of both the sultan of Sambas and the Dutch, and were an excellent operation base for headhunting forays to the surrounding lowlands (Schadee 1931:10, Helbig 1982:79). Zealous raiders of Dayak and Malay settlements near and far, they were the object of several Dutch punitive expeditions, one of which even occasioned a rare instance of joint military operations with the Brooke regime across the border (ibid.:94). In the 1930s and 1940s, many lowland Dayak still lived in fear of the Songkong, knowing that they continued to ritually treat heads and practice the *kamang* cult (ibid.:94, Kennedy 1955:41). The communities of Banyuke and Darit in the northwestern part of Pontianak district enjoy a similar reputation; there are strong indications that warriors from these places were involved in some of the most gruelling atrocities of the anti-Madurese pogroms of 1997, and accounted for the rare instances of ritually-imbedded headhunting that occurred during the riots (interviews, Pahauman, March 1997; Peluso and Harwell 2001:89, note 16).

To sum up, then, I believe that we are justified in assuming that while some Dayak groups in the conflict area have been the target of terror by states and tribal Others for generations, others indeed have meted out such terror in fair measure, and were able to lead their ethnic cousins in the area-wide rediscovery of violent traditions that so baffled Indonesia in 1997.

Blood, soil, conspirators: Three arguments

Most academic researchers, Dayak intellectuals and many voices in the Indonesian press trace the violence either to the fateful cultural incompatibility of the antagonists, the economic and political marginalization of the Dayak or the manipulation of both sides by a third party. For reasons of space, it is not possible to examine these propositions and the facts presented in their support in detail; a brief recapitulation of my reading of the evidence will have to suffice here.

Blood: the argument of conflictive cultural legacies

The majority of the journalistic and scientific accounts of the pogroms argue that certain characteristics inherent in the cultures of both groups have all but made the tragedy inevitable. In particular, the quarrelsome nature of the Madurese and their penchant for shedding blood, so the argument, collided with the Dayak institution of blood revenge (see e.g. *Sydney Morning Herald* 1997a, Human Rights Watch



Photo 5.8 : Calculating frenzy: spared house of Bugis owners (near Pahauman), March 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

1998:6, Bamba 2004:137), exacerbated by the religious hiatus between the staunchly Islamic Madurese and the Christianized Dayak (Alqadrie 1997:20). Opposing views on the honourable way to kill (see above) further aggravated the already difficult relationship between the two groups.

The proponents of the thesis of the cultural incompatibility of the two groups usually point to the long chain of violent incidents that have pitted Madurese against Dayak. The chronology of slaying incidents, murders and the unrest that sometimes followed is vividly remembered by the Dayak population in the conflict area. My own investigations and other sources (*SiaR* 1997d, *Jantra* 1997:2f., Human Rights Watch 1998:7) indicate a total of nine³⁵ cases of armed violence over a period of 28 years, with the first one dating back to 1968 – a time when the pace of Madurese immigration visibly accelerated (Ave and King 1986:97) and, in certain parts of Sambas and Pontianak, the two groups came to live in ever closer proximity to each other (see below; Somers Heidhues 2001:141). A narrow majority of the incidents ushered in rioting in one form or the other, the most devastating of which took place in 1979 and demanded an official toll of 15 Madurese and 5 Dayak lives.

It is important to point out that all available information on the background of previous clashes – my own included – are mainly based on Dayak sources, and are therefore liable to bias. Nevertheless, the storyline that these accounts suggest is similar for all incidents. All of them were initiated by verbal challenges of some sort on the part of a Dayak actor, which the Madurese side, feeling slighted, answered with a *carok* attack. The general pattern of past violence between the two camps indeed suggests that the Madurese are a “chip-on-the-shoulder society”, a social community

whose moral code obliges its male members to see a severe personal insult in the slightest provocation (Sterling 1960). Nevertheless, a close examination of the *issues* that precipitated bloodshed between the Madurese and the Dayak reveals that these were only superficially trivial “matters of honour”. In five of the nine cases, the disputes revolved either around land ownership and disputed use rights to land or had a contest over other agricultural resources at their base (e.g. the stealing of grazing fodder or harvestable rice). Moreover, the fact that all instances of violence took place in the two most densely-settled districts of the province³⁶ indicates a correlation between scarcity and violence, and should prompt us to turn our attention away from the cultural to the material and economic parameters of the conflict. If studied carefully, therefore, the chronology of the clashes between hot-blooded migrants and atavistic avengers testifies to the reality of a bitter agrarian contest over increasingly scarce land (or its products), set in the most densely-populated area of West Borneo, and – nearly – of Kalimantan as a whole.

Soil: the marginalization argument

Together with the argument of the conflictive cultural legacies, politico-economic explanations enjoyed the widest popularity among those who reported on and tried to make sense of the clashes (see e.g. *Jakarta Post* 1997b, Dove 1997, Somers Heidhues 2001). According to the reasoning of the proponents of the marginalization argument, the gradual displacement of the Dayak from their land, the attendant pauperisation and the fact that they were largely excluded from political power in the province caused massive disaffection among the Dayak, a pent-up frustration which *one day* would have to be given vent violently against *some* part of the newcomers. While “blood” was the keyword in culturalist explanations of the riots, “soil” captures the essence of the marginalization argument.

Indeed, West Kalimantan’s recent agrarian history and the fact that the government’s development policy in the province has so far largely benefited external actors make it difficult to ignore the question of the distribution of land and patronage. First, Sambas and Pontianak districts where the conflict raged fiercest have always had the highest population densities of West Borneo, which are at present five to ten times higher than those of the three non-affected districts³⁷. The coastal areas of Sambas are more densely settled than any other part of Indonesian Borneo except Hulu Sungai in South Kalimantan³⁸. In large parts of Sambas, Pontianak and Sanggau, the soils are exhausted and the yields from shifting cultivation critically reduced (Padoch, Harwell and Susanto 1998:3f., 10), prompting many to adopt fixed-field wet rice cultivation. As a result of the combined impact of population growth, maladaptive swidden practices (Jenkins 1978a:25f.) and the forced cession of land to outsiders, local carrying capacities have been surpassed in many areas (*ibid.*,



Photo 5.9 : Palmoil plantation (near Sanggau), September 1996 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

Roekaerts 1986:41), making land issues the most frequent source of intra-village disputes (Dharmawan 1994:56)³⁹.

Land loss to outsiders comes mainly in two guises – the development of commercial palm oil plantations and the influx of settlers, both through official transmigration programs and independent of them. West Kalimantan is the origin of much of Indonesia’s output of palm oil; only two provinces have converted more land to the commercial production of the crop⁴⁰. Since the 1980s, vast plantations were established in those parts of Sanggau that were affected by the second wave of riots. Similarly, the 170,000 transmigrants that statistics showed for 1991 made West Kalimantan the third biggest receiving area nationwide, and the troubled districts have had a fair share of the 98 transmigration settlements on record in that same year (Ahmad and Saleh 1992:181). Under both forms of state-imposed “development”, the local Dayak communities were faced with a choice of either joining the projects as “local transmigrants” or leaseholders selling their produce (and their labour) to the plantation company, or of being dispossessed of their land with little or no compensation. Notably in the case of plantation development, the appropriation of Dayak land (in most cases under massive pressure) has angered and embittered many Dayak – a disaffection which was made worse by the fact that the affluence promised by the plantation corporations and the authorities failed to materialise (Dove 1997:13f.). Clearly, these forms of land conversion have further aggravated the already critical scarcity of land that prevails in the coastal areas of Sambas and parts of the middle and lower Kapuas basin. Nevertheless, there are, to my mind, a number of equally weighty arguments against placing too high a value on economic marginalization and frustrated hopes of delivery from poverty on the part of the Dayak in the area of conflict.

For one, the area under consideration is not the only one in Indonesia where people had to cope with such forms of “development aggression” (TABAK, ed., 1990) recently, nor is it the worst-affected of such areas. The provinces of North Sumatra and Riau have lost more than twice as much land to plantation development as did West Kalimantan (Novellino 1998:3), without there being the slightest sign of an agrarian uprising or any other form of manifest disaffection on the part of the locals. The same goes for transmigration. Even though West Kalimantan records relatively high absolute numbers of people transferred through the programme, it ranks far behind leading provinces such as Lampung and South Sumatra as regards the actual pressures generated recently through the inflow of state-sponsored settlers. The provinces that have led the transmigrant intake statistics for decades are by now so saturated with transmigrants that they have become migrant-sending areas; in Lampung, for instance, the population has increased twenty-fold since transmigration began, and two-thirds of the residents are currently speaking Javanese at home (Elmhirst 2000:209). In comparison, the changes that transmigration brought to the ethnic structure of West Kalimantan are negligible. Such changes, however, are in evidence in other Kalimantan provinces. Thus, compared to the 1970s, the transmigrant intake of Central Kalimantan increased more than ten-fold between 1980 and 1985, as a result of which 11 out of 100 inhabitants were state-sponsored settlers, compared to only 6 in West Kalimantan (Potter 1996:31). Within West Kalimantan proper, districts other than those which suffered the programs were the preferred target areas of state-sponsored settlement – at least after 1979. Thus in 1990, the top-ranking receiving area, Sintang district, had a transmigrant percentage of 22.7% of the total population, which is four times the figure recorded for Sambas or Sanggau (Biro Pusat Statistik 1993:10, 12).

In none of the areas mentioned above were there any reports of serious frictions between locals and transmigrants similar to those that involved the Dayak and the Madurese settler community in Sambas and the lower Kapuas in 1997⁴¹. In fact, the official transmigrants did not face any open rejection in either Sintang – arithmetically the most likely candidate for possible violence against state-sponsored settlers in West Kalimantan – or the conflict area itself. It was no accident that during the riots no transmigration settlements were damaged except for the few where Madurese lived⁴². The Dayak themselves do not link their general predicament or their adversity against the Madurese to the official transmigration programmes; to the contrary, many believe that transmigration benefited local communities in that it precipitated the building of much-needed infrastructure, such as roads⁴³. It was not, as some comments had it (see e.g. *Down to Earth* 1997), the inconsiderate implementation of a publicly-heralded policy of guided population transfer which led to catastrophe in West Kalimantan; much more consequential was the influx of *spontaneous* migrants into indigenous territories and the government’s failure to react with determination once its corrosive



Photo 5.10 : Madurese refugees of the 1999 riots camping on the grounds of the J. C. Oevang Oerey sports stadium, (Pontianak), September 2000 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

effects on ethnic peace in the province had become apparent. Throughout, it was my impression that the Dayak do not seem to care much if settlers arrive with the blessing, funding and logistical support of the state or independent of it – as long as they do not choose overtly aggressive means in the contest for frontier resources.

In the experience of the Dayak of the conflict area, however, marginalization means also and above all the exclusion from political participation in the arena of provincial politics where they had once wielded considerable influence. Under Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, a Dayak party (variously called *Partai Dayak* or *Partai Persatuan Dayak*) came out first in the general elections of 1955 and the regional elections of 1958, winning it the governorship (in 1960) and four of six District head (*bupati*) posts. The tone of Dayak aspirations in West Borneo was set by the amazing success of indigenous pressure politics in the south of the island where in 1957, a province of and for the Dayak had been carved out of the erstwhile province of South Kalimantan. However, that success was difficult to emulate: When Sukarno changed the electoral rules, West Kalimantan’s *Partai Dayak* had to be dissolved, prompting the victorious Dayak politicians to join one of the national mass parties, the left-leaning Partindo (*Partai Indonesia*) to keep their posts (Davidson and Kammen 2002:70). This alignment proved to be a bad idea when Suharto and the army grabbed power in 1965, purging the political system of everything and everyone that remotely smacked of communism and sympathies for Indonesia’s ousted founding president. In July 1966, the Partindo *gubernur* and *bupati* were stripped of their offices on the charge of being Sukarnoists – a damaging blow to the political aspirations of the Dayak from which they have never since recovered (*ibid.*). Today, the brief

blossoming of Dayak power is nostalgically remembered as a Golden Age of self-determination, and J. C. Oevang Oerey, the Kayan governor of 1960 to 1966, "is to the Dayak what Sukarno was once for the Indonesians" (Roekaerts 1986:13).

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the West Kalimantan governorship was the exclusive fief of army officers or appointees of the central government; for the rest, political life was dominated by the members of the princely families of the Malay sultanates of Sambas and Pontianak: Malays came close to conquering an absolute majority in the provincial parliament and filled as many as half of the administrative positions; the army meanwhile was dominated by the Javanese (ibid.:20-23; Human Rights Watch 1998:8). The political marginalization of the Dayak, in contrast, is indicated by the fact that when the riots broke out, they occupied only one district head position of six in the province⁴⁴. Since patronage flows in ethnic channels, the Dayak were left out in the cold, finding little or no employment either in the civil service or the logging and mining firms which tend to prefer migrants or native Malay.

The Dayak's resentment about their being deprived of access to political and economic power and excluded from the pork barrel in the province is no doubt responsible for a general feeling of disaffection among the indigenous population of the conflict area. However, if we conclude that the true rationale behind the riots was a "struggle for the state" and the rents that it makes available (Wimmer 1994), the choice of the Madurese as the target of an elimination campaign remains enigmatic. Like the Dayak, they are political outsiders; on the scales of social prestige and material prosperity, they score even lower than the former, making them the true dregs of West Kalimantan frontier society (Roekaerts 1986:21, Dove 1997:13). Indisputably, the Madurese are rivals for land (even if far less rapacious ones than the plantation corporations), yet they are certainly not rivals for posts and sinecures. Thus, the marginalization argument gets bogged down: If thought through properly, the Dayak in the area of conflict rose up against the wrong people, and they rebelled for reasons that are – compared to areas of heavier exposure to plantation development and transmigration – not really compelling.

Conspirators: the argument of third-party manipulation

Wherever they are encountered, repressive political systems with their penchant for information control form the breeding ground for popular conspiracy theories. The New Order regime which ruled Indonesia until 1998 was no different in that respect. For decades, Indonesian citizens from all walks of life and of different political persuasions were schooled (and acquired great proficiency) in detecting the work of sinister forces behind the current of often confusing events in their country. A popular

explanation for puzzling developments – shrouded by rumour, but unexplored by the gagged-up public media – has been the *oknum penghasut*, the provocator who stirs up trouble – usually, but not in every version at the behest of the state – by bringing ordinary people to do what they would not usually do in their lives.

In the course of the pogroms, a wide range of institutions and individuals were suspected (or openly accused) of having instigated the violence at different points in the course of the events. Implicated were the security forces, but also journalists, intellectuals and eminent and less eminent personalities from both camps. The rumours focused, for example, on the huge distances covered by the rioters (a feat for which the Dayak seemed to lack the logistical means), and the conspicuous inaction on the part of the army or the police as either Madurese (for the greater part of the riots) or Dayak (during the Madurese reprisals end of February) were attacked (Human Rights Watch 1998:10). The less Manichaeian versions of the conspiracy theories which were circulated have, I admit, much appeal. They held that the riots, once erupted, had been exploited by the police and the military for their own purposes; rather than stamping them out, the incriminated institutions toyed around with them and thus contributed to prolonging the horror. The motives of the security forces were said to be either revanchist⁴⁵, aimed at discrediting the president's opponents or – according to the most often-quoted suspicion – meant to give a dramatic demonstration of the perils that lured when the nation slackened in its support for the Suharto government and the armed forces. In the final analysis, however, the theory does not throw any light on the factors that *caused* the conflict; at the most it reveals the strategic calculus of actors who were swept along by it. It is, therefore, of little value in explaining the events of 1997.

Mercenaries of the regime: 1967 and its consequences

What renders the topos of the hooded manipulator of the masses so particularly intriguing for West Kalimantan is the fact that exactly 30 years earlier, virtually the same area had already once witnessed pogroms against another settler minority (the Chinese) which – as all sources on the events agree – were indeed stage-managed by a third party.

Till today West Kalimantan stands out for its sizeable community of ethnic Chinese. Brought in towards the middle of the 18th century as contract labourers who worked the gold fields of Sambas and Mempawah, the Chinese have since developed a strong rural presence in the area. Until 1820, that presence had revolved exclusively around the *kongsi* (self-sustaining mining cooperatives that organized extraction, trade and military protection), but as the yields began to sink and Dutch armies put a violent end to the autonomy of the kongsi (1850-1854), an increasing number of Chinese in

the former mining districts tried their luck with farming. In 1967 this rare community of Chinese farmers got caught in the tide of the downfall of Sukarno's "Old Order" and the nation-wide persecution of the Chinese minority whom the new regime held in collective suspicion of communist sympathies. Because they had the bad fortune of inhabiting the sensitive border region to Malaysia, the Chinese were confronted with multiple accusations. They were suspected of supporting Malaysian insurgents of ethnic Chinese extraction operating along the border, accused of providing shelter to communist elements of the Indonesian army in hiding there, and charged with dubious loyalties in a situation of open tension with neighbouring Malaysia (Jenkins 1978b).

For months, the army remained unsuccessful in its search for the army cadres who had fled into the jungles that straddled the border, and the fighters of the Sarawak People's Guerilla Front (PGRS) proved elusive, too. By January 1967, the regional command had shifted its strategy; it was now looking for ways and means to cut off local support for the insurgents and escapees. It was believed that this objective could be achieved by resettling as many Chinese as possible from the border areas (Mackie 1976:126). In the months that followed, the military made half-hearted attempts to relocate and, as it called it, "repatriate" Chinese from the interior, but soon abandoned the effort in view of the impossibility of organizing relocation for an estimated 160'000 people. In this situation, the military leadership considered the possibility of enlisting the help of the Dayak: Not subjected to the scrutiny of an international public, and familiar with the difficult terrain along the border, the Dayak were ideally suited for locating the hideouts of insurgents and emptying the interior of Chinese inhabitants. However since the relationship between the indigenous population and the Chinese in the countryside was largely free of strain – if not, in fact, downright friendly (Feith 1968:134, Jenkins 1978b, Vierling 1990:22⁴⁶, Somers Heidhues 2003:250) – and as the Dayak in the border areas were lukewarm towards the Indonesian army and its campaign against the guerrillas and renegade soldiers (Feith 1968:134), the Dayak had to be first won over to the army's cause and pitted against the Chinese. The task of re-directing Dayak loyalties fell to Oevang Oeray, the first and so far only Dayak governor of the province, who in 1966 had been forced to vacate his post (see above). The predicament of the military offered him the chance of a political comeback. By mobilising his followers against the Chinese, he could prove his anti-communist credentials and allegiance to the new dispensation⁴⁷.

Provoked by bloody raids against Dayak villages for which the military blamed Chinese guerilla fighters, and stirred up by a militia organized by the former governor (Davidson and Kammen 2002:70f.), in October and November 1967 Dayak mobs systematically raided Chinese residents and hunted down supposed insurgents. Violent crowds searched an area of approximately 80 km² in northeastern Sambas, northwestern Sanggau and northern Pontianak for Chinese villagers, plundering and setting their houses on fire. They killed an estimated 300 to 700 (according to some

sources – see e.g. Peterson 1968:21 – up to 2000) people, and forced more than 53,000 – one third of the province's Chinese population at the time – to flee the hinterland for the safety of the coastal towns. Up to this day, few have dared to return to their farms and stores in the interior. The beneficiaries of this forced and violent relocation were not only Dayak, but also Madurese farmers, who acquired prime agricultural land for free. Ironically, at least in one sense, the new round of violence in 1997 is a late effect of the removal of the Chinese who had before served a vital buffer function between expansive Dayak and Madurese agriculturalist populations (Somers Heidhues 2001:141).

Many contemporary accounts indicate that the Dayak used the opportunity to take heads (Roeder 1967, Peterson 1968:11, Soemadi 1974:92-96, 118, 126ff., Dove 1988:32). However, it is difficult to determine whether the issue at hand was "authentic" headhunting (involving ritual care for the heads, see above) or just a vulgar mimikry version of it (in which the heads would have no intrinsic ritual significance but serve to convey a message of terror). As again thirty years later against the Madurese, the Dayak assured themselves of the assistance of the *kamang* ancestral heroes by performing the *mato* ritual that induces possession (*East Asia Millions* 1968:13f.). As a consequence, hundreds of Dayak warriors acted under the compulsion of quenching their spirit allies' thirst for blood. The fighting forces of dozens of villages were mobilised as the red bowl (*mangkok merah*) was sent on its journey (Peterson 1968:11, van Hulten 1992:285).

There is ample evidence for the fact that the Dayak acted with the active support of the military authorities. The picture that emerges from the most important accounts of the events (Feith 1968:134, Mackie 1976:127f., Human Rights Watch 1998:10) is one of a mercenary operation negotiated by Dayak elites who had fallen into disfavour after the fall of Sukarno; the bargain left the Dayak free choice of the means of violence which they were to employ in the course of the campaign. Military commanders wooed Dayak headmen by bestowing honorary military titles on them (Davidson and Kammen 2002:69) and distributed weapons to their followers. Inhibitions against killing and despoiling fellow humans fell by the wayside as the Dayak were told that "anyone who sides with the [communist] enemies can be beheaded like a pig or a chicken" (ibid.). The military developed an almost obsessive love for Dayak martial traditions, and in an astonishing instance of "embedded journalism" *avant la lettre*, let a Javanese war reporter of the country's largest newspaper, *Kompas*, depict them in the most grisly terms (Peluso 2003:226). Recasting state violence as violence-as-custom, the military sponsored parodies of traditional headhunting feasts (*notokng*) and arranged "traditional" "peace ceremonies" when their strategic goals were achieved (Davidson and Kammen 2002:69). Troops were instructed to intervene only in the case that the Dayak would launch an attack against the provincial capital, and it took a full three weeks before orders to reign in the Dayak arrived from



Photo 5.11 : Dayak-held stores of Chinese shop owners driven away in 1967 (Pahauman), September 2000 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

the military high command in Jakarta. Even the most sympathetic observer has to conclude that the Land Dayak and the Malayic Dayak of the conflict area allowed themselves to be made into a tool of a state campaign of subjugation – a pacification and counter-insurgency strategy which colonizers of all ages have shrewdly used far beyond Borneo and the particular case of the post-colonial Indonesian state⁴⁸.

The strategy of selective pacification that underlies the deployment of tribal mercenaries tolerates (and, in fact, promotes) the survival of pre-state violence in state-controlled niches. The states in question grant such licence to tribal allies in the expectation of consolidating or expanding their monopoly of power – the ultimate hallmark of statehood both in the colonial and the post-colonial era. Apart from the moral ambiguity attached to this practice, it has (and frequently had historically) the disadvantage of increasing rather than reducing the intensity and frequency of feuding and warfare among the state's tribal subjects. Thus, it has been found that colonial reliance on tribal auxiliaries in wars of pacification triggered off new and particularly vicious cycles of revenge and retaliation between hitherto unrelated groups of collaborators and resisters of the colonial power, thus undermining for many years the declared aim of setting an end to tribal warfare (Pringle 1970:91f.). The practice's second disadvantage is that it enables tribal mercenaries to reproduce their institutions of violence and to sustain these even after they have outlived their utility to the state. One example amongst many are those Iban groups of Sarawak who were used by the Brooke administration to subjugate recalcitrant Iban headhunters. As a consequence of such mercenary deployment, not only did violent activity and

headhunting increase in the upriver areas in the short run (Pringle 1970:210-246, Wagner 1972:50-76), but peace in the Iban territories eluded the Brooke administration for a good 10 to 20 years longer – depending on the area – than the Dutch on the other side of the border who had no recourse to mercenary help (see Rousseau 1990:35; King 1976:320, 324).

The seizure of Borneo's British and Dutch colonial dominions by the Japanese in 1942 and the reconquest of the island by allied forces in 1945 provided the young men of some of the Dayak groups in the interior of Borneo with the opportunity to distinguish themselves in the service of one or the other side. Unsanctioned by either authority, head-taking experienced a brief revival (Muller 1992:37, Maxwell 1996:251). In order to enlist the help of the Dayak and the Iban and to arouse their fighting zeal, both the Japanese and the Allies appear to have tacitly allowed these war practices to resurface. The British commandos for example that were air-dropped to the Kelabit plateau in Central Borneo with the task of accelerating the retreat of the Japanese, exhorted the communities along their route to resume headhunting against the enemy (Harrison 1959:253, 262, 265; Long, ed., 1989:65-69, 74; Muller 1992:37). After the second World War the administrative hold of the state centres on both sides of the border tightened again and the pressure to acculturate increased for Borneo's indigenous peoples. As a result, the practice of headhunting to which opportunistic war-time administrations had turned a blind eye between 1942 and 1946, became "obsolete as a mode of warfare" everywhere on Borneo (McKinley 1976:92). Writing on the verge of the last decade of the past century, Rousseau (1990:264), too, notes that for the island's central part, "warfare has not been practised for many decades" and "headhunting has disappeared", even if it continues to play an important role in people's imagination⁴⁹.

The lower reaches of the Kapuas and Sambas district where Dayak warriors in a killing trance descended on the Madurese in 1997 thus emerge as a kind of time island where the knowledge of the ritual and practical aspects of headhunting – and particularly its *practicability* – has lasted two generations longer than anywhere else in Borneo. Among the *panglima perang* (war leaders) who set themselves at the head of the mobs, there were men who had already led the raids against the Chinese three decades earlier (SiaR 1997a, *Merdeka Minggu* 1997). I am inclined to believe that the pogroms against the Madurese migrant community could not have occurred in the manner they did – i. e. taking off from an age-old war cult with its attendant forms of possession and the physical mutilation of enemies – if the state had not found it expedient to revive such "customary" violence in 1967. If pacification had not been suspended at the time for reasons of state, headhunting as a *symbolic resource* in the struggle for land, influence and official recognition at West Kalimantan's "uncontrolled frontier" (Bodley 1990:24-41) would have long gone out of function. The occurrence in 1967 of killings and beheadings in altogether "customary" garb,

however, signified to the Dayak's opponents of 1997 that the former had not lost access to the terrible war magic and the – or so it would appear – savage killing practices of their ancestors. In the arena of terror which imperial state projects open up at the indigenous fringe, the Indonesian military thus placed a weapon in the hands of the Dayak of the conflict areas which has become unavailable for most of the other tribal groups in the country.

Terror and the state at the West Kalimantan frontier

The patterns of everyday interaction between settlers and local indigenous communities in West Kalimantan are typical of interethnic relations in frontier areas in general. Thus, at the frontier, settlers, merchants and other para-state actors are not subjected to the same restrictions on the use of violence that are in force in the regularly-administered parts of the national territory (Gordon 1992:209). The reason for this higher tolerance for violence is not only the limited reach of state control, but also the belief – shared by all parts of settler society – that ruggedness and the ready resort to arms are to some extent necessary if the pioneering individual is to survive the hostile conditions of the frontier. The case of West Kalimantan illustrates nicely the frontier's peculiar visceral dimension, the fact that those who set out to make their homes at the periphery (or roam it as itinerant extractors of wealth) experience it as pervasively liminal, frightfully different from the world that they know. Civil servants posted in the province, businessmen involved in extracting its wealth of timber and minerals, soldiers manning the border garrisons and the average migrant all agree that in West Borneo, the "tame" and the "wild", the "civilized" and the "savage", "order" and "disorder" meet and clash in unmitigated tension⁵⁰.

Michael Taussig (1984, 1987) has advanced a plausible explanation of why the capitalist penetration of frontier spaces such as Colombia's Putumayo region at the beginning of the 20th century was accompanied by inconceivable and economically senseless atrocities by planters and settlers. In the area's rubber-producing zones, domestic and foreign companies netted impressive profits thanks to the enslavement of the local Indian population. The violence undergirding it was so shocking that the English parliament (some of the companies on the Putumayo were British) ordered an enquiry to which we owe detailed information on the methods of torture and terror used by the plantation staff. Of late, Taussig's propositions on the role of terror in state expansion and the discourse on the "Other" that serves to legitimize it have inspired Anna Tsing (1993, 1996) and Stefanie Fried (1995) who have applied them to the study of frontier interactions in the Indonesian part of Borneo.

The "culture of terror" which white society and its black and Indian helpers established on the Putumayo was based on the construction of the Indian "Other"

as-savage-cannibal. On one hand, this "cultural construction of evil" drew on stereotypes circulating among acculturated Indians and was anchored on rumours and the phantasmagorical reports of travellers and missionaries; on the other hand, as Taussig admits, it was at least partially confirmed by the ethnographic facts⁵¹ (Taussig 1984: 485-489). Rubber-station managers "saw everywhere attacks by Indians, conspiracies, uprisings, treachery etc., and in order to save themselves from these fancied perils, (...) they killed, and killed without compassion", wrote a Peruvian judge in a report quoted by Taussig. They and their personnel "lived obsessed with death" that they expected to suffer anytime from the venom of a viper, the mouth of a jaguar or the club of an Indian warrior. The only way these frontiersmen could live in such a terrifying world, writes Taussig, was by themselves inspiring terror (ibid.:493).

In the collective imagination of settler societies, the frontier is a pristine "zone of death", a place where fearless pioneers lead – and often succumb to – a perilous struggle with the wilderness and are forced to live eyeball to eyeball with barbarism. The phantastic discourse on the "Other" which settler society nurtured and elaborated at the Putumayo, made the frontier a place where exploitation, violence and torture were readily justified by reference to the supposed moral depravity of the Indians (ibid.:469). In this death zone where man is encircled by the horrors of the jungle and the perversities of savage society, things are unreliable and unpredictable, and an air of "magical realism" lingers; life acquires the quality of a "nightmarish reality in which the unstable interplay of truth and illusion becomes a social force of horrendous and fantasmic dimensions" (ibid: 492). Animalesque attributes and occult magical powers are ascribed to the indigenous "Other". In strange ambivalence, indigenous frontier-dwellers are, on one hand, constructed as the despised antithesis to everything civilized, making them a legitimate object of unscrupulous exploitation and unrestrained violence. On the other hand, as pointed out by Robert Gordon in his Taussig exegesis, frontier-dwelling indigenous populations are seen to partake in the occult powers of undomesticated nature; to the extent that settler society attributes to them sorcery and other supernatural skills, the vulnerability of indigenous peoples in frontier exchanges is (to some extent, at least) mitigated (Gordon 1992:213).

Since the "culture of terror" at the frontier is mediated and reproduced through narratives – rumours, phantasmagories, purported "eyewitness accounts" distorted by systematic prejudice –, the scientific (or administrative) reconstruction of the "facts" behind these narratives constitutes a difficult problem (Taussig 1984:494), regardless of whether the issue is autochthonous indigenous violence or the excesses of settler society. The frontier is characterized by a "trade in terrifying mythologies and fictional realities" that involves all ethnic groups; on account of it, all attempts to isolate ethnographic and historical "facts" must fail as they loose themselves in the "epistemic and ontological murk" that defines the frontier (ibid.).

In the following I will examine how the collective representation – described by Taussig – of indigenous frontier-dwellers as languishing in the state of nature and practicing atavistic forms of violence has impacted on the actors and bystanders in the clashes with the Madurese. As the events unfolded, it became apparent that the image of the Dayak entertained by West Kalimantan's settler society was indeed deeply ambivalent, portraying them as “hated and feared, objects to be despised yet also of awe”, as Taussig put it in his work on the Putumayo (ibid.:470). Non-Dayak residents of the province, visiting journalists and even some of the soldiers deployed to contain the conflict were all highly sensitive to the “air of magical realism” which hovered over West Kalimantan's “zone of death”, and participated eagerly in the “trade in terrifying mythologies and fictional realities” that typically characterizes frontier imaginings both sides of the ethnic divide. The archetype of the Dayak as notorious headhunters effortlessly captured the imaginary of the non-Dayak groups. For most actors, then, the West Kalimantan of the giant plantations, sawmills and paddy fields reverted back to the “distant jungles” of past ages, where “the grasp of religion, modern government and market forces is still tenuous” (Fried 1995:44).

Thus, the Jakarta-based paper *Merdeka Minggu* quoted eyewitnesses testifying that they had seen Dayak warriors possessed by ancestral spirits performing acts of which no ordinary human beings were capable. Once the *kamang* had come over them, Dayak raiders ceased to be subject to needs such as hunger and thirst, nor were they bound by the laws of gravity: their bodies as light as those of birds, warriors were seen leaping onto coconut palms and resting on the delicate leaves of banana shrubs. Running at the speed of lightning, they reminded press reporters – or, rather, their local sources – of Kung-Fu pulp fiction characters, and it was specified that such fast motion was available to them even when the path ran through “dense jungles” (*Merdeka Minggu* 1997). The informants of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1997a) claimed that the raiding parties included “spirits, raised from the dead”, while another formulation in the same article had it that the warriors were “magic Dayak who would not die, their blood unable to be shed with the blow of a curved knife”. One of my informants, a Batak man from Sumatra residing in the provincial capital, insisted that the Dayak warriors could not be harmed by bullets, while another spoke of the fatal effects of the ritually-prepared spears used by the Dayak, claiming that they could break through any shield or armour-plating. Widely reported was also the ability of fighters possessed by the *kamang* to seek out Madurese by the smell of their bodies, clothes or sandals, enabling them to tell “enemies” from members of innocent third groups when, in killing trance, they searched houses or vehicles (see e.g. *Tiras* 1997)⁵².

Unsurprisingly, the “epistemic and ontological murk” that enshrouds the “zone of death”, brought into existence and kept alive by morbid rumours and phantasies, was densest where the issue was the supposedly archaic manner of killing resorted to by the Dayak. Even the Dayak themselves would not dispute that their warriors,

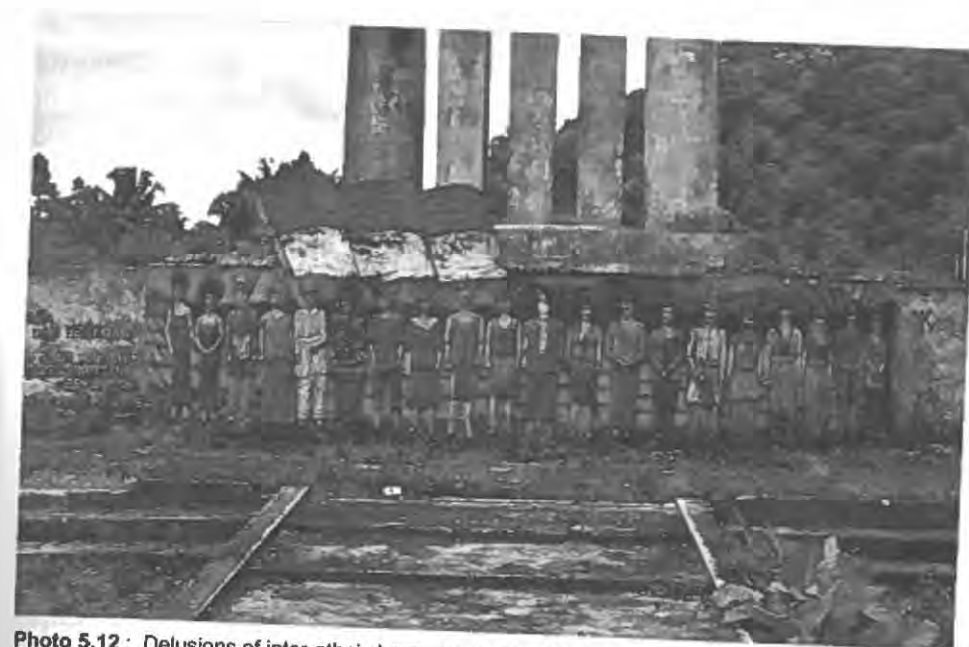


Photo 5.12 : Delusions of inter-ethnic harmony: monument erected in the aftermath of an early round of clashes between Dayak and Madurese (Samalantan, Kab. Pontianak), September 2000

possessed by the *kamang*, chopped off the heads of their opponents and often tore out their hearts and livers to devour them (interviews with riot participants, Pontianak, March 1997, Parry 1998:100f.). Other parts of the victims' bodies, too, are said to have been on offer at the barbecues of public kitchens that sprang up everywhere in the area as the Madurese were hunted down (interviews, Pahauman, March 1997). Furthermore, since the *kamang* constantly demanded a fresh supply of blood, the warriors under their spell were reported to have cut open the wrists of some of the victims and drunk their blood (*Tiras* 1997).

It would be difficult to dismiss as pure imagination these tales of decapitation and cannibalism and refute them in this manner. On the contrary: rather than exemplifying “one of Indonesia's oldest societies” “running amok and returning to its brutal traditions” (*Asia Times* 1997), the Dayak seem to have embraced the mutilation of the bodies of their opponents as a strategic ruse to further increase the terror that their campaign of expulsion caused in the Madurese camp. The Dayak must have perceived it expedient to take heads and eat human flesh because they could thus make use of a “particularly gruesome imagery of a much older form of combat” (Hoskins 1996:35) to achieve their goal of violently expelling the most aggressive and successful of their settler competitors⁵³. In their case it would not suffice to merely kill. The killing had to be carried out in the language of custom if the Dayak were to succeed in keeping alive the latent fear of the hostile and life-threatening wilderness of Borneo, prevalent amongst the Madurese and other immigrant groups, which alone would guarantee

them some protection against land grabbing, exploitation and settler violence. Left to guess whether in early 1997 the area was indeed confronted with headhunting (or what the frightened eyewitnesses *believed to be* headhunting) and cannibalism or merely a hallucination born from the fertile imagination of settler society, I would clearly subscribe to the former view.

We will now briefly turn to Anna Tsing's (1993, 1996) and Stefanie Fried's (1995) adaptations of Taussig's motif of the "culture" or "relations of terror". The object of both studies is the past experience – partly dating far back – of Dayak groups in South and East Kalimantan with state-perpetrated violence, including the one emanating from development planning carried out by state elites. The forms of violence described by both authors which the two Dayak groups under study had to ward off at different times are also part of the experience of the Land Dayak and the Malayic Dayak in West Kalimantan, as the following paragraphs shall demonstrate.

Not all Dayak societies were as self-consciously warlike and expansive as the Iban and the Kayan, the hegemonic powers of colonial-time Sarawak and Central Borneo. The collective historical experience of the weaker among the island's autochthonous groups was one of exposure to changing state authorities, who, for all the outward differences that separated them, shared the same predatory nature. From the vantage point of politically and militarily marginal groups, state authorities inflict arbitrary or, as Tsing (1996:191) puts it, "systematic random violence". Like the Meratus of South Kalimantan, many Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak groups of the conflict area are painfully aware from generations-old observation that the state imposes its order not, as it claims, to put an end to the violence of the many; rather, as they have realized, state rule itself is intrinsically violent and a prize that accrues but to the most ruthless and martial. States' enforcement of their notion of order is a threatening, not a soothing prospect for peripheral political subjects like the Meratus (Tsing 1993:91) and their cousins in West Kalimantan's conflict area. "Development" on modernizing precepts is but the last in a long line of "extraordinary and unpredictable interventions" by hegemonic powers in the life of peripheral indigenous societies such as the Dayak (ibid.:85): It sows fear because it claims victims and is – the rhetorics of "modernity" notwithstanding – reminiscent of the violence of pre-modern times.

In her study on the "modern relations of terror in Kalimantan", Fried (1995:71-83) highlights the fact that the development process has completely overlooked the Dayak, ignoring their rights, aspirations and, most basically, their way of life. She speaks of the Dayak's "invisibility in the eyes of the authorities" and brands this in a straightforward way as a „form of terror“ (ibid.:76).

The symbols of "regional terrorism" (Tsing 1993:85) are permanently inscribed in the palimpsest as which I prefer to regard West Kalimantan. As explained earlier, the fact that in the 17th century, the Iban chose West Kalimantan as their gateway to

Borneo, has left a deep imprint on the area's autochthonous Dayak societies. Sea-borne Iban raids – often in joint operations with Malay pirates – devastated the coast and its immediate hinterland deep into the 18th century, and recurrent visits by headhunting parties from across the border ranges across Sarawak's First and Second Divisions and later the upper regions of the Kapuas basin led many Land Dayak and Malayic Dayak groups of the area to define warfare as something to be suffered rather than to be actively engaged in. On top of this, some of the Dayak groups in the conflict area were subject to slavery-like subjugation and heavy tributary exactions on the part of the Malay sultans, and in the case of the Middle Kapuas, the Dayak population had to put up with a massive influx of Malay settlers and traders (Roekaerts 1986). Finally, as I have explained earlier, the violence that many communities started to experience from the 60s at the hand of Madurese settlers had a distinctly terrorist note; given the impossibility to reign them in through agreements and the futility of pressing for tougher police measures against Madurese delinquents, many Dayak of the area entertained a genuine sense of being threatened.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Dayak of West Kalimantan – together with other indigenous peoples in the archipelago – became the crucible of social engineering by the developmentalist "New Order" regime; development planners declared war on the Dayak's "communalist" way of life, manifested in the long house (*radakh* among the Kendayan, *ntangan* among the Land Dayak) and the headhouse of the Land Dayak. For one and a half decades the provincial government discouraged or banned the construction of new longhouses and insisted on the demolition of existing ones (Jenkins 1978a:23f., Dove 1985:29). The campaign was justified with recourse to three interrelated arguments: the "communalism" epitomized by the vernacular housing styles was reminiscent of communism; the buildings were a fire and health hazard; and they were encouraging promiscuous sexuality (Jenkins 1978a:24). In cases where the population refused to give up their longhouse, threats and actual violence were applied. In 1976 for example the police set a longhouse on fire after the population had refused to pull it down itself. In their tours of the villages, the police and the *camat* (the subdistrict heads) underlined the need for knocking down longhouses with the threat that if these instructions were not followed, they would return and set on fire all structures still standing (ibid.).

When even mere cultural symbols such as the longhouse are assaulted by use of massive pressure and physical force, Dayak communities that dared to publicly defy official development plans have to prepare for the worst. Two brief examples will serve to highlight this. Since 1977, the Linoh of Sintang, a Dayak Desa group, have lost a large part of their land to rubber plantations linked with transmigration projects, although the community never gave its consent. Protests were dismissed with the argument that the government was only taking that which it was entitled to and the management clarified that compensation for planted fruit trees would



Photo 5.13 : Lone survivor of the New Order's zeal to eradicate the vestiges of "communalism" in West Borneo: Tourism board-built radakh (longhouse) of Saham (Pahauman, Kab. Pontianak), March 1997 (photo: Danilo Geiger)

be provided only to those who had given up their land voluntarily. It was not so much direct violence but intimidation that expelled the Linoh from their land. Like other groups of "bonded Dayak" (*Dayak Serah*), the Linoh have a long history of domination by Malay rulers, and the mere presence of men in uniform usually suffices to make them fall in line and comply. Whole village communities were threatened with "consequences" if any of their members were to obstruct the government and plantation development (Roekaerts 1986:28).

In the mid-1990s, the Krio, Pawan and Jekak Dayak of Sandai, Ketapang, whose land had been appropriated by a tree plantation, found out the hard way just how these consequences looked like. After the company was faced with demands for appropriate compensation for the losses caused by its intrusion, the local authorities sent not only a negotiating team into the villages but at the same time dispatched troops into the area; the villagers were given to understand that the troops were preparing for a combat mission in East Timor, causing quite some trepidation in the communities (IWGIA 1996:165f.).

The Bentian Dayak's experience of their and their culture's "invisibility to the eye of the authorities" (Fried 1995) is mirrored by events reported at the eve of the pogroms from the territories of the abovementioned Krio, Pawan and Jekak of West Kalimantan. In response to their complaints that plantation company bulldozers had

destroyed fruit trees planted by their forefathers, the communities were told that these were "wild" trees which did not fall into the category of cultivated plants, and that their owners were therefore ineligible for compensation (IWGIA 1996:165). Time and again, West Kalimantan's indigenous rubber cultivators find that, to their bewilderment, some government office, after conducting an aerial survey, has declared their smallholdings uninhabited forest land and earmarked them for conversion into a commercial plantation (Djuweng and Dove n.d.:10f.). The state is indifferent as to whether the areas concerned are inhabited or not. Government bureaucrats seem determined not to recognise the forest as a social and cultural landscape, despite the fact that it contains hamlets and villages, rubber groves, orchards and swidden fields. One can only concur with Djuweng and Dove (*ibid.*:7) who conclude that in Indonesia "the only legitimate landscape is one that has been planned and thus validated by the state itself".

The tribal "Other's"'s invisibility in official discourse has yet other aspects; the non-recognition of the Dayak's possessory rights to their land (*hak milik tanah*) or, as has been formulated by the management of a plantation in West Kalimantan, their "[wrong] impression that they possess land" ("*perasaan memiliki tanah*") (*ibid.*:4) is, of course, one of them. Closely related to this is the fact that the Dayak are not represented in the institutions of provincial politics. So pervasive is the negation of the presence of indigenous peoples in the economic, legal and political setting of the province that we have to surmise that it contributed in major ways to the Dayak's decision to obliterate the Madurese.

I have already mentioned earlier that the statements of many Dayak rioters support the conclusion that their murderous action was also in part motivated by the frustration at being poorer than most others, and deprived of a political voice in their own province; the blame for this was laid at the door of the local and the central state. Deprived of any kind of civil recourse under the New Order's repressive political system, the brutal revenge wreaked on rival inhabitants of the frontier offered the Dayak the opportunity to remind both state and settler society of their existence and re-acquire visibility. To "say it with murder" (Horowitz 2001:2) – this, in a nutshell, seems to capture the strategic dimension of the Dayak uprising that points beyond the Madurese as the true targets of the violence. In the arena of terror – which is how the Dayak perceive this frontier space till today – only he who employs means of terror will be respected. Or, to return to Taussig (1984:493: "The only way they could live in such a terrifying world [...] was by themselves inspiring terror".

Notes

- 1 Field research for this article took place in summer of 1996, spring and summer of 1997 and 1998, and summer 2000. A first, slimmer version appeared under the title "Kunstlose Kunst des Widerstands: Staatlicher Terror und indigene Gewalt an Westkalimantans Grenze" in *Tsantsa*, the journal of the Swiss Association of Social Anthropologists (SEG) (issue 4, 1999). Initial work on the translation was done by Chitra Harshwardhan. My thanks go to Edgar Keller for his careful editorial comments and proofreading.
- 2 "Nativism" here does not connote the more familiar anthropological meaning of reaching back to and revitalizing traditional cultural practices; in correspondence with the prevalent usage in migration studies, the term refers to collective action that targets migrants because of their foreign origins and supposed threats emanating from them.
- 3 The violence was so one-sided to warrant calling it a "pogrom" rather than a "war", the preferred label used by indigenous spokespersons and, indeed, many academic observers (see e.g. Peluso and Harwell 2001).
- 4 The following account of the clashes is based on field interviews, a wide range of press reports and an investigative report of a US-based human rights organisation (Human Rights Watch 1998).
- 5 Dangdut is a widely popular folk music style in Indonesia.
- 6 Impartial investigators (Human Rights Watch 1998:18) challenge the truth of this assertion, pointing out that, in fact, a Dayak attack on a Madurese-inhabited village had preceded the assault on the school; it had left one person dead and several wounded. The victims had relatives in Siantan who may have called for retaliation against Dayak targets. Furthermore, the rumour that a well-respected Madurese religious leader from a village in the vicinity of Pontianak had been killed by Dayak seems to have contributed to the Madurese decision to assault the school.
- 7 Killed at a Peniraman roadblock was also a widely-respected traditional leader (*kepala suku*) from Tebas subdistrict in Sambas. The outrage that followed his killing in his home district explains why the latter also slid back into violence.
- 8 Before the army-enforced lull after the first week of January, killings and the ransacking of houses were restricted to four subdistricts in Sambas; when the violence resumed after 29th January, an area extending 160 km inland from the coast and 148 km northwards from Pontianak descended into chaos.
- 9 The military was not alone in believing that the rioters had support from outside the province. According to one of my Dayak interlocutors in Pontianak, warriors from Central Kalimantan had joined in the fighting. Consistent were the reports that fighters from upriver areas in West Kalimantan proper were involved during the early stages of the riots (Jakarta Post 1997b, Asia Times 1997). Given the fact that the areas mentioned – Kapuas Hulu district and the bigger part of the border areas of Sambas, Pontianak and Sanggau – had no noticeable Madurese population, we must conclude that many rioters had no personal axe to grind with the migrants, but joined the mêlée out of solidarity with those who did, or for the fun of it.
- 10 Often panicking and equipped only with combat ammunition, army troops committed in three cases actual massacres among approaching Dayak crowds (Human Rights Watch 1998:22f., 25ff.).
- 11 A Kalimantan-wide colour code assigns the colour red to the Dayak; during the renewed outbreak of violence in 1999 (see introduction to this article), the dominant colour was yellow, the colour associated with the Malay, the second autochthonous population group in West Borneo. Similarly, pieces of red cloth pinned to the doorframe or adorning small earthen pots on tripods protected Dayak homes from harm by the roaming bands of Dayak rioters.
- 12 The province had seen clashes between the two groups before, the bloodiest of which – in 1979 – claimed at least 20 lives. A more detailed account of these will be provided below.
- 13 Hate slogans smeared on the walls ranged from the ubiquitous "death to the Madurese!" ("Madura harus mati!") and "Madurese, sons of dogs!" ("Madura keturunan anjing!") to slogans that seemed like queer parodies of Indonesian nationalist propaganda and the anti-communist rhetorics of the Suharto regime. Thus, the graffiti that said "Destroy the traitors, from Sabang to Merauke! They aren't human beings!" ("Musnahkan pengkhianat, dari Sabang sampai Merauke! Bukan manusia!") turned the historical call to liberate the national territory from Dutch colonial rule – taught in every Indonesian primary school – against the unloved settler group. Another message on a wall equated the Madurese with the Communist party ("Madura = PKI"), whose bloody annihilation had inaugurated the rule of Suharto's regime of the generals. Predicting to the enemies of the Dayak the same fate that befell the enemies of the "New Order" three decades earlier, the graffiti seems to communicate a rather straightforward message. On a different level, however, a second, almost metaphysical meaning may shine through, if Maribeth Erb (1991:121) is correct. Discussing the popular association of pinyamun headhunters with communists among the Manggarai of Flores, she posits that "the term 'communist' itself in the Indonesian context, particularly to uneducated villagers, suggests supernatural evil".
- 14 In the main this meant the laying down of arms when entering a Dayak household and the renunciation of armed violence as a means for settling disputes in everyday life.
- 15 Thus, Dayak villagers let the reporter of the Jakarta Post (1997a) know that their people were "sick of being treated like fools!", and were confident that the riots would send out a powerful signal: "After we throw out the Madurese, no one will treat us like fools again [sic!]!". A third Dayak voice quoted by the same paper is still more explicit: "We resent the Madurese taking our land, but we also resent the government for not protecting our rights" (Jakarta Post 1997b).
- 16 In particular, the Dayak public took issue with the urban background of the Dayak signatories of the three large peace agreements; they were referred to as "businessmen" or "discredited politicians" without a rural constituency.
- 17 Thus, Robert Cribb (2000:176), the leading authority on casualty statistics from political and ethnic violence in Indonesia, estimates that there were 1200 Madurese victims, while a source inside the local government leaked geographically-detailed approximations that amounted to a total of 1720 victims (SiaR 1997c). A Capucin father from Menjalin, finally, a parish in the epicentre of the violence, puts them at no fewer than 4000, to which he adds 200 Dayak fatalities (Parry 1998:101).
- 18 Mary Somers Heidhues (2003:246, note 41), too, is sceptical of the alleged antiquity of the tradition, speculating that it may have appeared for the first time towards the end of World War II. There is every possibility, in fact, that future ethnohistorical research will reveal that non-Dayak played a decisive role in "inventing" the *mangkok merah*. Thus, in 1962, when the newly-independent Federation of Malaysia was faced with a rebellion in Brunei, a British colonial officer prodded the Baram tribes of eastern Sarawak to add to the national defence effort by mobilizing their fighting men. He remembered having heard during his time as a servant of an old Malay rajah that it was customary to mobilize one's Dayak allies by means of a red feather circulated in their communities, and suggested to revitalize that tradition. The Kayan and Kenyah chiefs zealously followed the advice, and hundreds of armed warriors volunteered for patrol duty or the fighting line under British command (Heimann 1999:343).

- 19 Author's interview with Dayak participants in the riots, Pontianak, February 1998. The fact that the violence was thus de-regulated and de-traditionalized at the very moment when it was unbound geographically, is remarkable and could point to a more fundamental change in the nature of the unrest after the three-week lull.
- 20 There are, for instance, indications that the mobilization of the Dayak crowds during the first and second wave of the violence rested on rather mundane and not particularly ancient means such as the posting of flyers urging the eviction of the Madurese and the return of unlawfully-acquired Dayak land (Human Rights Watch 1998:12). Furthermore, it was confirmed that certain Dayak individuals who had lost relatives or property in the present or earlier clashes with the Madurese went from kampung (village) to kampung, gathering youths for an attack on the enemy (ibid.:21f.).
- 21 However, some of my interlocutors intimated that not all communities had truly abandoned the practice, alleging that a quantity of heads had been brought to Darit and Banyuke in the northwestern part of Pontianak district where specialists still knew how to ritually treat them (interviews, Pontianak, March 1997; see also Peluso and Harwell 2001:89, note 16).
- 22 At the time of the riots, Kalimantan's most populous province had nearly 4 million inhabitants; their ethnic composition was as follows: Dayak 40% (or 1.6 million); Malay 40% (1.6 million); Chinese 11% (440,000); Madurese 2.67% (106,800); others (Javanese, Bugis, Batak etc.) 6.33% (253,200). In Pontianak, the capital, the proportions were different: The Chinese made up 30%, the Madurese 13%, while the Dayak, in contrast, had a mere 1.4% share. Figures on the ethnic composition of the province are heavily contested politically and are often of questionable value as the last pre-riot census that gave an ethnic key dates back to 1971. The figures indexed here have been extrapolated from various press articles and information from the Pontianak-based Institut Dayakologi. For the latest official census data, see Achwan et al. (2005:3f.).
- 23 It is interesting to note that no attacks against Madurese were reported from Ketapang. If my Dayak informants are correct, this may have to do with the fact that in that district, unlike in Sambas and Pontianak, the two ethnic groups live segregated from each other, with the Dayak concentrated in the hinterland and the Madurese confined to the coast.
- 24 Thus, according to official statistics of 1990, a mere 1645 Madurese participated at that time in the national transmigration programme, as compared to almost 37,000 East Javanese (Husson 1995:252). Besides Bali, East Java and Madura contribute the largest percentages of migrants to Indonesia's Outer Islands.
- 25 The Dayak of the conflict area charge that the Madurese routinely try to convert leasehold or usufruct into property rights, and secretly expand their holdings to make room for relatives (interviews, Pontianak, April 1997).
- 26 William Schneider's (1974) dissertation on the social structure of a Selako community across the Malaysian border (Lundu district, Sarawak).
- 27 In the following, the term will be used without inverted commas.
- 28 In collaboration with linguist James Collins of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Dayak researchers from the Pontianak-based Institut Dayakologi (ID) have conducted a systematic survey of indigenous languages in West Kalimantan. Among others, the project had financial support from IWGIA. For some of the results, see Sujarni Alloy, Albertus and Yovinus 1999, Peta Dayak 2000, Collins 2002. Another solid linguistic study of recent date is Adelaar 2005.
- 29 The densities of the six districts are spelled out below (note 37).

- 30 Thus, the Sya'ir Awang Simawn epic which recounts the exploits that led to the founding of Brunei, describes a series of military expeditions that must have taken place at around 970 A.D. After having defeated the local Melanau and their allies in the Third Division of latter-day Sarawak, the troops of chief Awang Halak Batatar proceed further west, plundering the Land Dayak areas on both sides of today's international border, and laying waste to Sambas, Pontianak and Singkawang (Maxwell 1996:97-102). On campaigns such as these, the spoils included large quantities of heads taken among the defeated populations (ibid.:112f.).
- 31 Supposedly, reference here is to the Dutch explorer, van Lijnden (van Lijnden and Groll 1851, quoted in Roekaerts 1986:4), who reasoned that the Dayak of the lower Kapuas are "tribes whose destiny it is to be ruled rather than to be rulers".
- 32 Kanayatn self-representations echo the view expressed by Vierling. One year before the outbreak of the riots, Kanayatn human rights activists entertained each other with jokes such as the following: At the Oscar celebrations, all sorts of celebrities queue up to see the show, among them a Kanayatn. As many have forgotten to bring their identity papers, the bouncers ask them to perform a sample of their art to allow quick identification. Thus, we see someone flash a characteristic smile, someone else sing a well-known song line, and a third person produce a hidden tattoo. When it is the Kanayatn's turn, he is so intimidated by what goes on around him that he can only stammer and stare at his own feet. He is waved through, though, because everyone recognizes the Dayak in this picture of misery (personal field notes, August 1996).
- 33 That "charter myth" held that the advent of the "White Rajah", James Brooke, had saved the Land Dayak from the predations of both groups, and the almost certain extinction by the Iban.
- 34 From the 1820s on, this included also the Dutch who – in 1822-25, 1851-54 and 1884-85 – fought protracted campaigns to conquer the major kongsi federations.
- 35 Other researchers give a figure of ten incidents, counting the December 6 prelude to the outbreak of the riots discussed here separately; I opt to treat the two as one single case.
- 36 Sambas with 62 persons per km² (Biro Pusat Statistik 1993:4) had five clashes, and Pontianak with 43 persons per km² (ibid.) had four.
- 37 The figures are: Sambas 62 persons/km², Pontianak district 43 p./km², Sanggau 23 p./km², Sintang 12 p./km², Ketapang 9 p./km², Kapuas Hulu 5 p./km² (Biro Pusat Statistik 1993:4).
- 38 Figures of 1980 show an average of 150 persons/km² for the littoral areas of Sambas (Seavoy 1980:66); areas further inland such as those in the Sengah Temila subdistrict of Pontianak – the scene of heavy fighting in 1997 – reach densities around 36 persons/km² (Fox and Atok 1997:34). Marking the maximum value for Kalimantan, the floodplain of Hulu Sungai in South Kalimantan records 202 persons/km².
- 39 The example of the village of Bagak Sahwa along the road from Singkawang to Bengkayan, one of the riot hotbeds in the subdistrict of Tujuh Belas, illustrates well the land squeeze that has resulted in some areas:
 "The village is unable to expand beyond its current land area because it is bounded by the nature reserve [Gunung Raya Pasi, D. G.] to the south, a Catholic mission to the west, and transmigration settlements for retired military and police personnel as well as for Javanese transmigrants to the east and to the north of them" (Peluso and Padoch 1996:123).
- 40 Land conversion to oilpalm plantations is 251'905 hectares in West Kalimantan, slightly less than 2% of the total land area of the province. It is outflanked by North Sumatra and Riau which record acreages that are twice as high as West Kalimantan's (Novellino 1998:3), and ratios of plantation area to the total land mass of 6.5 and 5.3%, respectively.

- 41 It would be dishonest, however, not to draw the reader's attention to the fact that Central Kalimantan exploded in nativistic violence two years after I first published this article (see this article's introduction). Again, the Madurese were targeted (and the government-sponsored transmigrants spared), but my argument that high transmigration levels do not predict conflict has been seriously damaged by the events.
- 42 Contrary to the transmigration minister's, Siswono Yodokusodo's, claim that seven settlements in the province were damaged (Jakarta Post 1997c), the only confirmed attacks concerned the two partly Madurese-inhabited units of Lembang and Marabu, five kilometers away from Sanggau Ledo, where the crowd tried to capture Bakrie, the man responsible for the stabbings on the morning of 30th December.
- 43 The Dayak's generally positive attitude towards official transmigrants that my interview data reflect is confirmed by Avé, King and De Wit (1983:97) who noticed the good relations that prevailed between Dayak and Javanese transmigrants in the 1970s and early 1980s.
- 44 That of Kapuas Hulu; all three districts that were the scene of the riots had non-Dayak regents.
- 45 The military and the police appear to have taken sides for one or the other party during the course of the conflict. Some military units were apparently looking for an opportunity to avenge themselves on the Dayak for violent protests against a highly unpopular military detachment in Ngabang, Sanggau, the previous year. The police, on the other hand, had a score to settle with the Madurese because in 1993, Madurese rioters had demolished police stations in Pontianak and forced the resignation of the police chief of the city, after one of their number had died from beatings in police custody (Human Rights Watch 1998:3, 9, 17).
- 46 Vierling (ibid.) makes the pertinent observation that the co-existence between Dayak and Chinese in the Kanayatn (Kendayan) areas was much less conflictual than that between Dayak and Malay. In spite of their secretly-harboured beliefs of being "racially" superior to the Dayak, Vierling writes, the Dayak prefer them to the Malay on account of their affability. Dayak respect for the Chinese, moreover, speaks from the colloquial expression "sobat" ("friend") as a term of reference for the latter.
- 47 It is important to point out that the evidence for Oevang Oeray's involvement in the run-up to the slaughter is not merely circumstantial, but confirmed – not without pride – by himself. Thus, he confided to a reporter:
- "In 1967, the Dyaks played a prominent role in eliminating the communists in West Kalimantan. (...) Most of the Chinese were helping the communists. They were supplying material aid, supplying information, supplying manpower. (...) The decision [to purge the border areas from the Chinese] was taken after discussions between the government security forces and the Dyak leaders. The initiative came from me. I made a circular – in cooperation with the military, of course" (Jenkins 1978b).
- 48 Ferguson and Whitehead (2000:21 ff.) term the state practice of hiring tribal auxiliaries "ethnic soldiering". Characteristically, the proxy wars being fought under state patronage involve a tacit agreement that the choice of the means of violence which tribal clients employ is largely at their discretion, as long as they operate under state supervision and against state-selected targets. Wars fought by indigenous mercenaries have often been carried out with state-of-the-art weaponry, taking an enormous blood toll of indigenous frontier-dwellers on all continents (ibid.:22).
- 49 The last headhunting incidences outside West Kalimantan which I found mentioned in the literature concern East Kalimantan in the 1960s (Rousseau 1990:280).

- 50 In the foregoing, I sought to show that the Dayak of the conflict area have retained, thanks to the assistance of the state, the reputation of possessing a capacity for "customary" violence and the war magic of their headhunting ancestors. This fact has powerfully contributed to the Dayak's image – entertained by many non-Dayak in the province – of being alien to "civilized" ways.
- 51 Thus, as Taussig (ibid.:484-487) remarks, the indigenous societies of the Putumayo are known to have engaged in frequent raiding, intergroup violence and even cannibalism, and white fears of Indian rebellion were not unjustified as indigenous uprisings had repeatedly occurred before the rubber boom.
- 52 Rather sarcastically, Anna Tsing (2005:50) has called this "body odor ethnicity" and "a poor man's DNA testing", allowing otherwise disoriented locals to "make mass conflict legible".
- 53 While, in the main, this strategic deployment of "wildness" appears to have secured the desired results where the Dayak were facing Madurese, the strategy backfired in confrontations with well-armed soldiers. These, as eyewitnesses confirmed, were often no less scared of the Dayak than the Madurese or other civilians (Human Rights Watch 1998:16); many combat units left the conflict area traumatized by what they had seen. At least in part, the army-perpetrated massacres of Dayak rioters which occurred (see above, note 10) seem to have been committed by frightened soldiers who lost their nerves, overpowered by the hallucinatory reality of West Kalimantan's "death zone".

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6 FROM VILLAINS AND VICTIMS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS: The Case of the Amazonian *Colonos*

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photo: Marina Campos

6 From Villains and Victims to Environmental Activists: The Case of the Amazonian *Colonos*¹

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“At times, the consequences of a particularly significant local contest alter economic-political structures and ideological discourses at regional and national levels (...). The result is social change, evidenced by transformations in the structure of the regional economy, the constitution of new social actors, the demise of others, and the reconfiguration of the economic, political and ideological arrangements that defined critical periods in frontier history” (Schmink and Wood 1992:18f.)

Introduction²

The rural landscape of Amazonia is no longer dominated by indigenous peoples. Seven hundred thousand migrant families—about three and a half million people—have settled in the region (INCRA 1999), and today are far more populous than the indigenous and *caboclo*³ populations taken together. Through their dependence upon swidden *agriculture*⁴ and their willingness to relocate as new frontier opportunities emerge, these migrant farmers have become an important driving force of the development process in the region (Moran 1981, Schmink and Wood 1992, Hall 1997).

Despite the central importance of migrant farmers (referred to here as “*colonos*”) for the transformation of the Amazon frontier, we know little about their relationship with the forests in which they live. Ethnoecological studies conducted in Amazonia have focused almost exclusively on indigenous peoples and more recently on *caboclo* and rubber tapper populations (Balée 1989, Posey and Balée 1989, Kainer and Dureya 1992, Balée 1995, Padoch et al. 2000, Pinedo-Vasquez et al. 2001, Shanley and Luz 2003).

The increasing international concern for the destruction of the rainforest, and the concomitant interest in forest people⁵ and traditional local knowledge have resulted

in the valorization of certain groups – notably indigenous peoples and rubber tappers – who we believe are entitled to live in forest areas. By doing so, we are at the same time positing that other categories of people, such as migrants and peasants, are not entitled to live in the forests (Brosius 1999, Dove et al. 2003). The absence of studies on *colonos*' forest knowledge and management tends to arise from the assumption that because they are not native, they lack any knowledge about forest resources and therefore have no concern for the environment.

In the same vein, images about non-indigenous groups are generally associated with ideas of "land hunger" and "forest phobia" (Nygren 2000), with little consideration of contextual factors such as the state's colonization policies, market forces and precarious land tenure regimes. These biases go a long way in explaining why there is so little research about *colonos*' forest use and management, whereas so much has been written about indigenous people and other social groups with a longer history of forest use in the Amazon.

When I explained my research objectives at home and in Brazil, researchers and officials alike were surprised that I assumed the *colonos* could have any environmental knowledge at all. In this context of systematic omission, I chose to study not the usual "native informants" of anthropologists in the Amazon, but the "migrant," "extra-local," "hybrid" people that – albeit in another geographical context – Liisa Malkki (1995) pointed out as worthy objects of research. Moreover, because I chose to work in colonization rather than in protected areas (i.e., national parks, extractive reserves, or national forests) most people did not understand how my work could be related to Amazonian conservation. The fact that migrant farmers or *colonos* and colonization settlement are not seen as important topics related to conservation made me aware that to study *colono* environmental knowledge also meant to draw attention to their marginalization in academia as well as in the practical arena.

To work against these biases, I decided to take the "road less traveled" and investigate the *colonos*' natural resource management systems and practices, their social organization, as well as the public policies associated with small-scale agriculture and colonization schemes in the Brazilian Amazon. In the centre of my research is the analysis of the evolving relationship between these farmers and their forests, including: (1) the *colonos*' acquisition of knowledge of forest ecology and uses; (2) the relationship between this knowledge and *colono* land-use practices; and (3) the broader role that governmental and grassroots organizations have in shaping new approaches to rural development. Different from most of the studies of migrants' farming systems that mainly analyze and observe what happens at the plot level, I decided to add to my analysis the understanding of the dynamics of "invisible" social processes. First, I decided to incorporate the study of both formal organizations and informal social groups associated with *colono* land use practices, and I wanted

to understand how *colono* social relations were played out in the political arena. Second, by focusing on various scales of social relations and social action related to natural resource management, dynamics on the regional level came into view which, in turn, enriched my understanding of local-level actors and actions. For instance, it was by looking at the regional grassroots organizations and their struggle that the environmental knowledge and innovative forest management strategies of *colonos* in Altamira, Brasil Novo, and Medicilândia really came to my attention.

As stated by Nygren (2000:13), deforestation "is a process of change in people's land tenure and land use systems, in their social stratification and power relations, and in their environmental perceptions and cultural constructions". Therefore, it is a process that should be analyzed not only from the land plot perspective – usually by means of remote sensing surveying technology –, but by encompassing the entangled layers of natural resource management, public policies, and social mobilization. I will use the case study of *colono* farmers along the Transamazon Highway as a way of questioning our assumptions about non-forest people and their relationship to the environment. Basically, I want to center my discussion on two main arguments.

My first argument is based on the realization that for a large part, the deforestation discourse associated with *colono* farmers is created by national governments with the intention of avoiding the blame for creating faulty policies. As stated by Dove (1994:347), "what is officially represented as facts about rural people is often subjectively determined by the government agencies responsible for development interventions. Facts then, often are less reflections of rural realities than of the agendas of the intervening agencies". The emphasis is less on what the facts really are, than on what the different parties involved (in this case officials and the elite) want the facts to be (Thompson et al. 1986). This allows us to conclude that the social relations associated with resource use are historically and politically constructed (Nygren 2000). In this light, the public representation of Amazonian deforestation needs to be seen as a social process in which unequal relations of power and natural resources access and control play a crucial role.

My second argument is that the assumption that settlers and their production and resource use systems necessarily exhibit a destructive "frontier mentality", is no longer tenable. With the exception of a few cases (Muchagata 1997, Atran et al. 1999, Nygren 2000), most studies of *colonos* and deforestation in Latin America tend to ignore the fact that social mobilization can create alternatives for "traditional" land use management. A more holistic approach to the study of *colonos*' production systems that incorporates local forms of social organization and regional social movements reveals a story that fails to correspond to the picture of reckless settler opportunism in frontier environments.

To state my case, I will start by telling the story of *colono* migrant farmers and their struggles. It commences with a brief overview of the historical context in

which colonization schemes were created, a context which is essential to understand the reality that the *colonos* who were brought to Brazilian Amazonia faced. I will then move on to analyze the logic of deforestation in such environmental, social, and political landscapes. After that, I will describe the *colonos* and their production systems. Subsequently, I will discuss how the *colonos*' ethnic background (or more precisely their lack of ethnic background), in association with their production systems and the deforestation rates attributed to the latter, reinforces images and misrepresentations of *colonos* as bad forest stewards. In this section, I will also discuss how other Amazonian groups such as indigenous people and rubber tappers successfully reshaped their identities as "forest people" and how that, in return, affected other Amazonian social groups who failed to do so.

Finally, I will describe the origins and evolution of the *colono* social movement and the incorporation of environmental concerns into their development agenda. I will conclude with some thoughts about the importance of the empowerment of *colono* farmers and the creation of concrete bottom-up approaches and solutions to the need of firmly reconciling their production systems with forest conservation.

An important point to make right up front is that this paper is not an attempt at stating that *colono* farmers everywhere and irrespective of context are forest stewards, but to show that the realities and people we study are far more complex than one would think, and that they subvert the dearly-held dichotomy between "forest protectionists" and "forest destroyers." I do hope this paper will inspire academics as well as practitioners of development cooperation and conservation to analyze and, possibly, question romantic images of indigenous peoples as "forest peoples" and, conversely, reconsider the derogatory stereotypes pinned on non-traditional forest dwellers. Mine, therefore, is a plea to reconceptualize our categories of human beings and the assumptions associated with them, and to help reshape public policies which have been informed by prejudice. As social scientists, we have to be mindful that categorizations, while valorizing some, inevitably depreciate and exclude others, and that such exclusion is no innocent act. I am, then, advocating a more reflexive approach to the study of rural populations which is prepared to discover and "celebrate" dynamism, hybridity, and complexity where others found but maladaptation and failure.

"Bringing together people without land and land without people":

**Brief historical background of colonization schemes
in Brazilian Amazonia**

After the armed forces took control of the Brazilian government in 1964, the military regime adopted a series of aggressive development policies. The main goal of the

Brazilian government was to promote "national integration," both economically and politically, as well as to occupy and secure Brazil's frontiers against the perceived threat, real or imagined, of foreign incursions (Moran 1981, Goodman and Hall 1990, Schmink and Wood 1992). In this new political setting, Amazonia played a special role.

The famous slogan of the military regime, "*bringing together people without land and land without people*", demonstrates that the generals saw Amazonia as a big "vacuum", intending it to serve as a "safety valve" for social problems elsewhere in Brazil. By filling it with the poor and landless, the juntas could avoid dealing with the root cause of agrarian tensions: The extraordinarily high concentration of land ownership in the northeast and the expulsion of farmers through the expansion of mechanized agriculture in the south-southeast (Hall 1997). This "populist" strategy of providing free land to the needy landless poor responded to critics who accused the military regime of promoting a model of development that favored the interest of the rich (Lisansky 1990, Schmink and Wood 1992, Browder and Godfrey 1997, Hall 1997).

Agricultural colonization schemes and road-building were the spine of the development plans designed by the military regime, promising to connect Amazonia and the northeast to the rest of Brazil, while ameliorating socioeconomic problems in both regions (Schlecht 1990). Consequently, in 1972 the military regime inaugurated the Transamazon Highway⁶, and the first colonization project in the Altamira region was established. The responsibility for administering the colonization projects in the Amazon was assigned to the newly-created *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform - INCRA). INCRA churned out the plans for the colonization schemes and was responsible for setting aside land for the settlements, building side roads, dividing plots and selecting farmers for the colonization projects. Officially, peasant settlers were entitled to the following: 1) 100 hectare land plots along the highway; 2) housing subsidies, including a six-month salary to be repaid after three months; 3) guaranteed crop financing and twenty-year loans on generous terms for purchase of farm plots; 4) government-built facilities (housing, schools, medical centers); and 5) technical assistance and training (Smith 1982).

Despite of all the planning, the governmental settlement schemes failed to create self-sustained agricultural communities for reasons associated with environmental and institutional factors. For example, both the routing of the Transamazon Highway and the layout of its colonization projects were done hastily and with little regard for patterns of soil fertility or topography⁷. The fact that the government had no experience with the construction of roads in the humid conditions of the Amazon also contributed to the failure of the colonization program. Inadequate planning of road construction

resulted in ruinous costs for road maintenance and migrant farmers' access to markets (Moran 1981, Smith 1982, Mahar 1989). Besides these environmental factors, institutional factors also played an important role in colonization schemes' failure. The extremely bureaucratic nature of the different government agencies involved in the colonization schemes and – even more importantly – power asymmetries and constant conflicts between the different agencies contributed to an even stronger distortion of government policies (Bunker 1985).

In addition to that, the Transamazon settlers faced other adverse circumstances due to the location of the settlements far away from the major markets for agricultural commodities, which put them at a disadvantage compared with other producers. Moreover, the high costs of transport, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and seeds for the small farmers exacerbated this disadvantage. Without these modern inputs, crops often succumbed to pests and diseases; furthermore the only way that farmers could sustain their yields was to fell and burn more forest by practicing swidden agriculture. Finally, the frequent long trips to the city and the bureaucratic work required by the bank system discouraged farmers from seeking rural credit (Mahar 1989).

Adding insult to injury, the official policies of frontier colonization in Brazil changed radically in 1973-1974. A government decree in 1972 initiated a dramatic reversal with regard to the program's objectives of settling small farmers⁸ (Schlecht 1990). In this new phase, the strategic integration of the Amazonian region aimed no longer only at alleviating landlessness and protecting Brazil's sovereignty, but, significantly, wanted to provide economic growth through the exploitation of the region's natural resources (Schlecht 1990, Hall 1997).

The new program for the region, called "Program for Agricultural, Livestock, and Mineral Centers in Amazonia", or POLAMAZONIA, was established in 1974. With the implementation of this new program, budgets for colonization schemes shrank, as the fiscal incentives were passed on to large enterprises (Schlecht 1990, Schmink and Wood 1992). In order to attract private capital to the region, the government policies offered generous economic subsidies to investors. These subsidies had several consequences such as the concentration of land in the hands of a few large landowners and the rapid conversion of forest mainly to pasture. Since these policies were adopted ostensibly in the name of economic development, environmental and health issues such as deforestation, uncontrolled forest fires and increases in the incidence of malaria were not on the government's agenda (Repetto 1987). The apparent logic behind this change in the thrust of the development plan was that the government hoped to contribute to Brazil's foreign exchange earnings by exporting the Amazon's minerals, timber, and agricultural products (Mahar 1989, Pandolfo 1994). The *colono* farmers who had been lured to the Amazon with promises of land, credit and infrastructure, no longer featured as beneficiaries in the conquest of the region.

In order to justify this political change and to further their own political and economic interests, politicians, technocrats and the private sector consistently attempted to "blame the victims" (Wood and Schmink 1978) for the failure of the previous development strategy (Schlecht 1990, Schmink and Wood 1992). As I will discuss later, the new developmentalist paradigm "constructed" and fostered negative images of small farmers as being inefficient and culturally retrograde as well as the principal culprits of Amazonia deforestation.

Another consequence of this shift in the rationales for the occupation of the Amazon was the deleterious impact it had on indigenous populations. An increasing number of communities were drawn into protracted range wars with ranchers in the 1970s, not only because of the direct occupation of their lands, but also as a result of the dramatic increase in road construction (Hecht and Cockburn 1989). Consequently, tenure issues and land conflicts became common phenomena that affected indigenous groups as well as rubber tappers, *caboclos*, small farmers, cattle ranchers, loggers, and miners. Thus, the conflicts between different social groups became an intrinsic part of the Amazonian landscape, creating "simultaneous and overlapping contested frontiers" (Schmink and Wood 1992). Indeed, these waves of struggles over power and resources have become so permanent a feature of the Amazon landscape to have made it a "perennial frontier"⁹ (Little 2001).

Until today, the state has failed to fulfil the commitment that the military regime had made towards the *colono* farmers in the 1970s. Many farmers still lack land titles; sites still do not have basic infrastructure such as electricity, treated water, and phone lines. More than 30 years after its construction, the Transamazon Highway remains unpaved. Access to education and health services are even worse, especially during the rainy season when the roads are impassible.

In short, as stated by Bunker (1985), this extremely expensive and socially destructive modernization of Amazonia was a product of what he referred to as an "overdeveloped" state and "overpowerful" bureaucrats, which together controlled access to the land and agricultural production by a "disempowered peasantry". In this context the role of the modern state was to maximize production, settle population in state-controlled spaces, while at the same time drawing tribute from, or at least neutralizing, non-state spaces (Scott 1998). The developmentalist formula, so predatory in social and destructive in ecological terms, ended up overpowering well-adapted local production systems.

Logic of deforestation

To understand the challenges that *colono* farmers faced (and continue to face) in the quest for official acceptance for their farming practices, we must first evaluate the

logic behind their agricultural production systems – swidden agriculture and cattle ranching. Although the government has characterized *colono* farmers as ignorant and inefficient in their use of natural resources, a closer examination suggests that many of these farmers have reacted “rationally” to the conditions with which they have been presented. The shift away from their dependency on forest-clearing as part of their agricultural systems will require a change in the way that farmers are using the land but, more importantly, a change in the frontier conditions in which they are imbedded.

Some other critical factors that drive deforestation by *colonos* are the availability of cheap land and insecurity of tenure. The combination of these two factors encourages settlers to minimize the cost of occupation by cutting down the forest, establishing pastures and performing other activities that provide for the occupation of the cleared land at a low cost. In addition to that, the inappropriate recognition by INCRA of land clearing by pioneers as both a proof of “improvement” and “rights” to grant land title has led small farmers to cutting down ever more forest in order to obtain some kind of land title somewhere (Smith 1982, Fearnside 1990). In this context, livestock has become a firm part of small farmer land use strategies because it reconciles land security with the prospects of a guaranteed income. Today, forest conversion into pasture is still a very potent and convenient avenue for the granting of a definitive title (Fearnside 1990, Mattos and Uhl 1996).

The challenge when studying deforestation by *colonos* is to understand the reasons that drive them to cut down the forest. The most appropriate analysis is one that considers deforestation not as an isolated, one-dimensional phenomenon but, rather, as a process in which several economic, demographic, political, and institutional factors jointly influence the landholder’s decision for or against felling trees. The consolidation of properties in the Amazonian frontier put the *colono* in a dilemma between opening the forest and establishing some form of possessory rights, consolidating land use, and at the same time “avoiding” deforestation (Brondízio et al. 2002).

One of the key conditions for sustainable land-use is permanent settlement. The farmer’s decision to migrate is based on opportunities perceived and the resources available at that time. The decision to stay also depends on the new opportunities and resources that can be generated in that location. Pioneer families usually farm on a succession of plots in different locales in the course of their migrant careers, moving along with the advancing frontier (Almeida and Campari 1995).

In the course of the 1980s, local land speculation has emerged as the main cause of deforestation in the Amazon. Some *colonos* took advantage of the government’s offer of free land with the intention of using it for speculative reasons. The demand for pasture land enables the farmer to obtain significant gains from the sale of the property. *Colonos* who sold their lands went to different destinations: some moved

to the cities to operate small stores; others moved to newer frontiers (Moran 1981, Smith 1982).

For migrant farmers in the frontier context, agricultural intensification and the shift toward permanent production systems begin to make sense only in old frontier areas, where land scarcity and rising land prices make swidden agriculture and cattle pastures unviable. Furthermore, old frontiers also offer the capital, technology, and access to markets that permanent production systems require (Toniolo and Uhl 1996).

At the time when the colonization schemes were started, the *colonos* had plenty of primary forest to cut in order to establish fields for cultivation. Today, primary forests have been dramatically diminished in colonization areas. Agricultural fields planted on land prepared by felling and burning primary forest are considerably more productive than those prepared by felling and burning fallow vegetation, but it takes more time and money to clear the former. The choices between cutting one of these types of forests are made in consideration of the balance of the total area of primary forest left in the plot, as well as money and labor availabilities¹⁰.

In contrast, medium and large land holders plant grass and raise cattle regardless of soil characteristics. Labor is an important limiting factor. To overcome it, the owners of large holdings hire external labor, whereas smallholders usually rely on family labor. Therefore, medium and large holders tend to focus on activities that reconcile low labor investment with land availability, and engage in extensive cattle ranching. As a consequence, these medium and large land owners cause much of the deforestation of the Amazon, even though they represent only a small fragment of the rural population (Steward 1994). In the late 1980s, Hecht and Cockburn (1989:267) posited that the idea of small *colonos* being the main force of destruction in Amazonia was one of seven false beliefs about the Amazon: “Small settlers and peasant pyromania are to blame for the disappearing Amazonian Forest. This is one of the most widely-held beliefs about the Amazon, and it is wrong. The culprits in setting fires to clear forest are overwhelmingly medium- and large-scale landowners and land-grabbers”. On the evidence that we have, small settlers can largely be exculpated from the responsibility for deforestation in the area. Pushed out of their regions of origin by poverty and skewed land distribution, they were attracted to the frontier by government-created incentives in the form of access roads, titles to public lands through forest clearing, and various other public policies (Mahar 1989). The deforestation resulting from *colono* land use practices was, and still is, more a matter of inadequate policies that constrained their choices, than a matter of a maladaptive production system (Schmink and Wood 1992, Porro 2001).

Lastly, the conflicting nature of Brazilian agrarian and environmental policies also contributed to the deforestation process and put the *colono* farmer at the center of an insolvable dilemma. Historically, agricultural and environmental policies were

created and established in separated government institutions without any articulation between these two sectors. On one hand, the *colono* farmers had (and still have) to deforest to claim land and demonstrate to INCRA that they are “improving” the land. On the other hand, according to the Brazilian Forestry code they have to maintain 80% of forest in their plot as legal forest reserves (*reserva legal*)¹¹. Although there have been some attempts for a better coordination of environmental and agrarian issues in public policies under the current administration of President Luiz Inácio (“Lula”) da Silva, this articulation is still in its infancy. Clearly again, therefore, the *colonos* alone cannot be blamed for cutting down the forest; deforestation is a process that is driven by the country’s overall political, economic, and power structures in which *colono* actors are embedded.

The Transamazon colonization scheme, the *colonos*, and their production systems

The importance of selecting the right types of *colono* farmers with adequate knowledge of agriculture and the new environment, and of adjusting federal incentives and policies for frontier migration was severely underestimated by the government. In this section, I briefly describe the implementation of the colonization schemes, give a general characterization of the *colonos* who arrived in the region, and provide an account of their production systems.

A traditional orthogonal road design known as “the fish-bone” pattern was widely implemented in colonization projects throughout the Amazon Basin; it gave little regard to soils and other landscape characteristics. The colonization scheme created in the Transamazon region was composed by the main road and two opposite side-roads every 5 km (Figure 6.1). The initial configuration for the colonization scheme was a ten-kilometer-wide strip of land on either side of the highway set aside for small farmers who were to receive one hundred hectares plots each, usually in a lay-out of 500m x 2000m. The design of these projects was developed and supervised by INCRA according to a hierarchical Rural-Urban Settlement Plan. It included an *agrovila* (settler house and limited facilities), an *agrópolis* (intermediate administrative center), and a *ruropolis* (small town with bigger facilities) (Moran 1981, 1990; Schminck and Wood 1992, Schlecht 1990).

Altamira was chosen to be the first colonization scheme in Brazilian Amazonia because of the incidence of fertile soils (*terra roxa*) in the region. Due to the absence of a more detailed soil map for the region, the extension and exact location of these fertile soils were unknown. However, it turned out that the soils of the Altamira region were far from being homogeneously fertile, but rather were a mosaic of different nutrient-poor soils.

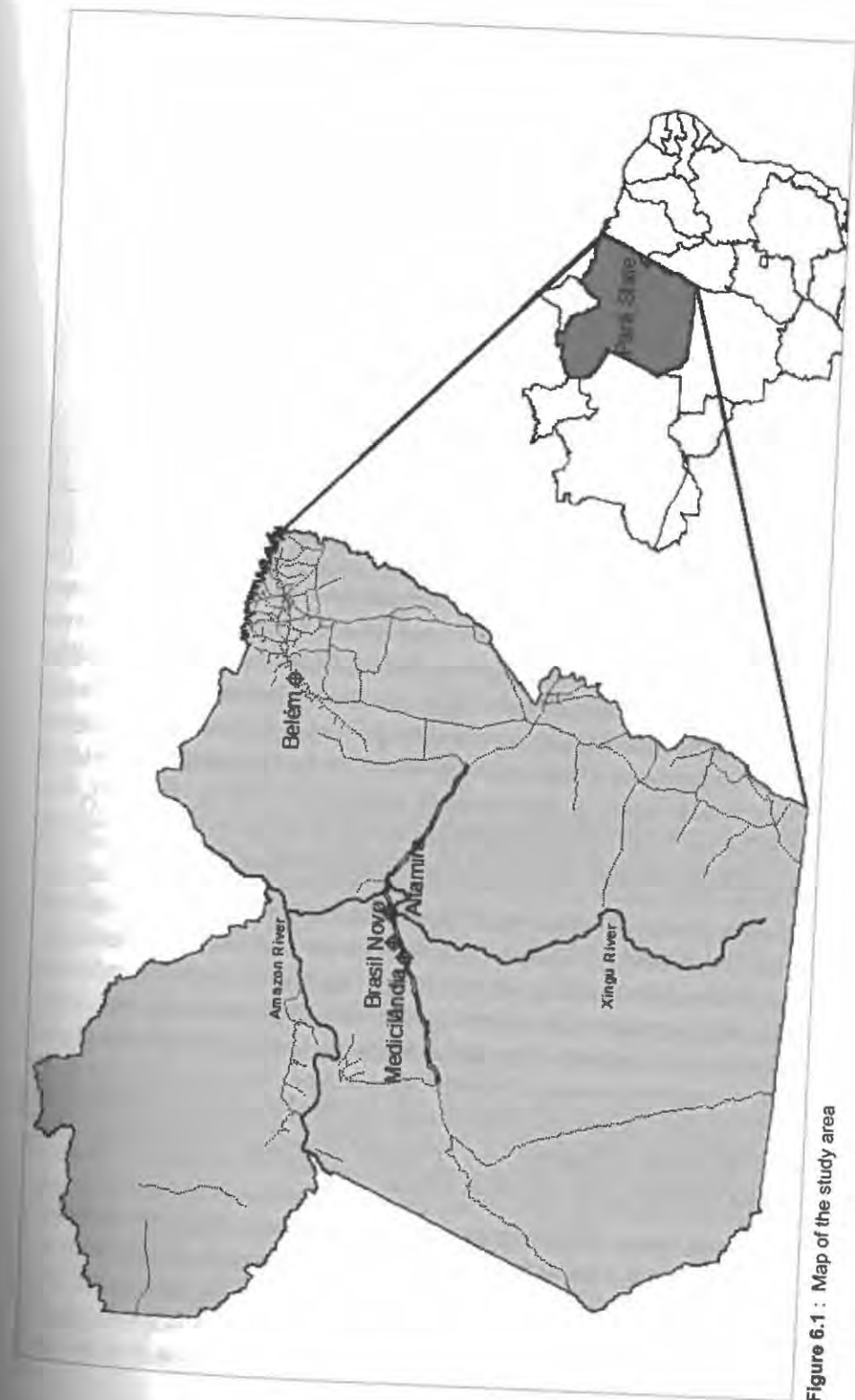


Figure 6.1 : Map of the study area

The current rural population along the Transamazon Highway is a mixture of indigenous people, *caboclos* and migrants from different regions of Brazil. Of these, the *colono* farmers form the largest part and therefore play a prominent role in the development and expansion of the agricultural frontier. According to Hall (1997), about two-thirds of Amazonia's rural population (roughly 4.5 million people) depend primarily on agriculture rather than on forest extractivism or fishing for subsistence and cash income¹².

As on many frontiers, the *colonos* that migrated to the Amazon in the context of the Transamazon colonization program were highly heterogeneous and represent an extremely diverse group in terms of places of origin, cultural background, farming experience, financial assets, and level of education. Even after thirty years when the second and even third generations have been born in the region, cultural heterogeneity is still an outstanding characteristic of this social group.

At the time when the colonization schemes were founded, the government recruited migrants mainly from the northeastern and southern parts of Brazil. In this process, the government planners assumed that the agricultural performance of the *colonos* obeyed the respective stereotypes that circulated for the different regions. For example, the native "*caboclos*" were considered lazy and illiterate, and were attributed with a preference for hunting over farming. In the same way, the landless poor of the Northeast were considered to have a low level of technological skills and education. In contrast, the Southerners were incorporated in the colonization scheme with the goal of providing a "demonstration effect" under the assumption that they would "teach" other settler groups advanced agricultural methods. However, data obtained by Moran (1981) on agricultural production found no evidence to support this assumption of "cultural" advantage in farm management of Southerners.

Studies by Moran and others have shown that more important than "cultural" traditions of "sophisticated" farming methods in the settlers' places of origins were three other factors: initial capital, openness for new agricultural practices, and strong social networks. The relationship between having initial capital and being a successful farmer is obvious. Farmers with more capital had more funds for buying tools or even hiring labor in order to increase efficiency of production. The two other factors are also closely related. The curiosity for learning agricultural practices suitable to the ecology of the region is enhanced by a strong and diversified social network which can stimulate borrowing and innovation (Moran 1981).

In the early stages of settlement, most of the *colonos* that came to farm in the Transamazon area were unfamiliar with both the resources of the forest and the various ways of exploiting them (Moran 1988). One of the newcomers' most important strategies to succeed in the frontier was interaction with local *caboclos* who brokered the respective knowledge. The successful newcomers were the ones



Photo 6.1 : Pictures of migrant farmer families in the study area, illustrating the migrants' diverse origins and ethnic composition (photo: Marina Campos)

who sought advice from the local people, recognizing that they themselves did not know how to deal with the new environment. They also realized that the government's technical personnel assigned to help them were probably as inexperienced in farming in the rain forest as they were¹³.

One of the key factors in the evolution of smallholder agricultural systems along the Transamazon was the identification of different soil types and their respective potentialities in terms of crop cultivation. The ability to recognize the best soils and select their lots accordingly allowed certain pioneer farmers to accumulate substantial capital and goods over time. On the other hand, pioneers established on poor soils had very limited options. Today, later *colono* arrivals along the Transamazon recognize and classify their soils and choose their agricultural crops accordingly. Crops tend to dominate in farm lots with good soils, whereas cattle dominate on poor soils.

Besides soil limitations, the *colonos'* farming options were also strongly shaped by the policies in force and financial incentives made available during the different stages of the implementation of the colonization scheme. At the start of the colonization program, economic incentives for planting annual crops, such as credits and subsidies, were offered by the government, with the aim of feeding a growing urban population. The most common annual crops planted were rice, beans, corn and manioc, which are collectively known as "*lavoura branca*" (literally translated as "white cultivation"). Although the plantation of annual crops has diminished drastically in the region, until today most *colonos* still maintain their subsistence fields, which are locally called

roças. Therefore, planting beans, corn, rice, and manioc for their own consumption still plays a major role in their survival strategy at the frontier (Moran 1981, Smith 1982, Steward 1994).

In the late 1980s, using similar economic incentives as the ones for annual crops (such as bank credits and rural assistance), the government started encouraging farmers to engage in planting perennial crops for regional markets. Gradually, the latter were incorporated into the colonos' plots. Sugar cane (*saccharum officinarum*), cocoa (*theobroma cacao*), coffee (*coffea arabica*), and black pepper (*piper nigrum*) were the most common in the region. However, in addition to better soils, cash crops require long-term investments in labor and capital, and not many farmers have good soils or can afford this investment. Due to better yields and higher prices, cash crops are preferred where soils permit them. Today, most *colono* farmers produce annual crops such as beans, corn, rice, and manioc for their own consumption. Cash-crop production, on the other hand, remains hampered to this day by fluctuations in market prices, frequent crop diseases, and lack of infra-structure for commercialization and transportation.

Even when *colono* farmers are able to harvest their crops successfully, they still face other major challenges, such as storing, transporting and marketing their agricultural products under conditions of a weak infrastructure and price fluctuation. Although some cooperatives were created to facilitate commercialization, they have been very inefficient. Agricultural uncertainties and the lack of minimum infrastructure for commercialization are keeping *colonos* locked in a battle for survival (Moran 1981, Smith 1982).

To make matters worse, in the Transamazon region, like in the whole Amazonia, the governmental model of agricultural extension is still largely following the formula referred to by Scott (1998) as "production and profit". Technicians are trained to focus only on one particular crop or system that the government wants to promote, with no concerns to the farmers' overall needs or the property as a whole. Unfortunately this is a common story in many rural places around the world. Consequently, this simplistic model of agrarian extension fails to represent and incorporate the typically complex and changing concerns of real farmers and their communities (Dove 1994, Scott 1998).

Several works have conceptualized and identified the various stages that compose the processes and patterns of household cycles and land use change among small farmers in Amazonia at the agricultural frontier (Pichón 1996, 1997; Perz 2001, 2002; Brondízio et al. 2002, Moran et al. 2002). Thus, these diverse activities ranging from clearing the forest to planting annuals and perennials to raising cattle are dynamic and interacting activities which are used by *colonos* at different stages of settlement. This pattern of successional life-cycles that the *colonos*' plots experience at different stages of the settlement is defined by Brondízio et al. (2002) as the "colonist footprint".

In the past two decades, the establishment of agroforestry systems, mainly associated with cocoa, has become a more common agricultural activity along the Transamazon as well as on other agricultural frontiers. *Colono* farmers have started to develop agroforestry consortia through extensive experimentation with native and exotic species. In contrast to the top-down agroforestry systems developed and prescribed by government institutions, these farmer-driven systems are more diverse. Yet farmers' creativity and knowledge in developing agroforestry systems have received little attention from governmental research institutions¹⁴.

Although they still depend on burning the forest for their livelihood, *colono* farmers are developing a growing awareness of the importance of planting trees in their plots. *Colonos* are starting to plant mainly highly valuable timber trees such as mahogany (*swetenia macrophylla*) and cedar (*cedrela spp.*), which are usually planted in their agroforestry plots or home gardens. Although these are slow-growing trees, and take several decades for maturation, many *colonos* see this practice as a long-term investment that will benefit their children. However, the costs of finding the seeds and other steps connected with this activity at present still keeps this option from being adopted widely. To overcome these obstacles, the new trend of planting trees needs to be resolutely encouraged, promoted, and financially supported by the government and its responsible agencies.

My data and the studies conducted by Muchagata (1997) emphasize the surprisingly wide knowledge of existing forest resources which *colonos* have, not only for household use, but also for market purposes. In *colono* households, more than fifty species are known as important sources for saleable timber, medicine, nutrition, and construction¹⁵. Moreover, the *colonos* are now keenly aware that forest depletion has a significant negative impact on their household economies.

Also, ethnobotanical data on the home gardens of *colono* farmers illustrate a great diversity of plants and uses. Like in most home gardens, the majority of species cultivated are exotic species with a very long history of domestication, such as coconut and mango; however the *colono* farmers' home gardens reveal a significant incorporation of native species mainly for food purposes, such as açai (*Euterpe oleracea*), cupuaçu (*Theobroma grandiflora*), and urucum (*Bixa orellana*). Moreover, the fact that settlers from different places of origin usually favor different plant species in their home gardens also contributes to the overall diversity of these systems¹⁶.

Another important point is that migrants to Amazonia have proven to be capable of both acquiring environmental knowledge and transforming local technologies; they do this in ways different from the local people. Settlers' distinct perception and knowledge of natural resource systems have a significant impact on local farming systems (Steward 1994, Hall 1997, Muchagata 1997, Atran et al. 1999, Muchagata and Brown 2000). As this section hopes to show, the *colono* farmers, like any other



Photo 6.2 : *Colono* with big Brazil nut tree left standing in his cacao agroforest (photo: Marina Campos)

farmers, are far from being static. They are constantly learning, experimenting with, and improving their agricultural systems. Most studies of indigenous and non-indigenous agricultural systems alike lack this dynamic perspective of knowledge acquisition through borrowing from other groups or through experimentation. This dynamic aspect of the acquisition of agricultural knowledge becomes even more relevant when the farmers are faced with a new and unknown environment¹⁷. As a result of the *colonos*' openness for experimentation and learning after three decades in this new environment, several innovative resource management strategies emerged and were consolidated.

In short, with the knowledge acquired from other social groups (mainly *caboclos*) and through their own experiences, over time some *colonos* began to experiment with natural forest management and agroforestry. Successively, these non-indigenous farmers started developing their own hybrid knowledge systems, which derived from their specific background, culture, and previous experience while they interacted in a new environment and formed a new society.

The emergence of "forest people" and the devaluation of *colono* farmers in public discourse

An understanding of the genealogy of conservation and the history of development discourses which have produced public images and stereotypes of the Amazon forest

and its inhabitants is essential to explain attitudes and biases in the representation of rural people's life-styles and their production systems. Therefore, in this section, I want to discuss how the labeling of certain social groups as "forest stewards" consequently relegates others to the status of "forest villains."

Indigenous peoples around the world (as well as many rural farmers) have practiced and developed elaborate agriculture systems whose sophistication has long not been recognized by policy-makers and development planners. This oversight is not coincidental, but the expression of a structural and therefore widespread "political ignorance" in which debasing myths of indigenous peoples and their livelihood systems are "created by powerful minds of urban elites that benefit from a vulnerable peasantry" (Dove 1983). In the late 1980s, several studies and reinterpretations of Amazonian indigenous agricultural systems have revealed a sophisticated ecological and economic logic behind these practices (see e.g. Posey 1985, Balée 1993, Alcorn 1993, Denevan 2001). This shift in scholars' perceptions of indigenous agricultural systems from "archaic and unproductive," and "environmentally destructive" to "sophisticated" was accompanied by a re-evaluation of indigenous societies as a whole during which they progressed from "primitive and backwards" to "wise bearers of ancient cultures" (Slater 2000).

The majority of studies about Amazonian community-based resource management have focused on indigenous peoples, and more recently on rubber tappers and other forest people, as the only "true" holders of this kind of knowledge. Although these studies of indigenous agriculture systems have partially changed people's images of forest people, there are other rural groups which are still subjected to the same biases. As a consequence, some Amazonian social groups, such as indigenous people and rubber tappers, gained recognition as "natural conservationists" (Conklin and Graham 1995). This recognition is strongly associated with their long history of occupancy in the region. According to Little (1999), the idea of belonging to a place is one of the strong components of the environmental discourse that has emerged in contemporary social and environmental movements. The other component that favors Native Amazonians' and like groups' "green image" has to do not only with the fact that their land use practices have little negative environmental impact, but also that these practices enrich forest diversity (see e.g. Posey 1985, Balée 1993, Alcorn 1993, Denevan 2001).

Therefore, in Amazonia, rubber tappers and indigenous groups in association with metropolitan environmentalists started using environmental discourse as a powerful tool for what were, in fact, social struggles. Pulido (1998) coins the term "ecological legitimacy," which in her own definition "is associated with environmental stewardship that is the practice of caring for the land in a sustainable manner". As a concept, ecological legitimacy can draw from different sources and be shaped in different ways in various contexts. This concept is directly related to notions of cultural essentialism

and romanticized cultural heritages and is embedded in pre-conceived ideas that some cultures are inherently more sensitive to nature than are others.

Based on these assumptions, different social groups and their allies reconstruct and valorize natural or cultural communities that have been historically and politically subjugated (Escobar and Alvarez 1992, Pulido 1998, Brosius 1999). However, the greening of their discourses and identities is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it gives international as well national visibility to their struggles, helps them secure territorial rights and maybe even contributes to their political empowerment. On the other hand, by portraying themselves as forest stewards or natural conservationists, they run the risk of falling into a trap: wedding their movements to the environmentalist discourse might tie them to stewardship responsibilities that they may not fully agree with or be unable to guarantee in the long term.

Through the recognition of indigenous peoples and rubber tappers as "natural conservationists", these Amazonian groups secured astonishing gains in terms of the demarcation of group territories and the creation of extractives reserves (Allegratti 1990, Conklin and Graham 1995). The "forest people" concept created by conservationists tends to obscure the much broader and numerically far more significant group of small migrant farmers in the region. Therefore, one of the so far little commented-on dangers of the veneration of those labeled "forest people" is the concomitant exclusion of those considered unworthy of that label.

In contrast to the "green" image of indigenous groups, rubber tappers and *caboclos*, the *colono* farmers have been viewed as the "villains" of the forest, or, as noted by Nygren (1999), they comprise the "disembedded" or "incomplete" others who fail to qualify for the forest people's "pristine otherness." So, whereas indigenous people were glorified, migrants were vilified (Hecht and Cockburn 1989). Migrants, through both a governmental and non-governmental lens, have become convenient scapegoats for deforestation and other manifestations of frontier politics. In contrast to prevailing views about indigenous forest-dwellers, *colono* peasants are credited with the "mentality of pioneering" and the "culture of mining the environment" and are said to lack any regard for the latter's conservation (Nygren 1999).

These representations are inevitably political (Nygren, *ibid.*); more attention should be paid to such systematically distorted images and the power structures in which the respective social groups are caught up and upon which they act back. More importantly, the dichotomy between "pristine conservationists" and "despoiling intruders" reflect less objective truths but a highly contingent and eminently changeable global power constellation. The discourse of forest people's "stewardship" has its roots in the biodiversity discourse of a powerful environmentalist movement and the latter's wish that forest dwellers' "wisdom" and knowledge be made a resource to benefit all of humanity. The notion that *colono* farmers are incapable of practicing

"rational" – i.e. ecologically adaptive and sustainable – forms of agriculture comes from two main assumptions. First, since they are not "native," it is assumed that they cannot hold knowledge about appropriate uses and management of either agricultural systems or forests. Implicit in this assumption is the notion that *colonos* are static farmers who are incapable of learning, experimenting with, or improving their agricultural systems. Second, and conversely, it is assumed that *colono* agriculture, and the deforestation that it causes, is not "rational", and therefore not open for mitigative intervention by e.g. the changing of policy parameters. To sum up, the implications of the misunderstanding and misjudgment of *colono* farmers by policy makers and government officials has contributed immensely to the malfunctioning of colonization schemes in Brazilian Amazonia.

The emergence of grassroots organizations and the political transformation of *colono* farmers

The national political opening with the end of the military dictatorship in the 1980s coincided with the increasing mobilization of grassroots movements in Amazonia such as indigenous groups, rubber tappers, and also *colono* farmers. What began as isolated and sporadic local protests evolved in the following decade into resistance movements that found allies among domestic leftist parties, and, even more importantly, environmentalist lobbies and social democrats from abroad (Schmink and Wood 1992). In this section, I want to examine the trajectory of the *colono* social movement and show how and why the adoption of the environmental discourse played an important part in this recognition.

In the areas along the Transamazon Highway, collective action in a grassroots context has grown substantially since the early 1980s. With support from the Catholic Church, rural workers' unions and other grassroots organizations started to consolidate and raise their voice. In the late 1980s, these mobilizations began to address not only social issues, but also environmental concerns such as the management of legal forest reserves and the creation of protected areas (Steward 1994, Hall 2000).

Protest articulation by different small farmers' groups was primarily a response to the abandonment by the government of the region in the late 1970s. In this new scenario, the Catholic Church and, more recently, grassroots NGOs have had an important role in facilitating the process of peasant mobilization and acting as communication channels (Hall 1997:222) In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of organizations linked to the Catholic Church were inspired by "Liberation Theology" and provided strong support for grassroots organizations. The *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Pastoral Land Commission, CPT) and the *Conselho Indígena Missionário* (Missionary Indian Council, CIMI) – in turn linked with the *Conselho Nacional dos*

Bispos do Brasil (Brazilian National Bishops' Council, CNBB) –, were created in the 1970s to coordinate church-supported activities for indigenous peoples, rubber tappers and *colonos* who were involved in land conflicts, primarily in Amazonia (Hall 1997)¹⁸. However, in distinction to earlier social movements like that of indigenous peoples and rubber tappers, the *colono* social movement has not succeeded in establishing alliances with international lobbies and pressure groups.

Besides the Catholic Church, local NGOs also have successfully performed a number of key functions in assisting communities in organizing for self-defense and articulating their view more effectively. This is especially important in the cases where there is little tradition of collective action, yet high heterogeneity, such as in the case of the *colono* farmers in the Brazilian Amazonian frontier.

In order to cover the financial gap caused by the withdrawal of the World Bank's support for large-scale development projects, Brazil's new constitution of 1988 created the *Fundos Constitucionais de Financiamento* (Constitutional Funds for Financial Support). According to the new constitution, 3% of national taxes would be diverted to a fund for investment in productive sectors in the least developed regions, such as the north, northeast and central west of the country. Of this 3%, the northern region of Brazil, including Amazonia, would be allocated 0.6%; these funds were dubbed *Fundos Constitucionais de Financiamento do Norte* (Constitutional Funds for Funding in the Northern region – commonly known as FNO) (Tura 2000).

One of the best examples for the emerging political power of the *colono* farmers of Amazonia is a new agricultural credit line negotiated in the 1990s. During this time, organized *colono* farmers represented by the union organizations FETAGRIs (Federations of Rural Workers of Pará State) and CUTs (Central Workers Unions)¹⁹, as well as by the National Rubber Tappers Council and other support organizations, questioned the form in which the FNO was being implemented and channeled into the Amazon. During this period, the democratization and simplification of access by small farmers to the FNO became the most important political goal of the Amazon's *Movimento Sindical de Trabalhadores Rurais* (Rural Workers Union Movement, MSTR).

The MSTR advanced this goal through a well-organized form of protest, called a *Grito do Campo* ("cry from the field" in literal translation), in major cities of the Amazon. Beginning in 1991, the *Grito do Campo I, II and III*, and *Gritos dos Povos da Amazônia* ("cry from the field" I, II, and III and "cries of the peoples of the Amazon") mobilized thousands of farmers. The *Gritos* lasted for a fixed period of time (usually 3-5 days), and were organized by the MSTR, with the support of NGOs, in order to propose and negotiate the reformulation of the FNO credit lines in a way that would answer to rural workers' needs.

These protests also forced the *Banco da Amazônia* (Bank of the Amazon, BASA), responsible for the FNO, to reshape the credit policies they had adopted. In

1993, with three of these events in less than two years, the government agreed to alter some of the credit lines and, most importantly, establish a special credit line for small farmers (Friends of the Earth 1996).

This new credit line became known as *FNO-especial* (Special FNO). It included several important innovations to address small farmers' needs and concerns. For example, it eliminated the requirement that farmers must hold legal title to their land to qualify for funds, allowing them, instead, to request funds as communities or associations of farmers. Through the *Gritos* the rural workers had succeeded in organizing themselves, reflecting their own condition, and fighting for their own voice, access to government funds and political power. What makes the *FNO-especial* different from previous regional policies is that it was not established by executive fiat, but, rather, that it was the product of intense social mobilization by rural producers and their families who tried to shape their own reality (Tura 2000)²⁰.

In Altamira, these local institutions and organizations encompass the Rural Workers' Unions of Altamira (*Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais de Altamira e de Brasil Novo*, STRs), and the *Movimento pela Sobrevivência da Transamazônica* (Movement for Survival along the Transamazon, MPST). The latter is a result of intense grassroots organizing efforts in the region by the Catholic Church, and was founded in 1991.

The *Movimento pela Sobrevivência da Transamazônica* was originally formed by farmers' unions, associations, cooperatives, teachers' unions and women's groups, and it covered the area not only of the Transamazon Highway but also the northern part of the Xingu river. The regional plan elaborated by the MPST had two main objectives (MDTX 1991): First, to establish conditions that would secure local people's tenurial rights and decrease migration to other, ecologically yet more vulnerable regions. The second objective was to stimulate public debate on existing policies for the region, with the aim of identifying more promising development strategies for the region, which would have at their core human well-being and social and economic progress, without causing environmental degradation.

Currently, MPST is called *Movimento para o Desenvolvimento da Transamazônica e Xingu* (Movement for the Development of the Transamazon and Xingu regions). The change in name of this grassroots organization reflects a shift in the role that it intends to play in the colonization schemes. According to the *colonos'* leaders, the old name was dropped because the organization's concerns have seen a transformation from mere survival for the immigrant population in the region to the desire to collaborate and play an active role in that region's development. Their regional forum is comprised of two sectors, represented by urban and rural organizations. Connecting these sectors, the *Fundação Viver, Produzir e Preservar* (Foundation for Living, Production and Preservation, FVPP) relays funding and technical assistance to the organizations. At

present, the MDTX represents between 5,000 and 10,000 farmers organized in thirteen farmers' unions and more than twenty-five cooperatives and associations. Because of its proven capacity for mobilizing large crowds, MDTX has emerged as one of the strongest and best-known regional farmers' organizations in Brazil.

Reaping the fruits of patient legworking by the Catholic Church, the *colono* movement today can claim support from 13 municipalities, enabling it to articulate itself at the regional level. Essential for uniting the migrants behind the MDTX's struggle was the fact that the *colonos* everywhere faced largely identical conditions: momentous economic problems, miserable road conditions, absence of health posts and an ailing educational system, just to list a few. To the extent that they were organized in MDTX, this scaling-up to the regional level not only gave *colonos* a stronger voice, but also led them to reframing their demands in terms which were no longer purely local. As we will see later, the movement's regional identity had profound implications for the formulation of a cohesive regional development plan which, among others, incorporated environmental concerns.

In the 2004 mayoral elections, leaders from the *colono* social movement won elections in three of the thirteen municipalities. Although these results seem ungainly, they, in fact, have historic dimensions since this is the first time that the *colono* movement managed to send representatives to municipal parliaments. With the coming to power of President Luiz Inácio da Silva, the *colonos*' political influence also increased on the national level.

Strong and powerful mobilization, together with effective and broad social networks, set against a backdrop of the election of a friendly government, combined to create a fertile ground for the *colonos*' political empowerment. The movement as a whole has strong connections to the Worker's party, which is now governing the country. Two former leaders of MDTX were recently elected congressmen, one each at the state and federal level. Both have their campaigns based on the consolidation of family-based agriculture, investment in family farmers that practice agriculture with low-impact forest management, and training young people for participation in a diversified and competitive economy which benefits from the brand name "Amazonia." On final count, the MDTX and its leaders' empowerment presupposed the existence of political opportunities in the Brazilian democratic regime; without them, the movement could not have grown and prospered the way it did.

Although most analysts interpret such empowerment as cooptation, Hellman (1992) prefers to see it as a step in the evolution of all social movements, to the extent that they all are interested in gaining legitimacy and forcing open some access to power. However, since the MDTX's leaders' empowerment is a fairly recent event, it is still early to determine how this empowerment will affect the agenda and concerns of the rest of the movement.

Embracing the environment: The proambiente program and the creation of regional protected areas

Three decades in the region gave the *colono* farmers the most important tool for developing a rural development plan: deep knowledge about the everyday reality and challenges of survival along the Transamazon. In 2000, the MDTX together with other grassroots institutions drew up a proposal for rural development that seeks to reconcile smallholder agricultural production with environmental conservation. This document, entitled *Projeto de Consolidação da Produção Familiar Rural e Contenção dos Desmatamentos na Transamazônica e Baixo Xingu* (Project for the Consolidation of Family-based Agriculture and the Containment of Deforestation along the Transamazon Highway and in the Lower Xingu Region), was negotiated with the state and federal governments. As the MDTX's leaders state, this regional plan represents an attempt to "democratize public policy" through the implementation of a plan in which government and farmers' organizations join as partners.

The *colonos*' regional development proposal promotes a reconciliation between agricultural production and forest conservation through the following measures: 1) change of settlement design, with a stress on the maintenance of legal forest reserves in larger communal areas; 2) creation of special agricultural formation centres in which students would alternate between lessons in school and home spells during which they translate newly-acquired knowledge into practice; 3) experiments with agricultural practices that operate without fire; 4) careful management of legal forest reserves; and 5) creation of two large (about 7 million ha) protected areas (FVPP 2000).

Land tenure reorganization would involve the implementation of a pilot project that includes the transfer of families who were assigned properties that are located far from the main highway, or are inappropriate for agriculture because the area in question lacks streams or has poor soils, to "abandoned" properties closer to the main highway. This pilot project would involve four municipalities and a total of 400 families (100 families per municipality), which are settled more than 10 km away from the main road. Moreover, the MDTX proposes to provide migrant families in the future with smaller (20 ha) yet agriculturally more viable²¹ plots than those handed out to them today. Legal forest reserves would be established in large blocks representing at least 50% of the landscape, instead of at the level of the individual plot or property where fragmentation and edge effects diminish the forest. This improved zoning practice would center around matching appropriate types of agricultural production and forest extraction activities with extant soil quality. Finally, according to this new scheme, settler families' incomes would no longer be based only on agriculture, but also on the extraction of forest products (FVPP 2000).

The regional development plan intends to establish small-scale family-based agriculture ("*agricultura familiar*") on the twin supports of an increase in agricultural productivity on degraded lands and the thoughtful management of legal forest reserves. Agricultural productivity would be raised through the introduction of agroforestry (including timber plantations and fruit trees on previously-cleared agricultural land), land preparation without the use of fire, and development of market chains for regional products. As envisioned, the management of legal forest reserves will hinge on activities such as selective logging, extraction of non-timber forest products, and hunting (FVPP 2000).

The MDTX campaigns also pursue other environmental goals. With other local organizations, the *colono* movement successfully mobilized against the building of a hydroelectric dam on the Xingu River. As their reason for opposing it, the MDTX and its fellow organizations pointed to the likelihood of project's having extensive environmental and social impacts on the region.

For the purposes of this paper, my analysis of the *colonos*' regional development plan will focus on two major environmental aspects: 1) the creation of the *Proambiente*, a "green" program system to reward farmers for the environmental services²² that their management practices provide, and 2) the creation of protected areas as part of a conservation plan on the regional level.

Proambiente is an excellent example of a bottom-up proposal; it was created to amend the FNO-Special for *colono* farmers of the early 1990s which, in recent years, has come to be viewed as a failure by most involved stakeholders. In spite of the fact, as stated previously, that it had been shaped by the *colono* farmers' movement, the implementation and regulation of FNO-Special by the federal government had deleterious consequences for the *colono* farmers. First, farmers did not have the freedom to choose the combination of crops they wanted to plant on their plots, but had to obey the dictate of the BASA bank and the agrarian extension agencies of the government. Moreover, they were forced to buy seeds and calves from the big local landowners who usually offered these goods in low quality. Consequently, the inflexibility of the FNO-Special program resulted in mounting debts for farmers and higher deforestation rates that made *colonos*' lives in the region, if anything, more miserable.

The main ideas behind the current *Proambiente* program have originated from the rural union movement in whose ranks they were conceived and debated for the first time in 2000. Since then, there has been an intense interest in helping to further shape and implement the program, with a strong involvement of governmental as well as non-governmental institutions representing different sectors of society. The basic idea is that the program would provide incentives for the implementation of production systems which are considered to be more sustainable by taking into account the environmental services they would provide. Some examples of projects

that may expect funding from the *Proambiente* are: Enrichment of secondary or degraded forests, establishment of agroforestry systems with valuable timber species, *silvipastoral* systems, and community forest management with multiple uses.

However, from 2000-2003 the initial idea of creating a "green" credit line by the *colonos*' grassroots organization took on a life of its own during negotiations with President Luiz Inácio da Silva's administration, and evolved into a complex environmental program. This as yet untested approach became a greatly expanded public policy and as such was broadened in several ways. First, the green credit line is now part of a larger program, entitled *Programa de Desenvolvimento Socioambiental da Produção Familiar Rural – Proambiente* (Socio-environmental Program for the Development for Family-based Agriculture). Second, although the program has its roots in *colono* grassroots organizations from the region alongside the Transamazon Highway, the beneficiaries of the program now include other rural communities like rubber tappers, *caboclos* and indigenous peoples. Third, the program now reaches out to rural populations elsewhere in Brazil and is thus no longer restricted to the Amazon region²³.

The *Proambiente* Program is now a federal program directed by the Brazilian Ministry of Environment (*Ministério do Meio Ambiente*, MMA) in partnership with civil society. The main difference between the *Proambiente* and other credit lines after 1990 is the introduction of the notion of "environmental services." The *Proambiente* is based on the "perception of civil society that environmental degradation causes social and economic problems in rural areas" (Little 2004) and that, therefore, new and better-adapted production systems are needed. However, new and sustainable forms of production cause additional costs. So *Proambiente* operates as a compensation mechanism for environmental services, with compensation taking the form of direct financial remuneration²⁴, support for projects, and community development (MMA 2005a, 2005b). The idea behind this "payment" for environmental services is that the services offered by rural producers benefit society in general, while their costs are shouldered by the latter alone. Some examples of environmental services from Amazonian *colonos* who have taken to more sustainable production methods are the protection of air, water and soil qualities; a progressive reduction in agrochemical substances; reduction of accidental fire risk; biodiversity maintenance; carbon sequestration through reduced deforestation as well as reforestation efforts (Little 2004).

Since September 2002, twelve pilot centers were established where the implementation of the program is taking place. There is one center in each state of Brazilian Amazonia, and three special centers for the entire region: one dealing with indigenous communities, one with fishermen, and one with extractivists. About 300-500 families are involved in each center. So, although small farmers are going to have their management activities implemented in their individual plots, the program result

will have a great impact at the aggregate level of the different states and the region as a whole (Little *ibid.*, MMA 2005a, 2005b).

As stated earlier, official agrarian extension programs in the Amazon are rigid and disconnected from farmers' realities and needs. Therefore, another important contribution of *Proambiente* is the reconceptualization of rural extension. In the *Proambiente* Program, rural extension is tailored according to farmers' needs, and adjusted to socio-economic and environmental factors. The proposal takes a holistic approach to the question of how to manage *colono* plots, and allows for a larger time frame where planning is concerned. For planning and for monitoring land practices, the extension personnel from the outside will work together with the representatives of local communities.

To sum up, the *Proambiente* program has come into existence because of the interplay of several auspicious factors, such as the *colono* farmers' heightened environmental awareness, the consolidation of their identity, successful grassroots mobilization, and the political opportunity that came with the rise to power of "Lula" da Silva's government. Since the program still awaits its full implementation, it is at present too soon to evaluate the outcomes of *Proambiente*; however, the program's history to this point and its bottom-up conception augur well for the prospect of opening a public debate on policy issues that involves the Brazilian government and the Amazonian population.

The other major proposition of MDTX's regional development plan which has direct relevance for regional conservation is the establishment of two large conservation units in the area. Whereas managing individual *colono* plots in a more sustainable manner will certainly help lower deforestation rates, the cumulated outcome of such individual behavioral changes should not be expected to solve the present forest crisis. Closing access to vast areas by declaring them protected areas is a much more sweeping step to environmental protection. The two areas earmarked for conservation are the "*Mosaico da Terra do Meio*" (Middle Land Mosaic) and the "*Verde para Sempre*" (Forever Green). Once established, these reserves (covering about 7.5 million hectares) will together comprise the largest nature reserve in the tropics. Moreover, in connection with several indigenous reserves and other protected areas, the planned protected areas at the headwaters of the Xingu Basin – comprising a total of 25 million hectares – will form the world's largest corridor of protected tropical forest.

In December 2004 and later in February 2005, the Brazilian government declared "*Verde para Sempre*" and part of the "*Mosaico da Terra do Meio*" official extractive reserves. This represented a very important achievement for the *colono* movement, especially because in the past, these areas had been prominent arenas of land conflicts.

In view of the conventional understanding of *colonos* as forest-depleting ecological villains, this demand for the establishment of large conservation areas seems

paradoxical. Upon second look, however, and as we place *colono* struggles in a broader ecological, social, and political context, it becomes apparent that *colono* concerns and parks in the vicinity of *colono* settlement areas are two goals that do not necessarily contradict each other. First, advocacy for protected areas is intimately associated with the *colonos*' rising consciousness about the importance of forest conservation, not only because the latter provide vital ecological services (e.g. climate regulation, soil fertility), but also because they are crucial for maintaining local and regional biodiversity (FVPP 2000). Among *colono* ranks, awareness has set in that both aspects are central to the *colonos*' quality of life in their new homes along the Transamazon Highway. Second, the planned protected areas can also function as buffer zones which isolate the *colonos*' lands from the truly destructive forces of frontier expansion, such as loggers, cattle ranchers and soy bean farmers, with whom there were violent conflicts. An associated reason behind the creation of these protected areas is the fact that "public lands" in the frontier context *mean de facto* "nobody's land" which can therefore be claimed and controlled by powerful, large land holders. This process leads to intense land tenure instability and violent land disputes. By setting aside large tracts of land as protected areas, *colonos* are "closing the frontier" and preventing further, disorganized frontier expansion. The creation of these units would, therefore, isolate them from future confrontation with expansive and aggressive soybeans producers and cattle ranchers.

Some authors (see e.g. Castellanet and Jordan 2002) have recently cautioned that the *colonos*' embracing of the environment is merely empty political rhetoric for the purpose of establishing political legitimacy. Certainly, *colonos*' and environmentalists' notions of and reasons for promoting forest conservation are quite different. However, seen over the past ten years, the *colono* regional development plan, and more specifically the *Proambiente* and the proposed creation of protected areas along the Transamazon highway, together represent the most promising public policy implemented for the Amazon region with a view to reconciling development and conservation. Remarkably, none of these policy proposals stemmed from researchers' or environmentalists' ideas.

As mentioned previously, modernist developers in the 1960s and 1970s viewed *colono* farmers as "inherently submissive and stoical bearers of their fate" (Hall 2000). However, in the 1990s, recognizing that they shared common interests, *colonos* started working together to improve their lot. Community organizations facilitated access to credit lines and provided a political voice for the *colono* farmers (Wood and Walker 2000). However, more recently, a combination of external and internal factors guided the trajectories of Amazonian *colono* farmers into a new direction. My data show that they have successfully transformed themselves from mere "puppets" of state planners to self-conscious regional protagonists who are consolidating themselves as a well-organized constituency, influencing policy decisions, and increasingly projecting themselves as principled and reliable stewards of the environment (Hall 2000).

Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the *colono* movement and the concomitant empowerment of the *colonos* come at a high price. The price of increasing political power and legitimacy in contested landscapes of territory and power is violence, death threats, and assassinations. While we know that violence is a standard characteristic of frontier areas, the Ministry of Agrarian Development (formerly the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, or *Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário*), seems to believe that it has evidence that violence at the frontier has declined in the past years (see MDA's web-site at: www.mda.gov.br) However, unresolved murders are still a common occurrence at the frontier. In the last four years, three prominent grassroots leaders were assassinated for reporting illegal logging operations, publicly questioning hydroelectric dams, and for defending land claims.

In 2001, the coordinator of MDTX, Ademar "Dema" Federecci, was murdered in his home because of his role in publicly denouncing illegal logging and opposing the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam planned for the Xingu River. In 2002, another rural leader, Bartolomeu Morais "Brasília" da Silva, was tortured and murdered because he had denounced cattle ranchers who had expelled *colono* landholders²⁵. More recently, in February of 2005, the American nun, Sister Dorothy Stang, was murdered by cattle ranchers in a settlement project along the Transamazon Highway. Sister Dorothy was an important religious activist who had made the *colonos'* cause her own. Battling cattle ranchers and loggers, she advocated land demarcation for *colono* settlements as a condition for future programs. Moreover, she also fought for better infrastructure, education, and health conditions in the region. Like Dema and Brasília, she was strongly connected to the MDTX.

However, not only grassroots leaders were murdered at this perennial Amazonian frontier. Unfortunately, murders of small farmers in the context of land conflicts are still a common occurrence in the Amazon region, and they rarely get investigated. While Brazilian politics undoubtedly have undergone momentous changes in recent years, it still seems that for the time being, the power of guns and physical force exceeds that of the grassroots organization in the contest for the region's future. The rampant rural violence can undermine the forest conservation agenda of Amazon farmers (Nepstad et al. 2002). Consequently, the promising attempts at designing a regional development proposal that would reconcile agricultural settlements with forest conservation – described at length in this paragraph –, are still at risk.

Conclusions

Forty years of development projects in Amazonia have had great social and environmental impacts in the region, without yielding the returns in wealth and prosperity that the government promised. The top-down, predatory Amazon development model designed



Photo 6.3 : New York Times articles by Larry Rohter commenting on the da Silva and Stang murders and the general situation of land conflicts in the region. Left: article published on October 12, 2001 ("Amazon Populists' Killing Exposes Bitter Conflicts"). Right: article published on February 14, 2005 ("Brazil Promises Crackdown After Nun's Shooting Death"; photos: Marina Campos)

by the military regime was based on the integration of the regional economy with the national and global economies through large-scale development schemes. Government institutions had a large role in coordinating these programs and reproducing through them the power relations that were characteristic of the rest of the country, exacerbating existing and creating new problems in the Amazon region.

The growing concern about the destruction of the rainforest and the upsurge of the conservation discourse which gave rise to the concepts of "forest peoples" and "indigenous knowledge" have resulted in the valorization of certain groups (indigenous groups and rubber tappers), to the detriment of those now tagged "non-forest people" (such as the *colono* farmers) who were constructed as the antithesis to the former. The meagre attention paid by academics to *colonos'* knowledge of forest resources and management is a product of the assumption that because the latter are not native, they necessarily lack such knowledge and, therefore, have no concern for the environment. As a consequence, standard images fostered by the government portray *colono* farmers as "forest villains" who are singled out as culprits for Amazonia's deforestation.

While deforestation by *colonos* undeniably takes place, there is, however, a compelling logic behind it. Land clearing, until today, is one of the cheapest and most efficient ways to establish land ownership. Furthermore, the conflicting nature of agrarian and environmental policies in Brazil places *colonos* in an unresolved dilemma. Therefore, the deforestation that results from *colono* land use practices

was, and still is, more a matter of inadequate policies that constrained the settlers' choices than the outgrowth of an ill-adapted production system.

Colono farmers who in the wee days of the colonization programs were used by the government to achieve geopolitical goals, are today undergoing a process of profound transformation. During three decades on the frontier they were able to create and calibrate their own systems of production and natural resource use. These evolving production systems rest on knowledge acquired from other local populations and through self-experimentation and *colonos'* critical review of their own experiences. Close examination of *colonos'* management systems reveals that as the time spent in the region increases and environmental knowledge is accumulated, *colono* farmers are able to recreate adaptive management strategies at the plot level.

Moreover, a broader analysis of *colono* land practices that includes the political and social arenas (usually not considered in studies of *colono* adaptation at the settlement frontier), reveals a more dynamic image of *colonos* which is, indeed, a far cry from received ideas that portray them as passive puppets. My study shows that *colono* farmers are proving a capacity for self-organizing, generating dialogue, and advancing their own solutions for the problems associated with their role at the frontier.

The analysis of the emergence and trajectory of the *colono* social movement in Brazilian Amazonia shows a complex set of actors who dynamically interact with different cultures and economies at local and supra-local levels. The characteristics of the *colono* social movement raise some interesting points. First, my insights suggest that it is necessary to deconstruct ideas of a monolithic peasantry with no environmental concerns. Second, they show that movement participants' alliances with extra-local actors – in the case of the *colonos* the Catholic Church and urban unions – were extremely important for encouraging and invigorating social mobilization. Third, they confirm what we know from social movement theory that mobilization is usually followed by routinization, i. e. the creation of firm organizational structures and possibly the insertion of movement leaders in official political structures. Thus, after successful efforts to gain political legitimacy, the *colono* movement has had its representatives elected into political offices at the local, state and even federal levels.

Surprisingly at first look, the *colono* movement's proposal for regional development encompasses several environmental initiatives which we would not have expected from "non-forest people", suggesting that the proposition of *colonos* as eternal forest villains is open for revision. A second look at the matter shows that there is a "conservation logic" associated with *colono* farmers. The rationale behind *colonos'* concerns with forest conservation results from the fact that for them, the preservation of the forest comprises a structural necessity. This necessity can

be understood by analyzing the ecological, economic, political, and social contexts within which *colono* farmers operate at the frontier. In terms of ecological and economic necessities, forest conservation provides climate regulation, soil fertility, and forest resources. Moreover, the forest is crucial for the maintenance of the *colonos'* agricultural production system and, therefore, for their survival as a distinct social group. In terms of political necessity, the discourse of forest conservation plays an important role in generating political legitimacy for the *colonos*.

Although the MDTX was probably also driven by the desire to acquire political legitimacy and access to power, it also has genuine concerns about environmental degradation to the extent that it is associated with the development model propagated by previous governments. They surely do not share the same romantic ideals about "saving the forest for the jaguars" that motivate many conservationists, nor do they defend the theory that simply by embracing environmental concerns, no forest will need to be cut anymore. They also will not deny that *colonos* have been a part of the deforestation process.

Despite the fact that the rationale behind the *colono* movement's rationale for supporting forest conservation differs from that of most environmentalists, the *colonos'* adoption of an environmental discourse should not be construed as merely a rhetorical means to a political purpose. One cannot disagree that the creation and implementation of the *Proambiente* Program and the mosaic of protected areas which has sprung from the *colono* movement's development plan has been of the most successful efforts for forest conservation and people-oriented public policies in Amazonia in recent years. Moreover, these two forest conservation efforts, *Proambiente* at the plot and micro-regional level, and the mosaic at macro-regional level, are examples of natural resource management on different, yet complementary scales.

MDTX's proposals at the regional level raise interesting questions about the scale on which colonization projects and environmental conservation need to be devised. For decades, public policies oriented towards environmental conservation in colonization schemes have focused on the level of individual plots, calling into existence legal forest reserves of minuscule size, with little concern for their connectivity with the rest of the landscape. While improved management and the containment of deforestation on individual plots are certainly desirable, they can have only a limited impact on regional deforestation levels. In this context, the *colono* social movement proposes that environmental conservation initiatives make more sense on the regional than the local micro-level.

While indigenous peoples' and rubber tappers' movements and their environmentalist counterparts have used environmental discourses as a strategy of identity construction and a means for procuring political legitimacy, the way in which

reference to the environment is made in the *colono* movement is quite different. In the *colono* social movement there is no intention of creating a "green image" as the rubber tappers and indigenous groups have done with much success. For the *colonos*, forests should be preserved not for the "jaguars," but for the ecological services they provide for a larger human populace. Furthermore, forest preservation in the *colonos'* mould is a means for "closing" the frontier and isolating migrant smallholders from the aggressive expansion of commercial soybean planters and cattle ranchers.

Different than its predecessor movements of rubber tappers and indigenous peoples, the *colono* social movement is not international and has not yet received much international attention. In contrast with indigenous groups or rubber tappers, the concrete gains and access to power which the *colono* movement won were achieved by exclusive reliance on domestic resources. I believe there were several reasons why a transnational alliance was not essential in the case of *colono* mobilization. First, the political context was much different from the one which framed earlier struggles. Although the *colono* movement was born and raised under an authoritarian regime, it flourished during a democratic regime which offered recognition and facilitated a political dialogue on a national level. Second, several high-ranking officials in the current government have a background of involvement with previous social movements in the Amazon, and had sympathies for the *colonos'* cause. Lastly, the success of the mobilization of the rubber tappers and indigenous peoples set an example that provided inspiration to other grassroots movements like the one of the *colonos* and opened up a new window of opportunity for other groups' struggles.

How unique, then, is this story? Why did this movement emerge along the Transamazon Highway, instead of other places? The singularity of the case of the *colono* mobilization is due to a combination of factors that provided fertile ground for the emergence and development of the *colono* movement. I identified five key factors: 1) the existence of prominent local leaders with past experience of mobilization in their places of origin; 2) the cultivation of extensive and strong social networks within and outside the movement; 3) the acquisition of knowledge about the environment and, consequently, awareness of the latter's importance for *colono* survival and economic upliftment; 4) the capacity not only to mobilize within the parochial context of their own struggles, but more importantly, to develop programmatic links with other struggle (notably that of the conservationists); 5) the emergence of political opportunity at the federal as well as local levels (i. e. the rise to power of the Workers' Party).

Although the *colono* social movement achieved several of its goals, the fight is far from over. In a dynamic context of struggles, the challenges that the *colono* movement faces and is going to face in the near future are likely to threaten its unity. Future triumphs will not only depend on the *colonos'* continued ability to mobilize for their cause, but also on their alliances in Brazil's civil society and the fate of their

allies in national-level electoral politics. Moreover, rising levels of violence threaten the outcomes of *colono* mobilization. The rising stakes in environmental and social struggles at the Amazon frontier make this a key moment in understanding the role of *colono* organizations and their vision of better practice in resource management and regional development.

To conclude with, this story illustrates that *colono* migrant farmers were able to construct a collective identity, get organized, and build strategic alliances with other local and extra-local groups. In doing this, they successfully subverted simplistic notions of a monolithic and passive peasantry and confirmed the potential of social movements as sources of social change. Thus, strong grassroots organizations are an essential condition for a successful strategy of land use change that reconciles forest maintenance with the imperatives of agricultural productivity and livelihood security for migrant communities. Most importantly, however, the *colonos'* reinvention of themselves as defenders of the forest may have started a process of public re-evaluation of received stereotypes which have obscured too long the *colonos'* potential role as partners in the quest for better development and conservation practices.

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Notes

- 1 In this paper, I will be using the term '*colono*' for migrant small farmers. I prefer the term to its English equivalent, 'colonist', because the latter encompasses a broader range of land users – e.g. big ranchers – than *colono*, and therefore tends to be negatively charged in the literature.
- 2 The information and data presented in this paper were collected in the context of a dissertation project at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Preliminary research was conducted during two summers (2001 and 2002), followed by 18 months of field research along the Transamazon Highway (January 2003 - August 2004). Fieldwork concentrated on the municipalities of Altamira, Brasil Novo, and Medicilândia, but I traveled to other parts of the region as well. I lived in some of the colonization scheme villages, where I collected ethnographic data and conducted systematic surveys and a large amount of interviews. Interviews were also held with leaders and members of local grassroots organizations, rural technicians and governmental officials in the regional cities, as well as the state capital, Belém, and in the national capital, Brasília.
- 3 Colloquially the term *caboclo* is defined and translated as "rural backwoodsman" and has been used to designate any individual or population that lives a rural life. However, the formal definition of the term is associated with a racial mixture between Europeans (especially Portuguese) and Amerindians. *Caboclos*, then, are in a sense the product of the detribalization of Amerindians (Parker 1985).
- 4 The term "swidden agriculture" is used in this text as a synonym for "shifting cultivation" and "slash-and-burn agriculture" because it is sanctioned by scholarly use and less derogatory than the latter. For more detailed arguments in support of this terminological strategy, see Dove and Rhee (2004).
- 5 Although they represent groups with different and diverging political and social systems and forms of ecological adaptation, indigenous peoples, rubber tappers and *caboclos* are commonly referred to in the literature as "traditional people" or "forest people". These terms have emerged as a product of community-based conservation efforts and reflect ideas of "nativeness" or strong attachments to the land as well as a longer history of resource use. For a more thorough discussion of these terms see Little (2001).
- 6 Until today the Transamazon Highway is not more than a dirt road that becomes impassable during the rainy season (December-April). Migrants who have established themselves along its sides have ceased to view it as the launching pad into a better future as which it was portrayed when it was built. Says one clerk at a fuel station who was quoted by Schmink and Wood (1992:4): "It is a poor man's road. It links nothing but poverty from the Northeast to misery in Amazonia".
- 7 Just 3% of the soils designated for the allocation to the settlers in these colonization projects were considered fertile, and most of the area is hilly (Moran 1981, Smith 1992).
- 8 The new plan was implemented by president Médici, who just three years before had pronounced the government's dedication to the small farmers and landless poor of the northeast.
- 9 Little characterizes Amazonian frontiers as "perennial" because they "have not been opened and closed but reopened and reclosed again and again. The existence of frontiers in the region is not a one-time occurrence, a definitive arrival of modernity, but rather a perennial phenomenon spurred by a constant arrival of ever-new social groups seeking ever-new resources, and their subsequent reterritorialization based upon differential ways of appropriating geographical space" (Little 2001:3).
- 10 A more detailed and deeper analysis of settlers' decisions on land preparation as a function of forest types is part of my dissertation.

- 11 Originally, the Brazilian Forestry code stated that in the Amazon region private land estates should have 50% of their cover in forest as legal reserves; in the late 1990s when deforestation rates skyrocketed, the national congress increased the size of Amazonian legal reserves from 50% to 80%.
- 12 However, most Amazonian farmers nowadays combine agriculture with some extractivist activities.
- 13 A complete description of colonist agricultural systems and crops at the beginning of the Transamazon colonization program is provided by Moran (1981) and Smith (1982).
- 14 The biological and political evolution of cocoa agroforestry systems at the frontier of Altamira, Brasil Novo, and Medicilândia is fully described in Campos (forthcoming a).
- 15 I have attempted a more detailed analysis of *colono* forest knowledge in my dissertation.
- 16 The botanical richness and diversity of *colono* home gardens is described in greater detail in Campos (forthcoming b).
- 17 For a detailed analysis of the evolution and adaptation of *colono* farming systems see Veiga (2003).
- 18 Nonetheless, the Catholic Church as a whole has played a very controversial role vis-à-vis the Indians and the rural poor at the Amazonian frontier. While progressive church activists have played a vital role organizing community action and protest, and continue to do so, others follow a paternalistic line, which is non-confrontational and based on a "discourse of love" (Alves 1994, in Hall 1997).
- 19 FETAGRI is strong grassroots organization that represents more than 300 small farmers organizations in the state of Pará, Eastern Amazonia. CUT also is a very important workers' organization in urban settings in Brazil.
- 20 The discussion of the consequences as well as the failures associated in the implementation of the *FNO-especial* go beyond the objectives of this article. The main point about relating the struggles to do with *FNO-especial* is to highlight the successful fight for a credit line attuned to small holders realities, and the fact that it constituted a genuine victory for the *colono* social movement. For a detailed analysis of the implementation of the *FNO-especial*, see Tura (2000).
- 21 Today, the agricultural viability of plots in settlement areas is often hampered by unfavorable transport condition and bad soils.
- 22 Brazil's Department of the Environment (MMA 2005a, 2005 b) defines potential environmental services by forest users as: 1) carbon sequestration, 2) forest restoration, 3) conservation of soil, water and biodiversity, 4) progressive reduction in agrochemical use, 5) reduction of the flammability of the landscape, 6) switch to a renewable energy matrix (solar energy), and 7) transition to agroecology.
- 23 During my interviews with governmental officials at the *Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário* (Ministry of Agrarian Development, MDA) in Brasília, opinions about the consequences of the expansion of the Proambiente Program were interesting and somewhat contradictory. On one hand, the officials saw the enlargement of the program to more geographical regions and the inclusion of a broad range of social groups as problematic, citing the great potential for failure. But on the other hand, they believed that its elevation to the status of public policy rendered the program singularly compelling and powerful.
- 24 Families engaged in the Proambiente program would receive about a third of a Brazilian minimum salary, which is around \$35/month. The initial funds for payment for environmental

services and the other activities to be implemented in the program's twelve pilot centers were provided by the Embassy of the Netherlands. Core funding for the full program, however, has not yet been secured.

- 25 These murders and the land conflicts in the region were commented on in different articles by the *The New York Times*' Larry Rohter; see Oct 12, 2001: *Amazon Populists' Killing Exposes Bitter Conflicts*; Feb 14, 2005: *Brazil Promises Crackdown After Nun's Shooting Death*; and Sept 23, 2005: *Brazil's Lofty Promises After Nun's Killing Prove Hollow*.

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7 Indigenous Peoples, Settlers and the Philippine Ancestral Domain Land Titling Program

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Introduction

By increasing security of tenure for frontier-dwelling indigenous populations, the legal ambiguity which accounts for much of the characteristic violence, political insecurity and ecological instability of frontier environments can be eliminated. The article reviews the Philippine state's approach to restorative justice for indigenous peoples. At the expense of settlers and other competitors, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 provides indigenous communities with communal land titles. Against the backdrop of antagonistic interethnic relations, the article addresses some of the sticky issues connected with the mapping and titling of ancestral domains. Evaluated are the author's experiences with an NGO program (the Ancestral Domain Support Program, ADSP) with a focus on the island of Mindanao.

Land titling as a conflict mitigation strategy

The frontier, as we know, is a zone replete with conflicts – conflicts that characterize both the relations between groups of human beings (or at least some of them), and between these (or – again –, rather some of them) and the natural environment. At the margins of the state, ancestral claims of indigenous peoples clash with the claims of colonists, the latter, in general, commanding superior resources by virtue of their easier access to the state bureaucracy. The lawlessness of the frontier and especially the absence of land titles and their enforcement encourages the forceful seizure of indigenous land by colonists and the establishment of exploitative labour relations into which the former occupants of the territories are forced through intimidation, goon violence and economic bondage. More often than not, such competition for land (and labour) calls forth high levels of settler violence and, possibly, indigenous

counter-violence. Moreover, the expansion of generally unsustainable land use regimes practiced by colonists and extractive industries controlled by them are a prime cause of the rapid forest destruction that can be observed in many countries of Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Frontiers, it has been noted, are characterized by "unpredictable and even chaotic" fields of power "where the rules of interaction are not clearly established" (Little 2001:8). Where the frontier is one of settlement, ownership rules concerning land are certainly crucial among these vague rules of interaction. As native customary rights to territory clash with systems of formal title deeds which intruders wield in the name of the state, rules of access to land become plural and contested, and security of tenure vanishes, depending, as it does, on cunning and force.

To re-introduce security of tenure must be one of the first aims of states that have realized that the situation of "open access" created by frontier expansion jeopardizes political and environmental stability at the periphery. Extending enforceable, state-backed tenurial rights to frontier-dwellers reduces the prospect of violent conflict that arises from competing usufruct or ownership claims to the same tracts of land, and improves the chances that land users (whether peasants or shifting cultivators) practice sustainable resource management. From the perspective of a "politics of recognition" that stresses the need for restorative justice for disadvantaged groups such as indigenous peoples, policies that put a priority on restoring the latter's land rights above securing those of later arrivals to the contested territories, are especially commendable. This paper looks at one variety of such restorative interventions of the state – programs for the delineation, demarcation and titling of indigenous communal lands. While accentuating land conflicts in a first phase, such land titling programs for indigenous communities have been found to contribute greatly to reducing conflict levels in the long run (Gray 1998, Hvalkof 1998) and to act as a break against the uncontrolled exploitation and destruction of forest ecosystems (Davis and Wali 1994). The paper discusses the Philippine mapping and titling program in the context – mainly, but not exclusively – of Mindanao, the country's prototypical frontier region.

Over the past fifteen years, land demarcation and the struggle for legal titles have become an important and often remarkably successful strategy for the defense of indigenous territories in many Latin American countries¹ (most notably Peru and Brazil, but also Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia; see García Hierro, Hvalkof and Gray, eds., 1998, Plant and Hvalkof 2001). In South and Southeast Asia, adverse national land laws and repressive political regimes have in the past conspired against using this tool (with the exception of the Philippines). In recent years, however, democratization and the reform of the forest sector in many Asian countries have created more favorable conditions for land titling programs, and indigenous organizations there are showing a growing interest in that approach. Since the passing of the Indigenous

Peoples' Rights Act on 22 November 1997, the Philippines have become the continental hub for indigenous mapping and titling activities, and the indigenous movement is accumulating valuable experiences with this tool by the hour.

Mindanao – The area and its indigenous peoples

The southern Philippines are situated south of latitude 10° and extending to within 4° 38' north of the equator. Some 36,500 square miles or nearly 34 percent of the total Philippine land surface fall to the large island of Mindanao (Wernstedt and Spencer 1967:502).

A careful investigation of ethnographic maps drawn between 1877 and 1913 reveals the presence of three cultural regions in the area: The Islamized communities that the Spaniards called "Moros", the "pagan" population (today's indigenous peoples), and small pockets of "nuevos cristianos", recently-settled Christian migrants. The Moro territories more or less correspond to what is the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) today, with the exception of certain areas traditionally settled by the indigenous Teduray and Manobo² which have changed hands since the maps were drawn. On the Zamboanga peninsula in western Mindanao, Dapitan was a Spanish colonial outpost and a destination for political exiles, while Zamboanga City was a naval port intended to neutralize Moro slave-raiding assaults on Christian settlements in the Visayan Islands and Luzon.

The work of Pastells (1994) and the five-volume publication *Jesuit Missionary Letters from Mindanao* (Arcilla, ed., 1990a, 1990b, 2000a, 2000b, 2002) afford us some glimpses on the conditions of Mindanao a century ago. Blair and Robertson (1973) have translated a number of important historical documents – in their majority reports of Christian missionaries from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Mindanao scholar Rudy Rodil made a summary of these various historical accounts in his "Kasaysayan ng mga Pamayanan ng Mindanao at Arkipelago ng Sulu, 1596-1898" (Rodil 1992)³.

Dr. N. M. Saleeby, quoted by Garvan (1929), reports that "the aborigines are often referred to in Sulu and Mindanao as Manubus. The original inhabitants of the Sulu Islands, the Budanuns, were called Manubus also, so were the forefathers of the Magundanao Moros. The most aboriginal hill tribes of Mindanao (...) are called Manubus". Saleeby originally used the name "Manobo" to describe the people of eastern Mindanao; he cautioned that the term is "a generic name for people of greatly divergent culture, physical type and language" (Saleeby, in Garvan 1929:1-3).

In 1887, Fr. Francisco de Paula Sanchez (Arcilla ed. 2002: 365ff.) wrote that there were three "races" of people that inhabited Mindanao. These were the "Negritos", "Indonesians", and "Malay". He characterized them in the following manner:

Table 1 : The most important Lumad groups and their settlement areas, presented in a "racial" grid by Jesuit priest Francisco de Paula Sanchez (Arcilla, ed., 2002: 365ff.)

Negrito Race:	Indonesian Race:	Malayan
<p>Pure and known: Mamanuas, around Mainit Lake, northeast of Mindanao; in the peninsula of Surigao, and in the hills along the Pacific Coast until Tago.</p>	<p>Almost pure: Samals, in the island of the same name in Davao Gulf.</p> <p>Pure: Bagobos, on the eastern and southern slopes of Mt. Apo</p> <p>Pure: Gianggass, along the rivers and in the ranches of Dulian, Gimalan, Tamugan, Seril and Biao, southeast of Mt. Apo.</p> <p>Pure: Aetas, in the western sector close to Mt. Apo and northwest of it.</p> <p>Almost pure: Tagacaolos in Malalag, Agimitan Mountains and the opposite coast of Cape San Agustin.</p> <p>Hybrid: Tagbanuas, on the northern Davao Gulf.</p> <p>Two types, pure and hybrid: Manobos, on the northern Malalag Bay, near Davao Gulf, the Cape of San Agustin, and in Cotabato district.</p> <p>Almost pure: Mandayas, on the valley of the Agusan River and the eastern coast of the island, from Tandag to Mati, a very numerous population.</p> <p>Hybrid: Bilaans, on the two Sarangani islands, and on the eastern sector of Buluan Lake.</p> <p>Hybrid: Manguangas, along the tributaries left of Salug River.</p> <p>Hybrid: Dulangans, in the forests and mountains about 15 kilometers from Tamontaka, down to the south-southwestern coast of Mindanao.</p> <p>Hybrid: Tagaballs, west of Buluan Lake.</p> <p>Hybrid: Bukidnons, between Gingoog and Nasipit, and in the mountains and valleys of Tagoloan and Pulangi.</p> <p>Hybrid: Subanens, in the Sibugey kingdom.</p> <p>Hybrid: Tirurays, in the mountains on the left zone of Pulangi.</p> <p>Almost pure: Kalagans, along Davao River and the entire Davao Gulf.</p>	<p>Hybrid of Arab and Indonesian: Moros, in the Jolo archipelago, from Baguan near Mayo Gulf towards the north until Daron south of Davao, along Pulangi, Malanao and in Iliana Bay.</p> <p>Hybrid of Arab and Indonesian: Sanggits, in northeast Sarangani.</p> <p>Hybrid of Arab and Indonesian: Kalibugans, in Sibugey Gulf.</p> <p>Hybrid of Arab and Indonesian: Samal-Lauts, on the coastal zone of Basilan.</p> <p>Hybrid of Arab and Indonesian: Yakans, in the interior of Basilan.</p>

Fr. Sanchez' categorization, of course, is imbued with the notions and terminology of his day, a period when evolutionism reigned supreme and tribal 'specimen' were classified according to the color of their skin, the size and shape of their cranes, and their facial features; in that, it followed Blumentritt's influential work of 1882, *An Attempt at Writing a Philippine Ethnography* (1916, translation by Maceda 1980). Nevertheless, his article provides the first larger survey of Lumad groups. Other important ethnographic sources include Barrows (1903), Garvan (1929), Cole (1943, 1956), and Beyer (1917, 1921).

The term "*Lumad*" is the collective designation for indigenous peoples in Mindanao who do not identify with the Bangsa Moro (referring to Muslim groups in Mindanao who desire a nation of their own), and who had not been Christianized during Spanish times. The expression signifies "indigenous" and is taken from Cebuano – the major language spoken in the Visayan Islands, and by extension also in Mindanao, as the overwhelming majority of migrants hail from the Visayas. Lacking a common language, Mindanao's indigenous groups turned to the language of the colonizers when they felt the need for an over-arching identity (Rodil 1992:245).

Rodil (ibid.:233) counts 18 "non-Muslim" ethnolinguistic groups – the Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, Blaan, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaonon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Manguangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Tiduray, Ubo and the controversial⁴ Tasaday; he based his estimate on Elkin's (1977:253) sketch on the origins of the languages and dialects of the Manobo sub-family.

McFarland (1983), using the 1970 and 1975 census', grouped the Mindanao languages, as spoken by non-Islamized communities, into: East Mindanao languages (Mamanua, Kamayo, Davaweno, Mandaya, Kalagan, and Tagakaulu); Subanon (Sindangan, Salug, Lapuyan, Malayal and Kalibugan); Manobo (Kagayanen, Kinamigin, Binukid, Agusan Manobo, Rajah Kabungsuwan, Ata, Tagabawa, Tigwa, West Bukidnon, Ilianen, Obo, Manobo Sarangani, Manobo Cotabato); and South Mindanao languages (Bagobo Guianga, B'laan, Tboli and Teduray).

An examination of the Summer Institute of Linguistics' *Ethnologue* (2006) reveals that there are 35 distinct languages spoken by Mindanao indigenous peoples, including the Mamanua. The present Manobo language family alone consists of 15 languages, while Subanon (Zamboanga Peninsula) features five languages, including the Kolibugan. South Mindanaoan groups speak another five languages – Gianga (Klata), B'laan Koronadal, B'laan Saranggani, Tboli and Teduray. There are also nine Mansaka languages that include Kamayo and Isamal.

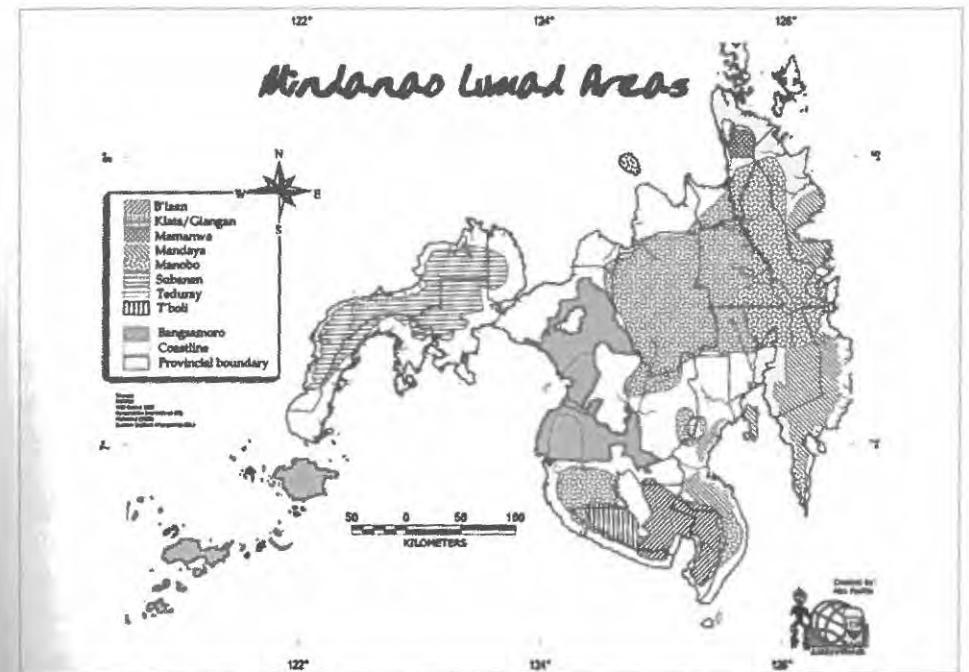
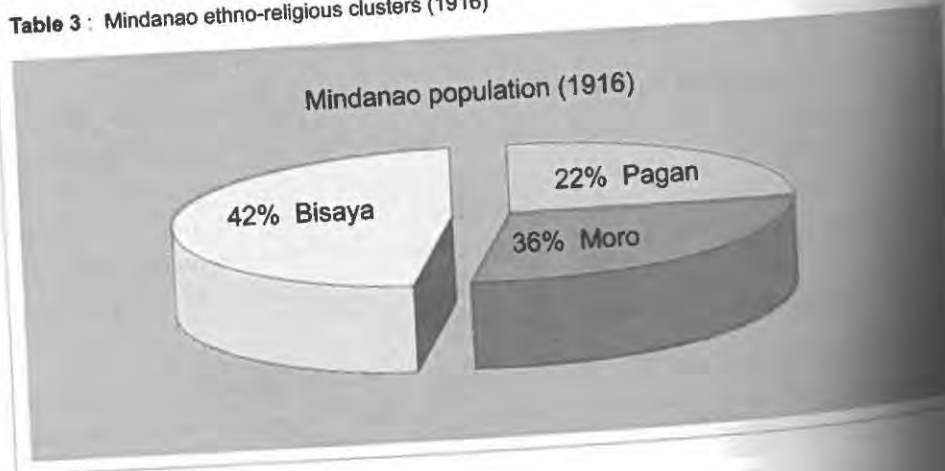
The number of languages, however, may not reflect the exact groupings of indigenous peoples in Mindanao. The label 'Bagobo' is a case in point. The term initially denoted the newly-Christianized 'Manobo', a designation which collectively

referred to the pagan population of Mindanao at the time. It is, therefore, an ascription by others (exonym), which hides three distinct communities with their own language – the Tagabawa, Klata and Ubo (Manuvu).

Table 2 : Mindanao indigenous peoples, population (1916)

Group	Locality	Number
Ata	Davao, Mindanao	7500
Bagobo	Davao, Mindanao	9350
B'laan	Davao, Mindanao	10,400
Bukidnon	Bukidnon, Misamis, Agusan, Cotabato	48,500
Isamal	Samal Island, Davao, Mindanao	983
Kulaman	Davao, Mindanao	3600
Mandaya	East Mindanao	2500
Manguangan	Central Mindanao	25,000
Manobo	Central and East Mindanao	39,600
Mamanua	Northeast Mindanao	3850
Subanun	West Mindanao	31,450
Tagakaolo	Davao, Mindanao	7100
Tedurai	Davao, Mindanao	7150
	Total Pagan Population	196,983
		314,040
Moro		366,708
Bisaya		877,731
	Total Mindanao Population	

Table 3 : Mindanao ethno-religious clusters (1916)



Map 7.1 : Lumad groups

During the 1916 Census, the population of Mindanao was only 877,731 persons. Beyer (1917:19) listed twelve “recognized ethnic groups” in Mindanao, but the Bukidnon (Higaunon) were not included⁵. Already at that time, the Lumad accounted for a mere 22 per cent of the total population (196,983 persons)⁶; however, they still occupied the largest territory. In the next two decades, the ethnic distribution was drastically changed in favor of Christian migrants on account of a series of official programs for the resettlement of excess population from the heavily crowded and conflict-ridden islands of Luzon and the Visayas. From the early 1900s to just before the outbreak of World War II, the population of the island doubled and the 1939 census listed 1,828,000 individuals with an average density of 19.3 persons per square kilometer. Moro areas and the coastal provinces of Mindanao registered higher population densities. Still, this was clearly below the national average of 53.8 person per square kilometer for the same year. Only the two Misamis provinces and Sulu – Mindanao’s top three provinces – exceeded the national average.

Today, according to a report commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2002, citing figures from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, NCIP), Mindanao is home to 61% of the overall indigenous population of the Philippines.

Table 4 : Mindanao provinces, population densities (1939 census)

Province	Density per sq. km
Agusan	9.3
Bukidnon	7.2
Cotabato	13.0
Davao	15.0
Lanao	36.5
Misamis Occidental	101.2
Misamis Oriental	54.6
Zamboanga	21.1
Sulu	87.8
Surigao	28.3

Table 5 : Mindanao indigenous peoples, population (2000)

Indigenous peoples	Sub-groups	Population
		194,067
B'laan		3043
Dibabawon		164,585
Higaonon	Bukidnon, Talaandig	6379
Isamal		23,470
Kalagan		42,264
Klata		460,242
Mandaya ¹	Kamayo, Davawenyo	254,863
Manobo ²	Agusan Manobo, Arumanen, Ata Manobo [Talaingod], Dulangan, Kulaman, Kamigin, Manguangan, Matigsalug, Pulangion, Tigwa	35,052
Mansaka		1450
Mamanua		11,330
Tagabawa		92,523
Tagabili (T'boli)		82,950
Tagakaolo		57,296
Teduray		
Ubo (Manuvu) ³		279,367
Subanen ⁴		

- 1 Included in this figure are Kamayo and Davawenyo speakers.
 2 Not included are 26,716 Kamigin and 23,700 Matigsalug in Bukidnon, and 5,064 of the latter in Davao del Sur.
 3 No data. May have been included in Manobo.
 4 Not included are 18,723 Kolibugan.

Table 6 : Mindanao indigenous peoples according to province (2000)

Province	Population	Number of indigenous population	Indigenous population as % of total provincial population
Agusan Del Norte	552849	2212	0.40
Agusan Del Sur	559294	87543	15.65
Bukidnon	1060265	187264	17.66
Camiguin	74232	26716	35.99
Compostela	580244	35052	6.04
Davao	743811	50862	6.84
Davao Del Sur	1148675	365464	31.82
Davao Oriental	446191	216533	48.53
Lanao Del Norte	889213	3000	0.34
Maguindanao	801102	57296	7.15
Misamis Occidental	486723	21274	4.37
Misamis Oriental	1126245	12520	1.11
North Cotabato	1122429	41862	3.73
Sarangani	410622	133149	32.43
South Cotabato	1102550	109368	9.92
Sultan Kudarat	586505	27541	4.70
Surigao Del Norte	481416	489	0.10
Surigao Del Sur	501808	132069	26.32
Zamboanga Del Norte	823130	156966	19.07
Zamboanga Del Sur	1935250	119850	6.19

Note : Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawitawi have no resident indigenous people

The National Statistics Office (NSO) Census for 2000 provides data on ethnicity; however, the criteria for determining ethnic belonging are not spelled out, and it appears that the language data were translated as ethnic identity. For the Lumad population data of this paper, we can arrive at an estimate of the number of indigenous people currently living inside a specific territory by looking at the language data of a Lumad group in their traditional homeland. With ethnic designations so arbitrary in official census materials and no independent surveys available, even the country's official bureau for indigenous communities, the NCIP, is left guessing whom exactly it is meant to serve. For the sake of the present paper, therefore, I am using a version of the official "ethnic" census of 2000 which I have modified and complemented to the best of my knowledge. It yields the following Lumad groups and sub-groups and associated population figures (see Table 5).

The modified and complemented 2000 figures, thus, put the total Lumad population at 1,787,030 persons, or 10.28 per cent of Mindanao's overall population (Table 6). In this listing, Lumad migrants or those residing outside their traditional areas of concentration were not included.

The settler factor in Mindanao

In Mindanao, the struggle for control over land has fuelled territorial disputes for the better part of the second half of the last century and continues to be a burning issue to this day. Since the integration of this southern island into the American colonial state at the beginning of the 20th century, the resident indigenous communities faced an ever-growing number of settlers encroaching on their lands. While the larger part of the ensuing conflicts over frontier domains have remained latent, with the indigenous communities favoring a strategy of retreat (or, as Adas [1981] proposed in the context of peasant protest in Southeast Asia, "avoidance resistance"), the region has also witnessed periodic local uprisings, some of them involving the slaughter of large numbers of settlers (see e.g. Rodil 1999 on the Matigsalug rebellion of 1975). In the meantime, the situation has aggravated to a point where the increasing scarcity of land and the depletion of natural resources no longer allow for retreat to the hinterlands, but call for pro-active conflict mitigation. To wit, internal migration data for the early 1990s show an increase in urban-to-rural migration rather than, as has been the case in other Asian countries, the rural-to-urban stream (Cruz et al. 1992). In the absence of an official tenurial instrument to prove indigenous claims to territory, these lands are regarded by landless tillers, impoverished tenants and sharecroppers as open for all. However, until recently, public land policies have aided rather than impeded outsiders' access to frontier domains.

Public land policies and programs for frontier settlement

The Spanish colonizers introduced the notion that land is a commodity which can be held as property, bought and sold, with the owner having the right to use and dispose of it as he wishes. The U.S. colonial government, following on the heels of the Spaniards, perpetuated this concept. It upheld, as well, the idea of the state having primary decision-making power over the land and the natural resources contained in it. Several laws and policies were passed to institutionalize these precepts, the earliest being the 1902 Land Registration Act No. 496, which required private persons or corporations to register the lands they occupied. Simultaneously, land acts were formulated which encouraged migrants to settle in the then sparsely-populated parts of the country like Mindanao. An example is the 1903 Public Land Act No. 926 which allowed individuals and corporations to apply for homesteads.

These laws gave no consideration to the situation of the frontier-dwelling indigenous communities. For one, the concept of having to register their land was totally alien to the latter, including Mindanao's Lumad – moreover since traditionally, land was held in common by the local communities, and the law recognized but individuals as legal persons. And finally, even if they had wished to file for registration, most Lumad would have failed to do so because they were illiterate, and the procedure required a written application signed and sworn to by the applicant.

Another consequence of American colonial land classifications and land laws was that many ancestral domains came to lie within "public lands" or "unoccupied, unreserved, unappropriated agricultural lands" (1903 Public Land Act No. 926), which the government felt at liberty to hand out as homesteads to settlers. An amendment in 1919 to the 1903 law provided that "non-Christians" could apply for homesteads, too, but not exceeding 10 hectares, as opposed to settlers ("Christians") who could have 24 hectares.

During the Spanish colonial period, Mindanao did not experience much immigration – largely because agricultural colonization presupposes an earlier conquest and more or less stable colonial rule, and the island as a whole had not until after 1898 been militarily subjugated. Thus, the 1903 census gave it only 8.8% of the country's total population. This changed dramatically in the course of American colonization. A pattern of migration from Luzon and the Visayas established itself, influenced in large part by the prospect of homesteads for free promised by the Public Land Act.

The U.S. colonial government likewise crafted a series of policy instruments designed to bring more people to thinly-settled provinces, which included those in Mindanao. In 1910, for example, the Bureau of Labour had a program to encourage workers and families to settle at the national periphery to fill the labour needs of the frontier, and Mindanao was a primary destination. Until 1939 the program transferred some 80,000 persons. Another example was the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA)'s plan to settle – over the course of only ten years – half a million people on the Koronadal plain of Cotabato. Pelzer's (1945:135-159, 249) work contains a description and evaluation of this Php 20 million (then 10 million US\$) project, which, from its establishment to late 1941, was headed by Gen. Paulino Santos. Rodil (1992) summarizes that due to the U.S. colonial government's resettlement programs, by 1948 provinces which previously had had Lumad majorities no longer did so.

After national independence, post-war laws of the Philippine Republic showed a trend towards recognizing the indigenous peoples' distinctive place in Philippine society, and their special ties to the land. While the 1973 Constitution, released under the Marcos dictatorship, merely acknowledged the indigenous peoples' unique character, the 1987 Constitution – a product of the democratic transition – guaranteed

Table 7: Summary of CADTs issued (in Hectares)

REGION	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	TOTAL
CAR ¹	0	0	265,980	107,318	205,068	578,366
I	0	0	5,293	0	28,705	33,998
II	108,360	0	139,882	0	113,979	362,221
III	0	0	64,696	31,962	0	96,658
IV	0	4,748	89,673	65,225	223,247	382,893
V	0	0	39,417	38,758	16,187	94,362
VI	0	0	0	8,860	13,397	22,257
VII	0	0	4,373	0	0	4,373
IX	0	0	22,182	30,560	19,437	72,179
X	0	81,389	0	52,651	50,138	184,178
XI	0	89,974	81,629	130,781	96,189	398,573
XII	0	9,084	22,221	0	21,410	52,715
XIII	312	8,001	14,071	0	240,878	263,262
TOTAL	108,672	193,196	749,417	466,115	1,028,635	
GRAND TOTAL						2,546,035

Notes: CAR is the Cordillera Autonomous Region; Regions IX-XIII are in Mindanao

Source: Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

the protection of indigenous peoples' rights to their ancestral domains, and confirmed the validity of customary laws related to the land. The 1988 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law made a point of exempting indigenous territories from agrarian reform.

However, some traces of the earlier, authoritarian legal framework linger on in the 1987 Constitution, as well as in the 1989 Organic Act for the Autonomous Region of Mindanao, creating a situation of paradigmatic tension and contradiction. While certain clauses in these new statutes affirm that indigenous peoples are to have full control over their ancestral domains, other clauses maintain that natural resources in these domains are owned and shall be regulated by the state.

Significantly, the true break with the past does not lie in the declaration that the state has a responsibility for protecting indigenous ancestral domains, but with providing a practical legal mechanism to substantiate that pledge. Thus, a Marcos-time Presidential Decree (No. 410 of 1976) had expressed the intention to protect the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples, but no Letter of Implementation for it was ever issued. It was an administrative order of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 1992 – Administrative Order No. 02, Series of 1992 –

that put the country's indigenous peoples closer to gaining documentary recognition of their claim to their ancestral domains. Under that order, an indigenous community could apply for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) for as long as it could ensure the proper protection and management of the natural resources within the domain. Before a new law – the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act or IPRA (Republic Act 8371) – superseded this administrative order four years later, 85 CADCs covering 970,908 hectares in 5 regions of Mindanao had been awarded (see Table 7).

The promise of a better future: The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act

The current ancestral domain land-titling program in the Philippines is mandated by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), which became law in October 1997 and took effect a month later, on 22 November 1997. The law is the national government's interpretation of the constitutional provisions governing indigenous peoples' rights. During the signing of the law in Malacanang palace, then-President Fidel V. Ramos hailed IPRA as a "triumph of political will" and declared that it would accelerate the emancipation of the country's indigenous peoples from the bondage of social inequity that bred poverty, ignorance and deprivation, and further alienated them from the national mainstream⁷

The constitutional framework of the law is expressed in Section 2. In review of the constitution, Section 22, Article II (State Policies) mandates that the state "recognizes and promotes the rights of ICC⁸ within the framework of national unity and development". Section 5, Article XII (National Economy and Patrimony) commands the state to "protect the rights of ICC to their ancestral lands to ensure their economic, social and cultural well-being". Furthermore, it authorizes Congress to "provide for the applicability of customary laws governing property rights or relations in determining the ownership and extent of ancestral domains". Section 4, Article XIV (Social Justice and Human Rights) provides for the rights of indigenous communities to their ancestral lands in the disposition or utilization of natural resources. Section 17, Article XIV (Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports) also provides for the recognition and protection of indigenous cultural communities and thereby must be considered in the formation of national plans and policies.

IPRA of 1997 implements these provisions by enumerating the civil, social, cultural and political rights of indigenous peoples, and demands the recognition of their property rights. Furthermore, it creates the office of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) as implementing agency. NCIP has quasi-judicial powers. It includes the power and authority to promulgate rules and regulations governing the hearing and disposition of cases filed before it; to administer oaths, summon the parties to a controversy, issue subpoenas; to hold any person in contempt

and impose appropriate penalties; and to enjoin any or all acts involving or arising from any case pending before it.

On tenurial rights over ancestral domains and ancestral lands⁹, IPRA emphasizes the communal nature of property rights; the law describes this concept in Chapter 3, Section 5:

“The indigenous concept of ownership sustains the view that ancestral domains and all resources found therein shall serve as the material bases of their cultural integrity. The indigenous concept of ownership generally holds that ancestral domains are the ICCs’ private but community property which belongs to all generations and therefore cannot be sold, disposed or destroyed. It likewise covers sustainable traditional resource rights”.

Section 7 defines the right to ancestral domains as a form of ownership. Thus, ancestral domain holders may claim ownership over the resources within the territory, develop land and natural resources, stay in the territory, have rights against involuntary displacement and, in case of displacement, the right to return to the same territory, may regulate the entry of migrants, have rights to safe and clean air and water, the right to claim parts of reservations except those reserved for common and public welfare and service, and use customary laws to resolve their conflicts.

Section 8 describes the right to ancestral lands. Such rights include redemption of land/property rights acquired by non-indigenous peoples through forced consent or fraudulent transaction within a period not exceeding 15 years from date of transfer, and the right to transfer the property to/among members of the same indigenous community. Another form of right to ownership is the recognition of ancestral lands that have been held for not less than thirty years prior to the effectivity of RA 8371. This expands the definition of ancestral lands as lands that need not necessarily have been held since time immemorial. Given this situation, Section 12 of the law provides the option for indigenous peoples to secure a Certificate of Title under Commonwealth Act No. 141, or the Land Registration Act 496. Significantly, this provision includes areas with a slope of eighteen per cent (18%) or more which were hitherto – by virtue of the Marcos-time Presidential Decree No. 705 – classified as public forest land over which no individual or group can claim ownership rights. Applicability of this option is granted only within twenty (20) years from the approval of the law. Furthermore, only individual applications are accepted. This form of ownership of ancestral lands, it needs to be pointed out, veers from the traditional group or communal rights associated with ancestral domains.

Chapter 8 of the law gives the procedures in the delineation and recognition of ancestral domains and ancestral lands. The procedures are identical to those provided under DENR Administrative Order No. 02, Series of 1992. Through the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, the implementing agency stipulated in the law,



Photo 7.1: Members of a Tagbanua community in Palawan using their 3D model to plan the route of their ancestral domain boundary survey (photo: Sabino Padilla, AnthroWatch)

the latter provides for the issuance of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title, or CADT, and Certificates of Ancestral Land Title, or CALT. CADC which were issued prior to the enactment of RA 8371 may be converted into CADT without going through the process under the said law.

Sections 56, 57 and 58, however, are provisions that need to be further qualified. Section 56 subjects the indigenous peoples’ property rights to other existing rights. More of this will be discussed below. Section 57 recognizes the right of indigenous peoples to ownership and development of natural resources only as *priority rights*. Consideration needs to be given, the law stipulates, to non-indigenous peoples who may claim the right to use, exploit or develop the resources in the title area for up to fifty (50) years. Section 58 refers to environmental protection and allows for the priority use of ancestral domains as critical watersheds, mangrove areas, wildlife sanctuaries, “wilderness” and protected areas, but stipulates the “full participation of the ICCS/IPs”¹⁰ in deciding this priority. Finally, the NCIP is authorized to issue Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title, and Certificates of Ancestral Land Title.

Crucial to the understanding of indigenous peoples’ rights is the definition of the terms and the concepts that they entail. Section 3 of the law attempts such a definition. However, the law’s understanding of the basic nature of indigenous struggles remains sorely inadequate inasmuch as the law repeatedly invokes the constitutional provision on “public domain”. The notion of “public domain” is an outcrop of the colonial doctrine which held that all lands which lacked proof of ownership by the time the representatives of the Spanish crown set foot on the islands, automatically came into



Photo 7.2 : Tagbanua elder assisting the NCIP land surveyors during the perimeter survey of the ancestral domain of his community (photo: Sabino Padilla, AnthroWatch)

the possession of the state (the so-called "Regalian Doctrine"). Consequently, Sections 2 and 3, Article XII (National Economy and Patrimony) provide that all lands of the public domain and other natural resources are owned by the state and are inalienable with the exception of agricultural lands. Furthermore, the law does not say that the indigenous peoples have the right to deny the state from using and exploiting the ancestral domains and ancestral lands by the power of eminent domain¹¹. In Section 7, paragraph C, IPRA maintains that "no ICCs/IPs will be relocated without their free and prior informed consent, nor through any means other than eminent domain".

Whereas it may be said that through most of the text, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act endorses the claiming and registering of ancestral domains and ancestral lands as legitimate ways of acquiring ownership, and that it supplements the private vested rights recognized in the constitution through the *Cariño* doctrine and the rights provided by Section 48 of the Public Land Act, all these rights are in fact overruled by Section 56 of the law. That section provides that "property rights within the ancestral domains already existing and/or vested upon effectivity of this act, shall be recognized and respected". It severely restricts the definition of ancestral domains and ancestral lands, in that it proposes that land leases, contracts and permits granted to big mining speculators, loggers, ranch operators etc. are automatically retained.

By the way of a first preliminary assessment of the law and its conflict-resolving potential, we can state that the Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title and Certificates

of Ancestral Land Title available through the programme represent a pragmatic compromise on the way to a roundabout, secure protection of a community's territory. IPRA, in fact, does not insulate indigenous peoples' ancestral domains and ancestral lands from attempts from other parties – both state and private – at using or exploiting them. All that it may take to wrest control over its territory from an indigenous group is the "free, prior and informed consent" of an individual, a family, or a clan – something that can be easily "manufactured" at any time.

Slow progress of implementation

Since IPRA has been considered the most progressive piece of legislation on indigenous land rights in Southeast Asia¹², it is said that the rest of the region watches with interest how it is being implemented. Today, a decade after it was passed in congress, the law's implementation is frustratingly slow and thus a cause for concern.

Indigenous people – in the Philippines and elsewhere – put great emphasis on the fact that their lives are inseparable from their ancestral territories, and that the latter represent the link connecting their past to their future. As such, territory is the basis of indigenous peoples' collective material, cultural and spiritual life. Here lies the essence of the dispute over resources between indigenous peoples, the state, and actors who are politically, economically and culturally linked to the latter. The former, subscribing to the regalian doctrine and its principles, claims absolute control of its territory and reserves for itself the power to manage all resources within its boundaries. Land laws in the Philippines are based on this legal fiction and remain a stumbling block in the recognition of indigenous peoples' land rights and the management of their territories.

In Mindanao, the spatial distribution of indigenous peoples has been profoundly altered by the displacement of many groups from their long-standing ancestral domain territories. Most of them have been pushed from the coast and plains to adjacent hill and mountain areas. Due in part to the state's encouragement of the immigration of land-starved peasants from Luzon and the Visayas, indigenous communities have gradually lost control of large parts even of their erstwhile upland sanctuaries. Another factor in indigenous displacement is the state's continuing support to logging and mining ventures, industrial tree plantations and other instances of what Philippine indigenous people refer to as "development aggression". To help local communities stand their ground against such powerful forces, a competent and motivated National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP, the official office for indigenous affairs) would have been called for to take the lead in implementing the new law. However, most indigenous activists today feel a profound distrust and disappointment towards the agency. Why is that so?

The most basic problem of the NCIP in implementing IPRA is the identification of the very constituency that it is supposed to serve. It has no clear understanding as to who the indigenous peoples in the Philippines are and where they can be found, and continues to confuse itself pondering over oblivious ethnolinguistic lists inherited from previous government agencies of dubious standing, like the Marcos-time PANAMIN (Presidential Assistant on National Minorities) and Cory Aquinos' OSCC (Office for Northern Cultural Communities)/ONCC (Office for Southern Cultural Communities). Despite of the meagre resources it has at its disposition, it should have decided to allocate a part of them to baseline activities like conducting an ethnological survey and population census.

Over the past decades, the bureaucracies of the state's minority offices have acquired a reputation as a dumping ground for politicians' *protégés* who cash in on their patrons' political debts by seeking government positions. Thus, the impression at the indigenous grassroots is that NCIP officers continue the tradition of doing nothing while waiting for their salaries and allowances. Although a study on how to reorganize the agency has been commissioned and completed, its recommendations are still to be put into operation.

Despite being under the Office of the President, lack of government funding also hampers the implementation of NCIP's programs (particularly the ancestral domain titling line). The lion's share of its budget goes to operational expenses, notably personnel salaries. Ostensibly to address this problem, the government in 2004 issued an Executive Order (#364) which placed the agency under the direct supervision of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Part of the reason was also to consolidate the "asset reform" program of the present Arroyo government. The reasoning which I surmise underlay the departmental transfer was that state managers perceived in the issuance of ancestral domain titles the same element of social justice as in the redistribution of large landholdings, and wanted one single agency to deal with these matters. Placing ancestral domain concerns with the DAR has two drawbacks: communal titles for indigenous communities are misconstrued as representing properties (i.e. assets) with a corresponding commercial value, and the issue of restorative justice for indigenous peoples is confounded with that of redistributive justice for tenants, peasant smallholders and the landless poor.

Furthermore, although IPRA specifically requires indigenous communities to submit anthropological proofs for their prior occupancy of the domains to be titled, the agency has no competent personnel to evaluate the data thus gathered.

According to the NCIP's planning documents, security of tenure on ancestral lands and domains was to be the key accomplishment for 2002, indicated by the availability of "technically sound and authentic titles and alternative tenurial instruments." Thus far the results have not been heartening. The previous administration under Pres



Photo 7.3 : Manobo man tracing his descent from local ancestors as part of the proofs required for government recognition of an ancestral domain (photo: Sabino Padilla, AnthroWatch)

Joseph Estrada did practically nothing to advance the programme and help the agency complete its targets. During its early term, the current Arroyo government has been attempting to project the program as a key thrust, and scored some gains, but today, political will to egg it on is no longer in evidence. For instance, in 2001, after Arroyo's first year in office, only one (1) CADT had been awarded. Due to this dismal showing, the NCIP Chairperson during that time was sacked.

In September 1998, a few days before the law's first-year anniversary, retired Supreme Court Justice, Isagani Cruz, and lawyer Cesar Europa filed a petition before the Philippine Supreme Court, challenging its constitutionality. The petition assails the legal standing of IPRA and its Implementing Rules on the grounds that it violates a) the regalian doctrine embodied in the Constitution; b) the rights of private landowners because of the encompassing definition of "ancestral domains" and "ancestral lands" which might even include private lands found within the said areas; c) the powers and jurisdiction of the NICP, notably by making local customary law applicable to the settlement of disputes involving ancestral domains and ancestral lands; and d) the President's power of control over executive departments. Many indigenous rights advocates and observers suspected the mining industry to be behind the move. It was only by a stroke of luck that IPRA was able to hurdle the challenge of the constitutionality issue.

Opponents of IPRA are not only lurking on the right; the fragmented legal left and the armed insurgency groups with which some of them are connected, have mobilized

as well against the law. Organizations identified with the National Democratic (ND) revolutionary movement have consistently rejected and opposed ancestral domain delineation and IPRA; to them, the only legitimate issues to be raised in connection with frontiers are the army's human rights violations in the rebel-influenced countryside. To that effect, the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP, or National Federation of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines), an organisation aligned with the National Democratic left, demanded that the IPRA be scrapped, arguing in somewhat twisted logic that the passage of the law obscured the fact that in all other domains of policy and practice, the government had "failed to make any substantive accomplishments". On the ground, the New People's Army (NPA) has continuously cautioned indigenous communities against engaging in the ancestral domain titling process. In Mindanao, NCIP surveyors and community volunteers are warned and harassed. In the past, at least, survey instruments and Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers – important implements for the production of maps – were also confiscated.

A second reason behind the revolutionary left's obstruction against IPRA is that the law puts its core constituency, the poorer part of the peasantry, at a disadvantage in the competition for land at the frontier. Furthermore, the titling of ancestral domains threatens to remove large parts of the lands theoretically available from the coverage of the revolutionary land reform program propagated by the radical left. No different from the traditional politicians they oppose, National Democratic organizations resent the fact that indigenous people are accorded ownership rights over swaths of territory far larger than their share of the total population would warrant. At the local level, therefore, the armed underground has repeatedly interfered with ancestral domain claim-making processes. A case in point was a Subanen area in Western Mindanao – in 2001 a prospective project site of the Ancestral Domain Support Program (ADSP) touched upon further below –, where the community wanted to apply for a CADT, but was interdicted by the New People's Army. In an ADSP area on Luzon Island, in the ancestral domain of the Agta, several armed groups have the potential to disrupt the claim-making process in defense of the settlers there, and are constantly reminding the applicants of this ability.

A third political force, the Bangsa Moro movement for the self-determination of the Muslim south – fractitious, but with undiminished military strength –, fears that indigenous land claims in Mindanao might jeopardize its own aspirations for – depending on which faction you talk to – autonomy or secession of what the Moro describe as their "ancestral territory". Albeit only cryptically, one of the two most influential Moro organizations, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), has addressed the issue of ancestral domain in peace negotiations with the government. "The MNLF has a very general concept of land, going back to their secessionist demand that Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, or MINSUPALA, belong to the Moro people as their ancestral territory. They claim a historical right over these territories", as Wahab Guialal, a Moro activist, commented. He added that they are not sure whether ancestral territory and ancestral

domain are the same. He disclosed that even Nur Misuari – the organization's founder and chairman – admitted that the frictions between the two notions are a "delicate issue" ("An Interview with Wahab Guialal" 1997-98).

Finally, there are those who acknowledge the law's shortcomings but would like to exploit it as an opportunity for furthering indigenous rights. Anthropology Watch (AnthroWatch) and Inter-Peoples Exchange (IPEX), two NGOs working with indigenous peoples, share this view. Below, I give an account of their delineation and mapping activities in which I have been involved for six years.

Pressing on: The Ancestral Domain Support Program

In 2000, AnthroWatch with the Inter-Peoples Exchange Program (IPEX), an NGO composed of indigenous staffers, commenced the Ancestral Domain Support Program (ADSP) – with the support of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). The goal of the ADSP was to provide land titling support to indigenous communities (10 of them in 2000-2003 and another 10 in 2004-2007), with the additional aim of advancing community empowerment through capacity-building programs. Since its establishment in 1998, the NCIP has, to the time of this writing, managed to issue a mere 42 CADTs, covering 851,849.373 has. Seventeen CADTs were issued to indigenous communities in Mindanao, with a coverage of 421, 169.455 ha (see Table 8). Three titles with a total of 121,727.317 hectares were granted to ADSP-assisted sites. Indirectly, the program reached even more beneficiaries, through: 3-D mapping for Bakun (29,444.345 ha), the first community ever granted a CADT, in 2002; community organising and lobbying for the Agta community of Karahume (1,817.152 ha.), Bulacan Province; and lobbying for the Sibuyan Mangyan Tagabukid (7,718.836 ha.), an area assisted by AnthroWatch with support from WWF-Philippines in delineation prior to the ADSP. The last 2 acquired their CADTs in 2004. All in all, the ADSP had a hand in over 15% of successful CADT applications. Currently, there are 7 other ADSP sites on the tail end of the process of CADT application: 1 ready for deliberation by the NCIP Commission; 3 awaiting NCIP's survey, and 3 more in various stages of NCIP's validation of proofs.

Observations en route: Experiences with the ADSP Program in Mindanao and Palawan

Critical decisions: Inclusion or exclusion of settler-dominated areas?

With few exceptions, the census and mapping exercise on the ADSP sites in Mindanao and Palawan revealed that the intrusion of settlers in domains that were being

Table 8 : List of CADTs as of February 6, 2006

	Indigenous Group	Province/Geographical Area	Individual Beneficiaries	Area in Hectares
2002				
1.x+	Kankana-ey and Bago	Benguet/Luzon (Cordillera) [Bakun]	17,218	29,444.3449
2.x	Manobo	Surigao del Sur/Mindanao	1,065	11,812.6247
2003				
3.x	Agta-Cimarron & Agta Tabangon	Camarines Sur/Luzon	5,622	5,099.3430
4.x	Subanen	Zamboanga del Norte/Mindanao [Siocon]	1,144	8,213.5020
5.x	Mandaya	Davao Oriental/Mindanao	3,259	19,151.4437
6.	Mandaya, Manobo, Mangguangan & Dibabawon	Compostela Valley/Mindanao	2,189	30,468.2250
7.	Aeta	Bataan/Luzon	759	4,355.9312
8.x	Arumanen	North Cotabato/Mindanao	715	5,680.6281
9.	Talaandig	Bukidnon/Mindanao	4,922	11,105.7657
10.x*	Matigsalug-Manobo	Bukidnon/Mindanao	24,405	102,324.8186
11.x	Bugkalot & indigenous migrants	Quirino/Luzon	15,374	139,691.6194
2004				
12.x	Bukidnon-Karolanos	Negros Occidental/Island Group	4,140	3,981.2501
13.x	Iraya-Mangyan	Occidental Mindoro/Island Group	639	5,365.110
14.x*	Subanen	Zamboanga del Sur/Mindanao	3,161	4,530.0800
15.x	Kankana-ey	Benguet/Luzon (Cordillera)	15,472	22,836.8838
16.	Obo-Menuvu	North Cotabato/Mindanao	679	3,177.2000
17.x	Manobo	Bukidnon/Mindanao [QUEMTRAS]	1,398	1,595.2926
18.	Mandaya-Mansaka	Compostela Valley/Mindanao	8,443	92,413.8676
19.+	Dumagat	Bulacan/Luzon [Karahume]	363	1,817.1515
20.+	Mangyan-Tagabukid	Romblon/Island Group	1,846	7,718.8365
21.x	Tagbanua	Palawan/Island Group [Coron]	1,358	24,520.7600
22.x	Iraya-Mangyan	Oriental Mindoro/Island Group	2,888	5,700.8371
23.	Kankana-ey & Bago	Ilocos Sur/Luzon	3,300	6,339.4170
24.x	Aeta	Tarlac/Luzon	2,979	10,684.2295
25.	Kankana-ey & Ibaloi	Benguet/Luzon	15,634	20,017.6498
26.	Panay-Bukidnon/Sulod	Iloilo/Island Group	1,526	1,748.8972
27.	Bagobo-Tagabawa	North Cotabato/Mindanao	596	2,973.1090
28.	Subanen	Zamboanga del Sur/Mindanao	6,985	20,097.9340
29.x	Agta/Agta-Tabangnon	Camarines Sur/Luzon	2,020	1,278.1203

2005				
30.	Isnag	Apayao/Luzon	852	11,268.0255
31.x	Kankana-ey & Bago	Ilocos Sur/Luzon	5,717	8,341.1505
32.	Bajau	Zamboanga City/Mindanao	292	40,733.3810
33.	Bagobo-Tagabawa	Davao del Sur/Mindanao	19,218	40,733.3810
34.	Dibabawon-Manguanan	Compostela Valley & Davao del/Mindanao	19,218	40,733.3810
35.*	Higaonon	Misamis Oriental/Mindanao	1,247	14,872.4188
36.	Ivatan	Batanes/Luzon	3,911	89,163.4154
37.x	Iwak	Pangasinan/Luzon	248	5,484.1101
38.	Dumagat	Aurora/Luzon	553	5,983.2000
2006				
39.	Iraynon-Bukidnon	Antique/Island Group	1,090	6,426.7246
40.	Ibaloi & Kankana-ey	Baguio City/Luzon (Cordillera)	2,900	147.4496
41.	Agta	Albay & Camarines Sur/Luzon	639	1,453.8462
42.x	Sama Bangingi	Basilan, Mindanao	3,482	2,673.2683
			194,953	851,849.3728

* ADSP area (full assistance to titling)

+ ADSP provided some assistance to its titling

x Converted from CADC

prepared for titling has progressed very far. In a Subanen area in Zamboanga del Sur, indigenous leaders and NGO supporters facilitating a community assembly to discuss CADT-related development plans registered with dismay the flock of settlers who attended the meeting and asked to participate; a count revealed that the 60% of those attending were non-indigenous. Similarly, in a Higaonon area in Misamis Oriental, the census data bore out that 40% of the ancestral domain's residents were settlers. This was all the more distressing for the leaders since they had liked to think of their community as probably the most "traditional" and "intact" of all Higaonon groups.

To the extent, thus, that census-taking and mapping have brought to light the scale of settler penetration of indigenous domains, beneficiary communities have been forced to address the problem of this substantial settler presence. One solution which was tried was that in the process of delineation, the community excluded those parts of the ancestral domain with a high concentration of settlers, so as to avoid the emergence of conflicts which could later hamper the land titling process. Thus, in the case of the Higaonon title claim mentioned above, an important traditional village center was deliberately left out of the title area because it had come to be numerically dominated by settlers.



Photo 7.4 : Manobo community members watching NCIP personnel validating ancestral domain proofs (photo: Sabino Padilla, AnthroWatch)

As evidenced by Latin American experiences, a distinctive disadvantage of the pragmatic exclusion from claims of areas in which the indigenous have no clear majority any more, is that such a course is hard to revise once it has been adopted. It has proven to be much easier to let go of a part of a claim than to later on – for instance when an accommodation has been reached with the settlers – try to expand it. A Tagbanua community on Palawan Island on the western fringe of the Philippine archipelago – another ADSP area – was briefed accordingly, whereupon the community leaders chose to include the village center in their claim, despite the high density of settlers in the center.

Settler reactions during the claim-making and delineation process

Through IPRA, the Philippine state significantly alters the balance of power in the contest for land and resources in the uplands, throwing its weight with the indigenous communities. Collective land titles for indigenous communities are an instrument of exclusion which, we can assume, is bound to be resented and, possibly, even militantly resisted by those it is being wielded against – settlers being foremost among them. What, then, were the latter's reactions to claim-making and delineation at their doorstep?

Experiences in ADSP areas included both instances of confrontation and accommodation on the part of settlers. A common negative response was to refuse to

take part in the census of residents in the ancestral domain. This occurred in all ADSP areas which had undergone census-taking. Settlers who boycotted the census refused to recognize the claim-making process as such. Their action (or, rather, non-action) was motivated by the fear that by being included in the census, they would easily be marked out as non-indigenous late arrivals who had no right to remain on the ancestral domain. As part of our assistance to community facilitation and technical matters, ADSP staff advises that no one can be forced to be part of a census, but that instances of refusal will be documented.

Another negative response is for settlers who fear imminent expulsion to "sell" their plot of land. In the Higaonon area mentioned several times before, for example, the commencement of census activities prompted some settlers to do this. Since there can be no individual deeds of ownership on "public domain", what these individuals were selling to unsuspecting buyers – in all cases fellow settlers – was their "right" to stay on the land. These incidents caused panic among indigenous community leaders. The ADSP staff explained that two things were essential here. First, that indigenous fears and settler hopes about the issue were both unfounded, as the law unequivocally stated that these sales were illegal and therefore invalid. Second, that the issue of settlers wanting to trade what they did not own raised a broader challenge to community leaders: that of reflecting on how to defend the integrity of their claim in the face of all sorts of challenges.

A third kind of negative response was for settlers to physically sabotage the claim-making process. For instance, in the Tagbanua area mentioned earlier, settlers



Photo 7.5 : Settlers opposing the CADT application of the Lison Valley Subanen in Zamboanga del Sur (photo: Sabino Padilla, AnthroWatch)

removed the markers which indicated the boundaries of the ancestral domain claim; such markers are needed for surveying. Remarkably, the Tagbanua responded with calm to this provocation, declaring that they knew their boundaries even without the help of *mujon* (posts) or triangular markers.

A final form of negative response, observed in several ADSP areas, was for settlers to exhort other settlers (preferably relatives) to join them when news of an indigenous title application in their immediate neighbourhood reached them.

Positive responses came in the shape of various forms of cooperative behaviour in the claim-making process. In the Subanen area cited before, two long-time settler residents offered (and were granted) their full participation in the census, a welcome assistance since there were few Subanen adults who had the necessary literacy skills for census-taking. In another Subanen area assisted by the ADSP, settlers attended the community assembly on the issue of the preparation of a community development plan, which under the IPRA's Implementing Rules and Regulations is called the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). The settlers volunteered to take part in the processing of the ADSDPP. The ADSP staff advised that the ADSDPP formulation was largely an indigenous responsibility, intended, among others, to help consolidating the community, but also to avoid the unwitting insertion and protection of settler interests. In a part of our Tagbanua area, the settler head of the village endorsed the claim-making process and even participated in some activities that were part of it. He did not see the issuance of an ancestral domain title as threatening to himself or his fellow settlers in the village, as the claim did not include the places with a high concentration of settler houses and farming plots¹³.

Conditions for success

Six years into the program, it is possible to outline a few conditions which increase the chance that a) a viable CADT is established, based on b) some sort of negotiated arrangement between resident settlers and indigenous title holders which reduces inter-ethnic tensions to a minimum.

A first crucial factor is the degree to which the settlers have been made to understand the idea of restorative justice for the indigenous part of the nation, which informs IPRA and has propelled the establishment of a CADT in their midst, so-to-speak. Where the necessary information campaigns were conducted, settlers found it easier to make – sometimes painful – concessions to facilitate a compromise solution. A case in point was the Regla settler family on Sibuyan Island, central Philippines, in a CADT area that was to benefit the Sibuyan Mangyan Tagabukid. The Regla family were long-time residents within the ancestral domain, and, after having learned of the



Photo 7.6 : President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo handing over the CADT to the leaders of the Matigsalog. Davao City, 30 October 2003.

background of indigenous claim-making, wholeheartedly supported the community's application for a CADT. Despite their settler background, the family is in fact not only considered a part of the community, but some of their members were made leaders (e.g. of the newly-established, ancestral domain-wide indigenous organization). Significantly, the Regla family conceded to the ancestral domain the tracts of land within the ancestral domain that they had settled on, and promised to abide by the Mangyan Tagabukid community's customary laws on land use and inheritance.

A second factor is the degree to which the indigenous community in question is consolidated; the more it is consolidated, the more confident it will be about facing up to conflicts with settlers. At present, however, most ADSP areas are still in need of capacity-building to help consolidate the communities, organizations and their leadership. The ADSP has been careful to design the claim-making process in a way that helps this consolidation process.

A third and final condition is that settlers lack strong clientelistic bonds with politicians and businessmen; where such connections exist, the settlers feel powerful enough to defy the wishes of the claim-making community, and obstruct the application and titling process.

Notes

- 1 This is not to say that only Latin American countries provide such titles. Recognizing and bestowing communal land rights has also been a policy in Australia since the passing of the Native Title Act of 1993.
- 2 A prime force behind the displacement of these groups has been the violence surrounding the Muslim insurgency which has raged for the bigger part of the past 33 years.
- 3 In English: "History of the Lands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, 1596-1898".
- 4 Most Philippine anthropologists agree today that the group was a fake; from 1971 to 1983, then-Presidential Adviser on National Minorities, Manuel Elizalde, had made a group of Manobo Blit shifting cultivators pose as stone-age cave dwellers.
- 5 Curiously, however, they figured further down the text in his tables and descriptions.
- 6 As early as 1917, the largest ethnic block in Mindanao (42%) was made up of settler populations. The Moro accounted for only 36% of the Mindanao population.
- 7 The response of Philippine indigenous peoples themselves to the enactment of IPRA has been mixed, ranging from full support by those who perceive it as a belated, but genuine government recognition of the needs and aspirations of a particularly vulnerable part of the nation, to those who reject it wholesale either as part of an appeasement strategy to contain unrest among indigenous communities, or as a gross and calculated distortion of what ancestral domains mean for indigenous peoples.
- 8 "ICC" or "Indigenous Cultural Communities" is the official designation for indigenous peoples favoured by the Philippine government; it was introduced by the Aquino administration after 1986.
- 9 "Ancestral lands" are areas claimed by indigenous individuals or families, while "ancestral domains" are those lands that communities own collectively. If the application practice so far is a valid measure, ancestral domains are far more extensive than ancestral lands.
- 10 A different formulation would have been more acceptable to advocates of indigenous peoples' rights; in contemporary international standard-setting activities on indigenous rights, reference is usually made to the "free, prior and informed consent" of indigenous peoples.
- 11 "Eminent domain" is the legal prerogative of the state to appropriate or compulsorily purchase landed properties in the name of superior state interests, e.g. for the construction or widening of a road.
- 12 For its trailblazer role in Southeast Asian minority rights legislation, the Philippine government won praise and respect from concerned anthropologists and human rights organizations around the world (see e.g. Headland 1999).
- 13 It may also be that the reason for the settlers' relaxed attitude was that they were more interested in land for the tilling than in the gathering of forest products, the protection of which was a primary concern of the Tagbanua claim proponents.

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8 THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS "PEACE ACCORD": Whose Peace?

Raja Devasish Roy



photo: Christian Erni

8 The Chittagong Hill Tracts "Peace Accord": Whose Peace?¹

Raja Devasish Roy

Historical background: Militarization and colonization

The area and its indigenous inhabitants

The Chittagong Hill Tracts² in southeastern Bangladesh is an extensive wooded borderland made up of several parallel ranges of low mountains and rugged hills, traditionally inhabited – like the neighbouring hilly areas in India and Burma ("Myanmar") – by a number of different ethnic groups of 'Mongoloid' extraction marked off from the surrounding plainspeople, most clearly, by their practice of swidden or "shifting" cultivation (*jum*). It is the salience of this collective trait which has given birth to the epithet '*Jumma*' ('swiddener') as an umbrella term for the Hill Tracts' indigenous peoples. These ethnic groups have an unusually rich cultural heritage in terms of language, religion, dress and settlement patterns. While the Chakma, numerically and historically the most prominent ethnic group, and the Tanchangya people, speak languages that are linked with Bengali, Assamese, Nepalese, Oriya and Pali (the language of the Theravada Buddhist scriptures of the time of Gautama Buddha), the languages of the other peoples belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. The Marma, the second largest group, speak a language that is similar to Rakhaing and Burmese. While the Chakma, Tangchangya, Marma and Khyang practice a form of Theravada Buddhism, and the Tripura, the third largest group, are mostly Hindu, the remaining smaller ethnic groups are either still followers of their own religions or faiths, such as the Mro (Mru) and Khumi, or have, in the meantime, mostly converted to a Christian creed, such as the Bawm and Lushai. In addition, many of the peoples may follow more than one religion, as is the case with numerous indigenous peoples worldwide, which some call 'polytheism'; e.g., the Mro (Mru) follow their own traditional faith, the new faith "Krama", and a form of Buddhism, while some of the Tripura and Khyang also practice Christianity.

The Chakma, Tangchanya, Marma, Tripura and Khyang live mainly in and alongside the river valleys, and at the foot of the higher hills, rather than on the higher slopes or ridge tops (except the Khyang, to a limited extent), and are, thus, collectively referred to sometimes as the "riverside" or "streamside" groups (Sopher 1964: 109). The aforesaid peoples have increasingly adopted plough cultivation, instead of, or besides, the traditional swidden cultivation. The smaller ethnic groups, sometimes regarded as hill dwellers, can be roughly differentiated into the mountaintop-dwelling or "highlander" group of the Lushai, Bawm and Pangkhua, whose big villages are located on the ridge tops, and the "uplander" group that includes the Mro and Khumi, whose smaller villages are located on the higher slopes of the ranges, but below the ridge-tops proper (Ibid). These smaller ethnic groups are found dispersed along the easternmost range and in the southern part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, characterized by steeper hills and narrower valley floors. These hill-dwelling peoples largely continue the tradition of swidden cultivation, but have partly adopted the cultivation of fruit trees. Among all these indigenous groups, it is only the Chakma and Marma that have developed a relatively stratified and centralized society with a hereditary chief or *raja* with a court culture, influenced more by the Indian tradition of traditional statehood in the former case and by the Burmese and the Rakhaing variant in the latter case (see Sopher 1964, Brauns and Löffler 1990)³.

Militarization and resistance: The CHT become a British tributary

Like many other sub-Himalayan mountain areas on the tri-borders of India, Burma and Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts was first colonized, not by a kingdom or empire from the neighbouring plains, but by British imperialists (Bangladesh Groep Nederland 1984:23, Brauns and Löffler 1990:27). In the case of the CHT, the British were motivated both by strategic and economic interests, and they achieved their aims through military deployment and diplomatic subterfuge, leading first to an exploitative trade treaty, and, ultimately, direct colonization.

By the 1780s, the British East India Company had converted the major chiefdoms of the region into British tributaries (Chakroborty 1977, Hutchinson 1978 [1906]:8f.). Earlier, the region served as a buffer between British Bengal and the Lushai/Mizo polities to the east. This, however, did not come about before a decade-long war led by the Chakma chief or *raja* was brought to an end through an economic blockade of the land-locked region that cut off the supply of salt, iron, clay and other necessities that were not available in the region, forcing the chief to settle for a truce in 1785 (Serajuddin 1971, Chakroborty 1977, Roy, R. B. M. 1975)⁴. This was one of the first known wars of resistance in South Asia against a colonial power.

A similar struggle was to be repeated almost two centuries later, again led predominantly by the Chakma people, yet not by its chiefs as before, but by



Photo 8.1 : Bengali shopkeeper in Bandarban town (photo: Christian Erni)

Marxist-oriented leaders, and directed not against an empire, but against the nascent Bangladeshi state that had itself become independent through a bloody civil war. This was in 1973, two years after the independence of Bangladesh, and a year after the adoption of the first constitution of the republic, which rejected the CHT people's demands for revival of autonomy and constitutional safeguards. The new leaders' apparent lack of sympathy towards the CHT people was at least partly fuelled by resentment; during the independence war of 1971, a section of the CHT population – including both indigenous people and Bengali residents – had sided or collaborated with the Pakistani military regime, in most cases under duress.

Annexation to Bengal

Despite the British-Chakma treaty of 1785, formal annexation to British Bengal came almost a century later, in 1860, by the Company's successor, the British Indian government, which renamed the region the "Chittagong Hill Tracts". Earlier British records referred to the region as the "Jum Bungoo", "Jum Mahal" or "Kapas Mahal" (Kapas meaning cotton, then the major cash crop). Between 1860 to 1947, the indigenous polities and alliances were gradually realigned, leading to political centralization among some of its peoples and to decentralization in others, ultimately causing the smaller chiefdoms and "tribal" confederacies to fall into political and social oblivion (Hutchinson 1978 [1906]:12, Brauns and Löffler 1990:30, van Schendel et al. 2000:25-32). However, throughout the period of British rule, which ended in

1947, a quantum of administrative autonomy was retained in a reorganized, quasi-traditional and partly-formalized system of self-government, in which the primacy of the indigenous population was promoted, while non-indigenous settlers were restricted as regards the nature of their movement, presence and political influence.

Scarce resources and rising population

At one time this southeast frontier region was rich in natural resources and had a very low population density. The per capita access to resources was generous indeed. This is no longer true, at least for its known resources. The quest for taxes, trade, timber, fisheries and sheer living space has changed all that, not to mention the flooding of the region's widest and richest valley by the damming – some say damning – of the river Karnafuli in 1960. The dam – known as the Kaptai Dam – displaced nearly 100,000 people, one-third of the population of the region, and is regarded by many as one of the major causes of the armed revolt that started in the 1970s and ended in the 1990s. Between the 1860s to 1979, when the so far largest group of government-sponsored Bengali settlers started to be brought in, the region's population had grown more than fifteen-fold (see Annexe 1). Although its population is still small when compared to some of the world's most densely-populated regions as are found in the lowlands of Bangladesh, it does not seem so small when looked at in relation to the scarce flatlands and infertile, hilly uplands of the region (Roy 2004:11, 13, 35). Thus, the much-flouted “emptiness” of the hills, as the settlers found out to their peril in the early 1980s, was a huge myth, when they had to brave the jungle, malaria, hostile guerillas and a patronizing national army to make a new home in the region.

Erosion of autonomy and Bengali in-migration

The period after British rule (from 1947 onwards) saw a further erosion of autonomy, despite the introduction of franchise rights in the 1950s. With the phenomenal rise of the settler population of the region and successive government policies that discriminated in favour of the Bengalis and against the indigenous people, the CHT leaders were unable to prevent their people's political and economic marginalization. While the British government had allowed limited in-migration (it was also careful to not let anti-British Bengali political groups influence the relatively “non-revolutionary” hill peoples), the Pakistani government's (1947-1971) role on migration was more ambivalent, while the role of successive Bangladeshi administrations on this issue has varied from covert encouragement (early 1970s) to a directly-sponsored population transfer programme (1979 to 1984). The transmigration of the overwhelmingly Muslim Bengali peasants from various lowland districts led to the displacement of tens of thousands of non-Muslim indigenous people (mostly Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or following indigenous



Map 8.1 : Migration from Plains Regions of Bangladesh to CHTs & India

faiths), thereby partly “civilianizing” the ongoing violence and adding ethnic and religious overtones to a conflict that before had largely been restricted to the non-Muslim indigenous guerillas and predominantly Muslim Bengali government security forces.⁶ Of course, that does not mean that innocent civilians, whether Bengali or indigenous, were not victimized earlier, but at least their number until then was not so visibly large. This part-civil, part-military conflict continued up to the 1990s, and it was not until 1997 that the civil war formally ended with the signing of an accord.

Waging peace

War, peace and war

The signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord of 1997 heralded the consolidation of a much-publicized truce between the Government of Bangladesh and the indigenous peoples' political party – the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti⁷ (“PCJSS”, or “JSS” for brief) – that had until then sustained a protracted low-intensity war against successive regimes in Bangladesh for almost twenty-five years. Many called it a “peace” accord, since one of the primary purposes of the Accord was to bring an end

to organized hostilities in the region.⁸ The Accord was signed on 2 December 1997, but decommissioning had effectively started on 10 August, 1992 – not counting minor deviations – when the JSS had declared a unilateral cease-fire, while the actual handing-over of the guerillas' arms was concluded only after the signing of the accord.⁹

The resultant situation of “peace”, or, rather, the absence or near-absence of organized conflict between the two main protagonists, the indigenous guerillas and the government security forces, still holds. The past decade since the signing of the Accord has in fact shown little or no violence against security forces or Bengali settlers by the indigenous people, although the reverse is somewhat less true (IWGIA 2002:318). On the other hand, the post-accord situation has seen the rise of a new conflict with arms that threatens peace, a conflict between erstwhile allies from among the indigenous pro-autonomy activists. Therefore, on the face of it, we can say that the Accord has brought some “peace” to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but that it has also brought in its wake a new conflict, whether or not the accord itself is responsible for the new conflagration.

Losing the war and the peace?

Before we attempt to understand the complex and multi-dimensional impacts of the war-peace interregnum upon the frontier region and consider whether the current Pahari-Bengali truce will hold for long, let us also ask whether that truce was the only thing that the CHT Accord of 1997 had set out to do. Did the Accord merely seek to put an end to the war between the guerillas and the security forces, and to foster non-violence between the indigenous people and the settlers, or did it mean different things to different people? What did it mean to the indigenous people, for example? What about their land and self-government rights for which they had been struggling for decades? And what about peace between and among the indigenous population? How do we account for the growing intra-indigenous violence between the pro and anti-Accord groups, led respectively by the JSS (one of the signatories to the Accord) and the United People's Democratic Front, or UPDF (born from a splinter indigenous student group that was hitherto allied to the JSS). Can we say then that the Accord has failed, both to bring peace and fulfill the expectations, if not the aspirations, of the CHT indigenous peoples? Did the indigenous people lose both the war and the peace? What did the Bangladeshi government expect to get out of it? Or should we rephrase the question to ask *for whom* the so far elusive peace has come, or not come, as the case might be? Furthermore, was this peace a “just” peace? These are some of the intricate questions that the peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts raises. The following discussion attempts to answer some of these questions, while raising some new ones, and hopes to provide some general lessons that may be applicable to similar peace processes and “ethnic” political accords in different parts of the world.



Photo 8.2: Army camp overlooking paddy fields of a Chakma community in Khagrachari district (photo: Christian Erni)

The Accord and its reception

The 1997 Accord: Peace, culture, autonomy and rehabilitation

The 1997 Accord contains four main sections or parts. Part A, under the heading “General”, recognizes the CHT as a “tribal-inhabited area”, and deals with commitments to passage of legislation and details of composition of the committee that was to oversee the implementation of the accord (no time frame for implementation was agreed upon). Part B is entitled “Hill District Local Government Councils/Hill District Councils”, and as its title suggests, contains detailed provisions on proposed amendments to the District Council laws to strengthen the councils' existing powers and to add more subjects under their jurisdiction. Part C, entitled “Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council” lays down the composition of a new unit of regional self-government to be constituted, styled as a “regional” council, incorporating the three hill provinces or “districts”. In the case of both the regional and the district councils, the chairpersonship and two-thirds of the seats are reserved for indigenous or “tribal” people (see Annexes 3 and 4).

Part D, entitled “Rehabilitation, General Amnesty and other matters” actually covers a far wider range of issues besides the rehabilitation of the international refugees, internally-displaced people and indigenous fighters, and the grant of amnesty to the

guerillas and other indigenous people who were involved in the armed struggle. A specially-constituted *task force* is to expedite the work of rehabilitation. The vexing and seemingly irresolvable issue of land is mentioned both in the district councils laws (part B) and in this part (part D), including provisions for land grants to “landless” indigenous families, the formation of a *Commission on Land* to provide expeditious justice in land-related disputes (especially between indigenous people and settlers), and cancellation of land leases to non-residents where the lessees had illegally left the land unutilized. Other important matters included the manner and timing of the arms hand-over by the guerillas and their return to normal life, affirmative action through quotas for reservation of jobs for local residents, with priority to indigenous (“tribal”) candidates, special allocation of development funds, the dismantling of non-permanent military camps and the return of soldiers to peacetime permanent garrisons or ‘cantonments’ (without any time frame), and the formation of a separate ministry to deal with all major aspects of administrative and developmental matters related to the hill region. Preference was to be given to a “tribal” for the office of minister, as was the case for the chairpersonship of the CHT Development Board, a regional development institution that had been functioning since 1976.

An important cross-cutting matter of the Accord is indigenous culture. This was treated as a fundamental issue by recognition of the CHT as a “tribal-inhabited area” in part A, and reiterated, directly and indirectly, in parts B, C and D. The specific measures included the reservation of a specified number of seats for particular ethnic groups in the regional and the district councils, the proposed introduction of primary education in the mother tongues of the indigenous peoples, recognizing the jurisdiction to the CHT councils over customary law, the recognition of customary land rights through the Land Commission law, and the reinforcement of the traditional chiefs’ advisory, judicial and residential certificate-granting prerogatives.

A mixed reception: “Historic peace” versus “sell-out”

The signing of the CHT Accord brought mixed receptions. The government led by the Awami League was quick to hail it as a “historic agreement”, time and again invoking it as one of its major political achievements.¹⁰ Not long after the event, the UN agency UNESCO even awarded then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a “peace prize”. Conversely, a breakaway faction of indigenous student and youth groups hitherto allied to the JSS – now known as the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) – had unequivocally condemned the Accord as a “sell-out” to “reactionaries” as soon as it was signed, and vowed to continue its struggle for “greater autonomy” and constitutional safeguards. Other sections of the indigenous population were more cautious in their comments about the accord itself, adopting a “wait and see” attitude (Mohsin 1998:107). However, it would be difficult today to find very many indigenous

people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts who are happy with the way the Accord has been implemented so far. In fact, even the JSS itself has bitterly complained of non-implementation of the Accord.

Let us now consider the diverse range of views of the non-indigenous Bengali-speaking settlers of the region, who now constitute almost half the population of the region. These people may be divided, for our purpose, into at least three distinct groups: (i) the settlers of the 19th century (the “old Bengalis”), (ii) the spontaneous migrants of the 20th century (the “natural migrants”); and (iii) the population transferees or transmigrants of the 1980s (“government-sponsored settlers” or “government-sponsored migrants”). Bengalis from all three groups had initially condemned the accord for allegedly compromising their interests and “turning them into second-class citizens” (ibid.). Many of them even saw the hand of “big brother” India behind the accord, as it was widely believed that the guerillas had used Indian territory, training, arms and other logistics at different periods of the war.¹¹

Some of the old Bengalis are now allied with the JSS against the government-sponsored migrants, but not necessarily against the government of the day. Few of them openly speak against the accord now. Some have even supported its implementation under the banner of the *Original and Permanent Bengalis’ Welfare Association*, but have allegedly suffered harassment by military personnel for aligning with the JSS, and consequently, opposing the hardline Bengali organization known as the *Equal Rights Movement*¹². The situation of the “natural migrants” (largely traders, manual labourers, etc.) has perhaps changed the least in the post-Accord period, because peace, and more importantly, unhindered mobility and transportation are still threatened by intra-indigenous conflict and violence, whereas earlier it was threatened by the conflict between the army and the guerillas. Regarding the accord, leaders from this group are among the least vocal among the Bengalis – which is not really surprising, as businesspeople the world over are seldom openly for or against any political grouping.

With regard to their political clout and demographic weight, the last-named category, the government-sponsored migrants, constitute the strongest grouping within the Bengali population. They now have more physical security than before (they are no longer threatened by an active guerilla force) and still continue to receive food grain support from the government, a system that was introduced when they arrived in the region almost twenty-five years ago. However, they are not content with the status quo as many of them had expected the former right-of-centre BNP-led coalition government to give them a bigger say in the administration of the region, through stronger representation in the regional and district councils, in which the primacy of the indigenous people is currently guaranteed by law through the reservation of two-thirds of the seats and the chairpersonships for “tribals”.¹³ The government-sponsored migrants have been the most vocal critics of the accord, saying

that it has discriminated against them. Many of them rallied around the banner of the right-of-centre BNP, and the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (when both of these parties were in opposition), who were prompt to castigate the accord as having compromised the "unitary" character of the republic through what they saw was the establishment of a quasi-federal administrative set-up in the hill region (van Schendel 2000:66). As mentioned earlier, some have organized themselves under the Equal Rights Movement - allegedly with support from government intelligence agencies - ostensibly to secure "equal rights" for Bengalis, but actually to counter campaigns and programmes in favour of implementing the 1997 Accord (Mohaiemen 2003:155f.). Until today, these differing and opposed views on the CHT Accord still remain as stumbling blocks towards full-fledged devolution and further implementation of the Accord, and thus also towards sustainable peace between indigenous peoples and outsiders in the Hill Tracts.

Many would say that the accord is a failure. Some have questioned the contents and timing of the accord itself, as with other similar accords, and said that it amounted to "too little, too late, too loud" (Samaddar 1999:8). Mohsin, a well-known writer on the CHT, had expressed her foreboding over the success of the Accord even before a year had passed from the date of its signing. She had categorically stated that "[the] seeds of insecurity, discontent, inequality and further polarization are inherent in the peace accord" (Mohsin 1998:107). Mohsin's sympathies are clearly on the side of those who feel that the 1997 Accord has compromised the interests of the indigenous peoples, but her analysis does not attempt to reconcile the seemingly opposed needs of providing a larger quantum of autonomy to the CHT - with primacy to the indigenous people - and yet prevent "polarization and discontent", unless we disregard the views of those Bengali settlers who oppose the CHT Accord provisions on self-government as "too conciliatory" towards the indigenous people. From a particular political perspective, one can, of course, consider any political accord in its totality as a success or failure. This also raises another question, the question of whether ten years is a sufficiently long period to assess the success or failure of an accord such as that of the Chittagong Hill Tracts? Perhaps many would say yes. Nevertheless, if we look at specific aspects of the accord, one can perhaps see both success and failure.

Reviewing the Accord: Functional, textual and subjective analyses

The *relative* success or failure of *different aspects* of the CHT Accord of 1997 can be assessed in various ways. I propose here to analyze the impact of the Accord from three angles. **Firstly**, I shall attempt to assess the progress in the implementation of the major provisions of the Accord. In so doing, I shall combine features of what some refer to as the "functional" and "textual" approaches towards analyzing political accords (Singh 1999:1f.). **Secondly**, I shall try to understand the Accord more subjectively, by

considering whether the Accord has (so far) achieved what one or both of the parties intended it to achieve. I feel that this is one of the most difficult areas in the politics of accords to which the available literature has perhaps given the least attention. The matter is further compounded by the fact that the major parties to a political agreement like the CHT Accord may themselves be ostensibly representing a position that is itself the result of many subsidiary agreements, compromises and temporary fusions of a vast and pluralistic array of thought, belief, ideology, interest and expediency. I shall also try to explore here whether there was any hidden agenda behind the formal positions taken by the parties to the Accord. This approach may be regarded as belonging to what some call the *subjectivist school* (ibid:2). **Thirdly**, I shall attempt to understand the causes behind what many might consider to be the "failures" of the Accord by focusing on two issues: (i) the question of whether the accord omitted certain vital issues that ought to have been included; and (ii) the dynamics of the pre-Accord developments, including formal and informal negotiations and the legacies of the political and administrative history of the region. In the process, I shall also try to examine the question of how democratic and inclusive the process of negotiations was, including the gender dimensions of the accord and the negotiation process.

A functional-textualist assessment

According to the JSS (see e.g. Peace Campaign Group 2002), the major aspects of non-implementation of the Accord are the following commissions and omissions on the part of the government: (i) the non-withdrawal of (all except a few) non-permanent military camps¹⁴; (ii) the non-transfer of land and law and order matters to the district councils¹⁵; (iii) the passage of the CHT Land Commission Act of 2001 in violation of the provisions of the Accord (reducing the geographical jurisdiction of the commission and providing too much power to its non-indigenous chairperson); (iv) the non-commencement of the work of the Land Commission; and (v) the appointment of non-indigenous persons to the posts of the (cabinet-rank) Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs and the chairperson of the Hill Tracts Development Board by the former BNP-led government.¹⁶ These matters are relatively straightforward, and the government is not in a position to deny the above. However, some of the other allegations of the JSS are somewhat less unequivocal (though not necessarily without foundation or logic). These include: (vii) the inclusion of non-permanent residents of the region as voters in the last parliamentary elections (which the JSS formally boycotted); and (viii) the inclusion of non-indigenous people within the list of the "internally displaced".¹⁷

Among the issues mentioned above, I would suggest that it is the stalemate on land-related matters that deserves the most immediate attention because many believe that the success or failure of the CHT peace process is dependent upon their resolution (Mohsin 1998:114, Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission 1991:58). Among these issues,

the most intricate matter will perhaps be the work of the Land Commission, which is to deal with the complex issue of land titles and customary rights. On the one hand, the presence of a majority of indigenous people in the Commission (as provided by law) suggests that customary law will be given due regard, but practical and legal complications may mean that it will take many years before the disputes are resolved (Roy, R. D. 2000:40f.). It was only in 2005 that the commission met for the first time, and the meeting ended without much progress. The main reason for the commission's ineffectiveness was that the indigenous members were not prepared to start their adjudication work unless the concerned law was amended in accordance with the Accord. They singled out for particular criticism the virtual veto-making powers now vested in the non-indigenous chairperson of the commission as being contrary to both the CHT Accord and universally applicable democratic norms of decision-making¹⁸.

An unwritten agreement on the repatriation of settlers?

Apart from the non-implementation of the express provisions of the agreement, the JSS has also claimed that the government violated the "unwritten" part of the agreement. This agreement allegedly concerned the rehabilitation of the government-sponsored Bengali settlers outside the CHT, which was to have been preceded by the dismantling of "cluster villages" and the stoppage of government rations to the government-sponsored settlers.¹⁹ The then Awami League-led government had denied the existence of any such understanding, let alone a responsibility to take measures to either rehabilitate the settlers outside the CHT or stop their rations. It is worth mentioning here that the European Parliament had offered to provide grants to the Government of Bangladesh to help it rehabilitate the settlers outside the CHT, a proposal that was categorically rejected by the previous Awami League-led government.²⁰ The stand of the BNP-led government, which succeeded the Awami League, if any, was even less accommodative with regards to any such measures, not the least because the population transfer programme was initiated and largely completed during the tenure of an earlier BNP government. However, the occasion for such a consideration did not arise, as the matter is not known to have been included in the agenda for formal discussions between the government of Bangladesh and the European Union.

The government-sponsored Bengali settlers are the only section of the CHT population that has uninterruptedly and regularly received food rations from the government. This clearly suggests that their economic existence in the CHT is artificially subsidized by the government, implying that their situation would otherwise be very marginal. Indigenous organizations have demanded that this selective granting of favours be stopped²¹, but successive governments have thought otherwise. Among the indigenous people, only the repatriated refugees from India (but not the internally-displaced people) and ex-members of the Shanti Bahini guerrillas

receive some food grain support from the government, which was rumoured to be at risk of discontinuance by the former BNP-led government, and is now known to be continued in an *ad hoc* fashion only, whereas earlier, such grants to the indigenous people were integrated into regular annual development allocations²².

A number of researchers (Roy 1997, Roy, R. C. 2000 and Adnan 2004) have suggested that one of the best ways out of the settler-indigenous violence is to encourage voluntary rehabilitation of the Bengali transmigrants outside the CHT, since the major acts of indigenous-settler violence are seen to almost exclusively involve Bengali population transferees who were moved as part of the government's settlement programme, rather than other sections of the Bengali population. Roy (1997:200ff.) argues that since the transmigrants' economic conditions are generally so poor (especially on account of the land crisis in the CHT and lack of jobs), most of them would agree to rehabilitation outside the Hill Tracts, provided the compensation offers were adequate. This would leave relatively small numbers of transmigrants who refuse rehabilitation, allowing the scale of the settler-indigenous conflict to be reduced to 'manageable' proportions. Roy, R. C. (2000:157f.) suggests that since the transmigrants were given land grants, money and food subsidies to induce them to migrate to the CHT, similar incentives should be offered to those who wish to leave the CHT. Roy, R. C. (*ibid.*) also argues that any such rehabilitation should be done in phases. Adnan (2004:172) suggests that the existing foodgrain subsidies and other financial benefits to the transmigrants should be gradually phased out in order to encourage them to be rehabilitated outside the CHT. He supports suggestions to resume food and other subsidies to the rehabilitated transmigrants outside the CHT for a limited period (*ibid.*).

Changing governments and changing policies

The aforesaid situation of omissions and commissions in violation of the Accord includes developments both before and after the change of government in Bangladesh in 2001, which brought the BNP, the party that was opposed to the 1997 Accord, into power.²³ Regarding some matters, such as the presence of the military in the region and the general pattern of providing development grants to CHT institutions, there seemed to be no perceptible change in policy up to the time of the BNP-led government, whose term ended in 2006. However, it is clear that the BNP-led government had favoured larger development inputs for the settlers, as is evident by the appointment of a non-indigenous person as the chair of the premier public development agency for the region, the *Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board* and pressure on a UNDP-funded CHT development project to include the settlers among its beneficiaries in a more substantial manner. As regards the presence of the military in the region, the former BNP-led government seemed to favour strengthening rather than weakening it, as was evident from the extent and nature of the security forces' role in the region.

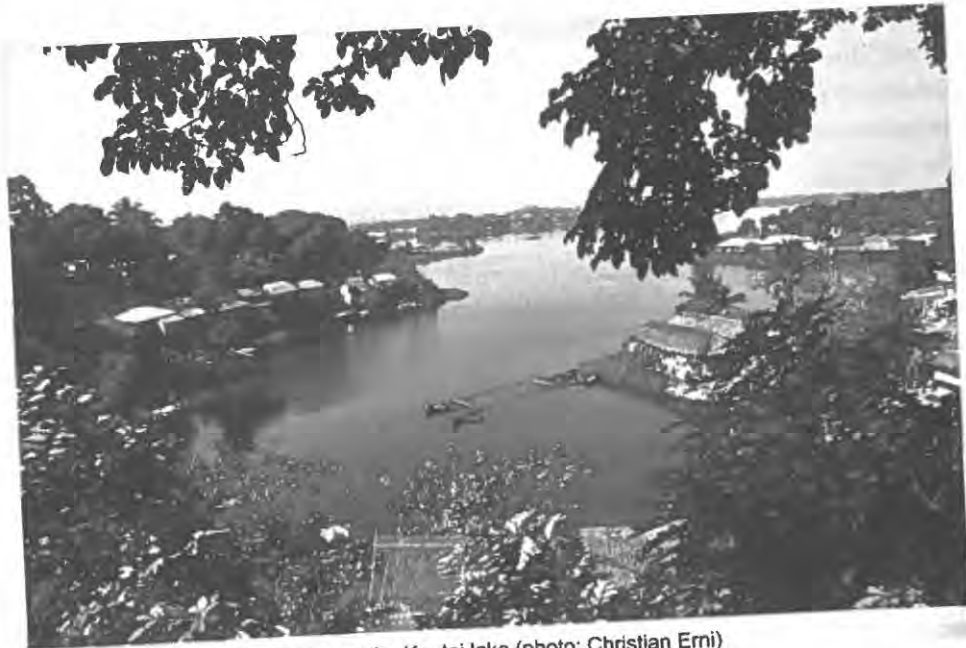


Photo 8.3 : Bengali settlements on the Kaptai lake (photo: Christian Erni)

At a much-awaited meeting in 2002 between the prime minister, the chairperson of the CHT Regional Council (the top JSS leader) and the CHT Affairs deputy minister (also an indigenous MP), an uneasy agreement was reached to consolidate and strengthen peace and compromise in the CHT. However, several developments in the years since suggest a clear shift towards the accommodation of demands of the Bengali population, including the retention of the cabinet-rank CHT Affairs ministership by the former prime minister herself, instead of appointing an indigenous person to the post, and the appointment of the only Bengali member of parliament from the CHT as the chairman of the CHT Development Board. There were rumours that the former BNP-led government had expressed its unwillingness to some of its bilateral development partner governments to devolve land administration authority to the hill district councils.²⁴ Moreover, anti-Accord statements made by senior members of the BNP-led cabinet some years ago, and rumours of non-continuation of foodgrain support to the ex-JSS fighters and Jumma refugees (but not to the government-sponsored Bengali settlers) could have meant serious trouble for the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace process²⁵. The overall situation of human rights, in the country as a whole and in the CHT in particular, had clearly deteriorated. Various incidents of alleged arson, killings and rape, implicating settlers and security forces, had remained, and still substantively remain, without independent and impartial investigation²⁶. Thus, an important lesson of the CHT peace process is that *implementation of an accord may run into severe difficulties when governments change and a party that opposes the accord comes into power*, as the successor government lacks commitment to the

accord. On the other hand, it is equally true that despite its avowed commitment to rescind the CHT Accord, by continuing to deal with the legal and institutional arrangements that resulted from the Accord, the BNP-led coalition government had signalled its de facto acceptance of the CHT accord as a political and administrative reality, although it had not made any formal statements to that effect. One of the few positive developments for the CHT under the former BNP-led regime was the passage of the CHT Regulation (Amendment) Act of 2003. This amendment sought to transfer powers over the administration of civil and criminal justice, currently vested upon district and divisional administration functionaries, to judges under the Ministry of Justice. This would not affect the partially-autonomous justice administration system of the chiefs and headmen. The law expressly excludes matters triable by headmen and chiefs from the new courts' jurisdiction, and stipulates that the latter's jurisdiction is to be exercised in accordance with the "laws, customs and usages of the district". Most provisions of this law were proposed by the CHT Regional Council, and it is generally believed that the amendment has the broad support of different sections of the people of the region, particularly from among the indigenous peoples (Roy 2004:132ff.). It is unfortunate that this law is yet to be given effect to despite the ongoing separation of the judiciary from the executive in Bangladesh as a whole.²⁷

The aforesaid developments suggest, among others, that *it may be very difficult for a successor government to repudiate an accord signed by its predecessor government*, even through such accords do not have the sanction of international law as is the case with international treaties. The motives for compliance include the international reputation of a government and the practical difficulties of *unbirthing* institutionalized creations of accords.²⁸

Peace-building through reconstructionist development

The period immediately following the signing of the Accord saw a frenzied rush by government development planners, bilateral development partners of the government and representatives of multilateral development agencies (notably the Asian Development Bank) to mount needs assessment missions, socio-economic surveys, "grassroots" opinion-seeking dialogues and the like to set the base for medium to large-scale development projects in the region. Seeking advice, the government invited "reconstruction" experts from regions outside Bangladesh that had recently overcome violent conflicts. Promises were made to restart development interventions with a "bottom-up" approach.

However, given the long history of being victims of so-called development projects that created dams that swallowed up their ancestral homes, concentration camps disguised as "model villages" and "collective farms", forest reserves that excluded indigenous people, among others, development projects in the region came



Photo 8.4 : Chakma man in front of his former property, now occupied by Bengali settlers (photo: Christian Erni)

to be synonymous with “dislocation, disruption and destruction” (Tripura 2000:98). Some said that they would rather stay like the inhabitants of the remoter areas – who remained without “development” for the entire duration of the internal war – rather than risk being victimized by inappropriate externally-oriented and imposed development projects (ibid:100). Non-governmental loan-disbursing institutions and large, corporate-style NGOs engaging in micro-credit schemes – currently somewhat fashionable in the western media – were not to be left behind. However, very few of the larger government-managed projects could be implemented due to bureaucratic red-tape, and later, aggravated security conditions triggered by the abduction of a number of Western European development personnel in 2000.²⁹

Since 2003, medium to large-sized development work was resumed in the region. One such project, on the “Promotion of Development and Confidence-Building in the CHT”, was started by UNDP in 2003, but was soon beset with difficulties. On the one hand, a section of the indigenous population feared that the government would manipulate the project targets to provide undue economic incentives and development opportunities to the Bengali population transferees and thereby perpetuate the latter’s occupation of indigenous lands and their dominance in the region’s electoral politics (IWGIA 2004:297). On the other hand, a section of the Bengali population of the region accused the project of being unduly biased towards the indigenous people and against the interest of the population transferees and other Bengali inhabitants of the region. On account of the above – among other – difficulties, progress of work on

the project has been stymied at times. Nevertheless, four years of development work can hardly be expected to show very many results to undo development neglect that goes back several decades. Thus, the impact of such post-war “reconstructionist” interventions upon the CHT peace process has not really been tested very far. However, the credit-oriented corporate NGOs have done a great deal of banking, but seem to have provided few welfare inputs (Roy 2006). They have further monetized the CHT economy without providing the loanees with ways and means to achieve sustainable livelihoods, leading to increased consumerism and alienation of lands and other assets rather than a higher standard or quality of living. The activities of some of these organizations have been supported by powerful international sources, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which unilaterally imposed the condition of micro-credit activities in a development project that was started in the CHT in 2004 with its loans (Roy 2005, Roy 2006).

Let us now look at the possible links between developmental and economic matters on the one hand and peace-building on the other. Given the relative poverty in the CHT, which was exacerbated by dislocation and land loss, one would have thought that developmental and economic matters would be important factors in rebuilding peace in the region. In fact, in the late 1970s and early 80s, the government had actually tended to look at the entire CHT issue as an “economic” problem, and hence one that required “developmental” interventions. That did not, however, succeed in either facilitating peace negotiations with the guerrillas or in diffusing political support towards the autonomy movement. This was perhaps not so much because economic development was unimportant to the CHT people, but primarily because the concerned programmes did not bring real benefits to them or were too small in scale, or had failed to address certain matters of a more social or political nature. In any case, when asked about it, many CHT people said that they did not regard economic matters as highly relevant towards the success or failure of the CHT peace process, as they did the presence or absence of violence and the nature of ethnic relations.³⁰

Thus it may appear, on the face of it, that the CHT situation supports the conclusion from the “Coming Out of Violence” study of five conflict-ridden societies (South Africa, Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, the Basque country and Sri Lanka)³¹, that “economic factors appear to have the lowest influence on the success or failure of a peace process” (Darby and MacGinty 2000b:251). However, that is perhaps simplifying matters somewhat because considering spoiler violence and external influences as more critical than economic matters should not be taken to mean that economic factors do *necessarily* and in every case have little or no impact on peace processes. After all, in the CHT case it is difficult to imagine that developments such as the appropriation of the indigenous peoples’ forest commons by the government, the inundation and displacement caused by the Kaptai Dam, the land dispossession caused by transmigrants, and economic exploitation by unscrupulous traders and

money-lenders were merely minor factors in fuelling feelings of deprivation, injustice and neglect in the formative years of the unrest. Therefore, economic issues may *appear* to be relatively unimportant to many in the CHT, but there should nevertheless be little doubt that they do influence the success or failure of the peace process, no matter what respondents say when asked about the matter (Roy 2003:23f.).

What did the parties really want?

Thus we see that mainstream “development” interventions may be insufficient, at least by themselves, to usher in lasting peace (Tripura 2000). At the very beginning, I had posed the question of the respective wishes, aspirations and expectations of the parties to the 1997 Accord. Let us revisit that question. Did the JSS and the Government of Bangladesh actually have a shared vision of a post-peace-accord Chittagong Hill Tracts? I do not think that they did. The dispute between the JSS and the previous Awami League-led government over the “unwritten” part of the agreement forces us to conclude that the JSS and the then-government had different conceptions about such vital matters as the presence of the settlers and the temporary military camps, the question of policing and law and order, and the equally important question of land. I would venture to guess that with an optimistic view, the JSS may have expected the following scenario in the post-Accord situation: (i) settlers and army departed; (ii) an authoritative regional council to oversee the CHT administration; (iii) resolution of land disputes by annulment of settlers’ land titles; and (iv) land and multi-ethnic police administration in the hands of the hill district councils. Actually, none of the above developments have occurred. Of course, we cannot have expected all members of the JSS to have trusted the Government, and therefore, many within the JSS must have had many misgivings about the process of implementation and the goodwill of the government of the day. What did they think? And what was their fall-back position if the government reneged upon its promise, or at least if it did not implement key provisions of the agreement? I do not know whether the JSS has any such contingency plans other than to “renew its struggle”, but they have certainly not been publicly expressed in detail. I do not think it has very many viable alternatives but to seek to exert pressure through civil and civic means, no mean feat in a polity that has traditionally been unsympathetic to minorities. The forging of political alliances is of course theoretically available, but in practice may be even more difficult. Similarly, I do not think that the UPDF has better answers, either.

Now what about the government negotiators? Did they expect to implement all that they had expressly agreed to in the Accord, not to mention their “unwritten” pledges (which I personally believe that they did make)? I can think of two alternatives. One was that the government side never really believed in implementing all its commitments but was ready to promise the earth to induce the guerillas to lay down their arms and



Photo 8.5 : Bengali petty trader, Khagrachari district (photo: Christian Erni)

come back to normal life. The other alternative is that the government of the day, as represented by the chief negotiators and senior cabinet members, did intend to keep its promises, but of course based upon differing interpretations and understandings of what those commitments meant to politicians, bureaucrats, and so forth.

Let us consider the first alternative first. It is more than likely that the government negotiators were acutely aware of the fact that once the guerrillas gave up their arms, they would loose their most powerful pressure tool. Moreover, the peace process seemed to have the support of the Government of India, which was crucial because of India’s long, mountainous and forested border with the Hill Tracts, and the fact that the latter had reportedly served as a strategic base for the guerrilla camps. Therefore, the lesson to students of peace processes in cases of ethnic conflict is that *in order to ensure that the parties comply with their obligations, mechanisms should be in place (i) to either make quid pro quo arrangements and carry out the mutual obligations on a parallel basis in phases, or (ii) to ensure the effective mediation of a third party to enforce the Accord, or both* (Roy 2007 in Boltjes 2007: 137).

With regard to mediation, the regional inter-governmental organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could have been, at least theoretically, a possible third-party mediator. However, the CHT peace process did not produce any distinguishable third party, as third party mediation was categorically rejected by the government.³² In any case, the mandate of SAARC is limited to resolving inter-governmental issues, and in a bilateral, and not multilateral, manner. Therefore, there would have been difficulties even if SAARC had been

involved. As regards *quid pro quo* arrangements, I recall that a writer on the CHT did suggest before the conclusion of the CHT negotiations that the repatriation of the *Jumma* refugees (then sheltered in India) from India to Bangladesh should be linked with a parallel rehabilitation of Bengali settlers outside the CHT (Roy, R. C. 2000:158f.). This would have spread out the implementation of the agreement to the period before the formal signing, and phased it into the 'implementation' stage in the post-Accord period.

The repatriation of the *Jumma* refugees to Bangladesh was done in phases. I am firmly of the opinion that this phased repatriation helped ensure that the refugees received *most*, if not all, of what they were promised by way of return of dispossessed lands, grants of money and foodgrain rations, etc. Taking for a moment the side of the autonomist underdogs, one could say with the proverbial hindsight that decommissioning and arms hand-over by the guerillas could have been linked to the dismantling of military camps and/or the rehabilitation of the government-sponsored settlers outside the CHT. Of course, these were the *theoretical* options that were open to the JSS. Political exigencies may of course have suggested otherwise, both in the case of the CHT and in other comparable peace processes. Yet another alternative to ensure the implementation of agreements is suggested by Darby and MacGinty (2000b:259) who also point out the necessity of *building safeguards or penalties for non-compliance into the agreement*. Such safeguards were patently absent in the CHT Accord.

Considering now the second alternative – that the government's intentions were honest –, one cannot of course test the presence or absence of such intentions empirically, or at least not unless and until the Awami League were to form a government again in the future. Nevertheless, even if the intentions of the negotiating government are not questioned, challenges in implementation would still remain, on account of changing governments (discussed earlier), bureaucratic hurdles, resource constraints, and so forth. The number of hurdles and challenges facing peace processes are so varied and unpredictable that practical considerations would suggest that safeguard clauses supported by strong mediation and implementation measures cannot be replaced by mere trust and goodwill on the part of one or a handful of leaders in negotiation processes, both state and non-state.

Negotiations

Negotiating the CHT Accord: Ceasefire and trust-building

Let us turn now to the pre-accord stage, including the process of negotiations, to see if it sheds any light on the difficulties confronting the CHT peace process today. Among other things, what has struck me as a crucial element in the negotiation process was the little-known pre-formal exchange of messages between the parties that suggested

that they had "agreed to agree, whatever the contents of the accord might be". This suggests one of two things to me: one: that the parties were able to develop trust based upon the idea of a *win-win* situation for both, which required their mutual cooperation. Conversely, one could say that the two parties *needed* the accord to get out of a situation that is described as a "mutually-hurting stalemate" by Richardson and Wang (1993:179). The second possibility is that there were strong inducements from external sources (encouragement from powerful lobbies like oil and gas exploitation companies, the government of India, and Western donor agencies)³³. Direct evidence of such inducements, however, are by their very nature difficult to uncover, but many inhabitants of the region nevertheless believe in the presence of such influences.

Among other lessons that the CHT negotiations process offers us is the impact of the ceasefire and earlier accords upon the negotiations leading up to the 1997 Accord. The 1997 Accord on the CHT was preceded by two other accords, the Priti Group Accord of 1985 and the so-called "Moderate Leaders' Agreement" of 1988 that had by-passed the then-underground JSS. The Priti Group Accord of 1985 was signed between a breakaway faction of the JSS and the army commander of the region. Besides ensuring the surrender of these renegade guerillas, little of substance resulted from it, in spite of the inclusion of a few substantive issues in the accord: (i) the return of dispossessed lands to the indigenous people; and (ii) a halt to further population transfer. *The one lesson that this accord offered to the CHT people was that to achieve results, you need to have an agreement that involves the political arm of the government rather than mere bureaucrats* (Roy 2007 in Boltjes 2007: 138). Still, the 1988 agreement laid down the basis for the district council system, which was strengthened through the 1997 Accord. Thus, although the 1988 agreement was made with political lightweights, its legacy still continues, and will perhaps endure for long.

The ceasefire process in the CHT also contains some very interesting features. During the ceasefire, the army complained that the JSS was using it to reorganize, rest and strengthen itself, since the army was no longer at liberty to apprehend or confront suspected guerillas. Similar sentiments have been expressed by government officials both in India and in Sri Lanka, in relation to the Naga and Tamil issues, respectively. On the other hand, the guerilla leaders feared that too long a cease-fire might make it difficult for them to order their battle-weary fighters to go back to war should the negotiations fail. The CHT example shows that *a long ceasefire can create a great deal of pressure upon an underground guerilla force to forsake war and settle for peace* (Roy 2007 in Boltjes 2007: 139). This is because a ceasefire may be the only wartime opportunity for an underground fighter to freely meet his (and less occasionally, her) family and friends without fear of arrest or death and to enter into a free dialogue with "civil society" and feel the pulse of the people's wishes and aspirations, besides seeing for herself or himself the havoc caused by the war upon non-combatants.



Photo 8.6 : Bamboo floated down the river by Bengali traders (photo: Christian Erni)

Taking a bird's eye view of the pre-accord negotiation process in the CHT, I would tend to think that the first to fourth of Richardson and Wang's (1993) five "preconditions" of successful accords were also present in the case of the CHT, namely, (i) the emergence of identifiable bargaining parties; (ii) evidence of a mutually-hurting stalemate; (iii) the existence of leaders determined on a practical solution; and (iv) external political actors supporting conflict resolution. The fifth precondition, the presence of a mediator actively on the scene, was not met here, as I have mentioned earlier, unless we count the Liaison Committee as a mediator. However, while the role of the mediator was dispensed with in the pre-accord negotiations, its absence has clearly been felt in the post-accord phase.

Democracy and transparency in the negotiation process

The success or failure of many peace processes has depended, to a great extent, not only upon the contents of the accords themselves but upon the process of negotiations that led to their signing. So many writers have highlighted the importance of democracy and transparency that I do not feel I need to refer to them in particular. In the case of the CHT peace process, too, there were severe complaints that the process

of negotiations – including the internal process of consultations conducted by the JSS and the government – was secretive and non-inclusive. Smaller ethnic groups in the CHT have complained that the JSS did not consult them in a substantive manner, or consider their wishes, as reflected in the non-representation/under-representation of their groups in the district and regional councils. A section of the educated indigenous elite living in the urban areas and peri-urban settlements have also complained likewise. Conversely, on the side of the government, there were complaints that the issue was not adequately debated upon in the national parliament or discussed with civil society at large.

I believe that the aforesaid allegations are not without substance. A more inclusive process of consultations by the JSS may well have led to wider support towards the 1997 Accord among the indigenous population. As for the views of the UPDF during the negotiations, the question was not so much its exclusion from the negotiation process but its voluntary rejection of the process as one that was doomed to failure because of what they considered were its "inherent weaknesses", such as the absence of constitutional safeguards and the absence of express provisions for the repatriation of settlers back to the plains. A student leader once told me that the UPDF felt during the negotiation process that the JSS was going to make an accord whatever its contents were, implying that the JSS was not in a strong bargaining position. How far this is true, if at all, will perhaps never be unequivocally established, because political realities are complex and multi-layered rather than unidimensional.

On the question of the government's consultative process, "democracy" and "transparency" may seem desirable ends by themselves, but if these concepts were to mean the agreement of the majority and open discussions with all major sections of civil society on the proposed devolution package, we might not have had the CHT Accord, or any accord with substantive devolution to marginalized minority groups. This is because sometimes as the debate becomes open, it also becomes open to potential "spoilers" from among conservative anti-indigenous or anti-minority lobbies who can entertain realistic hopes of imposing their views through majoritarian processes in the name of democracy. The study of similar peace processes in neighbouring Northeast India shows that the contents of the accords were usually decided upon by the leaders first, and presented to parliament, for endorsement or comment, later, as *fait accompli*. Otherwise, influential anti-minority lobbies might well have subverted the delicate processes of peace negotiation.

Another noteworthy feature of the negotiations was the absence of technical expertise on the side of the JSS. Although the organisation is known to have consulted a number of civil servants and legal experts on vital issues, its lack of access to technical expertise and experience in administrative matters may well have led to the lack of clarity in the way certain provisions were framed, as critics have bemoaned. In any case, it is a matter of conjecture whether greater access to technical support

would have produced a better accord. In sum, among the lessons that the CHT negotiation process provides us, as I mentioned before, are: (i) *that long ceasefires may help prevent a return to violence*; (ii) *that underground groups may require technical assistance to translate their wish for peace into an agreement that does not contain the seeds for a later return to violence*; and (iii) *that independent mediators may not be necessary to bring about an accord*.

Reconstructing the Accord: What it should have included

Accepting, at least for the moment, that the success or failure of an accord needs to be judged over a long period and from both a subjective and an objective perspective, I would offer some observations on crucial issues that were either not addressed or were inadequately addressed in the 1997 Accord. I believe that adequate attention to these matters, or at least to some of them, would help sustain and strengthen the CHT peace process both because their continued non-acknowledgment may fuel renewed conflict, but also because they are essential ingredients of a sustained "peace with justice" – according to Samaddar (1999) the *sine qua non* of sustainable peace-building. This is especially important in order to attempt to address the needs and wants of the marginalized within the marginalized, the smaller ethnic groups and disadvantaged communities within the larger groups, whose voices we do not hear today because they do not speak with guns.

De-marginalizing the smaller ethnic groups

I would suggest that more safeguards should have been provided for the interest of the smaller indigenous groups, whose economic conditions and relative lack of access to education and other basic needs make them far more vulnerable than the larger indigenous groups. The representation of these peoples in the district and regional councils is not adequate, as has been mentioned by leaders of many of their organizations. The right of self-determination of the indigenous people of the CHT to have their own system of regional government with primacy for the indigenous peoples is based not on the numerical strength of its population, but the latter's distinctiveness as peoples. Therefore, the indigenous population of the CHT has little political significance unless one acknowledges it as a composite of distinct peoples, who all have their respective rights to self-determination as defined by the UN Charter and other United Nations instruments.³⁴ Therefore, logically, morally, legally and strategically, one cannot espouse the call for self-determination for the indigenous population of the region without acknowledging and respecting the self-determination right of each people, however small its population or its political, social and economic strength.³⁵

Constitutional safeguards

The 1997 Accord is not protected by constitutional safeguards. This has three major implications, among others. One implication is that the legislation resulting from the Accord enacted, in effect, only ordinary laws that may be amended with a simple majority in parliament. Given that the CHT has three representatives in parliament – out of a total of 300 – at least theoretically, this could mean that a future government that disagreed with a substantial devolution of powers could initiate legislation that has the effect of revoking the Accord or at least of diluting its provisions and rendering the CHT councils ineffective in independently exercising their prerogatives to self-government. Secondly, the absence of constitutional recognition of the special administrative status of the CHT and the cultural identities of the CHT peoples may and usually does mean the absence of long-term and fuller commitments to the rights and needs of the peoples of the CHT. Thirdly, the absence of direct constitutional backing for the CHT self-government system with its prerogatives for indigenous peoples makes it susceptible to legal challenges as a potentially unconstitutional arrangement.³⁶ In fact, in 1999, 2000 and in 2007, in three separate cases before the Bangladesh Supreme Court, the constitutionality of the 1997 Accord was challenged, amongst others on grounds of violating the unitary character of the Bangladeshi republic, and of discriminating against Bengali-speaking inhabitants of the CHT. The hearings on the above matters are yet to be concluded.³⁷ It may be mentioned here that a similar political agreement concluded in 1985 between the indigenous Mizo peoples of Mizoram in Northeast India (bordering the CHT) and the Government of India was constitutionally protected, and hence outside the reach of legal challenges (Nunthara 2002)³⁸.

Gender

Considerations of gender equity were conspicuously absent both in the 1997 accord, in the formal post-Accord peace process packages and in the pre-accord negotiation processes. Only one-seventh of the seats in the district councils and the regional council are reserved exclusively for women. Pending elections, the interim regional and district councils are composed of government appointees, but in the case of the district councils, apart from one chairperson, none of their members are women. Women are even more severely under-represented in the traditional and largely hereditary institutions of the chiefs and sub-chiefs (*raja*, headmen and *karbari*). Although in comparison to the plains regions in Bangladesh, women in most indigenous societies in the CHT are known to encounter fewer social restrictions, their roles in the social and political spheres still remain very marginal, despite their important inputs in the economic sphere, whether as farmers, family workers, or as employees in the public and private sectors (Halim 2002).



Photo 8.7 : Cotton, one of the main trade goods sold to Bengali traders (photo: Christian Erni)

Women in the CHT have been at the forefront of the indigenous peoples' movements for self-determination, cultural identity and resistance to colonization. They have included persons from very humble backgrounds who led their people against injustice, including a peasant woman in the mid-19th century who became the Chakma queen and resisted British annexation, and a young college-going woman of the 1990s who resisted both gender discrimination by her own people and oppressive acts by the state military.³⁹ Similarly, women have played vital roles in revolutionary movements in Latin America, Africa, South Asia and many other places (Hilhorst and Frerks 1999:11-14). Today, indigenous women are more vocal in demanding equal rights and it is no longer either possible, or desirable, to ignore their rights. At a recent international conference on "Conflict Resolution, Peace Building, Sustainable Development and Indigenous Peoples", it was noted that despite their key roles in peace-building, indigenous women were as a rule not adequately represented in peace negotiations. The conference urged upon all to ensure that the obligations as set out in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) should be integrated into peace accords (Tebtebba Foundation 2001:42).

Environment, biodiversity and rights of forest-dwellers

Environmental issues have not been addressed at all in the Accord, despite the huge environmental problems being faced in the CHT – as a result notably of deforestation, mono-crop plantations and industrial logging, siltation of rivers and lakes, floods, and

the drying-up of streams, springs and other aquifers. The Accord does not expressly mention the reserved forests, covering about a quarter of the CHT, which have been directly administered by the central Forest Department since British times, and which still remain outside the ordinary jurisdiction of the district and regional councils. The colonial-style management of these forests as mono-crop plantation enclaves has not only caused huge ecological damage, but has also violated the human rights of traditional forest dwellers who are subjected to the whims of armed forest guards and sometimes treated like medieval serfs (Roy and Gain 1999, Roy and Halim 2001).

Psychological and justice dimensions of the conflict

I feel that the matter of the psychological wounds that were caused by the conflict, especially as regards women, children and those who lost family members during the conflict, should have been addressed, or at least acknowledged, in the Accord. Furthermore, in order to be able to diffuse the ethnic tensions that resulted from more than two decades of insurgency, militarization, political unrest, land dispossession and displacement, concerted efforts will be required in attempting to bring forth real reconciliation between the ethnic groups, especially between the ethnic Bengali people and the hill people, and to reduce the real and perceived feelings of domination of one ethnic group by the other. The recent meeting to commemorate the deaths of Bengali woodcutters some years ago, allegedly killed by indigenous guerillas, and the anti-Accord statements by senior government leaders show that the justice issue is still far from resolved. On the other side of the coin, the killings of indigenous people by Bengali settlers and state forces has also not been forgotten. The "Coming Out of Violence" study concluded that it is extremely important to address the needs of victims of violence, and examined to that effect the different approaches taken in the former Yugoslavia, Chile and especially South Africa, where a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* was established (Darby and MacGinty 2000b:257f.). However, the study also points out that most of the approaches to coming to grips with violent pasts dealt with individual victims rather than what it calls the "collective heritage" of violence (ibid.:257). The study does not, however, offer any concrete suggestions in this regard.

Fiscal autonomy

Given the recent international trends towards the strengthening of the free market system (and the rapid pace of monetarization of hitherto subsistence-oriented economies), which certainly has a great deal of influence on a small and aid-dependent economy like that of Bangladesh's, fiscal autonomy should have been given far more importance than it received in the CHT Accord. In the absence of real fiscal autonomy, self-government or autonomy, in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the CHT, may remain

elusive and illusory for many more years to come. Since the potential capacity of the CHT councils to raise significant sums of money from local taxes still remains quite weak, they will continue to be very largely dependent upon external input of funds, either as grants from the government and its foreign development partners (donors) or as loans from multilateral development banks. This process would of course be dependent largely upon the policies formulated at the national level by the central government. Thus, we shall have to wait and see to what extent the district and regional councils can influence policy-making at the national levels – no mean feat indeed.

The challenges ahead

Of the major challenges that lie ahead for the CHT peace process, I would identify the following four: (i) to seek ways and means to reduce the chances of settler-indigenous violence; (ii) to seek a negotiated end to the pro- and anti-Accord violence among the indigenous people; (iii) to attempt to “de-governmentalize” the practices of CHT-related institutions; and (iv) to continue efforts to implement the CHT Accord.

Conflicts between settlers and indigenous people

The fragile peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is under threat from different fronts. Violence between pro and anti-Accord forces among the hillpeople, on the one hand, has varied in intensity over the years, but is far from over. On the other hand, old wounds of the inter-ethnic conflict are showing signs of opening up again, pitting the indigenous people and the Bengali people in unrelenting antagonism and also acts of violence against each other. As a sign of protest against the (alleged) oppression by Bengali shopkeepers and day labourers, indigenous people have refused to visit the largest market place in the hill region – the *Reserve Bazar* – on market day. This has continued for a few years now. Seemingly mundane disputes over newly-surfaced river-bed rice fields, over common-pool resources like forests, pastures, water bodies and untitled lands are commonplace. Moreover, recent attempts to occupy lands of indigenous people in the district of Khagrachari by government-sponsored Bengali settlers, allegedly with the backing of the government, has led to a number of demonstrations and strikes by indigenous civil society groups⁴⁰. Furthermore, an alliance of indigenous people and Bengalis of long-term residence in the Hill Tracts has also started asserting itself to protest the non-revocation of commercial land leases granted to outsiders, in violation of the stipulations of the 1997 Accord⁴¹. The aforesaid disputes usually do not involve violence, but that can easily change. The history of the CHT features numerous examples where a single act of violence – committed for whatever reason – by an indigenous person against a Bengali, or vice versa, but especially the former, has sparked off an ethnic riot of large proportions.⁴²

And, as the past shows, where the law-enforcing agencies are dominated by one group (the Bengalis), one cannot expect them to remain impartial when violence flares up. Demands to transfer law and order to the CHT district councils or to otherwise deploy a multi-ethnic force in the region have been largely ignored. Only a small number of indigenous police personnel of lower rank are now posted in the region.

As mentioned earlier, among the possible ways to eliminate or reduce settler-indigenous conflict would be to encourage the voluntary rehabilitation of the population transferees outside the CHT (Roy 1997, Roy, R.C. 2000 and Adnan 2004). This has been linked to the restitution of indigenous lands now occupied by transmigrants. In his important study on the interrelation between settler migration, land alienation and ethnic conflict in the Hill Tracts, Shapan Adnan (2004:176f.) expressed the moral and practical compunctions behind such perspectives in the following words:

“As a matter of principle, the concerned authorities should take measures to reconstitute the alienated lands of the hill peoples as early as possible. Delays will only serve to legitimize the *status quo*, inclusive of illegal and unjust occupation of *pahari* lands, thereby accentuating ethnic conflict and political instability in the CHT”.

Such views as expressed above, however, seem to be quite far way from how policy-makers in successive Bangladeshi governments have viewed the matter. Many still cannot accept the 1997 Accord at heart. Thus the recent history of the CHT shows that ethnic conflict can indeed be quite “intractable” (Richardson and Wang 1993). In fact, a German anthropologist with long research experience in the CHT warned us many years ago that it is fallacious to expect that the hill people and the Bengalis can maintain a symbiotic relationship unless the “exploitative” practices that have historically characterized the lowlanders’ interactions with the hill people were to cease – something which, he argued, did not seem imminent. The same writer argued that a similar relationship also existed between the hill and plains peoples in Northeastern India and Burma (Mey 1984:88).

Given such a scenario, some specialists in the field of conflict transformation (see e.g. Horowitz 1985, Nordlinger 1972) feel that it would perhaps be far more practicable to put one’s energies behind the reduction, containment and regulation of such conflicts of this nature, rather than to seek to do away with – or *transform*, as the language of the trade has it – the conflict altogether. In fact that is what many CHT leaders have sought to do over the years. Following Nordlinger (1972:20-41) who studied multi-ethnic politics in Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Lebanon and Malaysia, we can identify six standard practices which have a proven record of minimizing or regulating – yet not eliminating – ethnic conflict. These are: (i) a stable coalition between the governing parties; (ii) the principle of proportionality; (iii) acceptance of a mutual veto; (iv) purposive depoliticization; (v) mutual adjustment of conflicting values and interests through compromise; and (vi) concessions by the stronger group (ibid).⁴³



Photo 8.8 : The beginning of peace in the CHT: Arms deposit ceremony before the signing of the Peace Accord. Khagrachari district, 10 February 2007 (photo: Devasish Roy)

In the context of deeply-divided societies (such as in the Chittagong Hill Tracts) with a long and pervasive history of ethnic antagonism, there are certainly good reasons for a more pragmatic (and thus less idealistic and ambitious) approach to peace-building, leaving the deep structures of the conflict untouched and renouncing reconciliation as a strategic goal of conflict transformation. However, pragmatism is not an innocuous proposition. When we are dealing with phenomena that have as far-reaching and all-pervasive societal impacts as, for instance, discrimination based upon race or gender, any lowering of the standards of long-term goals in the name of practicality of strategy or otherwise, is potentially dangerous. Few would consider replacing the goal of eliminating discrimination based on race (as mentioned in the *Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* or “CERD”) or gender (as mentioned in the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* or “CEDAW”) by mere reduction, containment or regulation of such practices. Collective violence is a phenomenon of the same order. Deviating from the maximum aim of combating the structural causes of violence which produce and reproduce violence could effectively lower the minimum standards of violence that are acceptable to any society at any given moment. Therefore, while the views of Horowitz and Nordlinger have their merits in helping us understand the difficulties in totally eradicating violence of certain kinds and in certain situations, we would do well to be aware of the limitations of such perspectives for any attempt at peace-making which aims beyond the immediate, short-term palliative effect.

The intra-indigenous violence

The current violence between different factions of the *Jumma* movement in the CHT is perhaps keeping the pressure off the indigenous-settler conflict over rights and resources for the time being, but has the effect of weakening the indigenous peoples in a way that they will eventually not be able to defend their rights and welfare against unscrupulous sections of the non-indigenous political and economic elite. A number of attempts to broker a truce have failed. Many young men have died in the conflict, and many families have been directly affected by the violence. Members of CHT society are obliged to pay “contributions” to finance the conflict, under threat of violence. Sometimes entire families, clans or villagers get split over divided loyalties. There are countless other ways that the people in the conflict areas are suffering, and they have time and again appealed for peace.

Perhaps the only thing that may force the warring parties to stop fighting is to realize that such warfare does amount to a situation akin to Richardson and Wang’s (1993:179) “mutually-hurting stalemate”. If they do not act fast, the indigenous people may turn away from them and seek other political leaders to follow, or create a third indigenous political force in the CHT. Acting upon broad public demand, a number of CHT citizens are known to have met leaders of the opposing pro-Accord and anti-Accord groups to seek a gradual reduction and, ultimately, total cessation of hostilities. Although violence between the two groups may not be over yet, its level has decreased markedly from 2004 to 2007, compared to previous years, particularly after the present interim caretaker Government of Bangladesh took power. It has been said that the opposing groups have been urged to initiate *unilateral peace initiatives*, with a view to encouraging, or morally pressurizing, the other group to reciprocate. In some instances, members of the aforesaid opposing groups are known to have worked together, but under the banner of neutral civil society groups – such as the *Citizen’s Forum* of Khagrachari – in the spring and summer of 2006, to protest settler and military violence against indigenous people. Whether, and if, such moves can be sustained is still too early to tell. However, support from broad sections of the indigenous peoples in the CHT has been overwhelming. In this context, it is worth noting that in the 1990s, the peace process in the CHT was in a way “kick-started” with a unilateral “ceasefire” by the JSS, which was later reciprocated by the government security forces.

De-governmentalizing accords?

Samaddar (1999:5ff.) appears to suggest that the impact of accords is short-lived because they inevitably have to be reduced to “governmentalized” power relations. Similarly, Singh (1999) suggests that the state has its own ways of imposing its will by camouflaging its acts of domination through strategic means, including peace accords.

While this may be the case for some agreements – such as the Shillong Accord of 1975 on the Naga issue⁴⁴ - I do not think that this is necessarily the case for all post-accord implementation processes. For example, the Mizo Accord of 1985 – which ended a decades-old armed conflict in the northeast Indian state of Mizoram, bordering on the CHT and Burma – has set a precedence of providing an indigenous people with a constitutional right of veto over its land and customary rights. The Mizoram settlement led to the adoption of constitutional safeguards that may be regarded as a “double entrenchment” provision, one safeguard being the special parliamentary majority and cumbersome process required to amend the (constitutional) provision, and the second being the requirement of the express consent of the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram state – which is controlled by its indigenous peoples – prior to amendment.⁴⁵ At least as a large number of the Mizos see it, the accord has the potential to protect the cultural integrity of their people for a long time to come. Of course, the CHT Accord has no such protective clauses, and is therefore under far more severe threat of non-implementation. However, I would argue that the positive impacts of the CHT Accord may yet endure for long because it will be politically difficult for even an avowedly anti-indigenous government to completely undo the self-government system that has been formally put into place by the Accord. Moreover, the reorganized CHT polity may also encourage the Bangladeshi state to itself move towards quasi-federalism (van Schendel 2000). In any case, how the political and legal legacies of the 1997 accord take the peace process forward remains to unfold further, particularly in the context of the recent parliamentary elections in early 2007.

Ahmed et al. (2000) have taken an approach similar to that of Samaddar (cited above) in arguing that the *governmentalized* nature of the work of the newly-created Ministry of CHT affairs has the potential to repeat the mistakes of its predecessor institution (the “Special Affairs Division”, a mere “department” within a ministry) if it continues with the same narrow and over-bureaucratized perspective on administering a region. I would support many of their recommendations to “de-governmentalize” the ministry (and related institutions) but I feel that a certain level of governmentalization – if not *over-bureaucratization* - cannot be avoided as is evident from the nature of even the aforesaid writers’ recommendations themselves. Perhaps we can think of a certain level of governmentalization as a necessary evil as Weber (1967:196-216, see also Beetham 1987) posited in the case of bureaucracies, until such time as more viable forms of *agovernmentalized* alternatives to strengthening the self-government rights of indigenous peoples and other marginalized minorities, and to otherwise implement accords, are discovered or constructed. A most important development for the CHT would be to have elections to the district and regional councils. Leaders without a clear and democratic mandate can sometimes find it difficult to deal with complicated and contentious issues.

Towards implementation

Accords are made, broken, abused or implemented. The biggest challenge facing accords is to implement them as faithfully as possible. This is the case in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and many other post-Accord societies like Mindanao and Northern Ireland. Let me reproduce here some of Darby and MacGinty’s thoughts on the implementation of political agreements:

“To make sure that agreements are fully implemented and sustained, post-agreement political activity is required. The danger is that parties may wish to disregard or re-negotiate some provisions in an agreement which they find unpalatable. Some peace accords attempt to anticipate such problems by building safeguards or penalties for non-compliance into the agreement. The bottom line, however, is a strong political will to implement an agreement” (Darby and MacGinty 2000b:259).

The ironical twist, however, is: how does one foster such a will? To help bring it forth may well call for involvement in a political arena that is situated far from the marginalized ethnic minority’s peripheral region, and where the rules are made by those who seek to exploit the people and their resources. It may be recalled that the CHT autonomy movement turned violent in the early 1970s only after the CHT peoples’ demands were rejected by a parliament and a political system in which the region’s indigenous peoples found themselves as minuscule minorities. Nevertheless, of course, political lobbying cannot be dispensed with, but will need to be complemented with activism on human rights, in partnership with progressive sections of civil society. This is as true for the CHT as for many other societies that have experienced conflicts and are seeking to re-establish peace. Peace, moreover, needs to be owned by all sections of the populations concerned, because if it is re-established amongst some, but not others, it will fail to be a just peace, and hence one that will not last long.

Lessons

In conclusion, the following may be considered as some of the lessons that the CHT peace process offers us:

- *Go for phased quid pro quo arrangements to implement crucial elements of an accord.* Thus implementation of part of an agreement may actually start *during the ‘negotiation’ stage and continue into the post-accord, ‘implementation’ phase.* Thus it may make sense in some situations to view different periods of peace processes as stages, and not necessarily happening consecutively. Attempting to bifurcate peace processes into two mutually exclusive ‘negotiation’ and ‘implementation’ phases, one following another, may be reductionist, and hence, a flawed perspective.

- *Transparency in negotiation processes may on occasion lead to sabotage of talks and reduced concessions to marginalized groups negotiating with governments. Peace agreements may have to be negotiated first by political leaders with a strong mandate from their constituents, rather than have the issues discussed in detail in state legislative and executive bodies during or immediately prior to negotiations.*
- *Accords need to provide safeguards for minorities and marginalized groups within the group that is seeking autonomy (or other right), if necessary even against the dominant sections' will. Otherwise, the relatively disadvantaged sections of the autonomy-seeking groups may be marginalized by the hegemonic sections. Ethnic autonomy within autonomy, as in Northeast India (6th Schedule, Constitution of India), is an example of a reasonably workable solution in certain circumstances.*
- *A strong post-accord monitoring process is a must, and the monitoring process should be so devised as to be independent of the parties involved.*
- *Agreements should be made with political leaders, not bureaucrats. Otherwise, absence of political will may lead to delay, and legislative, executive and other arrangements may become fragmented and ineffective.*
- *Implementation of agreements may run into difficulties if bureaucrats remain unsympathetic and unsensitized to peace and justice issues, despite the presence of some political will.*
- *An accord may run into difficulties if a party that is opposed to the accord comes into power.*
- *Accords may contain various hidden agenda.*
- *Accords may end violence between indigenous people and the state's armed forces, and violence between indigenous people and settlers, but at the price of engendering violence within the ranks of the indigenous movement.*
- *Accords may encourage devolution and federalism in other parts of the country, and even in other countries.*
- *To encourage successful peace processes, peace accord provisions should be protected by strong entrenchment clauses, including constitutional safeguards.⁴⁶*

Notes

- 1 Two earlier versions of this article have already been published (Roy 2003a, Roy 2007). For another related article of the same autor, see Roy (2003b).
- 2 In what follows, the Chittagong Hill Tracts will generally be referred to in abbreviated form as the "CHT", as is the customary practice in Bangladesh.
- 3 For these groups' numerical and percentage-wise strength, see Annexe 2.
- 4 It is generally believed that a treaty of peace was signed by the Chakma Raja and the British Governor General in 1785, but copies of the document have never been located (Roy, R. T. 2003:30).
- 5 Bangladeshi legislation refers to these peoples as "indigenous", "hillmen", or "tribes" in different instruments, but the latter expression, "tribe", is the most favoured by government leaders and functionaries. The term tribe is disliked by political activists in the Hill Tracts, particularly on account of its perjorative connotations. They prefer the notion of "indigenous peoples" or "hillpeople" or their Bengali equivalents, "Adivasi" and "Pahari", respectively. Following their preference, I will speak of "tribal" groups in inverted commas if the context demands use of the term, but otherwise employ "indigenous" or "hill" peoples. The major political organizations of the Hill Tracts peoples use the generic term "*Jumma*" (from the common swidden or *jum* cultivation heritage of all CHT peoples) to collectively refer to the region's indigenous peoples, although the use of this term is less common among the smaller groups. The latter generally prefer *Pahari*.
- 6 On the human rights dimensions of the population transfer programme, see Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission 1991. On the land rights issue and the question of the validity of the settlers' land titles, see Roy, R. D. (1997, 2000); Roy, R. C. (2000).
- 7 Translated into English: "Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Solidarity Organisation".
- 8 According to a BBC television broadcast on 10 February 1998, over 8,000 lives were lost between 1973 and 1997. Both sides suffered casualties; while numbers of Bengali settlers were attacked and killed by the guerrillas, the number of casualties among indigenous people at the hands of government soldiers and Bengali settlers was many times larger, estimated to run into tens of thousands (Adnan 2004:30, citing Shelley, ed., 1992 and Brauns and Löffler 1990). Between 1980 to 1992, at least eleven major massacres are known to have been perpetrated against indigenous people (Adnan 2004:30). Unfortunately, the practice continues even after the conclusion of the Accord: At Mahalchari, in Khagrachari district, on 26 August, 2003, more than ten indigenous settlements were reportedly attacked by Bangladesh Army personnel and Bengali settlers, leading to two deaths, the burning to the ground of 300-400 houses, and the rape of nine women (see e.g. IWGIA (2004:293), Mohaiemen (2003:156). Various instances of rape of indigenous women by security forces have also been reported, both during the conflict years and after the signing of the Accord (Mohsin 1997:178, 1998:116; Halim et al. 2005:22-26). See also Daily Star, Dhaka, 31 August, 2003 ("PCJSS Alleges Gangrape of 9 Ethnic Women in Khagrachari") and the editorial of the *Daily Star*, Dhaka, of 9 September, 2003. For a recent re-assessment of the CHT peace process, see Mohsin (2003).
- 9 The government of the time was led by the Awami League, a centrist party with secular orientation, which was recently in the opposition, having lost the last parliamentary elections to the right-of-centre Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its coalition partners of the religious (i.e. Islamist-oriented) right. The BNP's five-year term ended at the end of 2006.
- 10 The Awami League – now ideologically somewhat "centrist" – was the party that led the country to independence from Pakistan through a war of independence in 1971. The party

believes in "Bengali nationalism", which by definition excludes the non-Bengali-speaking indigenous peoples of the country. It framed the first national constitution that rejected the demands of the CHT people for a more multicultural concept of nationality, administrative autonomy for the region, and constitutional safeguards for that autonomy and their culture. The more right-of-centre Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was ostensibly more liberal towards non-Bengalis, but a large section of the non-Muslim peoples of Bangladesh do not feel comfortable with the party's implied orientation towards Islamic values and ideals.

- 11 Conversely, Indian sources have accused the Bangladesh government of sheltering and aiding anti-Indian separatist guerillas from Northeast India; see for example Bhaumik (1996) and Hazarika (1995).
- 12 See 'Torture of Sixteen Bengali Leaders: Protest Rally Demands Punishment to Offending Army Personnel'. *Prothom Alo*, Dhaka, 16 June 2005, p. 4.
- 13 The UPDF had claimed that the JSS, by signing the accord and failing to remove the Bengali settlers from the region, has effectively legalized the permanent residence of the settlers. Conversely, the JSS has claimed that the UPDF has legitimized the settlers by participating in an election that includes the "non-permanent-resident" settlers as voters.
- 14 As of March, 2002 only 35 out of the estimated 520 (temporary) military camps are reported to have been dismantled; see IWGIA (2002:318). As of 2005, more than 350 army camps are estimated to remain in the region, and their number has reportedly increased in recent years (IWGIA 2005:379).
- 15 Although the councils still have no role in providing land leases, their consent is now required before land transfers are allowed. This was initiated through a memorandum of the Ministry of CHT Affairs (Memo no. Misc, 12/99-217, dated, 26. 10. 2002).
- 16 During the rule of the Awami League, both the posts of the CHT Affairs minister and that of the chairperson of the CHT Development Board were held by indigenous members of parliament (MPs). During the time of the BNP-led government that followed Awami League in office, the same posts were held, respectively by the Prime Minister herself (while an indigenous MP from Rangamati held the deputy ministership) and a Bengali MP from Khagrachari, the northern hill district. This suggests a concession to Bengali lobbies that had continually protested against the indigenous primacy in holding high political positions within the CHT self-government system.
- 17 In the case of the former, the JSS claims that "non-tribal permanent residents" (meaning those non-tribals who "permanently reside at a specified address, and legally own land, within a hill district") are not eligible to vote in parliamentary elections. The government says that this clause applies for elections to the regional and district councils, but not to parliamentary elections. In the case of the internally displaced people (IDPs), the JSS claims that only indigenous people fall within this category within the meaning of the Accord, while the previous head of the Task Force on Refugees and Displaced People clearly thought otherwise when he compiled a list of 90,208 "tribal" and 38,156 "non-tribal" IDP families (see IWGIA 2000:290f., and IWGIA 2001:292f.). Representatives of the JSS and the Jumma refugees had boycotted the meetings of this Task Force. The previous chair of the Task Force resigned from the post before contesting the parliamentary polls of 2001 (which he lost), and the recent BNP-led government had recently filled this post by appointing a former chairperson of the Khagrachari Hill District Council as its chair. However, on the whole, the Task Force appears to have been reconstituted in name only, as it seems to have, until now, no effective role in rehabilitating the former refugees and internally displaced people.
- 18 The author was personally present at the commission meeting in Khagrachari, on 8 June, 2005, in his capacity as the Chakma Raja and an ex-officio member of the commission. The

commission is headed by a retired High Court judge, Justice Mahmudur Rahman, and includes the chairperson of the CHT Regional Council, the chairpersons of the three hill district councils, the other two Rajas or chiefs, and the Commissioners of the Chittagong Division, a civil servant (see also *Prathom Alo*, Dhaka, of 9 June, 2005). For a detailed discussion of the CHT land issues, including the likely impact of the commission's work, see Roy (1997, 2000, 2002).

- 19 Peace Campaign Group (2000:6f.) paraphrases the alleged explanation of the government representatives to the JSS representatives on the justification behind the government's non-inclusion of settler repatriation as a written provision in the 1997 Accord with the following words:

"The domestic constituency does not allow the simple majority Awami League Government to openly address the issue in the agreement (...) because once the issue is addressed in the agreement, the opposition parties, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), [which is] opposing the Government's deal with the [JSS], will come out in the streets with mass agitation that can even raise the question of survival of the government in power. In that situation, the possibility of an agreement between the two sides will be jeopardized. Of course, the Government understands and supports the concern of the [JSS] over the issue and can include some provisions in the agreement for the gradual removal of the settlers from the CHT".
- 20 "Budget Line B7-3010" of the European Parliament earmarked certain funds for the "repatriation of Bengali settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts back to the plains"; see *European Alliance with Indigenous Peoples (EAIP) Newsletter*, Issue 3, December, 1996, p. 3.
- 21 For example, the *Rangamati Land Declaration*, adopted at a seminar on "Land Laws, Land Management and the Land Commission in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" organized by the *Movement for the Protection of Forest and Land Rights in the CHT* in Rangamati, CHT, on 7 June 2002, demanded that similar rations be provided to all inhabitants of the CHT.
- 22 Author's interview with government official who wishes to remain anonymous, September 2002.
- 23 It is important to note, however, that the BNP itself had conducted peace negotiations with the JSS during its earlier tenure in government.
- 24 Author's interview with representatives of certain Western European governments (who wish to remain anonymous), June-September 2002. In October 2002, the authority over the transfer of land titles in their respective districts was granted to the hill district councils (Memo No. 12/99-127 dated, 26 October, 2002 of the Ministry of CHT Affairs addressed to the three hill district councils). However, the councils still do not exercise authority over land grants or other day-to-day land administration matters.
- 25 See *Prathom Alo*, Dhaka, of 10 September, 2002.
- 26 Among the most serious incidents was the Mahalchari attack on 26 August, 2003, referred to in note 8, ante.
- 27 "Judiciary Separation from November 1: Affirms Chief Justice", the *Daily Star*, Dhaka, 18 October, 2007, p.1.
- 28 This phrase has been borrowed from Ahmed et al. (2000).
- 29 Only the world-renowned Grameen Bank - founded by Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Dr. Mohammed Yunus - calls itself a "bank". Other corporate-style and size organizations are still known as "NGOs", although their substantive work is oriented around credit.

- 30 This is the common opinion of many people in the CHT as expressed in various public meetings, development and human rights-related workshops.
- 31 "Coming Out of Violence" was a pathbreaking comparative study by scholars of various European universities that explored the transformation from violence to agreement in ethnic conflict. It had a strong focus on identifying factors which accelerated or frustrated peace processes. Its methodology and results are presented in Darby and MacGinty, eds., (2000).
- 32 The services of go-betweens, however, were accepted. Formal meetings between the JSS and the Government of Bangladesh were facilitated by one or more members of a "liaison committee" consisting of people trusted by the JSS (one Bengali and the rest indigenous). However, these mediators' role started and ended with getting the two sides to the negotiating table. The signing of the 1997 Accord without external third-party mediation was boisterously capitalized upon as a "unique Bangladeshi achievement" by the previous Awami League Government of Bangladesh.
- 33 Although it is not confirmed, the CHT is believed to have some of the largest gas reserves in the country. The same could be true for oil.
- 34 These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of which have been ratified by Bangladesh. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recently adopted by the UN General Assembly, also unequivocally declares that this right applies to indigenous peoples.
- 35 For a critique of *Jumma* nationalism as inherently containing the seeds of "Chakma hegemony", see Mohsin (1997).
- 36 For a CHT law that was struck down as "unconstitutional" after the region lost its special constitutional status in 1964, see *Mustafa Ansari vs. Deputy Commissioner, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Another*, 17 DLR, 1965:553. See also Roy 2000 and Mohsin 1997:57-66.
- 37 Writ Petition No. 4113 of 1999 (*Shamsuddin Ahmed v Government of Bangladesh and Others*), Writ Petition No. 2669 of 2000 (*Mohammed Badiuzzaman v Government of Bangladesh and Others*) and Writ Petition No. 6451 of 2007 (*Advocate Md. Tajul Islam v Bangladesh and Others*) in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh (High Court Division). The first-mentioned case (Writ Petition No. 4113 of 1999) will no longer be heard, on account of the death of the petitioner. The other two remain to be heard. However, the most recent case included an ad interim order of the court instructing the Election Commission to not fail to enlist non-tribal Bangladeshi citizens on account of their residential status in the CHT. While this does not add anything with regard to parliamentary and local government elections, if the same voters' list were to be used for the elections to the semi-autonomous hill district councils, this would significantly enhance the number of ethnic Bengali voters who would otherwise have been ineligible to vote for the councils in accordance with the post-Accord Hill District Council (Amendment) Acts of 1998.
- 38 See, paragraph 4 (3) of the Mizoram Accord, 1985, and Article 371G of the Constitution of India. The relevant entrenchment clause reads: "[Notwithstanding] anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of parliament in respect of (i) religious or social practices of the Mizos; (ii) Mizo customary law or procedure; (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice, involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides". In the Philippines, the constitutionality of the *Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997* ("IPRA"), which formally acknowledges various fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, was challenged in the Supreme Court of the Philippines and its constitutionality was upheld by a narrow majority verdict.

- 39 In the first case, the reference is to the Rani Kalindi, in the second to the young political activist of the 1990s, Kalpana Chakma, who mysteriously disappeared after being allegedly arrested by Bangladesh Army personnel. On Kalindi see Lewin (1869:49f.), on Kalpana see Guhathakurta (1997, 2000).
- 40 "Khagrachari Road Block On as Talks End in Deadlock", *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 16 February 2006.
- 41 "Leasing of Land in Two Hill Districts Protested", *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 12 February 2006.
- 42 Large incidents of inter-ethnic violence in the CHT in recent years include the simultaneous attack (including rape) on ten hill villages by Bengali groups combined with armed Bangladesh Army personnel, at Mahalchari, Khagrachari district on 26 June, 2003 and the attempted forcible takeover of indigenous lands by Bengali settlers at Gamaridhala of Mahalchari sub-district of Khagrachari starting on 29 January, 2006. For press reports, see the *Daily Star*, Dhaka of 31 August, 2003 and 9 September, 2003 (Editorial), and the daily *Prathom Alo*, Dhaka, of 30 January, 2006. Another such incident was the simultaneous attack by Bengali settlers on three villages in the Maischari union of Khagrachari district on 3 April, 2006 in which several indigenous people, especially Marmas, were injured. The matter was reported in the daily *Prathom Alo*, Dhaka, on 4 April, 2006. For protest rallies against the attack, see *Prathom Alo*, Dhaka, of 18 April, 2006, p. 5, and *Daily Star*, Dhaka, of 2 June, 2006.
- 43 The societies in Nordlinger's sample are actually so diverse that I wonder whether there were not maybe other factors as well that prevented or reduced (ethnic) conflict. It also appears to me that the presence of the aforesaid factors could well reduce violence between other groups who do not differ on grounds of ethnicity. For implementation mechanisms in other comparable peace processes, see de Varennes, Packer, Vandrell and Biegman in Boltjes 2007.
- 44 See for example Singh (1999) and Luithui and Preston (1999).
- 45 See note 38 *ante*. For an overview of different autonomy or self-government and juridical systems of indigenous peoples across Asia, including Mizoram and the CHT, see Roy (2005).
- 46 For a detailed analysis of suggestions of different authors on lessons for implementation of peace accord and other intra-state political arrangements, see Boltjes 2007 (generally, and pp. 1-48, in particular).

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Annexe 1

Population of Indigenous People and Ethnic Bengali in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (1872 – 1991)

Census Year	1872	1901	1951	1981	1991
Indigenous	61,957	1,16,000	2,61,538	4,41,776	5,01,144
Non-Indigenous	1,097	8,762	26,150	3,04,873	4,73,301
Total	63,054	1,24,762	2,87,688	7,46,649	9,74,445
Indigenous %	98%	93%	91%	59%	51%
Non-Indigenous %	2%	7%	9%	41%	49%

Source: Suhrawardy, B. H. 1995. *Outline of the CHT Economy: An Analysis* (in Bengali), in: Vision, eds. Arunendu Tripura et al., Rangamati, 15 June 1995, p. 38.

Annexe 2

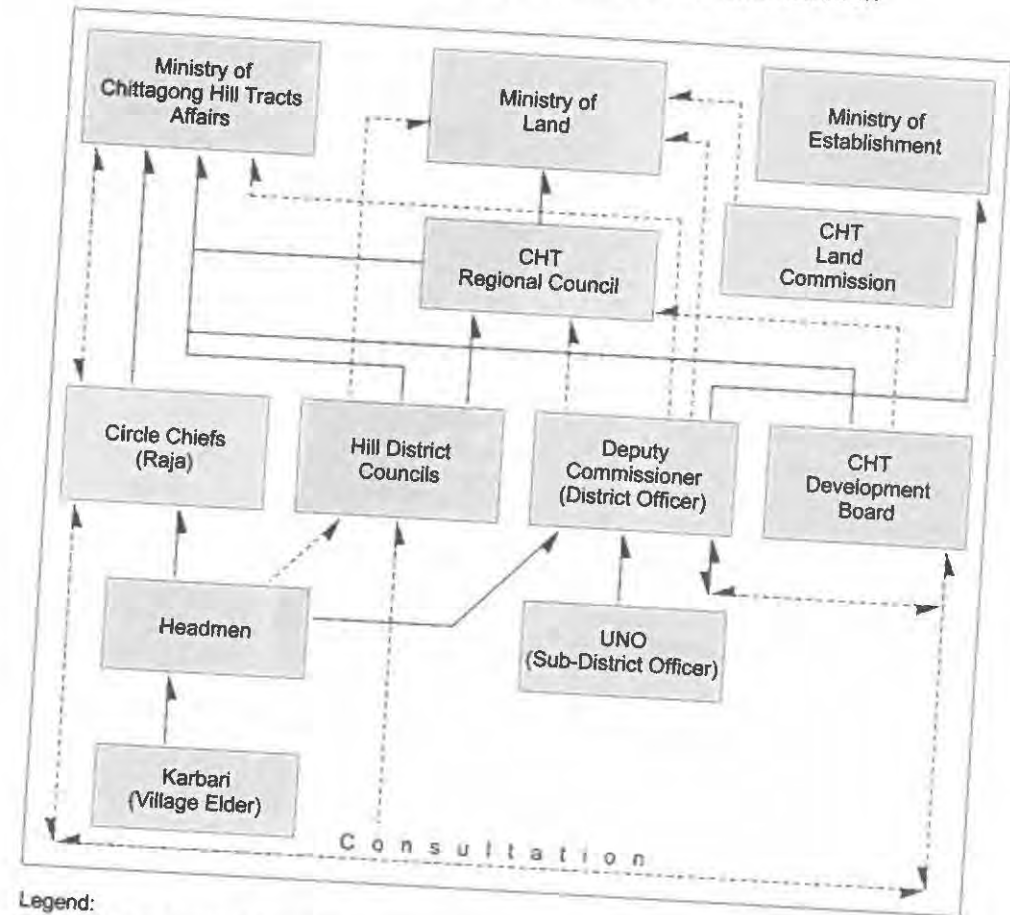
Ethnic Composition of Population, Chittagong Hill Tracts (1991 Census)

	total pop. in CHT	% of total pop. CHT	% of total indigenous pop. CHT
Bawm	6,431	0.65	1.28
Chak	1,681	0.17	0.33
Chakma	239,417	24.60	47.92
Khyang	1,980	0.20	0.39
Khumi	1,241	0.12	0.24
Lushai	662	0.10	0.13
Marma	142,342	14.60	28.49
Mro /Mru	22,167	2.27	4.43
Pangkhua	3,227	0.33	0.64
Tanchangya	19,217	1.97	3.84
Tripura	61,174	6.27	12.24
Bengali	473,275	48.60	
Others	584	0.10	
Indigenous	499,539	51.30	
Total	974,445	100.00	100.00

Source: Revised Estimate of 1991 Census from records of Hill District Council, Rangamati (Courtesy, Arunendu Tripura, Public Relations Officer)

Annexe 3

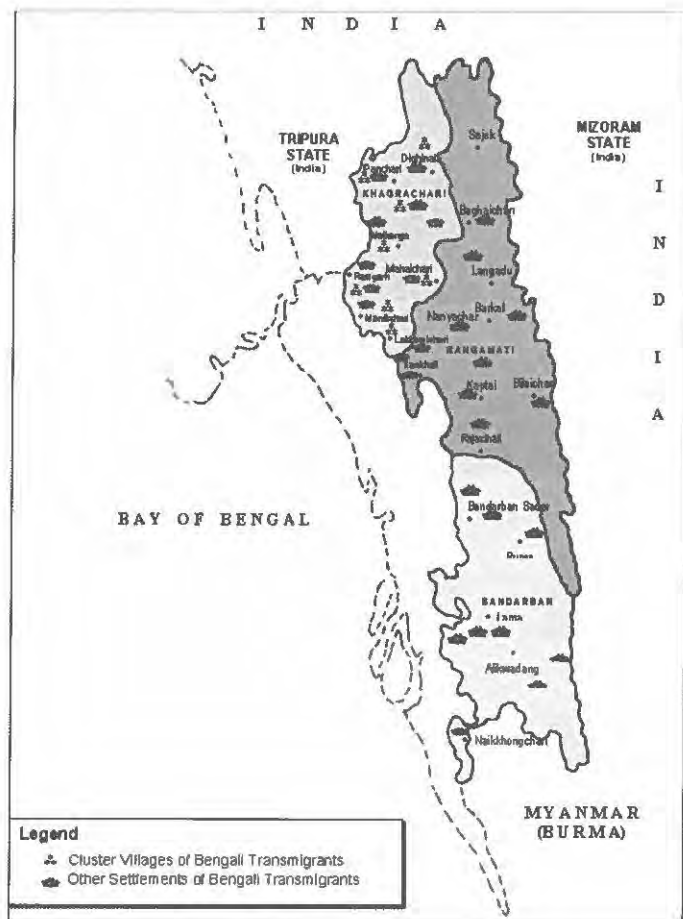
Institutions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Administration



Legend:
 —> Denotes Relationship of Direct Control
 - - -> Denotes Relationship of Supervision, Co-ordination or Consultation

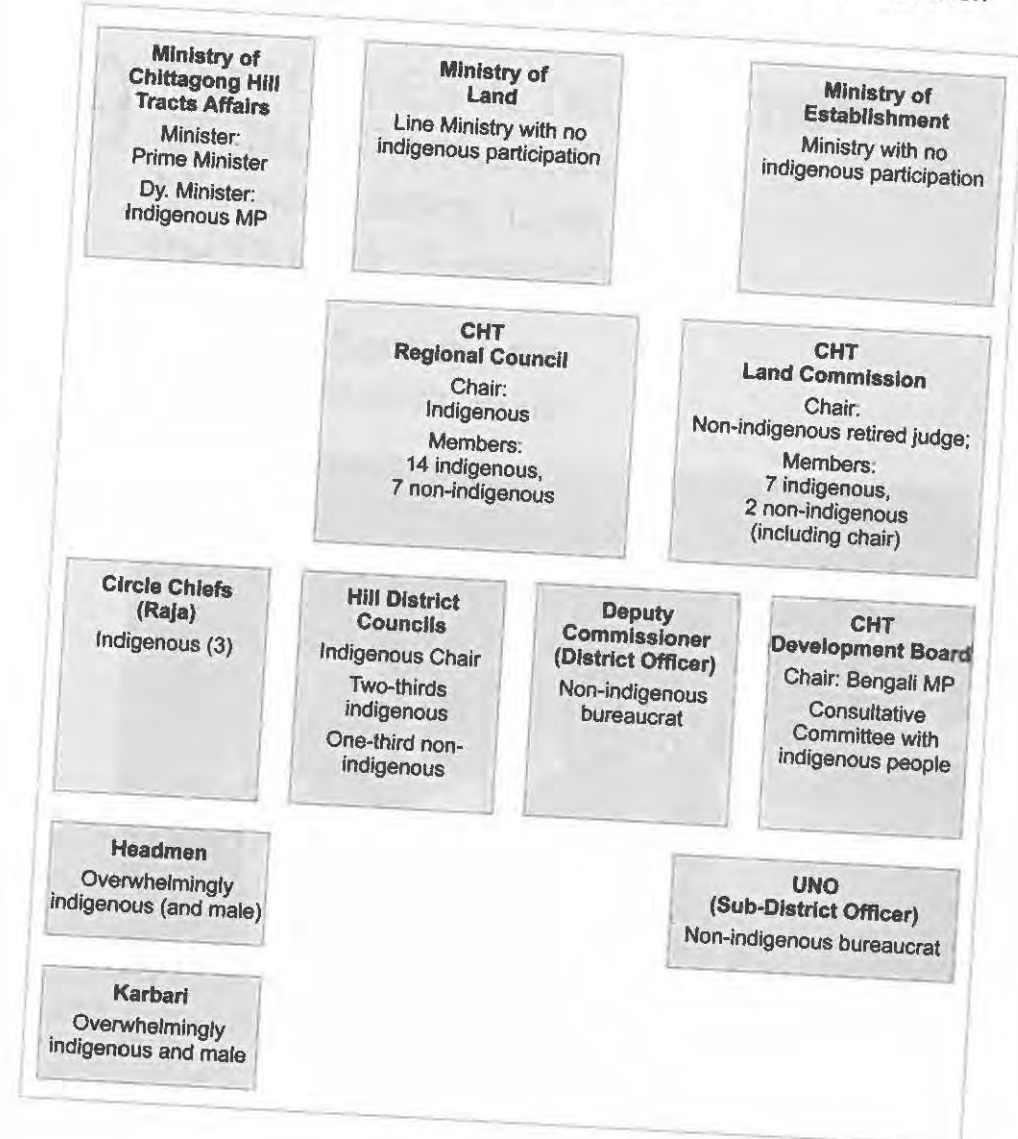
Annexe 4

Map 8.2 : Location of Cluster Villages & other Settlements in the CHT (March 2005)



Annexe 5

Composition of Institutions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Administration



9 NEW ISSUES IN THE POLITICS
OF THE INDIGENOUS:
Minimal Justice, Law, and
the Dialogic Experience

Ranabir Samaddar
Calcutta Research Group



photo: Christian Erni

9 | New Issues in the Politics of the Indigenous: Minimal Justice, Law, and the Dialogic Experience

Ranabir Samaddar, Calcutta Research Group

Introduction

Those who have read my *Memory, Identity, Power* (Samaddar 1998) would know that in that book I tried to trace the emergence of the politics of an indigenous people in one part of the country as a form of a historically contingent phenomenon that could be understood only in the context of contentious politics. In the politics of contention of West Bengal's Jungle mahals¹, there was a series of actors who were collectives, such as the local chieftains with their feudal power, the dominant castes, the peasantry, the revenue-consuming class with coupon-clipping income, the colonial administration, police and magistracy, and finally the landless labourers who were the indigenous people and had nothing but their memory and their cultural repertoire to make their existence known to the institutions of modern administration such as the law, court, the survey and settlement operations, the organs of nationalist politics, the revenue administration, and to the post-colonial reformist regime. And yet, as I showed, these two elements, namely memory and cultural repertoire, were not passive players in a game of chess between different elites, they became crucial in making the indigenous people active, helping them become their own agents in claiming nationhood one day. On that path to nationhood, claiming indigenesness was a crucial act, alliances were thus made, common cultural symbols evolved, and titles to resources such as land, trees, and forests turned into matters of long-drawn out contentions. In short, *Memory, Identity, Power* was a genealogical account of the politics of the indigenous. It was not so much a story of the emergence of what is known today as collective rights; the rights language of today can find its past there, but altogether in different form – in the form of contentions of other kinds.

Today of course, we cannot speak of the politics of indigenous peoples without speaking of rights, specifically collective or group rights as reflected in the right of self-determination, and this is an achievement. Yet, the politics of indigenous

peoples remains today as in the past whose story I had sketched there, as contingent, as influenced by the contemporary form of collective politics, and as contentious. Today's contentious situation is marked by three sets of transformations or, more accurately speaking, three sets of dualities. The first set of dualities relates to the co-existence of nationhood and ethnicity, national space and homeland, and citizenship and alien-hood, that is to say, citizenship and the existence of the immigrant and/or the outsider. The second set of dualities deals with mass democracy on one hand and on the other hand representative institutions that determine in a large measure the way rights will be articulated in the society. We have thus the co-existence of popular politics that defy the controls set by parliament, laws, and other modern institutions, and the overwhelming reality of representative government that governs by law, in the form of statehood, constitution, elections, party alliances, etc. Finally, the third set of dualities is related to the co-existence of the universality of rights and instruments of special protection (for instance, autonomy) of groups such as indigenous peoples or minorities. The politics of the indigenous are marked today by these three sets of dualities, with enormous implications for the language of rights and justice. Underscored by the reinforcement of patriarchy in the form of new ownership laws, new labour conditions in the wake of globalisation, and new social mores, the dualities have acquired severe forms. They have imposed a closure upon the language of rights. Consequently the need for the politics of the indigenous today is to find an exit, overcome the closure brought about by the dualities, and therefore devise new strategies in the post-colonial context that I have sketched above. This forms the background of this paper where I am arguing that only a dialogic politics of justice can help the politics of the indigenous overcome the aporia.

Indigenous rights, migrants' rights and the quest for minimal justice

As we all know, the politics of indigenous peoples cannot be conceived today except in the language of rights. In modern politics, the rights language implies group rights also. One implication of this is that the State must recognise the legal personhood of indigenous peoples and their rights; the other implication is that in a conflict among population groups over resources, the indigenous people are today considered as being invested with superior moral and legal claims to such limited goods. Immigrants and settlers are considered as illegitimate intruders/invaders. The common wisdom is that there is a basic power imbalance in favour of the settlers, and that it is the indigenous people whom we have to seek to empower. In most of the states of India's North East – and not only in the North East, but in many other parts of the country of India – one can notice state elections being run and won on xenophobic platforms, immigrants being denied protection or being discriminated against, migrant workers beaten,

abused, and driven out, migrant women dishonoured – all in the name of the rights of a group². In all these cases, the term “indigenous” is invoked in a manner which reminds one of the rise of the Shiv Sena³ in Mumbai and Maharashtra (Hansen 1999 and 2001), and one cannot help but recall the rise in incidences of the raping of women of their own communities, committed by cadres of militant indigenous organisations in the name of punishing the deviant who have – so it is alleged – jeopardized the “purity” of the blood. Rights are today issues of contest even between two equally indigenous population groups, as in Bodoland⁴, as a consequence of which hundreds of people belonging to one community have found themselves in a state of quasi-permanent displacement for years. Hunger, lack of shelter, lack of jobs and security, lack of membership of a political society are not apparently the concerns of a rights discourse here. As I had argued a few years back in my book *The Marginal Nation* (Samaddar 1999), the phenomenon of the alien is now everywhere on us.

However, in the context of globalisation, structural reforms, entry of vast number of people into the labour force, mostly constituting the surplus army of labour, and the right-wing wind of politics blowing across the globe, issues of mass immigration, destitution, ethnocide and political and economic marginality are clearly affecting huge number of people everywhere, in the process increasing the legitimacy of “nativist” reactions on the part of the (indigenous) local populations, and the legitimacy of the latter's radical assertion of the right to self-determination. The right to self-determination has transformed into a curious mixture today – rights of the indigenous sanctioning wanton violence on innocent people, driving out all who do not belong to the supposed ethnic core, one group of indigenous people (e.g. the Bodo) killing and driving out another (the Santhal) in order to claim a homeland, and some claims now co-habiting today with the denial of claims to dignity by others. Thus, the subjugation of women, intolerance towards minorities, the reinforcement of patriarchal claims to property, and the co-existence of the politics of self-determination with the politics of homeland, which is sometimes just a step away from ethnic cleansing – all these can continue as part of the claim to self-determination.

Will the rights language be enough, therefore, to face such a situation? Three years ago in the Mont-Soleil Workshop where we pondered over the logic of conflicts between migrants and indigenous communities and the possibilities for their mitigation, I raised this question. It was built into the title of my presentation there, namely, “Whose Rights First? The Human Rights Dimension”. The anthropologists and indigenous rights activists among the participants visibly struggled with my arguments, and suggested that I was not seeing the obvious, that I was “soft” on “intruders”, and politically naïve. I am however convinced that the question still remains relevant: How, in the context of the situation outlined above, are we to assess such competing claims as claims to titles to occupancy of land, access to job opportunities, and the moral legitimacy of claims? How are we to judge ethnicity-

based claims to land, resources, or the competing use of natural riches, urban land, and water? How – from a human rights perspective – can we reconcile the need to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and at the same time protect the need to safeguard the human rights of migrants, refugees, and other shelter-seekers? Are we to be helpless witnesses to a zero-sum game, or are mutual accommodations possible and rewarding for both groups? Can migrant/refugee rights be protected without infringing on the rights of indigenous host communities? I feel that in the context of these questions, we need to make a shift in terms of our language – we who are linguistically situated or structured in thinking only of rights and not of justice. The shift has to be from rights to justice, from law to morality, from community to political society, and from exclusion to reconciliation.

It will be said that the right to self-determination is not only political, but also supremely moral. In recognizing the political right of a collective self (in this case indigenous peoples), and with a view to determining that right's path to politics, it will be argued that we are recognizing historical injustices, the ethicality of a group's claim to its own politics, and the claim to a distinct way of life. I have no disagreement with that argument.

But I disagree with its absolutist orientation or implications. And I think that while the politics of autonomy, which is the most popular form of indigenous peoples' politics today, makes a distinct contribution to the attempts to exit from the closure brought about by the rights language that is divorced from the idea of minimal justice, there, too, we need to think critically, and need to situate the issue of rights and autonomy in an abiding context of reconciliation and justice. This is because justice and reconciliation are the ethical counterpoint in a discussion of rights, which essentially belong as a matter to the kingdom of law⁵. I shall come later to the question of autonomy; first let us discuss the issue of rights and law. While it may be difficult to understand why I feel it is imperative at this point of time to draw attention here to what I call "the dark side of rights", it will not be so difficult to understand my sense of utter unease with the reality of ethnicity – a reality that is also a phantom, in other words a term, an idea, a phantasmagoria brought about by the governmental connotation and deployment of the notion of "ethnicity". Ethnicity may be a product of self-perception and self-identity, but the genealogy of that perception and identity is rooted in countless material governmental practices of rule, management, categorisation, census, classification, typological exercises, welfare policies, and practices of subjecting populations to administration and rule. In defence of the populations being subjected to governmental procedures, ethnic resistance has been most prevalent – a game whose rules bind the conceptual structure of resistance also. While I shall not like to go into the empirical details of the formation of the seven states mostly out of the original state of Assam in India's North-East or the state of Jharkhand,⁶ it will suffice to say that ethnicity is as much a matter of past as

of present, and as much a matter of history as one of resistance against the current history of governmentality in modern politics. Following Foucault's dictum, we must study carefully material practices of rule, of subjecting populations to administration, the consequences of these, and the capillary points of resistance against them.

But here my agreement with the disciples of Foucault ends. I part company with those who refuse to see that the resistance against governmentality and the emancipation from governmentality cannot be bound with the rules of its formation, it may be linked with the structure, but it has already sought its origins in a different source. My aim in this paper is to suggest those sources – locate them in what you may call the "mystic origins of justice".

The rise of a political subject:

The making of "indigenous peoples" in India

To press the point, I shall ask to consider for instance the history of the political actor called the "indigenous peoples" in India. It is a long and extensive history, which we cannot recount here. But I shall mention only in the briefest way what is relevant for our discussion.

Indigenous peoples in India may have existed in pre-colonial India as an identity, but as a modern political actor we find indigenous peoples appearing on the political scene by the early part of the nineteenth century. Permanent Settlement⁷ had not only created a large number of landlords and intermediaries, it unleashed a process of large-scale peasant migration from one part of the Bengal Presidency to another. Migration, de-peasantisation, impoverishment, indebtedness, loss of local political power (in cases where the indigenous peoples had local semi-independent chieftainships) and famine conditions created restlessness among a large number of segmentary societies throughout the first few decades of the nineteenth century, eventually to burst out in the famous Santhal Hul (rebellion) of 1855, the most well-known rebellion among many of that time. This was also a time when the colonial government had hardly evolved the mechanisms of rule, a legal system of redress of grievances was yet to be put in place, the contours of the magistracy had still to be defined, the rent act was still to be enacted, and in that time, the "dark hole of the nineteenth century", the rebellion as an act of social and political criticism gave birth to a political subject. The rights language was yet to emerge, yet the clamour for justice was to last. Successive rent acts came, special tenancy acts were passed, lines of exclusion were drawn in various forms both on the east and the west of the heart of the Bengal Presidency, for about seventy years – from Alexander Grant through Dalton⁸ to Risley⁹, the administration wrestled with the category of "indigenous peoples", to settle the matter finally in the early part of the twentieth century, when Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas

emerged in a long chain of successive administrative reforms, to appear finally in the form of several provisions in the Indian Constitution, most notably the Sixth Schedule, but also in several provisions such as Article 371, provisions of Part XVI, or the reservation of seats and jobs. When democracy finally arrived, the indigenous peoples were made to disappear in the category invented by the government called the "scheduled tribes". Thus at one stroke the task of delimiting "indigeneity" was left to the government who would now decide as to which community was what. What is also important to keep in mind is that administrative and legal reform on each of these occasions was preceded by the most ruthless suppression of any insubordination and mutiny. Yet, has the political subject called "indigenous peoples" really disappeared from the scene? The answer is obviously no. The call for justice through the making of a new dialogic order remains. The struggle for a pro-people policy of ownership and use of resources such as the forest, water, and the issue of land reforms, continue even after the formation of the state of Jharkhand. In fact, in the neighbouring state of Chhattisgarh, where indigenous peoples are large in number and percentage of the local population, the struggle for reorganising the political society assumed even more direct forms.

If one takes the report by the colonial administrator, McAlpin (1981 [1909]), on the condition of the Santhal, which stands exactly at half-way in the two-century long history of governmental strategy on indigenous peoples, one can notice the following factors: acute land crisis, breakdown of political, social, and other forms of collective power of an indigenous society (McAlpin referred to the broken villages in details in this context), the need for special protection of a group now disarmed, defeated, and vanquished, and the transformation of a rebellious, extra-colonial political subject into one more group of law-abiding citizenry whose plights would be henceforth addressed by the due process of law, and who would from now on learn how to petition (viz. for instance the Simon Commission of 1929, appointed by the British Government for legal and constitutional reforms in India¹⁰) and become a proper constitutional subject. In this long history from Sidhu Soren¹¹ to Shibu Soren¹² via Jaipal Singh¹³, the elements mentioned just above have determined how the political subject had to define and refine itself periodically at each critical juncture (such as revolt, missionary education, the first act of writing by a Santhal author on the collective history of the Santhal, out-migration, census of 1901, deputation and petition, constituent assembly deliberations, the birth of a modern political party of the indigenous peoples, and the grant of autonomy and statehood) in the face of governmental techniques. And in each act of re-definition, the political subject in order to reclaim agency had to draw on both civil and political resources.

Even when put in the briefest form as I have done here, this history brings to us several interesting facts. The protest of the Santhal community begins against the backdrop of the loss of their independent existence, suppression of other indigenous

communities in course of implementing the new land order (the Permanent Settlement), it then decides the classic question of all revolt politics, namely "who is our friend and who is our enemy", that is the coalition politics of the time, and then it rapidly grows into rebellion. A political subject is born. In this process, which includes factors such as the act of writing one's own history, identity, education, categorisation under a new census regime (thus, for instance, Santhal are categorised as a scheduled tribe in Jharkhand, but not in Assam), different land laws, surely governmentality is a factor propelling the birth of the political subject, but governmentality is not all. More important are two things – first, the proto-existence of a political subject beyond the colonial society and politics, and second, the ways in which the colonial reality now affected a group's or individual's existence outside the colonial order. These two factors were critical in the birth of a political subject and the way in which power would be brought to bear heavily upon this emerging political subject. Governmental regulations and categories figured significantly in the composition of political power and the field of contention wherein it operated, but they were only one factor. The political subject marked by permanent opposition was born.

Moving from the legal to the dialogic: The need to democratize rights regimes

The expansion of the moral universe of claims is linked with feelings of nationalism and democracy. This is a double reality – first, it results in an expansion of citizenship, and second, it results in a division between homeland and outsiders, nation and homeland, insider and outsider – a duality that is ultimately accepted by the judicial authority and the juridical discourse. In this context of a dual reality I am speaking of the need to combine rights with justice, law with care and hospitality, and a regime of rights (both for the protection of indigenous communities and the immigrant population) with standards of minimal justice. Ethnic killings everywhere in the time of the post-colonial transition call for a sober thinking on our part regarding the paradox inherent in that dual situation. In Assam, one indigenous population group has killed another (as in Bodoland, where Bodo have mostly killed Santhal); in Gujarat, indigenous groups have killed or driven away the Muslims. Settled indigenous people have attacked migrant communities, as in Tripura (Bhaumik 2005) – all these in order to reinforce the rights of indigenous peoples. A regime of rights, as often found, calls for the latter's effectiveness, centralization of power at every level, power to be concentrated at one point to make rights effective, and rarely at multiple points. Thus at every level, clashes become fierce, and molecular insecurities become real.

The call for a democratisation of the rights regime from top to bottom - the international, the nation-state and the local power structure - will therefore inevitably

arise in any discussion on the history of rights and justice. The history of justice, as distinct from that of rights, is perched not only on law, but also on the mutual recognition of responsibility, a constant negotiation between the unconditional and the conditional, the absolute and the relative, the cosmopolitan and the particular – between the “unconditional purity of rights” and the historically definable norms of justice, which involves the political history of the struggle for justice at the quotidian level – the legal, political, and the social.

The move from the legal to the dialogic is strategic. Even in that colonial age when law was defining the rights of the indigenous (sketched in *Memory, Identity, Power*), the closure was starkly apparent. Laws, courts, and settlement verdicts could never appreciate in *legal* (measurable, cognisable, identifiable, and enforceable) terms the rights of the indigenous. As I showed taking out a slice of colonial history, beneath all the special tenancy acts lay countless judicial pronouncements on titles to property, and it was at that fundamental level that law was operating. Thus it was around the claims to title by the local *raja*, or by the men of substance, or by the prosperous tenants (or substantive farmers), that indigenous peasants were being drawn to the courts, asked to deposit evidence before the judge, explain in precise social terms institutions like the *mandali*⁴, or say where they had cultivated years back – and, mind you, not as peasants but as semi-slave labour – so that property rights of others could be legally defined and protected.

It may be said that the position I am striving to arrive at is too delicate and fragile for politics. But before I respond to that, let me return very briefly to the issue of the legal history of collective rights and claims in the context of the rights of indigenous peoples and others to self-determination in India. I shall refer here to the provisions of autonomy and try to tease out their implications in terms of my position.

Indigenous peoples and constitutional rights in India

In India, the constitutional and political system has evolved through at least seventy years of history a range of forms of autonomy – administrative, cultural, religious, fiscal and legal-juridical. The constitution provides for special status for certain states such as Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in Articles 370 to 371H. It embodies the principle of non-discrimination in Articles 14, 15, 16, 19 and 29. It assures freedom of conscience in Article 25 and freedom to manage religious affairs in Article 26. Article 30 ensures the right of minorities to establish and administer their own educational institutions. Under the special protection clause in Article 371, tribal customary laws, procedures, and land rights are protected. Part XVI ensures special provisions for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. There are arrangements for zonal councils

in the country. The States Reorganization Commission ensured statehood for major linguistic groups. There is provision for autonomous district councils in scheduled tribe-dominated districts. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution ensured devolution of powers at village and town level. Similarly the constitution arranged for the financial autonomy of the states through the constitutionally-prescribed division of resources and the National Finance Commission.

Apart from creating new states (some very recently created) and autonomy for some states in particular, a range of accords and unilateral measures on Darjeeling, Bodoland, Leh, North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong district, Khasi district, Jaintia Hills district, Tripura Tribal Areas district, Chakma, Mara and Lai districts in Mizoram, created autonomous areas and district councils under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. There is no uniform civil law, on the contrary there exists a variety of personal laws, and linguistic autonomy in some measure.

Despite the range of forms of autonomy, demands for the right to self-determination ranging from more autonomy to secession have arisen frequently, and if some have mellowed, others have persisted and have grown insistent notwithstanding massive state suppression and loss of lives. It began with the Muslim demand for self-determination in the pre-independence era and still continues in various forms and at various levels today. The constituent states have said that their legislative, administrative and financial autonomy is inadequate or has diminished. Kashmir says its autonomy is fictive. Insurgents in the North East have said that granting statehood is a ploy to subsume them in Indian polity. Religious minorities say that they are under unprecedented attack from fascist communal forces belonging to the majority community and are backed by the state. The scheduled castes and tribes say that their deprivation, poverty and disempowerment have increased. The legal-administrative measures for the protection of autonomy such as the Minorities Commission, Human Rights Commission and Women's Commission, are severely limited in their powers. These national commissions have counterparts in the states, which are even more limited in powers and functions. The commissions in the states for the protection of minority languages and cultures and the interests of scheduled castes and tribes are also weak and inadequate.

In short, we have in the Indian instance an extra-ordinary juxtaposition of the most relentless constitutionalism and the most insistent cry for the self to achieve recognition. It is also a narrative of how and when a group refuses to accept at some historical moment the identity of a *minority* and claims the status of a *people*, a *nation*. At the time of decolonisation, constitutionalism held promises of accommodation and reconciliation. The trust broke down quickly because the arrangements collapsed under the pressure of a centralizing state discourse. Then the dialectics of a long defiance on the part of the claimant group, state suppression, and a protracted and

often brutalising struggle, led to the escalation of demands for homelands, and a renewed attempt to contain all these within constitutional confines. Hence the disgruntled minority selves' anguished appeal for justice, their mistrust of institutions of autonomy, their plea that the urge of the self to gain recognition be judged in the light of democracy, and their despair at the double-edged weapon of ethnicity now so ruthlessly turned against them by a superior adversary. The Indian experience of the double narrative can thus also be seen as the return of the theme of justice and democracy to the heart of the argument of self-determination. "The Indian paradox", to borrow a term from the late Myron Weiner (1989), is very evident in the tortuous history of legal negotiation with the notion of autonomy on the basis of certain constitutional principles which are simply inadequate.

Indian law permits different family laws on religious lines, even permits different public laws according to different religions on matters like religious trusts, permits compensatory discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups, and is sometimes extremely solicitous of religious sensibilities. However, the broad regulative powers that the state has are rarely comprehensively enforced. Moreover, in analysing what he termed as "symbolic activism", Marc Galanter (1993) shows how compensatory measures sit so unhappily with the broad doctrine of equality as a fundamental right. Should these measures be seen as defining equality, so that the court should now force compensatory measures, or should they be seen as guidelines to the state towards making un-equals equals? The implication is that, if we take the first view (a view that bifurcates the Indian society into two broad groups - the scheduled castes and tribes and other dispossessed minorities on one hand, and the rest on the other), we cannot have a republican constitution promoting public politics. If we take the second view (that is, a prescriptive policy for the state to provide succour to some disadvantaged groups), we herald an unending series of demands for classification on the basis of which the discrimination will be made. Both possibilities show the dilemmas of a liberal constitution trying to grapple with the issue of inequality and autonomy. This produces what I term here as "constitutionalism" that ironically produces even more inequality and dispossession and, thereby, clamour for autonomy. The *politics of recognition* has to be seen in this context.

Finally, one can take the case of caste as an example of the impossible politics of a constitution producing an enduring form of autonomy in India. The constitution takes a dim view of the place of caste in Indian life, assuming that the ties of ascription remain beyond its domain; but it sees itself as the fundamental instrument to ensure that these ascriptions do not lead to hierarchy, inequality and invidious treatment in public life. Caste, therefore, with its own internal order and rule promulgating powers and functions, may continue as an *autonomous association*, but this autonomy is supervised so that it does not spill over into public politics. Doctrine, ritual and culture - all remain outside the juridical bounds till these affect the constitutional

mission of promoting equality. If they do, court and the law become active. In such a perspective, caste becomes a religious body, both in the sense that its own prerogative on such matters such as marital rituals, devotional methods, or representation to bodies like relevant commissions is allowed, and a non-religious body, in the sense that the constitution tries to detach it from the wider perspective of Hindu society and determines its character (advantages and disadvantages) among Muslims and Christians as well. But the institution of caste is securely tied to the "Hindu world"; few can opt out of a caste fold and receive protection from the state. In short, the Indian experience shows that modern law is not a self-fulfilling prophecy working towards the satisfaction of the political subject.

Why has constitutionalism failed in India in recognising rights and ensuring minimal justice, and why has it resulted in the brew of ethnic homelands that privileges certain rights while denying others? Justice, to be brief, has become subordinated to constitutional process and legal realism. In fact, there is a paradox here. Economic integration through special laws, concessions, subsidies, etc., makes the task and the strategy of special protection (of indigenous people, or minorities) non-threatening to the political class. Thus, it facilitates the resolution of *old* conflicts. But this integration creates new ghettos, and therefore new exiles, new selves, and the declining legitimacy of political rule. Mere constitutionalism does not offer any way out of a contentious situation, because it does not offer a way of escape out of the entrenched positions of power achieved through arms. By relegating to the margin the task of political accommodation, reconciliation and the ensuring of *minimal justice*, while confining itself to a framework of "protection" of "ethnic minorities", constitutionalism can only represent *gradualism*. Its consequence is the retention of the old framework of political power that had given rise in the first place to the dissenting self.

It is necessary to remember in this context that democracy comes principally on the basis of rights and not justice, though undeniably these remain connected. But the discourse of rights (of a nation, a people, a community, and of individuals) does not address the issue of justice in its complexities. Therefore rights are allowed to exist only in a state of clash with each other. It is a situation to which democracy has no sure answer, except that of strengthening the state to balance claims and rights. The received theory of democracy clearly does not offer from its own corpus a way out of the paradox.

Minimal principles for exercising the right to self-determination

Is it possible to combine the legal and the moral - the two overlapping yet distinct parts of the problematic that I have recounted here? Conflict over land and resource use patterns, linguistic and cultural autonomy, customary laws, and the issue of

justice for women are issues that not merely call for rights of the indigenous people, but for two more things – (a) democratisation of relations within communities; and (b) reconciliation of claims on the basis of justice. The call for ethnic space does not consider these two concerns as of fundamental importance. Hence, we need to go beyond that call.

I believe this is possible. It of course calls for certain concrete principles that can act as a plank for combining the two issues – rights and justice. These principles are like the task they will set out to achieve – they are like half-animals, half-moral and half-legal. They are the guarantees that, notwithstanding the historic obstructions, can pave the way for reconciliation and justice at least at a minimal level. I would like to propose that the following minimal principles are particularly important:

- The *principle of compensation* for past injustices, wrongs, and gestures on behalf of the State to convince the *other* of its desire to continue with the principle of compensation.
- The *principle of supervision and responsibility* - this means deciding on the right and agreeable way to supervise the introduction of autonomy.
- The *principle of custodianship* is crucial to the effort at settling the balance between the territorial sovereignty of the state and the autonomy of the dissenting community.
- The *principle of guarantee* – guarantee against future erosion of autonomy, guarantee of a mechanism for continuous conversation.
- The *principle of innovation* of federalizing and autonomy practices along non-territorial lines, such as consociationalism.
- The *principle of feminization of relations and the principle of autonomy* which implies federal relations within the group or a collective recognition of histories of separate existences, and a moral-constitutional guarantee of a variety of forms of co-existence and the guarantee of respecting those forms, including the guarantee of the rights and dignity of the minorities and immigrants.

It is evident that these cannot result simply from a unilateral offer from the state. Besides acceptance of these by the non-state selves, they require international recognition, adoption of regional and global standards, and flexibility of forms of accommodation. The principle and law of self-determination is international. Also the impact of self-determination is international. Besides understanding the inequalities in the global processes, what is also required is an appreciation of the historic possibility of a revision of the rules of political life. With the possibility of imagining newer forms of organization of politics, at least we shall be able to think of

a federal organization of society, freeing it from a type of democracy that can express itself only in ethnocratic forms.

Autonomy and the need for a new dialogic order

This brings us to the question of autonomy. As is commonly understood, the notion of autonomy is seen as belonging to nature, that is to say it is the source or the basis of political morality – claims and obligations. In the political context, individuals or communities as political actors should possess independent self-governing and self-legislative authority. Immanuel Kant thought of rational actors who could be lawgivers or legislators to themselves, and therefore responsible for their modes of behavior. This was to him a universal principle that required that one could set one's own ends only within a framework that was based on acceptance by all other such beings. Autonomy, the categorical principle, was to lead therefore to harmony and accord. Autonomy was "the property of the will by which it (was) a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition)", "subject only to laws given by himself but still universal". One should notice here that Kant, in describing autonomy as "property of the will", was integrally linking it to will. By the same token however, autonomy was thus different from freedom, because if, as Locke thought, freedom was the condition of a person "to think, or not to think; to move, or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind", autonomy implied on the contrary responsibility, legality, universality, and morality.

To be sure, the long liberal thinking of autonomy never came to terms with freedom, will, and the political realities of coercion and management of orders connected with will. Is there then a hierarchy of values involved in this uneasy relation between autonomy and the other relations of domination and will? Can we say then that a person or a group is autonomous with respect to a desire, yet has to be bound by certain regulations? Autonomy, as we can see, suggests freedom, yet it suggests regulation, direction, or to be precise, self-regulation, self-direction, and self-governance also. Autonomy is thus but one subject in the empire of conditions. These conditions of management, rule, governance, and admissible forms of politics are so basic, and intensely physical or material, that issues of autonomy affect and involve the body even.

The Indian experience, of course, implies that there is more to the problem suggested here. In the construction of a political society, people or the actors continually face the principle of several autonomies. These autonomies (horizontal, vertical, political, fiscal, cultural) mark the contentions and engagements that make a political society. In this political society, what we term as "public sphere" is on the one hand regarded as the "habitus" of democracy; on the other hand it shows itself

to be singularly incapable of coping with what I call the "politics of autonomy". One reason that I do not want to anticipate here is the fact that modern democratic polities with their celebrated public sphere are not all dialogic, therefore they understand freedom much more and are ready to be guided by wills, but cannot cope with autonomies, perched as our notions are on the old juridical notions of sovereignty. What all these polities can accommodate is a sort of "boutique multiculturalism". The situation is indeed worse, and even by Habermas' (1985) standards defies the capacity of "communicative rationality" to be set right. One of the relevant questions involves the issue of legal pluralism, namely: Can we have a differential system of justice in place of an equal system of public justice, with one or the other group dominating the public sphere and turning its norms in its favour? The predilection further is, if we have a differential system, will it be competitive or cooperative? Since a modern constitution is based on the republican system of an imagined equal public sphere that sees autonomy as an exception, how will such a basic law accommodate autonomy as an integral principle of democracy? Also important is the question, how will equality be pursued in the lands of hierarchy?

In the context of this question, it is important to remember that the broad regulative powers that the state has in terms of ensuring "equal liberty" (for instance, "subject to public order, morality and health" *vide* Article 25.1, and Article 25.2a of the Indian constitution) are rarely comprehensively enforced. The result is a paradox: we have on one hand a publicly equal system with broad state powers to regulate practices of separate identity so that they do not go against equality, we have also differential provisions to help the disadvantaged, and then besides these two features we have a public system accessible to a group determined to impose its values in a large or total measure, thereby almost equalizing the *public* and *group* interest. In such a situation, the stress on the judiciary is excessive. The political failure is sought to be compensated by judicial activism to the extent where a judge is compelled to define "who is a Hindu", or where the boundaries of faiths are. In short, as I have explained in details in a chapter on autonomy in my recently published book, *The Politics of Dialogue* (Samaddar 2004) – and I repeat here what I have said just a while ago –, the Indian instance in an acute manner shows the South Asian experience, namely that, modern law is not a self-fulfilling prophecy working towards the satisfaction of the political subject. Faced with asymmetries of power, it can manage at best the co-existence of various normative orders, and at worst it can become a willing accomplice to the manipulation of the public principles by a particular group. It also shows that beyond the given territorial form of autonomy, South Asia by and large has not been able to discover other forms of autonomy that will combine both spatial and spiritual dimensions. The resultant situation displays the existence of two political idioms. There is a liberal republican idiom of democracy originating in the constitutional exercises of 1946-49 in India (elsewhere in this region at different times) that tolerates

autonomy and dissent to a defined extent. There are also a politics of recognition fundamentally expressed in territorial form, pre-existing and now reinforced by the same liberal idiom, which threatens to break out (and indeed sometimes breaks out) of the imposed confines, resulting in a renewed phase of constitutional frenzy. These two are the quarrelsome duo, one not being quite able to displace the other. Together they have produced the uneasy reality of accommodation, which is not tolerance, but an accommodation of competing realities till one succeeds in pushing the other out of existence. But this situation, as I shall argue now, impels the issue of justice to surface again and again, and places the plea for a new dialogic order at the core of the issue of self-determination.

The aporia which the politics of indigenous peoples face in terms of their collective rights, can be termed as the "democratic closure", and the situation can be summarised briefly as follows:

- Autonomy as a group principle hangs as a categorical principle between freedom and regulation, and likewise between reason and passion;
- Autonomy being subject to rules and regulations is an event in the field of governmentality, where freedom and life become subject to governing codes and rules reflected in the "will to power";
- Autonomy is struck between a republican legal code and a hierarchical order, and is yet to achieve a satisfactory regime of legal pluralism;
- The juridical theory of sovereignty is strengthened by autonomy as a regulative principle, while the political theory of autonomy requires for its fulfilment autonomy from below, expressed somewhat in that strange term "autonomy of the autonomies"¹⁵.
- The success of autonomy depends on the effectiveness of a dialogic order, while autonomy has to depend on the strengthening and the relentless invocation of constitutionalism, which in turn marginalizes the dialogic spirit.
- Though the history of autonomy seems in a typically Hegelian glass to be the progressive realisation of a democratic spirit, its conditions is marked by a combination of geo-politics and ethno-politics, which go far beyond the twin problematic of territory and identity, and summon the very ingredients of the particular mode of power on which modern politics are based.

As in all situations of aporia, we need as a way out a third dimension here, which is latent but mostly shut out by the contending pulls and forces. Dialogic politics that emerge from the quest of minimal justice are the third face.

Important from the point of view of a dialogic order is the shift implied in the politics of autonomy itself that springs historically from what I have termed as the quest for minimal justice. Justice moderated by acknowledgement of rights is achieved minimally every time it is conversed and contested. The success, semi-success, and failure stories of autonomy are actually narratives of six broad rules of minimal justice. These are, to repeat, the six principles of compensation, supervision, custodianship, guarantee, feminization and innovation. Yet we must understand that these principles are not abstract, they are the products of the experiences mentioned in some detail above, and will remain historically conditioned. Minimal justice is "minimal", not only because it does not claim to achieve a redress of all wrongs, but accepts the fact that justice is always historically produced, and therefore contingent. These principles require a dialogic order at an increasing scale, because, besides other reasons, in this age of globalisation they require international guarantee and flexibility of forms of accommodation. This becomes possible when the state is irreversibly linked to an *order* that propels such an evolution of forms of shared sovereignty.

It may very well be that with economic integration helping the re-colonization of the "excluded" areas through autonomy packages and devolution, and with the historic growth of a political class that sees the merits and, more importantly, the possibility of a revision of rules of governance, these principles will be in practice in many parts of the world, and the chronicle of the success and semi-success stories of autonomy will be seen as belonging to a phase of revision of liberal political rule worldwide. Another fifty years later, political and constitutional historians will say that the principle and practices of self-determination occasioned the revision of rule. The issue of justice thereby will not be exhausted; politics is a matter of self, and will continue its vocation of being *just*, that is, seeking new standards of justice. For after all, the theory and the reality of the juridical form of sovereignty in form of a territorial democratic state exists as a "state of nature" whence all things follow and to which all things return. It is this immanent problem of a critique of a thing, which bases itself on that thing, that perhaps calls for greater attention in a critical theory of dialogue.

Conclusions: A new set of hard questions

Given that there have been irreversible shared experiences, we can now place some of the imminent questions on the agenda. Is "autonomy" necessarily tinged with the idea of nation and national identity? Can the ethnic accords on grant of autonomy be regarded as "moments of recognition" of diverse ethnic identities? Are they not rather the moments of denial, hiding the asymmetries of power between the signatories, and moments of self-serving integration and manipulation? From that point, can it be said that the accords between the state and indigenous peoples are locked in

some original moments and structures of contest and conflict? Some other questions will be: Is local governance necessarily to be understood from within the purview of state institutions? Any demand for autonomy shows some degree of negotiability. Thus, does not the notion of autonomy exceed the formal-legal sense in which we hold the concept of citizenship, which in India in any case is multi-layered? Finally, what sense are we to make of the fact that autonomy in the borderlands is a critical theme in all governmental discourses and links up inevitably with the identity question in a frontier discourse? Assam and Jharkhand share many similarities of being frontiers of development, and the geopolitical insights into their respective histories enable us to think of a possible map of autonomy – and thus the questions emerging from the discussion: a centralized disposition of autonomy or autonomy of autonomies? Interacting autonomies? Various kinds of autonomies – horizontal, vertical, interacting...

These questions are important because their discussion shows the implications of the process whereby rights, conceptualised in terms of autonomy, translate into the politics of homeland, and produce insiders and outsiders. These implications are related to state policies on forest rights, land rights, property rights, customary rights, and local government rights. At the heart of the autonomy problematic, as seen in the perspective of the above questions, will be other contending issues of autonomy – for instance, the issue of women's autonomy. Thus, for instance, the crucial question will be whether the collective rights of indigenous peoples will ensure rights of women, not as something vaguely universal, or as an individual right, but as central to the question of collective rights and the collectivity.

Notes

- 1 The term, denoting the south-western part of West Bengal, adjoining Bihar and presently belonging to Jharkhand and Orissa, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicated the common characteristics of the terrain – its dense forests and the laterite nature of the soil. The various administrative and revenue units (*paraganas* and *mahals*) in that sub-region formed together one administrative unit – the district of Jungle mahals, established in 1805. The colonial administrator McAlpin (1981 [1909]:4) had observed even many years later that the term survived in the whole of the western area of Midnapore. [Editor's note: For an analysis of the area in terms of the frontier notion, readers are referred to Sivaramakrishnan, K. 1996: "British Imperium and Forested Zones of Anomaly in Bengal, 1767-1833", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 33 (3), pp. 243-282].
- 2 This has happened in Tripura, Bodoland and several other places in the Northeast. Attacks on migrant workers have repeatedly occurred in the Punjab, in Jammu and Kashmir, and in Maharashtra. On Tripura and the entire Northeast, refer to the investigations by Subir Bhaumik (2005) and Meenakshi Sen Bandopadhyay and Jayanta Bhattacharya (2005). On Bodoland, see besides Bhaumik (2005) the investigative reports by the Calcutta Research Group (www.merg.ac.in).

- 3 Editor's note: Shiv Sena ("Army of Shiva") a right-wing political party in India founded in the state of Maharashtra in 1966. Its ideology basically rests on two core concepts: "Bhumiputra" ("Sons of Soil", reflecting the belief that Maharashtrians deserve more rights in Maharashtra than those who are not from the state) and Hindutva or Hindu nationalism.
- 4 Editor's note: Reference here is to the violent struggle of the Bodo of Lower Assam for a homeland which peaked in the 1990s. Among the prime targets of Bodo nativists were migrants from among the Santhal, an officially recognized, so-called "Scheduled Tribe" in east-central India. Large numbers of Santhal were brought as labourers to Assam during the British colonial era to work in the region's tea gardens. Their descendants have also taken up other occupations such as farming and have become a significant demographic element in the area claimed by the Bodo.
- 5 Editor's Note: Sharing the author's concern for the frequently blatant absence of considerations of justice in political debates on law and collective rights, we would like to draw the interested reader's attention to a work that treats the subject in great detail: John Rawls. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- 6 Since independence India has gone through a series of reorganizations of the make-up of her member states and union territories, usually as a response to a popular mass movement for autonomy along linguistic lines and in most cases by carving out a new state of an existing member state or by upgrading a territory to a member state or, as in a few cases, by the incorporation of semi-independent polities. In the Northeast, the birth of the new states (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Manipur), mostly from the old state of Assam, owes to the North East Reorganisation Act, 1971; Tripura, also in the Northeast, was a princely state; it subsequently became a full-fledged state in 1972; and Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal in Central India became states by a similar Act in 2000.
- 7 Concluded by the Cornwallis administration in 1793, Permanent Settlement was a grand contract between the East India Company government and the landholders (called the *zamindars*) in the Bengal Presidency and independent *talukdars*. Under the contract, the landholders were recognised as the absolute proprietors of landed property. Besides, they were endowed with the privilege of holding their proprietary right at a rate which was to continue unchanged forever. Under the contract, the government could not raise its revenue demand on the landholders. Though the *zamindars* had the right to transfer their land freely by way of sale, mortgage or gift, their *raiyats* (tenants) were denied such a privilege. They had the customary right to hold the land hereditarily and subject to regular payment of rent, but were not entitled to transfer the right in any form. In relation to the government, *zamindars* had of course one obligation to perform. It was to pay the government revenue strictly on time. The landlords were warned that in case any of them failed to pay the revenue at the stipulated date, "a sale (in auction) of the whole of the lands of the defaulter, or such portion of them as may be sufficient to make good the arrears, will positively and invariably take place." (Section 7, Regulation 1, 1793). The Permanent Settlement was not merely an arrangement for revenue collection, it was rather devised as a core part of the control system of the colonial state, as all other parts of the administration, such as executive, judiciary, and police were geared to the desired working of the Permanent Settlement system. However, the system began to erode under the impact of new circumstances, new modes of imperial extraction, growth of nationalism, repeated rent crises, introduction of other revenue acts, and growth of population. The system underwent a series of amendments and modifications and was finally abolished in 1950.
- 8 The colonial ethnographer who wrote the *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872).
- 9 Risley was associated with the census of 1901 and wrote *The Peoples of India* (Calcutta,

- 1908); as well, he co-authored along with E.A. Gait *India – Ethnographic Appendices* (Census of India, 1901, Volume 1, Part II).
- 10 The Government of India Act of 1919 was essentially transitional in character. Under Section 84 of the said Act, a statutory commission was to be appointed at the end of ten years, to determine the next stage in the realisation of self-rule in India. The British government appointed a commission under Sir John Simon in November 1927. The commission, which had no Indian members, was sent to investigate India's constitutional problems and make recommendations to the government on the future constitution of India. The Indian nationalists decided to boycott the Commission. Almost immediately with its arrival in India in 1928, the Commission was confronted by protests. The entire country observed strikes, and many people turned out to greet the Commission with black flags. Protests occurred in every major Indian city visited by the seven British MPs. On October 30, 1928, one of the most well-known nationalist leaders, Lajpat Rai, was severely injured by the police in Lahore while protesting against the visit of the Simon Commission to the city, and died of his injuries. However, several other groups such as the Naga and some *dalit* organisations petitioned the Commission with their demands. The Commission published its 17-volume report in 1930. It proposed the abolition of dyarchy and the establishment of representative government in the provinces. Having realized the extent to which nationalist Indians opposed the Commission and also how communal tensions had increased instead of decreased in the wake of the commission's work, the British government opted for another method of dealing with the constitutional issues of India. Before the publication of the report, the British government stated that Indian opinions would henceforth be taken into account, and that the natural outcome of the constitutional process would be the Dominion Status for India. The outcome of the Simon Commission was the Government of India Act of 1935, which established representative government at the provincial level in India on the basis of limited suffrage, and forms the basis of many parts of the Constitution today.
- 11 A leader of the Santhal Hul uprising of 1855 who died in the rebellion.
- 12 One of the most prominent leaders of the indigenous peoples' movements in India today.
- 13 An influential leader of the indigenous peoples' movement in the central part of India and a member of the Constituent Assembly.
- 14 Village head, at times responsible for collecting rent from the village and submitting it to the *zamindar* or the petty prince; *mandali* could also mean *jote*, a particular form of tenancy associated with the position of the headman. There were legal disputes over the precise meaning of the term. Was he a subordinate to the landlord? Was he a village head? Was he a particular type of tenant with special tasks? For all these that major implications in terms of power and economy in the countryside, see Samaddar (1998, chapter 3)
- 15 An expression used by Sanjay Chaturvedi (2005) in his well-known research on autonomy in Jammu and Kashmir.

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