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HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

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Cover photo: Haddad hunters and their bag. The net owner has clubbed and cut the throat of the gazelle, his partner stands with sticks used to lure the game into the nets. Some of these can be seen in the background. Photo: Ida Nicolaisen.

EDITORIAL

For ninety-nine per cent of human history we have been hunter-gatherers. Any other way of life is a very, very recent phenomenon. Hunting and gathering have thus been a part of us ever since the start of human evolution. Our common heritage as hunter-gatherers and how essential this life form has been in making us into what we are seems, however, to be forgotten and lost to most people today. And the few remaining hunter-gatherers suffer accordingly.

The term hunter-gatherer is applied to groups who primarily gain their subsistence from hunting wild animals (marine and terrestrial), fishing and gathering of wild plants and shellfish. By reserving the concept to groups who culturally, spiritually and in their social organisation are focused on hunting and gathering for subsistence and as a way of life, we conceptually separate these groups from, for example, hunting specialists or wild food collectors among agricultural peoples or hunters for sport in the industrialized world.

Today there are only a small number of societies (probably less than 0,001 % of the world's population) in which hunting and gathering still dominate everyday life. Yet, hunter-gatherers are to be found in most regions of the world: in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, in the Arctic and sub-Arctic as well as in the Americas and from the high Arctic to the tropics hunter-gatherers survive and continue their way of life, falsely perceived by some as isolated relics from an utterly primitive stage in human evolution. But today's hunter-gatherers are not isolated survivors nor the direct descendants of the first humans. We are becoming increasingly aware that the pre-history and history of hunter-gatherer societies is rich, complex and full of surprises. And far from being isolated these groups are, and have been for ages, engaged in important exchange relations with neighbouring societies, ranging from trading wild food and selling their labour to offering ritual expertise and healing. Varying degrees of integration into regional economic and political systems has existed for a long time and is increasingly common.

This issue of Indigenous Affairs presents cases from almost all regions where hunter-gatherers are to be found today: Africa – west, east, central and south; Asia – south and southeast; Australia, the Arctic and sub-Arctic as well as the Americas.

As becomes evident from a number of the presentations, the groups concerned are best understood when we also study the colonization of their territories and subsequent events and processes in post-colonial times. From a photo reportage in a glossy magazine, for example, the naked, exotic and hostile Jarawa may appear to some as a highly anachronistic stone-age type of society, while the careful analysis presented here enables us to see Jarawa strategies and reactions as a legacy of colonial and post-colonial policies in India.

In many respects hunting and gathering could be described as a modern and well-suited life form. These groups live on and off the land and the sea, in most instances with relatively little damage to the surrounding environment. Their adaptation may be the only option available without having to rely totally on imports to subsidize human presence in certain environments. They have their own territories and intimate knowledge of the environment and the life forms surrounding them. Hunter-gatherers are flexible and versatile and often turn out to be quite eclectic in their choice of subsistence strategies. Current groups range from those who are almost entirely unplugged from the larger society to those who will have the pick-up truck as a primary tool and successfully market their bush food for the sophisticated tastes in the larger cities.

There is no reason to over-romanticise the life of hunter-gatherers or, for example, depict them as some sort of model eco-angels. They have their malpractices and problems like everyone else. And yet, most of the groups have survived in their environments for millennia. On the whole – it makes sense in this world to stick to such a life form. And many of the principles underlying their adaptation match the aims we have in mind when discussing the urgent need to

radically change the life-destroying principles and practices of modern industrial societies.

Hunter-gatherers have shown a remarkable resilience and will to survive and thrive. It is important to stress this, as will become apparent in the following articles. Sadly, the presentations can stand for the predicament of the whole range of remaining hunter-gatherer societies as well as that of indigenous peoples in general. The life situations of the hunter-gatherer groups presented here reads like a catalogue of horrors: loss of land, loss of title to resources, diminishing land base, lack of security of tenure, marginalisation, forced resettlement, eviction from protected areas, destruction of ecosystems, domination, subjugation, exploitation, lack of recognition as peoples, exposure to serious health hazards, victims of surrounding wars and conflicts, ethnic cleansing, forced changes of their way of life and also loss of language, knowledge, spirituality and traditions. The few remaining hunter-gatherer groups are faced with a series of deeply serious problems.

Some decades ago protests regarding the fate of these groups were primarily voiced by hunter-gatherers in the Western hemisphere such as the Inuit and Indians of Canada and Alaska and the Inuit of Greenland, as well as by a few researchers and human rights organisations. Alongside the global growth of the indigenous movement and organisations, hunter-gatherers are also increasingly coming forward and protesting against the problems they face. Most hunter-gatherer societies are known to be strongly egalitarian and to emphasize respect for the individual; there are seldom positions of institutionalised leadership. This has been seen as a potential serious impediment to the hunter-gatherers' need for self-organising when having to face up to the threats their communities encounter. Apparently such problems are being overcome: the World Council of Whalers, the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters in Russia, the Inuit Hunter and Trappers Association, land management groups in Australia, the Commu-

nauté des Autochtones Rwandais (CAURWA) in Rwanda, and the Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, all presented in this issue, are only some of many hunter-gatherer organisations operating today. These organisational efforts are essential for hunter-gatherers in order to be able and allowed to make an impact on decisions pertaining to their future and to the development in their areas. In many parts of the world, various types of NGOs and individuals are doing valuable work together with hunter-gatherer communities in order to protect their lands, resources and way of life.

All the articles in this issue review recent developments in a number of hunter-gatherer communities and thus add significantly to our knowledge and understanding of their current situation. Some of the articles report on how general development trends such as the alarming rates of forest loss and deforestation in Asia, Africa and South America, are closely related to the serious consequences faced by a number of smaller local communities like the forest peoples of Equatorial Africa, the Batek, Orang Rimba or Kubu, and the Negritos of Southeast Asia. Other articles present groups like the Haddad of Chad and the Jarawa of the Andaman Islands that seldom even appear in specialised research literature. The article from the Chaco area in Argentina reports on groups many thought were extinct. Yet, unable to continue their life form they now look for rights as indigenous communities. A review of the situation of the Pygmy groups of Equatorial Africa contains information on both the very well known groups and those we hardly have had any information about for decades. Tom Mexsis Happynook provides a review which not only relates his own and his people's history on whaling and relations to nature, but also a fresh updated comparative review of indigenous whaling and resource management with news from both distant communities as well as the international political settings in which the future of whal-

ing and whaling communities is discussed. Through Brody's article we are reminded of the immense loss to humanity that is happening by way of the erosion of languages - a thought provoking argument which has relevance for all places where hunter-gatherers are living. Young's article on contemporary indigenous subsistence in Australia is one example of the need to break down obsolete conceptual barriers between the modern and the traditional in hunter-gatherer societies. She also stresses a theme recurring in several of the articles - a remarkable survival capacity in spite of long term and persistent attempts to degrade or even wipe out hunter-gatherers' way of life and their religion and how their spiritual relations and obligations to the land is part of their way to maintain the environment.

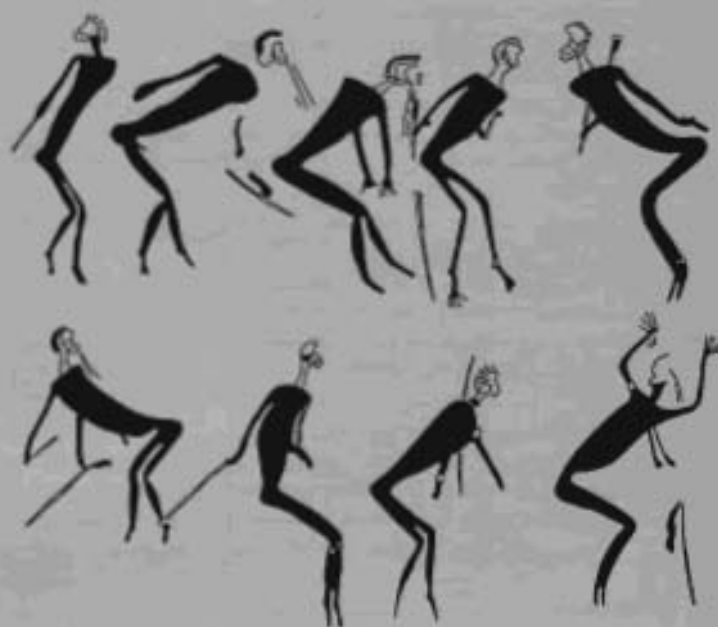
IWGLA has a longstanding commitment to bringing attention to the predicament of groups like hunter-gatherers, to publish, to engage in human rights work and project activities. Some recent examples are projects entailing capacity building and organisational efforts among so-called Bushmen in Botswana, but also among the new Pygmy organisations. A document on the Twa around the Kahuzi-Biega National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo is in the pipeline for publication and our list of publications includes a number of documents that solely or partly deals with hunter-gatherers. Our most recent document (no. 98) outlines the serious problems faced by the Hadza, a hunter-gatherer group in Tanzania. Just as the Hadza document was published we received the sad news of the untimely death of Bwire Kaare, the Tanzanian anthropologist who spent so much time and effort in studying the Hadza and lobbying for the protection of their rights. The loss of a fine researcher and a human rights defender reminds us not only of the fragility of human lives, but also of how much we still have to learn of the few struggling hunter-gatherer societies that remain in this world and how little we can afford to lose them.



TAKING THE WORDS FROM THEIR MOUTHS



By Hugh Brody



Petrus Vaidiei (centre, by window) attending the Arusha Conference, January 2000. Photo: Diane Vinding



Human beings make about 160 different sounds¹. This, say the linguists, is the sum of the vocal elements of all the world's languages. English, one of the more complicated vocal systems, has about 55 of these sounds. Norwegian has 75. The Bushman or San languages of the Kalahari have more than 145. In the words of Tony Traill, an expert on southern African linguistics, the San are the great acrobats of the mouth. In their campaigns against tribes, in particular against hunter-gatherers, the colonists have despised them for the very sounds of their voices and, with curious determination, have sought to eradicate their languages. As if the mind of the tribe were itself the enemy.



of human settlement for thousands of years. And ethnic cleansing has been the experience of all the indigenous and tribal peoples wherever agricultural colonialism has advanced. Using steel, horses, germs, guns, courts, churches, schools and parliaments - in whatever combination or sequence worked best for each particular invasion - those in the old world hungry for new

lands have invaded the territories of the peoples of the new world. New only to us, of course.

The removal of the great tribes from Georgia in the American southeast was debated, litigated, preached and promoted before they staggered out to the so-called Indian territories of the western plains in what became known as the Trail of Tears. And from the European capitals came instructions to colonial governors that resulted in the laundering and bleaching of the colonies of Africa, Asia, Australia and all the aboriginal domains of the Pacific, as well as every part of the Americas.

The Europeans' assault on tribal languages is well documented; and most persistent when its victims have been hunter-gatherers. These were the tribes whose ways of life meant they were spread far and wide across settlement frontiers. There seems to have been a compulsion to achieve, in these places, a final and decisive silence. Holocaust was not enough; the decimation of populations, eradication of whole cultures, relocation of communities from lands the settlers wanted to those they did not, confinement of the survivors of these projects in tiny 'reserves' and 'reservations' and 'homelands' did not achieve a silence that was quite absolute. There were survivors, adults and children, who could maintain the traditions, attitudes and idioms of the tribe. The administrators of indigenous lands and societies, the imperial arbiters of tribal fate, sought to put an end to these voices. The sounds of the chattering monkeys, barbaric tongues and less than human vocalisations would cease, to be replaced by English or Spanish, Portuguese, French, Afrikaans: any language of 'civilisation'.

Loosing the tribal languages

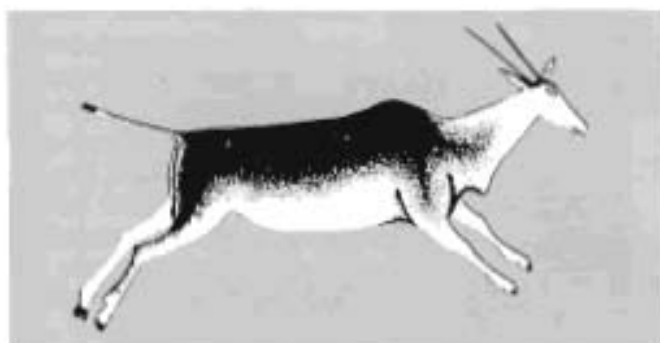
Throughout the world, there has been a drastic loss of tribal languages. Some linguists estimate that some 5,000 languages or distinctive dialects have faded away this century. In the Americas alone there are more than 1,000 languages that have disappeared or reached the brink of extinction in the past 30 years. With the expansion of schools and other homogenising social processes, the pace of this loss has accelerated; and it continues. The loss of these ways of speaking and of knowing the world is a diminution of the collective human mind: a loss of genius that may well be irrecoverable. It is also a cause of intense grief and disorientation to hundreds of thousands of tribal men and women, who struggle to be themselves without the words to say what that means.

In southern Africa, Dutch settlers dismissed the KhoiSan ways of speaking as 'gibberings of monkeys'. In the forests of India, missionaries noted that much of the language was 'gifted with a clicking, harsh, heavy pronunciation peculiar to all barbaric tongues'. In Australia, Aboriginal ways of speaking were often described as 'less than human'. In both the United States and Canada, those concerned to deal with 'the Indian problem' in the nineteenth century resolved that 'those barbaric tongues' would be eradicated, making way for the English that 'all who are civilised can understand'.

Ethnic cleansing and genocide are often said to have been the special curse of the twentieth century. But in their original form, as a war of settlers against tribes, of farmers against hunters, they have been a grim part of the history

The voices of the tribes

Tribal people often say that to have stories about a land is to own it. The continuing voices, using the languages that carry the stories, that hold the knowledge, that sustain the links with the spirits, are a permanent



challenge, a rival title deed to the territory. They must be silenced.

The voices of the tribes of our 'new worlds' contain their own way of owning, knowing and caring for their lands. Their stories are both a form of resistance and a record of what has taken place. Their ways of speaking and their forms of knowledge represent some of the oldest and richest expressions of the human mind. Their silence has a poignancy that reaches deep into the history of the world and the fate of the human mind.

All this means that within many nation states there are ways of life, whole cultures, albeit pressed to the margins of both geography and society, whose existence is shaped by a bitter paradox. On the one hand, these are people whose presence on particular territories reaches back to a time when nation-states did not exist: they are the original, indigenous dwellers and can claim priority and rights that transcend those of all who are relative newcomers to their lands. But they live at political, legal and geographical margins, deprived of many of their richest resources and denied rights to their heritage, if not to life itself. This paradox, the depth of historical claim alongside extreme colonial exploitation, defines the tribal peoples of the world.

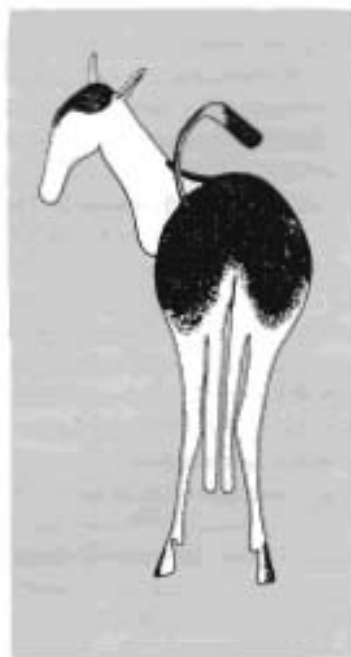
In the 1960s, eruptive liberation movements were emerging among tribal peoples and the story of this paradox was being told with new force. In Canada, the great Shuswap leader, George Manuel, coined the expression 'the fourth world' to define a communality of tribal interests. His vision was of emerging nations, not broken communities. The tribes, in his view, were nations within nations and should be recognised as such. But he also said, repeatedly, that the colonial assault upon the fourth world was most clearly to be seen in attacks on cultural heritage and language, both institutional - by missionaries, local government officials and schools - and more subtly subversive as in the racism of frontier settlers and the discriminatory routines of everyday life.

Since the work of Frantz Fanon, intellectuals and activists have been alert to the way in which this combination

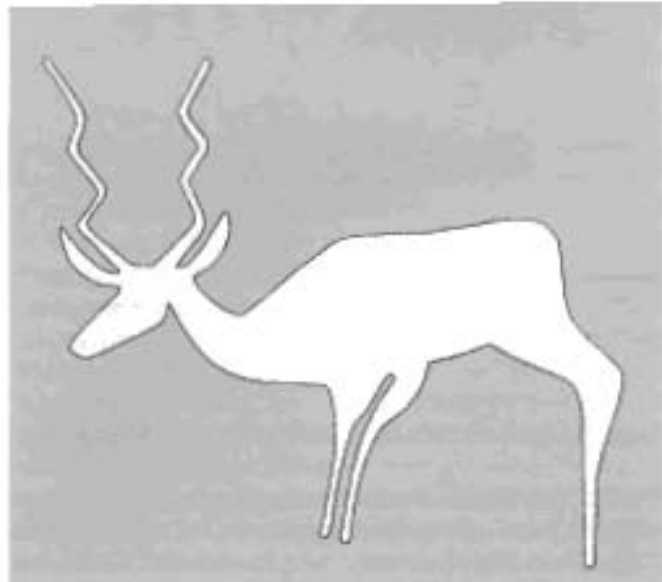
of racist forces - the institutional and the routine - works its way into the lives and psyche of tribal people. Those who endure protracted colonial oppression internalise the attitudes of those who oppress them. The anger of tribal people is intense, but often directed inward. And they fall into a deep silence.

No wonder, then, that the surviving descendants of these tribes, the men and women whose oral heritages carry the stories as well as the scars of these relentless and merciless events, have an intensely difficult and complicated relationship to their own voices. They often speak the languages of their oppressors and have absorbed the lessons the oppressors have addressed to them: indigenous customs, history and ways of speech are matters of shame. They witness in their daily lives the continuing discrimination and disdain that are shown toward them. So how can they speak? And to whom? Many tribal peoples have survived by remaining hidden, silent and unnoticed, at the remotest margins of the colonial world. They have judged it unsafe or unwise to raise their heads and voices too high above the parapets behind which they have been able to conceal themselves. Who out there is going to listen? Who knows how to listen? So silence is appropriate in many ways, but this silence can also be deep within the psyche as well as a matter of wise strategy. Shame and grief, accumulated from generation to generation, can tie the tongue tight.

Breaking the silence



Yet the silence, in many parts of the world, is being broken. Land claims movements, cultural revival, anti-colonial protest, a refusal to disappear. Tribal voices are making themselves heard, talking within their families, to their children and grandchildren, about their own lives. Their stories celebrate distinctive kinds of knowledge and speak of everyday events in their own lands. They are assertions of pride and rights: to know their place is to claim it, whatever the colonists might say.



But this is only a glimpse, an echo of the assertion of tribal rights and voices worldwide. We could be hearing from the people of West Papua (Irian Jaya), who have struggled for a generation against a murderous invasion of their lands and lives by Indonesian settlers and military. In Sri Lanka, the Vanni-atto, former inhabitants of the entire island now reduced to 2,000 people, are fighting for their rights. In Australia, Aborigine groups are defending every part that remains of their heritage and lands, bringing their stories to the courts as well as to one another. Throughout Latin America, indigenous peoples are raising their voices in order to keep their voices - defying the genocidal process that began with the arrival of the first Europeans and has reduced their numbers and languages by about 90 percent.

There are many kinds of tribal peoples. Perhaps we can all claim some form of tribal membership, some community to which at times we say we belong that is not our national identity. In many countries there are populations, subcultures that are stigmatised by a dominant group as dark, unclean and dangerous. These are the 'others' who have the task of defending their heritage and, at times, their very homes against many forms of aggression. They too can be the victims of ethnocide. They include, of course, the people for whose fate the modern expressions 'final solution' and 'ethnic cleansing' were coined. In many ways, and at particular points in their histories, Kosovans, Bosnians, Kurds, Armenians, Gypsies and Jews (to name but a few) have suffered brutal forms of prejudice and dispossession. And their voices also have been suppressed. Perhaps they can make common cause with the tribals who live the paradox of earliest claim and least status. Their experiences, and therefore their voices, will sound familiar to all who have dealt in the struggles of indigenous populations.

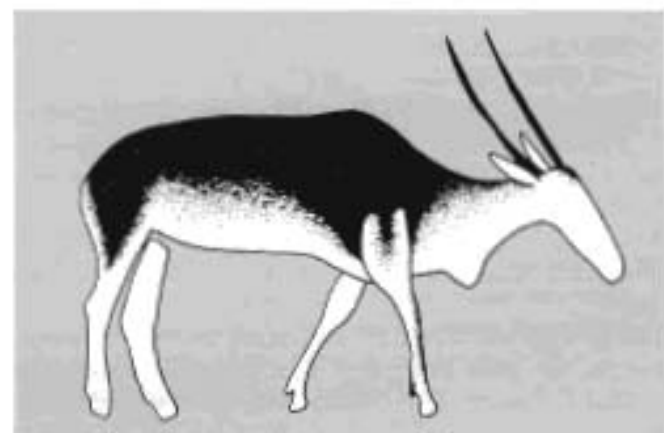
The resurgence of tribal voice has to do with both land and language. For tribal people, the connections between language and land are self-evident: they have always been there; their knowing these places is inseparable from their economic strength and their right to be there. They are where the battle takes place. From the point of view of settlers and their nation states, these are marginal, infertile

territories. (Though some of them now turn out to be rich in minerals, making a new colonial bid for some of the remotest of tribal territories.) They are the lands where tribal peoples have been able to endure, beyond the most aggressive incursions of the colonists. They are languages that somehow 'belong to the past'. So it may seem that the battle for tribal land and language is a peripheral issue, a quaint skirmish at the very edges of relevance. But these voices speak for a vast sector of human history, reaching into aspects, if not the histories, of us all.

It may also seem that tribal demands are anachronistic appeals against irreversible modernity. That they are disingenuous: most tribal peoples embrace the new, seeing opportunities as well as dangers, taking their place, therefore, as actors and riot victims even within the colonial frontiers. But modern tribals are not arguing for a reinstatement of the past. Rather, they seek to have their own resources with which to prosper in the present. With the lands and languages that are indeed theirs, they can live with every kind of opportunity and the strengths of both culture and individual health. This is true for Nunavut, the new Inuit territory within Canada, as it is for the =Khomani² deal with South Africa in the Southern Kalahari. Even at the margins of modern nation states, in the regions that are left to them, they, like everyone, need to live from the centre of themselves.

Resurrection: The example of the =Khomani of the southern Kalahari

Anna Kassi: *'Yes, life. How does life move? Does it run straight? Or does it run askew? ... If the Boer talks to us, we must talk Afrikaans to him, and shoot the language. Yet it's the nicest language. These children will speak ... That child, shoots out with the language.'*



Andries Oley: *'That is why it is I who sit here ... He who seeks the land of his mother and father and grandfather ... where we walked where we wished ... before the formers came to trap us ... that is why we are fighting over this thing. We fight for our land.'*

The dry veldt and deserts of South Africa were the lands of the Bushman, now known as the San. Five hundred years of settlement and colonialism, first by Bantu-speaking immigrants from within Africa and then by heavily armed Europeans, who dispossessed and silenced the San. Vast cattle and sheep farms replaced their network of gathering and hunting territories, their camps and communities, their animals and the very environment. Many thousands of San were taken into forced labour, imprisoned (they were the first inmates of Robben Island), hunted down and killed. The farmers' frontier pushed ever further north, across the Karoo, up to the Orange River and, in the twentieth century, to the Kalahari. Brains that understood domestic animals and a rugged low church Christianity prevailed. An immense encyclopaedia of knowledge of those places - of their water, plants, animals, dunes and spirits - was wiped out. Many languages of the San, each carrying the stories and mysteries of their world, disappeared.

Elsie Vaalboi: *'I loved the Bushman language ... If I think about it now, my brothers could all speak Bushman, they all spoke it. But just when the bread came, then it was, "Yes Ma'am, yes."'*

Elsie Vaalboi was born in the early 1900s in the southern Kalahari. She spent most of her adult life as a servant on white farms. Her people, the =Khomani, are the last San society of South Africa, the survivors of the Bushman holocaust. In the 1970s, both the apartheid government and experts on Bushman cultures decreed that the =Khomani had ceased to exist. Linguists announced that the language had died out.

Elsie Vaalboi knew the =Khomani language. But her children didn't, nor did her neighbours. She believed she was the last =Khomani speaker on earth.

Elsie Vaalboi: *'Nothing, nothing. There was nothing, just the bare sand dunes. That's what I don't know - if we scooped up water to drink. We were such naked Bushmen. I just know I ate tsama's and I eat cucumber, and I eat this thing, and that thing. I didn't know about tap water. Now that I'm so old, now I must find out. In those days, in the Kalahari, we lived without tap water.'*

Petrus Vaalboi: *'Here I sit without my mother's language, without my father's language. I am powerless. I only have Afrikaans. I am out. I feel sometimes like an exile. That, that is the sadness. Then you feel how painful it is, if you are without*

the language. If I could have spoken it ... but I couldn't. I can't. And now, now we have the chance. With the government, to begin to move.'

Claiming their land and saving their language

In 1997, one of Elsie Vaalboi's sons, Petrus, began to work with the South Africa San Institute (SASI), a tiny NGO in Cape Town. They met with =Khomani families who were squatters at Welkom, a community at the edge of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, selling crafts and photo opportunities to passing tourists.

Working with Roger Chennells, a human rights lawyer, SASI decided to claim the =Khomani lands. Elsie Vaalboi recorded a message in the =Khomani language, addressed to the Mandela government. Perhaps there was no one in the world who would understand her words, but in Afrikaans she explained: the time had come, she said, for the Bushmen to recover their lands and their lost language. The Boer had to move aside and let the Bushmen live again in their real homes.

SASI began a search for =Khomani survivors. They also looked for speakers of the language. In 1998, they went to Swartkop, a sprawl of shacks and cabins 10 kilometres from Upington, the principal town of the Northern Cape. They had heard that there was a =Khomani family living there. They met four women, three sisters and their first cousin. They were thin and frail, in their late sixties and early seventies. They were Bushmen, they said, and they spoke their language. They listened to Elsie's tape. They were amazed and delighted and recorded a message in reply. Yes, they said, they too spoke 'Boesmantal'. And yes, they said, the time had come to fight to get back their lands and to save their language.

SASI took the Swartkop tape to Elsie. She discovered that she was not the only speaker in the world, for the first time in many years she heard her language. She sent a reply. *'If you really do understand my language, then you understand this. We cannot live with the Boer. We must get our land, and live again as ourselves.'* The search for the =Khomani diaspora continued. By the beginning of this year, 15 speakers of the language had been found - at the edge of coloured townships, as isolated workers in shacks beside white farms, at the margins. They met, they talked, they shared hopes. And they became the centre of the land claim.

Family by family, the =Khomani put together the events of the last 50 years. They went into the Kalahari Gemsbok Park, where many of them had lived and from where they had been expelled. They went to the places they loved and had known best. They pointed to trees they knew, the graves of their relatives, the best places for each kind of

plant. They made lists of =Khomani names for everything. And they set out their grief, and their determination to get back that which was theirs, both land and language.

/Una Rooi: 'I was born here. Here, when I was very young, my grandmother, my father's mother, cut my umbilical cord for me. And there, in the veld, she gathered for me... This is where we lived, where my mother's house stood. I can still see it today, how that place looked. And I become so heartbroken when I look up, out over the branches of the tree... My tree, my tree, my tree. How could they not have thought that there would be people who would come back to stand under my tree. My mother buried my cord here. I want so much to take care of my tree.'

Andries Oleyn: 'There I was born, there I started to become a human being... Those days I lived just like I could and only on my mother's breast... Then come the understanding, it started to come. Because when I got my understanding completely, I was already among the farmers, the Boers. Then already the farmers scattered us here and there... And the farmers, they chased us one by one like sheep... what were we to do?'

/Una Rooi: 'They burned out our homes... Then my father asked him, "Sir, why? Where do you think we must live?" Then he asked my father, "What do you want to do? You are worth nothing, to ask why." Then he kicked my father... When my father fell, there were four constables and two of them had him by the arms and two by the legs... Then we ran. And I was always very fond of my brother... my brother and I ran and said, "Ma." When my father fell, then my mother stood... and said, "Sir, how can you? That's not a bad word that the man said. He just asked why you were burning our home." And then he said, "Now listen here, meid, on the road." They took my father to prison... And he died, he died. A good man, my father, and killed.'

Here is your land...

By the beginning of 1999, the =Khomani San demand was taking shape. On the basis of the South African government's land claims legislation, which states that anyone displaced or dispossessed since 1913 by racist laws or procedures can seek restitution or compensation, the =Khomani claimed the Kalahari Gemsbok Park and adjacent lands. After difficult and complex argument, the claim was accepted.

On 21 March 1999, then deputy president Thabo Mbeki, along with minister of land affairs Derek Hanekom, travelled to the Southern Kalahari, and met Petrus Vaalboi, Dawid Kruijper, the Swartkop sisters, along with many others. At a formal ceremony they signed an agreement, giving the =Khomani rights to some 50,000 hectares of

land within the Kalahari Gemsbok Park and 40,000 hectares outside the park. The details of the agreement are still under negotiation - including the role the =Khomani will play in management of the park, their role in tourism and the creation of a new village site.

Thabo Mbeki: 'We shall mend the broken strings of the distant past so that our dreams can take root. For the stories of the Khoe (Nama) and the San have told us that this dream is too big for one person to hold. It is a dream that must be dreamed collectively, by all the people... It is by dreaming together - by mending the broken strings that tore us apart in the past - that we shall all of us produce a better life for you who have been the victims of the worst of oppression. It is now my place to say.. Here is your land. Take it, look after it and thrive.'

/Una Rooi: '/Aise.' 'Thank you.'

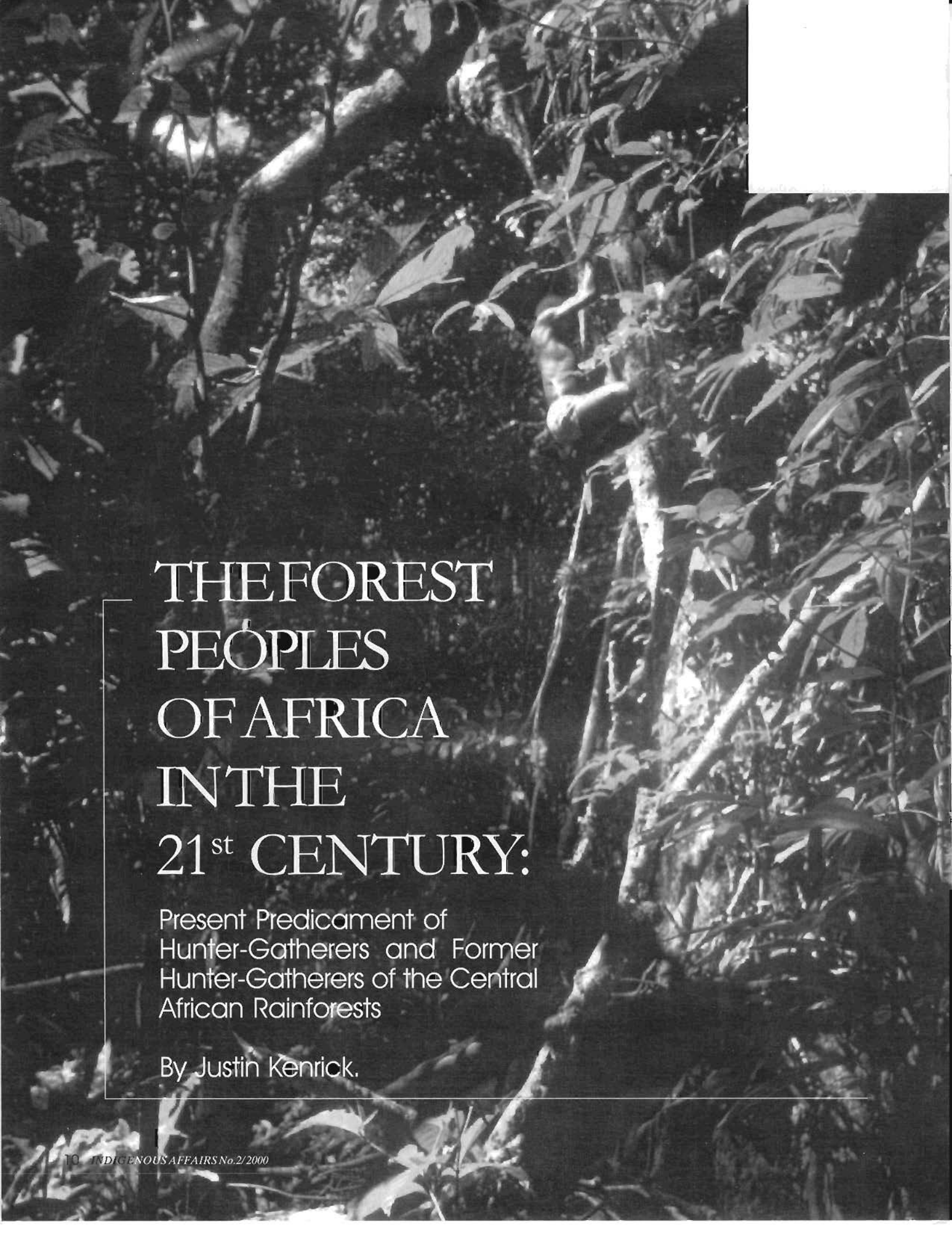
Notes:

¹ IWGIA acknowledges the permission given by *Index on Censorship* to reprint this slightly revised edition of two articles by Hugh Brody published in their issue No. 4, 1999.

² The symbols / and = are used to show the click sound for which San languages are famous.



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A black and white photograph of a person climbing a tree in a dense forest. The person is positioned in the upper right quadrant, reaching up towards the canopy. The forest is thick with various types of trees and foliage, creating a complex pattern of light and shadow. The overall mood is one of deep immersion in nature.

THE FOREST PEOPLES OF AFRICA IN THE 21st CENTURY:

Present Predicament of
Hunter-Gatherers and Former
Hunter-Gatherers of the Central
African Rainforests

By Justin Kenrick.

Introduction

This article is intended as a brief summary of the current situation of the Forest Peoples (or 'Pygmies') of the Central African rainforests. In all they probably number between 250,000 and 300,000 people, and their situation varies tremendously¹.

There are two distinct ways of looking at their marginal situation. The first is in terms of the severe discrimination which they can suffer at the hands of their farming neighbours and others; the second is in terms of the resilience and strength of their egalitarian social system. Severe discrimination is most evident for those groups which no longer have access to their forest resource base, but it is also a powerful enduring theme, and often a dominant one, for Forest-based groups in relationship to neighbouring farmers. Examining their situation primarily in terms of discrimination may be crucial for those groups who no longer have access to forest, but using this approach in relation to Forest-based hunter-gatherer groups often leads to approaches which seek to divide hunter-gatherers from their farming neighbours, often in the context of evangelising attempts to make them give up their own beliefs, and attempts to sedentarise them so that they will become farmers. Thus simply focusing on the discrimination they experience can obscure the strengths of their own cultural and social forms.

Where the forest continues to provide them with an independent resource base, it also provides the context for the beliefs and experiences which underpin an economy of sharing and a political system which is essentially fluid and egalitarian. In this context, Forest Peoples are, to varying degrees, able to exert some or great autonomy in determining the nature of their interaction with their farming neighbours and with the more recent incomers to the forest. Where their resource base has long been destroyed or denied them, whether through deforestation or through the control exerted over them by neighbouring farmers, by missionary settlements, or more recently through conservation projects restricting or denying their access to the forest, they have often been reduced to virtual serfdom and poverty. Both the infrastructure for logging concessions and other agents of deforestation and the financial backing for conservation projects have often been funded or supported by the World Bank (for example through the Global Environment Facility) and other international agencies. Where Central African govern-

ments tend to see such Forest Peoples as needing to be sedentarised - both for tax and control purposes, and in order to ensure that the rest of the country is not stigmatised as backward by association with such people - the actual work of sedentarisation is often carried out by Western/Northern NGOs and missionaries, and indirectly facilitated by the destruction or protection of the forest.

Those Forest Peoples whose forest is still largely intact spend some of the year hunting and gathering in the forest, and some living near farmers' villages and working in their fields. They now also tend to work for a while for logging companies, conservation projects, safari hunters or large commercial meat traders. However they can also vehemently denounce the consequences of such activities once they become apparent. They can also bitterly resent their access to the forest being controlled or denied by governments' sedentarisation policies, by logging companies or by conservationist restrictions. The three largest groups of Forest Peoples who still, to a great extent, retain their forest resource base are: the Mbuti (or Bambuti) and Efe of the Ituri Forest in the DR Congo, the Baka of southeastern Cameroon and northwestern Congo-Brazzaville, and the Aka (or Ba-aka) of northern Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African republic.

Farmers have generally had an ambivalent attitude towards these hunter-gatherers: sometimes viewing them as slaves and barely human, and sometimes as equals or even as the original civilising beings. Where, in the past, these hunter-gatherers have been crucial to farmers, enabling them to benefit from forest produce, protecting them from forest spirits, and ritually ensuring the fertility of their fields, today in many places the forests have dwindled in importance and as a result such hunter-gatherers and ex-hunter-gatherers have become marginalised and severely discriminated against. Where their universally acknowledged status as the original inhabitants of the forest once served in some areas to underwrite their autonomous forest life and their ability to relate to others as equals, that status is often now seen as a symbol of their backwardness. Any prior rights to resources which they may have had has been overridden, first by colonial and then by national governments who have tended to completely ignore traditional systems of land ownership.

However, as well as focusing on the three main groups of Forest Peoples who still, to a great extent, retain their forest resource base, it is important to

Mbuti checking hunting nets. Photo: Robert Grantlham



include in our picture the other groups who, until recently, have been much less well known to the world at large. Western indigenous rights NGOs working with indigenous peoples (in particular Dorothy Jackson of the Forest Peoples Programme, and Jerome Lewis working with FPP, IWGIA and MRG) have increasingly been focusing on the plight of the – until recently – less well known Batwa 'Pygmy' groups in Rwanda, Burundi, eastern DRC, and southwestern Uganda, and also on the future of the Bakola of southwestern Cameroon. The recent political upheavals and civil war in the region have had an especially severe impact on the Batwa of Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern DRC; and on the tiny group of Basua (numbering perhaps 65 – 70 people) in western Uganda, and has accelerated the ongoing marginalisation of these groups who are mostly former rather than present day hunter-gatherers. The ongoing logging in southwest Cameroon and the likely construction of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline may have a similarly devastating impact on the Bakola there.

As well as seeking to convey a broader picture of who constitutes the Forest Peoples (or 'Pygmies') of Central Africa, this article also seeks to point out that the situation of such peoples varies tremendously within each locality. The question is not simply 'how can we enable such peoples to reclaim the political space to determine their future?' The question is also 'how can we encourage those aspects of their local relations which look to their long term future, and how can we be encouraged to look to our long term future through better understanding the situation of the Forest Peoples of Central Africa?'

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Who is speaking, and for whom?

There would appear to be two levels to the process underway in relation to Central African Forest Peoples. On the one hand there is the beginning of networking between some of the groups at a national and an international level, partly facilitated through activities of Northern NGOs seeking to support such groups so that they can represent themselves and make demands at a national and international level. On the other hand there is the underlying question of who is claiming to speak for whom?

1. *Western Involvement:*

Unlike the question of indigenous rights and who is indigenous in South America for example, the situa-

tion in Africa is more complex and therefore there needs to be a more complex examination of Western involvement. For example: is our support for the rights of Central African Forest Peoples' rights based on a notion that they are more truly 'indigenous' than their farming neighbours who in many cases may have existed alongside them in the forest for as long as the hunter-gatherers themselves, is it based on a recognition that they are an extremely powerless marginalised group, or is it based on assumptions we make concerning their present day or former status as hunter-gatherers?

2. *Indigenous Representation:*

Given the existence of widespread egalitarianism amongst Central African hunter-gatherers and the lack of involvement in political decision-making, whether in relation to neighbouring farmers or local or national government, how can Forest Peoples establish a form of representation which can both reflect their concerns and enable them to reflect on what future they want to push for? For many groups, their traditional egalitarianism has tended to mean that those who claim to speak for a group to outsiders are those who are the least representative of the group.

Thus not only is there a need to create the political space to support such groups to enable them to withstand or respond to the destruction of their relationship with their forests, there is also a need to support them so that they can negotiate from a position of equality with those around them. Whether that be with their neighbouring farmers with whom they have traditionally either shared fairly equal exchange relations or been severely oppressed by, whether that be with those in charge of national parks, logging companies, and local or national government, or whether that be with people who have more recently moved into their areas.

The key point here is that there is a need to begin building the bridge from both ends. On the one side there is the urgent need to bring international attention to the plight of such peoples, and to encourage such representation as exists to speak out nationally and internationally in order to create a political climate in which their rights can be recognised and respected. On the other side a far longer term grassroots process is required to support Forest Peoples to find a way of enabling their traditional egalitarianism and inclusiveness to be expressed through, rather than overridden by, getting involved in national and international dialogue.

Creating the political space for Forest Peoples to regain the right to determine their future and the future of

Mbuti man. Photo: The author



their forests or former forest areas is vital, as is supporting them so that they can maintain or regain a position of equality in relation to their long standing or recently arrived neighbours. However, supporting them in such a way that they can translate their traditional forms of egalitarian and inclusive decision-making into the national and international arena may be just as vital to the continuation of their cultural identity. Likewise, in working with them, learning how to approach decision-making in an egalitarian and inclusive way may prove to be as important to the rest of us as the continuation of the forests are to the Forest Peoples.

Indigenous peoples or marginalised minorities?

Northern Indigenous Rights NGOs appear keen to stress that the key requirement for a people to be acknowledged as 'indigenous' should be their self-identification as such. This move to make self-identification the key requirement came first and foremost from the indigenous groups emerging onto the international scene between 1970 and 1990. It is an approach which refuses the right of others to define who one is: after all who would decide who fitted such a definition, if not those powerful forces against which indigenous people are already struggling? However, supporting indigenous rights in an African context is very different to South America. The majority population which surrounds and marginalises Central African hunter-gatherers would also identify themselves as indigenous vis-à-vis the 'departed' colonial powers, just as these populations identify the Forest Peoples as indigenous vis-à-vis themselves. If the term is to have any use at all in an African context then the identification of oneself or others as indigenous has to be seen as describing a relationship rather than a category: a relationship of belonging, certainly, and in all probability an experience of being dominated by those more intent on extracting resources from others and from the land than on maintaining a sustainable relationship within the social and physical environment.

Thus relative to colonial or neo-colonial powers, all Africans are indigenous, but relative to most of their African neighbours Central African forest hunter-gatherers are seen by their neighbours as indigenous, as the first peoples who truly belong to the forest and know how to ensure its blessings. Where, formerly, their farming neighbours relied on them to facilitate their relationship with the forest (whether through knowledge or through rituals), today the increasing domination of the forest environment is replicated in the domination and mar-

ginalisation of the Forest Peoples. This is a question both of power and of belonging. To support indigenous rights is both to support the marginalised vis-à-vis those who seek to benefit from disempowering them, but (at least as far as the 'Forest Peoples' are concerned) it is also to support such peoples' ability to relate in a fluid, inclusive and responsive way to each other and to their environment, a way of belonging that is grounded in equality rather than domination.

One could consider the same question from a different angle: why are some Northern NGOs so concerned about indigenous rights (as opposed to working with the same peoples simply through working on human rights or combating poverty and inequality)? On the one hand it may be a strategic way of supporting the disenfranchised, but is it not also that we too are seeking support vis-à-vis economic, social and cultural processes which we experience as disempowering (and potentially earth destroying), and that part of what draws us to work with people we characterise as 'indigenous' is in order to relearn a sense of belonging that is grounded in an equal rather than an instrumental way of relating to others and the environment? To pose this question is not to posit some idealised hunter-gatherer world, but rather to acknowledge that what we are seeking to enable (for others and ourselves) is an equality of belonging that recognises difference, not as a source of threat and a basis for hierarchy or domination, but recognises difference as potentially empowering, as an ongoing process of inclusiveness. A recognition that we are seeking support from those we are seeking to support, should enable a robust dialogue of equals where we can challenge and learn from each others' practices, rather than hide behind unaccountable notions of self-definition or static categories of who is and who is not indigenous. If we are to develop a robust, challenging and supportive dialogue between all those concerned with these issues – including hunter-gatherers and their neighbours, African states and multilateral bodies, Northern NGOs and emerging African indigenous networks – understanding 'indigenous' as being a quality rather than a category may be the only way of differentiating between motives and intentions grounded in an equalising process of belonging and those grounded in dominating and marginalising others.

'Pygmies' or forest peoples?

A further question is raised by the way in which this article encompasses peoples who have very different languages and who live thousands of miles apart. Some

Mbuli was playing musical instrument, Ituri Forest, DRC. Photo: Robert Grantham



of these people use the term 'Pygmy' to describe themselves, however most use names which reflect their own local shared language and forest area and hear the word 'Pygmy' hurled at them as an insult by others. Furthermore, probably all Central African forest hunter-gatherers use the term 'Forest Peoples' as a way of describing themselves and other forest hunter-gatherers they know of, in contrast to those they describe as 'Village People' or farmers³. Only time will tell whether the use of the term 'Pygmy' will fall away as their individual situations are acknowledged or whether part of the process of empowerment will include asserting a shared identity as Forest Peoples and even possibly the use of the term 'Pygmy' as a way of asserting that what was despised must be respected. Some of those who are becoming aware of the international context are certainly starting to describe themselves as 'Pygmy' for this reason. The term 'Forest Peoples' is equally difficult. It appears to define peoples according to their environment, and to suggest that if the

forest is destroyed, or if such people no longer live in the forest, then somehow they are no longer 'Forest Peoples', that they have a degraded identity. Clearly names carry political meanings, and in describing these people as 'Forest Peoples' there is political intent.

The intent here is to assert that these peoples have a right to their way of life, however they define it, and that they have the right to decide what happens to their environment; rights which multinational companies, national governments and their more powerful neighbours ought to respect. Although they may choose to farm or to work for logging companies, that should be their choice, not the only option they are left with as their forest is destroyed. To take as our starting point the intimate knowledge these peoples have of their forest environment, and their identification with the forest, is not to deny them the right to other contexts, nor to deny that their farming neighbours may also have such knowledge and have equal right to determine the future of their forest; it

is to acknowledge that these hunter-gatherers are in a politically weak position in relation to multinationals, national governments and their farming neighbours. It is to assert that they should have a clear say in their future and the future of their forest; and it is to acknowledge the difficulty of making a space for their voice to be heard given that their egalitarian political structures and particular context make it less likely that they will find the place or reason to speak out for their future in national or international contexts.

SITUATION OF THOSE FOREST PEOPLES STILL LIVING IN THE FORESTS

Background

Populations

To varying degrees groups such as the Mbuti (often referred to as the Bambuti) and Efe, the Aka (Ba-aka), the Baka, and the Bakola continue as hunter-gatherers. The Mbuti and Efe of the Ituri Forest, DRC, are thought to number between 35-40,000 people; the Aka of northern Congo (including the Mbendjelle) and southern C.A.R. between 25-30,000; the Baka of southeastern Cameroon between 35-50,000 people, and the Bakola of southwestern Cameroon between 3,000 and 4,000. Whilst there is tremendous variation within each group, with some people mostly sedentarised and engaged in agriculture, many working for long or short periods for outsiders such as logging companies, meat traders and conservationists, most of these peoples spend periods of the year moving through the forest between hunting camps and some of the year living close to their farming neighbours and working in their fields.

History

As Bantu cultivators and fishers moved into the forest from central Cameroon from 5,000 BP onwards, ancestors of present day hunter-gatherers exchanged forest produce with the farming peoples in exchange for iron and pottery artefacts, as well as for agricultural produce. This evolved into a system of economic and cultural exchange which continues to this day: in some places more in the form of freely entered into exchange relations and in others more in the form of domination by the farmers. The key point to recognise is that although these hunter-gatherers see themselves (and are seen by their neighbours) as being the original inhabitants of the forest, they have probably never (or not for thousands of years) lived an isolated existence and continue to take advantage of

opportunities offered by entering into exchange relations with others: be they traditional exchange relations with farmers, or more recent attempts to benefit from other incomers.

The hunter-gatherers' traditional system of land ownership differs from that of the farming people, in so far as their corporate rights to land are not related to cultivation but to gathering, fishing and hunting; however, their traditional rights to land rests on the same combination of defined territories and flexible group membership as has traditionally been the case for their neighbouring farmers. Both cultivators and hunter-gatherers' rights to land has been generally disregarded by Central African states who have declared all forest land to be the property of the state. However hunter-gatherer rights are doubly ignored since in the eyes of state authorities land that is uncultivated is often seen as land that is empty, since it is seen as not properly or continuously used in any way that would justify or legitimate a claim to land rights. In this, and in their granting of forest areas to logging concessions or conservation bodies, they follow on from their colonial predecessors who turned the forest over to huge European controlled concessions, whether for collecting rubber, ivory or skins. On top of this colonial powers imposed taxes on the population, forcing them to work for the concessions in order to be able to pay taxes, resulting in misery, impoverishment and often starvation as people had less and less time to work in their own fields. Where farmers enjoyed exchange relations with hunter-gatherers, the farmers would often try and control hunter-gatherer labour in order to meet tax demands leading to an inevitable hierarchy and domination in their relationship even where it might have previously been far more fluid and equal. At the same time, farmers were forced to move out of the forest and settle by the colonial roads, their daily interaction with the forest, and with hunter-gatherers in the context of the forest, becoming drastically reduced.

Social/environmental Relations

Where the forest is not destroyed and where hunter-gatherers, to varying degrees, maintain traditional exchange relations with their farming neighbours, the Baka, the Aka, the Efe and the Mbuti spend long periods of time in the forest. They perceive their environment to be plentiful and benevolent, and recent studies have shown them to be nutritionally better off than most other peoples of sub-Saharan Africa (Hewlett 1991:11-12). They live in bands of between 15 and 60 people, hunting for meat, gathering plant foods, and collecting honey. Everything they own has to be carried when they move to a new

hunting camp, so there is considerable advantage in having few possessions. What they do have in abundance is an intimate knowledge of the forest: the ability to read animal tracks, to know the flowering and fruiting cycles of plants, to locate a bees' nest from the flight of a bee. They know the individual properties of thousands of plants and make use of them to eat, to make poisons, to dull pain, heal wounds, and cure fever. Invariably these hunter-gatherers spend much of the year near a village, where they work in the villagers' gardens. Most of them engage in rituals which involve asserting their relationship with the forest and with the spirits of the forest. Song is central to these rituals, and may last all night with the intention of establishing a peaceful state of mind in everyone, establishing co-operation among the whole camp, and improving the hunt through re-establishing a good relationship with the forest.

It has been argued that their farming neighbours often also possess intimate knowledge of their forest environment, and (certainly amongst the Bila fisher-farmers associated with the Mbuti of the Ituri (Kenrick 1996a)) the distinction between farmers seeking to clear the forest and hunter-gatherers who can experience the forest as a sharing partner is more fluid than one might suppose. Many Bila men, some married to Mbuti women, spend long periods of time in Mbuti hunting camps and clearly prefer forest life; equally some Mbuti become accustomed to village life and attempt (generally unsuccessfully) to remove themselves from the equalising processes of demand sharing. The principle of demand sharing underlies Central African hunter-gatherers' immediate return system in which property cannot be accumulated over time but instead what is found today is mostly consumed today and any excess belongings or food can be demanded by those who have less.

Present day predicament

The forest provides the environmental, economic and political resource base which gives Forest Peoples room for manoeuvre, enabling them to negotiate with others and, to a great extent, to determine their own future. The immediate threat to them comes from the destruction of the forest itself, and thus the destruction of their relationship with the forest. After first examining the predicament of the different peoples we have been discussing, the final section of this article will look at the predicament of the Forest Peoples whose forest has been destroyed or who have been excluded from it.

Mbuti (or Bambuti) and Efe of the Ituri Forest, DRC

In the Ituri Forest, forest destruction is largely the result of the influx of incomers clearing large areas of forest to grow crops, often to exchange for gold from gold panners. Traditional farming communities engage in shifting cultivation, moving their village every ten years or so in order to return to the rejuvenated fields of a former village site to 'rejoice the ancestors' there. By contrast, incoming farmers clear much larger fields and seek to establish permanent conversion of the forest. Where shifting cultivators economically and culturally rely on their relationship with the forest and engage in long term exchange relations with hunter-gatherers, incoming farmers disregard such relations and tend to be short term extractors of gold and cash crops, who look for their long term security to their kin-based networks that are still centred in areas outside the forest, areas which they hope one day to return to.

The pressure on the Ituri by the influx of people from neighbouring areas has been in large part the result of the concentration of land in the hands of the powerful in Kivu, the region bordering the Ituri Forest in the DRC, from which the Nande (who constitute most of these incomers) have come. Any attempt to relieve the pressure on the Mbuti and their farming neighbours in the Ituri must necessarily involve attempting to secure people's rights to land in Kivu, an area where, up until recently, a combination of Western demands for cash crops and Western support for Mobutu's regime contributed to the power of the few to remove the less powerful from their land. For the last few years Kivu, and the eastern part of what is now called the 'Ituri Region', has been in a state of intermittent warfare, and the situation of the Mbuti and Efe in the western part of the 'Ituri Region' is unclear. Reports suggest that the Mbuti and Efe (and many villagers) have taken the same course of action they took during the 1960s civil war and during the early days of colonialism and the slave raids, which is to remain deep in the forest for long periods. It would appear that the Ituri has probably escaped the worst of the conflict which has been described as taking place between the Hema and Lendu peoples east of the forest.

In May 1992 a 13,000 square kilometre Forest Reserve was created in the Ituri in an area where approximately 28,000 villagers and perhaps 10,000 Mbuti and Efe live. The reserve has the potential to make its main strategy one of supporting local peoples' long-term sustainable relations with the forest and each other, and helping to halt the destructive impact of external extractive forces. However, it is possible - given the emphasis of conservation on biodiversity and on restraining local peoples' involve-

ment in their environment - that the conservation process will marginalise local people and be seen by them as an external extractive agent itself. As one fisher farmer remarked: 'Since [the conservationists] have taken our forest, instead of receiving the good things of the forest we receive nothing.' In the context of potential funding from the Global Environment Facility (which seeks to address the 'threats to biodiversity conservation') and from UNESCO (who sees such areas as 'world heritage sites'), rather than supporting and strengthening local peoples' long-term relationship with their environment, such conservation initiatives can easily continue the process of appropriating the local commons from local people.

Baka of southeast Cameroon

The rapid destruction of the forest here has been primarily the result of Western, and increasingly Asian, logging companies. The impact of activities such as logging, and the influx of poor farmers into the forest, can be closely linked factors. Logging concessions often act as magnets drawing people into the forest, who then find the meagre wages too low to survive on, and so have to choose between either returning to their regions of origin or turning to shifting cultivation.

The Baka social security system, of having to share any visible excess, works well within the day to day world of foraging in the forest and working in their neighbouring farmers' gardens. However, it breaks down within the wage economy of the logging concessions and amid the accumulation and structured planning necessary in farming. When the Baka no longer have easy access to the forest - which is both their independent resource base and the context for the spiritual beliefs and practice which underpin their economy of sharing - they are marginalised from a way of life where they are the experts and are put in conflict with their neighbours. As a consequence many attempt to put whatever remains of their expertise to use in working for loggers, safari hunters and bush meat traders. Thus the underlying pressures of resource appropriation and forest destruction gradually remove both the economic and experiential resource which provides the basis for their flexibility and inclusiveness. Their efforts to become farmers, or the efforts of others to train them in farming, can compound this process. Like most Mbuti, Aka and Bakola, Baka were forced to settle by the roadside in the 1960s, but whereas most of the others have since moved back some distance into the forest, the intense activity of missionaries and Northern NGOs attempting to help the Baka to become independent by

helping them to turn to agriculture, has meant that in some places many Baka remain centred on a roadside existence.

When the 5,000 square kilometre Dja reserve was created, control of land-use shifted from the 2,000 Baka and 3,000 villagers living within it, and the 30,000 people living on its perimeter, to the conservationists. Similarly, with the creation of a national park in the Lake Lobeke area in the far south east, it is highly unlikely that the Cameroonian government will agree to the creation of community forest areas which the Baka and the villagers could control. Whilst many conservationists recognise the need for community consultation and control of such projects, it would appear hard to convince enough powerful parties, probably because the very concept of conservation is about restraining peoples' involvement in their environment rather than about supporting or deepening their long term commitment to their locality.

Aka of northern Congo and southern CAR

As with the Baka, the rapid destruction of Aka forest areas has been largely the result of the activities of Western and Asian logging companies. In CAR 90 per cent of the forest area outside of the parks was already allocated by 1991, and in northern Congo the whole region has been allocated and there has been extensive construction of logging roads. On top of this there has been the creation of the 4,500 square kilometre Dzanga-Sangha National Park in southwest CAR, and the creation of the Nouabale-Ndoki Park across the border in northern Congo.

In northern Congo, the Aka (or Mbendjelle) make up the majority outside of the towns. As with the Aka of southern CAR, most groups spend between 4 to 8 months in deep forest camps and the rest near farmers' villages. In CAR and Congo, many Aka engage in short-term employment for meat traders, loggers and plantations. This form of work combined with efforts by missionaries, means that in some areas many Aka have become sedentarised, entering the forest on a daily basis rather than moving through it for weeks at a time. In other areas, Aka have used the opportunities offered by short-term employment to loosen their ties with villagers who (at least since the impact of the slave trade and the colonial era) have generally been very exploitative of the Aka (see Colchester 1993).

The Bakola (Bagyeli) of South West Cameroon

Generally the Bakola of southwestern Cameroon establish small farm plots at a considerable distance

from passable roads, whilst still relying on hunting (Biesbrouck et al.1999). They often leave the fields for 2 to 6 months of the year to stay in hunting camps, and they have a high reputation amongst their neighbours as herbal doctors. Logging, conservation and a possible oil pipeline combine to threaten their continued reliance on their forest.

Logging concessions have cut deep into their traditional forestlands, and many work for the loggers that not only destroy their forest but also their social cohesion. Another potential disruption to Bakola forest relations is the Campo Forest Reserve (originally created in 1932) which borders with Equatorial Guinea and will receive funding from GEF. However, probably the most drastic disruption of Bakola life is in the pipeline with the routing of the Chad Cameroon Oil Pipeline through their forest to the coastal port of Kribi. This would involve not only environmental disruption but also an influx of migrant workers to clear the forest and construct the pipeline. There has been very little meaningful consultation with the Bakola, the consequences would be drastic, and there would certainly be little recompense for the Bakola since they lack any land security in Cameroonian law.

Supporting forest peoples

The Bakola situation represents a somewhat typical example of the disruption being caused to Forest Peoples' lives. Their situation mirrors that of the Baka and Aka in terms of the disruption caused by logging in Cameroon, Congo and CAR. It mirrors that of the Mbuti and Efe of the Ituri Forest, DRC, the Mbendjelle (Aka) of the Ndoki Forest, Congo, and of the Aka of the Lobaye Forest, CAR, in that the creation of Forest Reserves can further disrupt their relationship with the forests. Unlike these other groups, but like some of the Batwa groups discussed below, some Bakola started an indigenous organisation CODEBABIK (Comité de développement des Bakola / Bagyeli des arrondissements de Bipindi et Kribi) in 1996, and has already sent a representative to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

The Mbuti, Efe, Baka, Aka, Bakola and other Forest Peoples of Central Africa need allies to help protect their forest and their right to decide their own future. The fact that they have maintained dynamic and changing relations with their farming neighbours over centuries clearly demonstrates that cultural integrity can rest not only on isolation but on interdependence. To support the rights of such peoples to make their own choices about how they



Awa, 12 year-old Mbuti, Ituri Forest, DRC. Photo: The author

shape their future, requires not only that we help to protect their forest from destruction, but also that we help to protect their relationship with their neighbours from external control - be it that of an extractive administration, logging companies, an influx of farmers made landless elsewhere, or inappropriate conservation regulations.

People in the West have been motivated without difficulty to support indigenous groups in the Amazon forest. The inability of Western people to respond to the situation of the Forest Peoples in Central Africa has partly been because Central African hunter-gatherers are not seeking protection in their own isolated reserves, but seeking protection of their forest and their autonomy within the context of long standing relationships with their farming neighbours. This totally contradicts common Western assumptions concerning indigenous people. In one Western view of them, as timeless hunter-gatherers existing in a separate world, they are seen as living in a state of grace that will inevitably disappear if it comes into contact with the West. The other Western view assumes that hunter-gatherers like the Baka are a marginalised group whose culture has largely fragmented, whose economic activity threatens its environment, and who are in need of development opportunities to pull themselves up to a reasonable material level of security to divert them from their now destructive involvement to the forest. To recognise both that these peoples have the right to their cultural integrity and that they have always existed in relationship to other peoples would be an important step forward in seeing their predicament more clearly. It would mean switching from seeking to build a wall around such peoples to seeking to support their relationships with their forest and their farming neighbours.

This requires that their rights to land and to political autonomy be recognised both nationally and internationally. Establishing such rights depends on the degree to which we can support them to maintain the physical and political space in which they can decide their own future. It is in this context that Northern NGOs and Indigenous Central African Forest Peoples' NGOs are beginning to work together. So far, the Forest Peoples' NGOs have emerged in contexts such as Rwanda where the people they are representing have been the most marginalised from the forest. Supporting the emergence of such NGOs amongst Forest Peoples such as the Mbuti, Aka and Baka who are still centred on a forest existence - and all the fluidity, equality and distrust of leadership that goes with that way of life - may be a far longer term process, but one which is equally urgent.

FOREST PEOPLES MARGINALISED FROM THE FOREST¹

Of the estimated 70-87,000 Batwa in the Great Lakes region, probably less than 7,000 have direct and regular access to forest today. Forest-based Batwa refer to themselves as Impunyu. A smaller second group of Batwa in the region are the fisher folk who mostly live on the shores of Lake Kivu. They are unlikely to number more than 3,000, and are today prevented from openly fishing because they do not have fishing licences. The third and largest group of between 60-76,000 Batwa, are referred to as 'potters'; for this latter group the forest has long since been destroyed and their sense of identity is focused on their occupation as potters rather than on their identification as Forest Peoples. In addition to these 60-76,000 Batwa in the Great Lakes region, there are up to 100,000 Batwa (or Batua) further west, mostly in DR Congo, whose forest has been destroyed and who are now almost entirely dependent on their neighbours for their meagre livelihoods.

EXCLUDED FROM THE FOREST: BATWA (TWA) OF RWANDA, BURUNDI, DRC AND UGANDA

Forest-based Batwa in Rwanda

Forest-based Batwa groups are traditionally semi-nomadic: hunting and trading forest produce, and engaging in short-term farm labour. Many who no longer have access to forest remain on the farms that have taken over their traditional land, where they are often described as squatters despite the fact that the land has always been theirs. Other areas formerly inhabited by them, have been taken over by conservation projects, and Forest administrators often see Batwa access to the forest as illegal, despite the fact that they have lived in and relied on these forests since long before agriculturalist and pastoralist peoples, and conservationist programmes, arrived in the area. As a result most now 'live on the borders of forest and agricultural areas but use the forest on a daily basis' (Lewis 2000:13). In Rwanda this is primarily in the north in the areas bordering on Gishwati forest and near the Parc des Volcans, and in Nyungwe Forest in the south. There has been no effective consideration of the needs of the Batwa in the creation of these parks and forest reserve areas.

Forest-based Batwa in Kivu, DRC

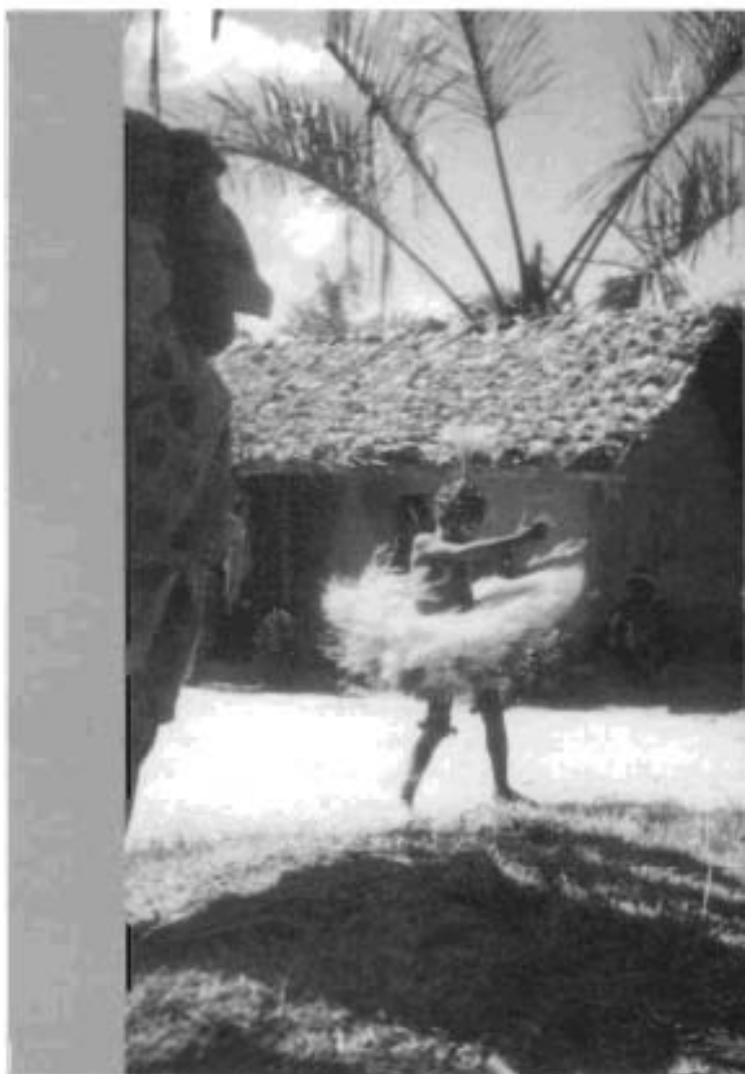
Forest Batwa live in many areas of Kivu province DRC, especially around the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Be-

tween the late 1960s and the mid-1970s the roughly 3,000 Batwa living inside the Kahuzi-Biega National Park in Kivu, DRC, were expelled from the park and have subsequently received brutal treatment when accused of hunting in the park. As a consequence their way of life and their livelihoods were destroyed, and no provision was made to help them⁴.

As in Rwanda and Burundi, the Batwa in Kivu in DRC are particularly vulnerable in times of violence because they often live in the remote areas where armed groups hide out. Most Batwa here have fled their villages, and they are caught helplessly between different armed groups, often being forced to act as guides and trackers for one group and then having revenge wrecked upon them by another for doing so.

Forest-based Batwa in south west Uganda

The Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya Forests in south-western Uganda were gazetted as forest reserves by the British in the 1930s. This effectively protected them from being destroyed by the agriculturalists who had moved into the area formerly inhabited only by Batwa, whilst the Batwa continued to make use of them (the Batwa here are often referred to as Abayanda). Since Bwindi and Mgahinga became national parks in 1991, Batwa exclusion has been enforced and so their forest-based role in the local economy has been completely destroyed. Some Batwa received compensation, most received nothing. Meanwhile farmers received most of the available compensation, because they had been the ones turning the forest into agricultural lands and, by destroying it, were therefore recognised as having land rights. Much funding for the parks comes from the World Bank through the Global Environment Facility. World Bank policies require prior consultation and the assessment and mitigation of the impact of such projects on indigenous people. Only since the eviction have efforts been made by those responsible for the parks to help evicted Batwa, but this has been opposed by the agriculturalists claiming it would be favouritism (rather than recognising the Batwa's unique dependence on their forest resource base, and their extreme marginalisation and impoverishment). Unlike their neighbours, Batwa impoverishment and lack of education have meant that they have not been able to form the associations and committees required to secure legal access to forest resources and to receive a proportion of the money generated by tourism. Batwa are accused of hunting gorillas despite the fact that no known Batwa groups eat gorillas. Their access to the forest for subsistence and religious reasons is illegal and risky for them, only two



The Mgahinga Spirit in the Nkumbi. Photo: The author

Batwa are employed by the parks, and meanwhile very few have been given land. Community development projects are funded by a Trust fund established by the World Bank and supported by the Dutch Government. However, despite pressure from the Dutch, the Batwa component has been very slow to materialise and the Batwa's unique position has been continually denied or downplayed.

BATWA WHOSE FOREST HAS BEEN DESTROYED: BATWA OF RWANDA, BURUNDI & DRC

Batwa of Rwanda

The vast majority of Batwa (between 20-25,000) are referred to as 'potters' and have adapted to the incoming farmers and pastoralists colonisation and destruction of their forests by working as travelling craftsmen, labourers and potters. As the immigrants no longer needed Batwa practical and ritual help to gain access to the forests, the Batwa lost the autonomy the forest provides and discrimination and exploitation increased. Pottery became their only reliable source of income and pottery rather than the forest became the symbol of Batwa identity. By the 1970s industrial substitutes began to flood the market, pottery became economically unrewarding but pot selling allowed the reviled and despised Batwa to legitimately engage non-Batwa in conversation which might result in a work opportunity or gift. Combined with this, farmers began to reclaim clay marshes for cultivation, reducing many erstwhile potters to a dependence on casual day labour and begging.

Indigenous Batwa organisations in Rwanda are trying to support the potters, but they have tended to focus on what they see as the immediate need to support, modernise and market pottery, rather than restore Batwa land rights and access to their forest and former forest land.

Impact of recent wars

Batwa have been caught up in wars between other groups for generations; however in recent years the conflicts have intensified and the marginalised and powerless Rwandan Batwa suffered disproportionately:

'During three months after April 6th 1994, mass-killings by Bahutu extremists resulted in the deaths of nearly one million, mostly Batutsi, Rwandans. This represented around 14 per cent of the Rwandan population. The Batwa only

made up between 0.3 – 0.4 per cent of the total population and have no interest in, or impact on politics, yet it is estimated that up to 30 per cent of the Rwandan Batwa died or were killed as a consequence of the genocide and ensuing war' (Lewis 2000:62).

The Batwa have suffered at the hands of the Interhamwe Bahutu extremists during the genocide, during which time many sought to flee, and then afterwards they have suffered at the hands of the Batutsi authorities who have imprisoned the majority of returning Batwa men after accusing them of complicity in the killings. Certainly some Batwa will have become as embroiled in the mass killings as anyone else since to not participate would often mean death, but the disproportionate percentage of Batwa deaths points not to their complicity but to their persecution. With the death, disappearance and now imprisonment of Batwa men, support networks and families have broken down, leaving poverty stricken women and children who are too desperately struggling to survive to have time to create the associations required to register and receive assistance from NGOs. The government policy against identifying people ethnically fails to address the particular needs and discrimination experienced by the Batwa.

Batwa of Burundi

As in Rwanda, the Batwa of Burundi also experience extreme discrimination. 'The Bahutu or Batutsi may not enter a Batwa hut, share food or drink, or even sit and chat with Batwa, for fear of being ostracised by their own community. This Burundian proverb illustrates the rule: "If you shelter from the rain in a Batwa hut, then remain there."' (Lewis 2000:70-71). The vast majority of Batwa in Burundi are landless labourers suffering extreme discrimination, and they have been caught up in the less intense but long drawn out endless cycles of violence between Bahutu and Batutsi in Burundi.

Batwa of DR Congo

There are a great many scattered groups of Batwa throughout this region who are now totally dependant on their neighbours for their meagre livelihoods. Their total numbers in DR Congo and Congo-Brazzaville are thought to number up to 100,000. The Batwa of Mbandaka and Equateur, DRC, provide just one good example of what such Batwa are experiencing.

In Mbandaka and Equateur, both Batwa and their neighbouring farmers have in the past been exploited by the Lever Brothers' oil palm plantations, and the forests in these areas have been hunted out. As a result of both these processes the 4,000 or so Batwa are dominated by the villagers both economically and ritually. The Batwa have to work on villagers fields at just the times of year when they should be planting or harvesting their own fields. As a result of this, relationships of debt are built up since the Batwa then have to borrow food to survive, and are then obliged to work villagers fields when requested, so remaining a ready source of cheap labour to the villagers.

Indigenous Batwa Organisations

In 1991 the APB (Association pour la Promotion Batwa de Rwanda) was formed, and it catalysed the formation of other Batwa groups (Jackson 1999:289). These original Batwa organisations reconstituted themselves after the civil war in Rwanda under a Batwa umbrella organisation, CAURWA (Communauté des Autochtones Rwandais) who are now seeking to help Batwa in neighbouring Uganda to start indigenous organisations, and are linking up with PIDP-Kivu (Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu) in DRC. With support from Northern NGOs such as FPP, MRG and IWGIA these organisations are linking up with other Batwa, with the Bakola/Bagyeli CODEBABIK indigenous organisation in Cameroon, and with the indigenous rights movement more generally.

Conclusion

This article has sought to give a broad overview of three different areas. In the first part it sought to examine how one might mobilise the term 'indigenous' to make the necessary bridges to enable the hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers of the Central African rainforests to retain or reclaim the political, economic and cultural space to decide their own future. The second part of the article sought to recap the situation of the Mbuti, Aka, Baka and Bakola peoples who still, to a large extent, have access to their forests. The final part of the article has made extensive use of Jerome Lewis' and Dorothy Jackson's recent research to convey the situation of the Batwa who have either been excluded from their former forest homes or whose forests have been destroyed by incoming cultivators and pastoralists.

The question remains: can these three aspects of the struggle for Central African Forest Peoples' indigenous rights be brought together in a way which respects their different situations? Can

- a) those former hunter-gatherers who are becoming aware of the need to fight for their rights but who no longer have access to the forest,
- b) those hunter-gatherers still relying on the forest to provide them with some autonomy and security, and
- c) those involved in the international indigenous rights movement, find a way of working together and challenging and learning from each other?

If these peoples' different ways of living and thinking are to survive, they will need to be understood and articulated effectively in an African context which requires a rethinking of what it means to be indigenous: including moving towards a more dynamic understanding which not only looks to the marginalised first peoples of the South but also reflects on the motivations and needs of those Northerners and others involved in the struggle for indigenous peoples.

What is suggested here is that 'indigenous' is perhaps better thought of as a quality rather than a category, a verb rather than as a noun. It is not necessarily something some people are and some people aren't but rather it is an equalising quality of belonging, a quality which many Forest Peoples' ritual, ridicule, humour and social practices appear designed to continually re-establish. Might it help to recognise that when the space is not kept open for these hunter-gatherers to shape their own future, when they can no longer practice their inclusive and equalising social forms of challenge and support, then they can lose that equalising quality of belonging (and in a sense stop being indigenous and start being extractive outsiders themselves). Might it help if we focussed less on drawing boundaries between them and their farming neighbours, and between the indigenous and Northerners, and instead recognised that their farming neighbours and other 'outsiders' are able to become 'indigenous' to the extent that they move away from an attitude of exploiting and dominating and instead enter into a dialogue of equals³.

The very fact that the term 'indigenous' is so difficult to use in an African context, is not something we need to gloss over, nor need it be a stumbling block to supporting indigenous rights in Africa; quite the reverse. Supporting indigenous rights in an African context could potentially be a unifying rather than

divisive process: asserting the rights of marginalised hunter-gatherers, including their relationship with their neighbours, involves identifying the processes that are marginalising and exploiting them. If hunter-gatherer equality is asserted in a way that identifies the processes which are also exploiting their neighbours, the process of asserting indigenous rights becomes a dynamic refusal to accept the unequalising and exploitative conditions which ultimately disempower everybody involved⁶.

Notes

- ¹ This article draws on very recent research into the situation of the Batwa in eastern DRC (Barume with Jackson: 2000), and of the Batwa throughout the Great Lakes region (Lewis: 2000); it also draws on a recent survey of different Forest Peoples situations throughout Central Africa (Luling & Kenrick: 1998), and on contributions to Biesbrouck, Elders and Rossel's excellent volume on Central African hunter-gatherers (1999).
- ² For example Jerome Lewis (personal communication) points out that the Mbendjelle call themselves 'bisi ndima' (literally: forest people) and also describe other groups they know of such as the Baka as 'bisi ndima'. This category is in opposition to 'bisi mboka' (literally: village people, whether farmers or fisherfolk).
- ³ This section draws heavily on Jerome Lewis (2000).
- ⁴ This section is drawn from Kwokwo Barume with Dorothy Jackson (2000).
- ⁵ Both Jerome Lewis and Espen Waehle question whether there is primarily such a continuity between hunter-gatherer and farmer's ways of relating to others and the environment. Espen Waehle highlights instead the contrast between essentially competitive farming societies and essentially egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies. I have argued elsewhere that there is a continuity between attitudes of opposition and attitudes of co-operation amongst both hunter-gatherers and farmers. These hunter-gatherers use social and ritual forms to move their experience towards co-operation, whilst their farming neighbours use social and ritual forms as an attempt to assert the importance of opposition and domination; but the experiences of opposition to, or identification with, others and the environment can be seen as being at either end of a continuum which all these people experience.
- ⁶ My thanks to Espen Waehle, Jerome Lewis and Axel Koehler for extremely useful comments on earlier drafts of this article; the views expressed in it are of course entirely my responsibility.

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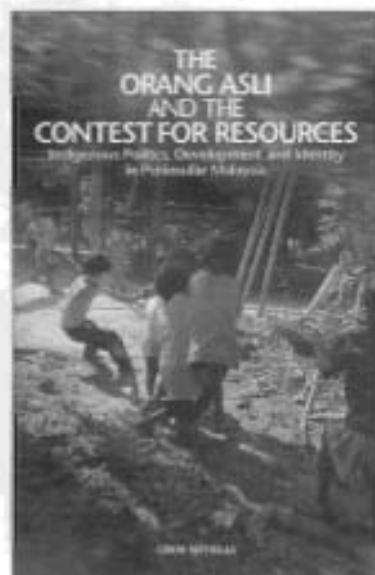
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The moves to diminish Orang Asli autonomy and the concurrent contest for their traditional territories and resources invariably cause much social stress in Orang Asli communities. *The Orang Asli and the Contest for Resources* describes how this common experience helped the development of an Orang Asli political consciousness beyond the local level such that a new Orang Asli indigenism emerged as a political strategy for more effective affirmation of their rights.

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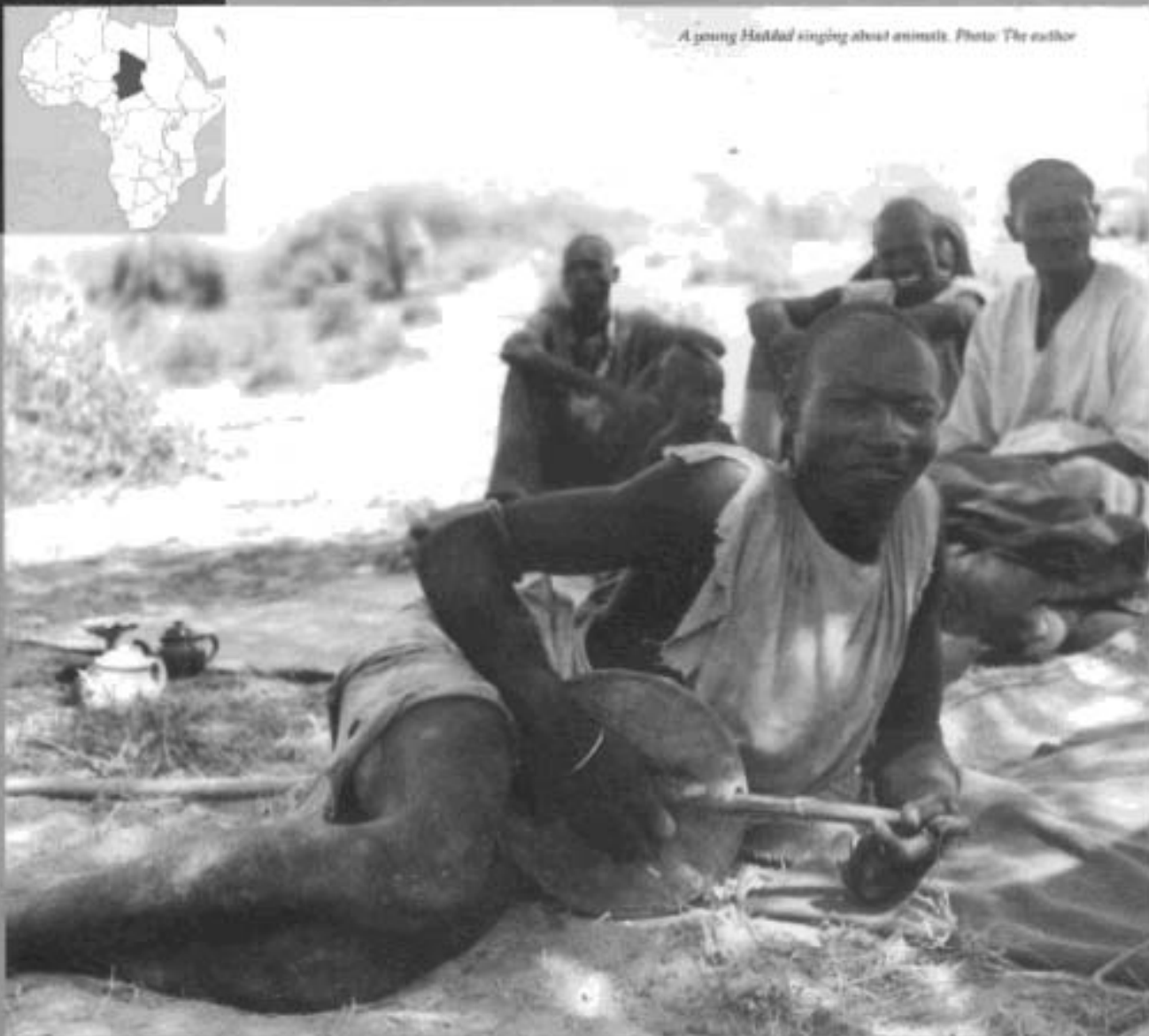
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THE HADDAD OF CHAD

By Ida Nicolaisen



A young Haddad singing about animals. Photo: The author





At the turn of the Millennium the voices of foraging peoples are getting louder. Around the world they speak to us of unacceptable living conditions, discrimination and cultural suppression, but also, to those who care to listen, of valuable contributions to and enrichments of humanity. Distant at first, like simple tunes from afar, foraging groups have become ever more incisive and eloquent in demanding respect of their fellow citizens. They ask for equal opportunities and compliance with the Charter of Human Rights. However, disturbing silence prevails in some parts of the world. This is the case of the Haddad, one of the many ethnic groups which make up the 5 million inhabitants of the Republic of Chad in Central Africa. The outside world knows little either of most of the people here or of this vast, desperately poor country itself. Apart from sporadic attention offered its belated but precarious political stability upon decades of civil war, Chad has been left on its own, except perhaps by arms dealers and oil companies. However, even the interest of the latter is marking time as the proposed pipeline to Cameroon has been put on halt, leaving Chad with but bleak prospects of propelling economic growth in the 21st century.

The situation of the Haddad is intimately linked, I shall argue, to the general state of insurgency and violence which have prevailed in Chad for as long as we can assess. Belligerence and wide scale slave raiding continued well into the 20th century. Slavery was not abolished until after independence in the 1960s, and a series of discriminatory practices were tacitly accepted by the French colonial regime, dooming the Haddad to second-rate citizens. The post-independence government declared all inhabitants free and equal. However civil war, poverty, environmental disaster following the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, in combination with the failure of the international community in curbing Hissene Habré's brutal regime 1982-90, during which tens of thousands were killed,¹ has stalled economic development. In many respects the population is as desperately poor as it was close to forty years ago, when I crisscrossed Kanem on camel back.

It comes as no surprise therefore that social research projects have been few and far between. Still, it is baffling that not more, in fact less is known about the Haddad

today than was thirty years ago. Scores of social scientists have worked for decades among foraging groups of adjacent Cameroon not to speak of those living in Congo, but the Haddad and many other Chadian peoples have not stirred scientific curiosity. Apart from short references to the Haddad in the writings of French administrators, and the studies undertaken by this author and her late husband Johannes Nicolaisen in 1963 and by Edouard Conte in 1972, no research has been carried out among the Haddad for the past thirty years to the best of my knowledge. One finds no reference to them and related foraging groups in Niger in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* recently published by Richard B. Lee and Richard Daly (1999). Hitchcock notes in this volume that 'West Africa has few if any foragers, other than people who have fallen back on foraging as a result of drought, crop failure, or civil conflict' (1999:175). This is not the case of the Haddad, as we shall see. Hopefully this essay will ignite renewed scientific interest in the Haddad and raise awareness of the plight of this and many other minor ethnic groups in Chad.

Ecological setting

The Haddad live in Kanem and adjacent tracts of Niger to the east and northeast of Lake Chad. Historically a crossroad of migration and trade routes, this area is the home of a fascinating ethnic multitude. It has seen the comings and goings of political dynasties since Medieval times, profited from and endured the miseries of trade in slaves and produce, northward along the ancient caravan route over Fezzan to Tripoli, and eastward through Dafur and Khartoum, a trail also worn by millions of faithful pilgrims on the way to Mekka. This is Sahel country, a gently rolling landscape of dunes dotted with acacias and growth of perennial and annual grasses and stretches where millet and other crops may be grown during the rainy season. The mighty Bahr el Ghazal valley, which provides a run off for Lake Chad cuts through southern Kanem. At the beginning of the 20th century Kanem was still rich in gazelles, antelopes, giraffes, ostriches, elephants and numerous smaller species, lions and cheetah being relatively few in number. Hippos and crocodiles were teeming in Lake Chad until the middle of the 20th century when commercial hunting had brought them near extinction. Also terrestrial game has grossly diminished, many species entirely in part due to natural causes like the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, in part to uncontrolled hunting with automatic weapons by the military and others.

Like the rest of Chad the prefecture of Kanem is inhabited by a series of ethnic groups, some largely pastoral like the Kreda, Fulani, Kecherda, and the Arab-speaking Uled Sliman, others settled agriculturalists or agro-pastoralists like the Kanembu. Amidst these many ethnic groups one finds the Haddad, who fall in two categories: One largely

foraging group, numbering an approximately 3000 individuals, who live for the major part of the year in camps and speak the language of the pastoral Kreda. The other, totalling about 25,000 souls, live a settled largely agricultural life in villages interspersed between those of the agro-pastoral Kanembu, whose tongue they apply. In this essay I shall sketch out the main distinctions between the two, but devote most space to the Haddad Kreda.²

The Haddad

The Haddad seemed to elude us at first that summer of 1963, just before the civil war broke out, when we set out on camel back to locate them. Little if anything was generally known about them and their whereabouts, and when we finally found Kreda camps which also housed Haddad families, these would invariably argue that they had given up hunting long ago, out of fear that we belonged to the administration or police and had come to confiscate their gear and fine them. Yet, during the following months we were able to gain their trust and form an overall picture of Haddad society and culture, as well as establish more intimate relations with some families enabling us to get a deeper understanding of certain aspects of their culture.

But the Haddad were elusive in other ways than by being hard to pin down in space. For one they possessed no name of their own. The word Haddad derives from the Arab term for iron, *haddid*. In northern Chad its colloquial singular, *Haddadi*, is used to denote not only those who work this metal, the smiths, but also by extension to other categories of craftsmen and to groups carving a living

A Haddad woman digging for acacia roots to be used as arches and cradlers for a tent. Photo: The author



largely by hunting and other foraging activities or claiming a tradition of having done so. The former are known as *Ezé seguire* (net-using hunters) or *Ezé firiré* (bow and arrow hunters) in Kreda, while the latter are called *Duu* in Kanembu. The name *Duu*, however, is no more narrowly defined than the term Haddad, as it too includes both craftsmen and their kin as well as non-craftsmen assimilated to the Kanembu in addition to the descendants of hunter groups. I shall not elaborate any further on the complexities of ethnic terms in Kanem, but just state that the two foraging groups, which concern us here, both recognize and apply the term Haddad to denote themselves. Moreover they may well specify their identity by adding Kreda or Kanembu that is the name of the ethnic groups to whom they

are tied in asymmetrical relations.

Just as the Haddad have no distinguishing ethnic name they speak no language of their own but use those of the Kreda and Kanembu, with whom they also share a wide range of social and cultural characteristics, including the adherence to Islam. The Kanembu perceive the Haddad Kanembu as a mere sub-stratum of their society, relegating Haddad clans to an inferior position within their own clan structure. This is not the case among the Kreda, who impose no similar cultural idiom on the Haddad incorporating them in their social structure. It goes almost without saying that both the Haddad Kreda and the Haddad Kanembu perceive themselves as ethnic groups in their own right, and that they substantiate their claim by pointing to myths of origin, distinctive cultural features, and last but not least to their traditional mode of subsistence, that of hunting. The Haddad are not socio-economically

Haddad families moving camp. Tents and household utensils are loaded on donkeys. Photo: The author



Whereas Haddad men tax hides for the Kreda, it is normally Haddad women who tax the hides of antelopes, gazelles, jackals and other game. Photo: The author



deprived people who have 'fallen back on foraging as a result of drought, crop failure, or civil conflict', to quote Hitchcock (1999: 175). To the best of my knowledge they are genuine hunter and gatherers, whose living conditions have changed radically over the past century. This has forced the Haddad Kanembu to settle down to a largely agricultural life, and the Haddad Kreda to accept a subservient position in Kreda camps.

What is common to all Haddad is the low esteem if not right out contempt in which they are held throughout Kanem, be they craftsmen or foragers. All of them are relegated to a debased social position. The socio-cultural depreciation by the wider society finds a range of social outlets and cultural expressions and it is upheld by the enforcement of strict endogamy.

Kreda and Kanembu men may engage in extra-marital relations with Haddad women, but marriages between the Haddad and Kreda or Kanembu men or women do not occur. The debased social status of the Haddad is culturally explained, not only by reference to mythical events, but also by pointing to definite qualities or lack thereof by the Haddad. The bellicose Kreda say for example that they despise the Haddad for being unwilling or unable to fend for themselves, while the Kanembu in awe of Haddad skills in applying their poisoned arrows, nevertheless single out this very weapon as of no cultural value in contrast to the spear, the weapon they use and by which they identify themselves.

The Haddad are tied into the wider social web by strictly asymmetrical relations of dependence and curbed by socio-economic restrictions. Beyond the stop brought to slave trade the French colonial regime neither uprooted the feudal-like bonds in which the Haddad Kanembu

were held, nor did they work persistently to abolish those slightly disguised forms of slavery which for example barred the Haddad from owning cattle. On top of these forms of discrimination the French imposed a ban on hunting by traditional means: nets and bow and arrow, destroying Haddad economy while at the same time demanding that they pay tax. The latter policy has been upheld by the national government.

The life and livelihood of the foraging or previously foraging Haddad has thus been defined throughout the past century not only by the physical environment and the availability of game at any one point in time but as much by the political agendas and cultural perceptions of their fellow men. In short the Haddad

have been prevented from pursuing their traditional way of life and in practice doomed second-rate citizens. Let us now take a closer look at these people and their way of living, including the situation of the women.

The net-hunting Haddad Kreda

This group of Haddad claim that they moved westwards into Kanem during the 17th century from neighbouring Sudan together with the pastoral Kreda, with whom they still camp and migrate for the greater part of the year. Wherever the two groups stay together the tents of the Haddad are pitched in a row right behind those of the Kreda, and in such a way that each Haddad family stays right behind the Kreda family to whom it is tied through mutual rights and obligations.

Haddad families pitch their tents behind the larger ones of their Kreda hosts. Still another Mat can be up in front of the tent to protect the family against swirling dust and chilly nights. Photo: The author



Usually there are but three to four Haddad families in a Kreda camp. The exchange relationship entails that the Kreda family offers 'its' Haddad family milk from one or two cows according to grazing conditions as well as meat from slaughtered cows. On their part the Haddad man tan the hides of cattle and small ruminants for the Kreda, while his wife dresses the hair of the Kreda woman, a task which each time takes up the major part of a day and for which the Haddad woman may receive an additional gift, say of a little tea. A Haddad family lends 'its' Kreda counterpart a hand with the churning of butter, and occasionally a portion of *ogu* grass, which they collect in considerable quantity and eat as porridge with a vegetable sauce. This is highly appreciated by the Kreda, as *ogu* porridge is a favorite dish and the Kreda do no collecting of the grass themselves.

Foraging, especially of *ogu* seeds is singularly important to Haddad diet, in particular during the summer when hunting is poor. Moreover few Haddad families had millet fields of their own to supplement the diet in periods of food shortage. It is noteworthy that foraging for *ogu* is carried out by Haddad men, not by women as is the case among most other foraging groups.

At the time of our fieldwork hunting was still of vital economic significance to the Haddad Kreda. They hunt primarily with nets into which the game is driven, but they do also make use of snares and of spears. We encountered a few simple wooden boomerangs, but this is a weapon typically found further east or south. The Haddad Kreda do not apply bow and poisoned arrows, the hunting gear of the Haddad Kanembu.

Hunting with nets is the all-important method, and the Haddad customize these to size according to the animals they wish to hunt. Small game is hunted individually, gazelles and antelopes collectively; the gazelles as a joint effort of the families of any given camp, the oryx antelopes on large scale hunting expeditions undertaken by several related camp units.

It is the hunting of gazelles and antelopes which form the backbone of Haddad economy, providing them not only with a considerable part of their nutrition, but also with sinews for net making, hides for household chores, and cash from sale of hides and horns.

Each kind of net has its particular name. The smallest of these are used for hunting hares and foxes. The nets are put up in a semi-circle or straight line, whereupon the animal is forced out of its hole with a stick to get entangled in the nets and subsequently killed or sold as pets to administrators or at the garrison of the Foreign Legion.

Slightly bigger nets are used to snaring guinea fowl and a single, long one to catch the great bustard. Next in size are nets for jackals, an animal which can still be hunted by one man only.

Gazelle hunting is a joint undertaking, as already intimated, involving one or more net owners as well as other members of the camp, including children under the leadership of the oldest man of the party. The hunting

party packs its gear on donkeys and sets out to scout for game, some on foot, others mounting the poor donkeys on top of the nets. When game has been spotted and the hunting strategy decided upon the party splits up. Each net owner puts up all his ten to twenty nets in one place. Depending on the terrain and location of the game, the nets are placed in openings between thickets and trees. Meanwhile young men and children place a considerable number of cleft sticks at a few metres' interval each hung with a strip of black sheepskin. These sticks are to represent men and are to direct the animals towards the nets, when these are chased. While the net owners hide next to the nets, all the younger members of the party line up at a distance from the game, and at a given signal they run towards this shouting and beating wooden sticks against each other to drive the bewildered animals in the direction of the nets where these may get caught, clubbed and subsequently have their throats cut according to Muslim practice.

The traditional backbone of Haddad Kreda economy was the collective hunting of antelopes in particular the oryx, which up to World War II still grazed in large flocks in the southern stretches of the desert to the north of Kanem. The Haddad undertook annual expeditions to tap this resource each winter. Sticks with sheepskin, according to the Haddad, cannot fool the oryx and a large number of people were hence required to make up the trap formation necessary for the drive on top of those actually chasing the game towards the nets. To hunt *Damaliscus* and Oryx antelopes, several parallel rows of large nets must be put up, one behind the other, to slow these strong animals down. Despite the ban on hunting some Haddad still went north to hunt antelopes in the mid 1960s, but the return had declined drastically due to depletion we were told.

All game collectively hunted is divided according to fixed rules after a successful hunt: the net owner receives the head, neck, skin, and all four legs up to the knees, i.e. those parts of the legs from which tendons can be taken out for the making of new nets. The net owner gets these parts even if he has not taken part in the hunt himself. The rest of the carcasses are divided equally between all participants in the hunt irrespective of age, sex, and family relations. Portions are sometimes set aside specifically for old people.

The lure of subservience

Our discussions with the Haddad made it blatantly clear that relations with the Kreda were economically and politically vital to them. For one they could subsist only with difficulty without milk from Kreda herds during the rainy season, they said. This supplement to their diet was the more crucial as game was becoming scarce and they themselves were barred from owning any domestic animals but donkeys. This had been the case since time immemorial, they said. Moreover it was socially accepted throughout Kanem that any such property was free for

grab, a practise not effectively stopped by the French. The social position of the Haddad had thus been similar to that of slaves until Chad had declared its independence and the free and equal rights of all its citizens. Still, at the time of our fieldwork the Haddad were not treated as persons in their own right, but as jural dependents of their Kreda masters, who offered them protection and could intervene on their behalf. From the Kreda point of view a dependent Haddad family not only meant an additional source of labour and supply of wild seeds and occasionally other foraging produce, it lent them social prestige within the wider pastoral society, signaling that they were sufficiently well off to subsidize a foraging family.

Violence and Dependency

At the time of our fieldwork the Haddad were not only living with and in a state of dependency on the Kreda; their social position was in many respects that of outcasts. They were looked down upon by the wider community, as already intimated, and the disrespect had a racial tinge. Both the Kreda and the Kanembu declared for example that the Haddad were 'black' in contrast to themselves. We came across but a negligible number of Haddad who had received any schooling, and members of other ethnic groups declared that the Haddad should be kept in their place, outside mainstream development. Some said that they should not be allowed any schooling at all, others that they should never be employed in positions higher than clerks.

The Haddad did not openly question their subservience and the caste-like position as far as we could judge. It is a well known sociological fact that the suppressed may well identify with the suppressor and that opposition, if it occurs, takes on subtle, disguised forms, as shown e.g. by Scott in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). As regards the economic and political dependency of the Haddad on the Kreda, one must remember, that this was not forced upon them or maintained against their will. It was a bonding to which the Haddad had submitted themselves out of necessity. Their reasons for doing so must be looked for in the fact that slave raiding, robbery, and a prevalent state of insurgency has characterized life in this part of Africa since time immemorial, and that violence moreover was systematically applied by the French as a means of control in Chad as demonstrated by Azevedo (1998). It is in the collective memory of this past as well as in their assessment of the actual political situation that Haddad reasons are rooted for remaining with the Kreda and accept a caste-like bond.

Although the new national government of Chad had declared its citizens free and equal the situation of the Haddad had not undergone any noticeable change by the mid-1960s. The Haddad remained in the Kreda camps for most of the year, and some took up shelter with and were

supported by the Kreda clan chief for a few months during the agricultural season. Some Haddad had acquired a few goats of their own, and they all hoped to achieve more domestic animals in view of the fact that it was becoming exceedingly difficult for them to subsist on hunting due to the ban on this activity and the fast decrease in game.

What has become of the Haddad since the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s is an open question. For all we know game is now exceedingly scarce and while insurgency may be on the decline, the general living conditions appear to be as difficult as ever in Kanem. It is high time that the international community directs its attention to this part of the world and that we try to pick up signals from people like the Haddad, if they are still able to send any.

Notes

- Attempts are now made to set up an international tribunal to investigate the atrocities. *The International Herald Tribune*, January 26, 2000.
- The actual size of the Haddad population is an open question today. In the early 1960s Rouvreur assumed that there were about 100,000 Haddad (including the craftsmen) north of the 13° northern latitude, a figure I find exaggerated. In the early 1970s the Duu constituted an average 20% to 25% of the Kanembu population or some 25,000 according to Conte, but precise estimates are wanting.

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THE JARAWA OF THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS

The historical and contemporary situation of the 'fierce' Jarawa who eluded the grasp of the British colonialists, keeping them at bay with their bows and arrows, presents an intriguing anomaly to the predicament of the other indigenous groups of the Andaman Islands, and to the trajectory of events that has now become commonplace with respect to indigenous peoples across the world. The Jarawa wield the same weapons still, stronger now, reinforced with iron arrowheads to defend their territorial boundaries as it is continuously remapped by the Indian colonialists. And yet, they are lured to remarkably staged encounters by the promise of coconuts, bananas, rice, cloth, and pieces of iron. Will the seduction of 'goods' finally erode the mystique of the Jarawa as they are drawn resolutely within the circuit of commodity fetishism?



By Sita Venkateswar



Loading baskets with 'goods'. Photo: The author

Who are the Jarawa?

The Jarawa are one of the four groups of indigenous people of the Andaman Islands, a group of islands located in the Indian Ocean close to Myanmar and Indonesia. The four existing groups are the Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa and Sentinelese, listed here according to intensity of exposure to the colonial administration in the islands. The islanders are a part of the dwindling semi-nomadic, hunting-gathering-fishing, Negrito populations of south and southeast Asia. The four groups of Andaman Islanders inhabit different islands of the archipelago. These groups have been separated long enough to have developed substantial linguistic differentiation, and are now referred to in the literature as four distinct tribes. A summary of the situation of the islanders since the Indian intervention into their lives since 1947 is as follows:

The Andamanese at present add up to approximately thirty-five people. They have been settled on a small island called Strait Island, which has been given over to them, although it remains doubtful as to whether there are any legal documents to that effect. The ravages of the earliest and longest duration of 'contact' have been borne by the Andamanese. Their resettlement on Strait Island is perceived by the Andaman government as some measure of reparation for the historical injustices that they have undergone.

The Onge of Little Andaman were unhindered in their hunting-gathering-fishing way of life until the mid-sixties. A research substation of the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) was established in Port Blair in 1952, and there were Indian research teams frequently visiting Little Andaman. A program for the development of Little Andaman was announced in the late sixties, and the former inhabitants were sequestered in two permanent settlements at two ends of the island: Dugong Creek, the larger settlement in the north, and South Bay at the southern tip of the island. Their population too has dwindled steadily, and they now number approximately a hundred people.

The Jarawa have been steadily pushed to the very margins of their former territory, and at present occupy the western borders of Middle and South Andaman Islands. Their population is estimated to be approximately 300 people. They remain hostile to incursions into their domain. Over the past twenty-five years, the island administration has initiated 'contact' with the Jarawa, and claims to have established some degree of rapport with the people.

Finally, the Sentinelese, named after North Sentinel Island, the island they inhabit, are the most isolated or the least known of the islanders, and continue to present a militant front to the outside world. Until six years ago, they thwarted any attempts to approach their island. They are believed to number between 200-250 people.

For the Andaman Islanders, it has been a continuous history of colonization since 1858, when the British established a penal settlement in the islands, with India taking control of the islands in 1947, following a brief Japanese occupation of the islands during World War II. The British version of the colonial economy was one which trafficked in the circuit of tobacco, tea, sugar, opium and alcohol, bringing the islanders firmly within the ambit of the British empire. The subsequent Indian variant, also colonial in its dimensions as it pertains to the islanders, further deprives them of control over their traditional resource base. It was merely a transfer of power between two colonial regimes, with very little to differentiate the two. The colonizer changed from the 'white man' to the 'brown' one after 1947, who, like the former, proceeded to shoulder 'the white man's burden' of undertaking to 'uplift' the 'backward primitives'.

What's in a name?

Through time, the people nominated by the term Jarawa, have served as the mysterious, unknown, hostile 'other' for those who have named them as such. Jarawa means stranger in the language of the Aka-bea-da, the Andamanese with whom the British, over the years since the establishment of the penal settlement, first became acquainted. The British administrators in the Andamans were unaware of the various territorial and linguistic divisions of the Andamanese. Or of a further distinction between forest-dwelling and coastal populations, namely the eremtaga and ar-yauto groups.

From analysis of the vocabulary and comparison of the material culture collected by Lieutenant Colebrooke during the period of the first settlement in the islands from 1789-1796, it was later surmised that the population residing in the region around the first settlement were, in all likelihood, the people referred to as Jarawa by the Aka-bea-da. An interesting contradiction resides in the fact that the people whom Lieutenant Colebrooke describes used both canoes and rafts, but those who were later known as the Jarawa did not possess canoes. They only constructed rafts to cross streams or travel short distances between islands, a practice characteristic of the Jarawa to this day. One possible explanation is that it was the coastal-dwelling Jarawa who used canoes, but the technology was unknown to the inland groups. It is probable that some disease was introduced among the coastal groups by Lieutenant Colebrooke and Blair's first settlement in 1789, resulting in a marked reduction of their population. The four years that the British occupied their initial site on the southeast of South Andaman, were sufficient to have decimated the coastal populations of the groups referred to as Jarawa by the Aka-bea-da. It was solely forest dwelling, raft-using Jarawa who were encountered in the interiors of South Andaman when the

penal colony was established, during the second span of British possession of the islands from 1858. Sarkar (1990) suggests that it was the depopulated coastal Jarawa who were pushed into the forest by the numerically stronger Aka-bea-da, and over the course of half a century of forest existence forgot the craft of canoe building and use.

It would be instructive at this stage to explore this particular appellation of Jarawa by the Aka-bea-da, who used it as an inclusive term when referring to the Onge of Little Andaman, as well as to the inhabitants of North Sentinel Island. Other groups that the Aka-bea-da were unfamiliar with in Middle and North Andaman were never specified as Jarawa, but by the name by which they designated themselves. Portman's conclusion, which appears to be substantiated by current linguistic research, is that there were two major branches of indigenous people in the Andamans. The Great Andaman branch comprised of all the North, Middle and South Andaman groups. The Onge branch included the Onges on Little Andaman, the Jarawa on South Andaman and the people on North Sentinel Island.

According to Portman (1899), all the area north of Little Andaman up to the site of Port Blair was, at some time inhabited by the 'Onge Group of Tribes'. But these groups came into conflict with the southward movement of the South Andaman Group of Tribes who, over time, occupied all the islands south of Port Blair up to Rutland Island. The Onges in response, retreated southwards. Portman goes on to suggest that these developments curtailed the movements of the people on the North Sentinel, who no longer dared to visit Rutland Island, 'and the various Septs of the Group thus drifted apart and became inimical; their bows, etc., altering more or less, but their languages remaining allied though so altered as to be mutually unintelligible' (ibid.:703).

Throughout the entire British period, there is much ambiguity as to who in fact were referred to as Jarawa. At various points, canoe-using Jarawa were captured whose language was incomprehensible to purported raft-using Jarawa. In some instances, captured Onge were sometimes conversant with captured Jarawa, and at other times their languages were found to be mutually unintelligible. Modified versions of Portman's view were reiterated by subsequent writers on the Andamans. Radcliffe-Brown (1964) was of the opinion that:

'[The Jarawa] are the descendants of emigrants who at some time in the past made their way across from Little Andaman and thrust themselves in upon the inhabitants of Rutland Island and the South Andaman maintaining their footing in the new country by force of arm' (ibid.:13).

On the basis of his observation of the seasonal northward migration of the Onge located in the northern parts of Little Andaman, the Onge knowledge of and

names for all the islands north of Little Andaman, Cipriani (1966) concludes that the Jarawa and the Onge are one and the same people, some of whom migrated to other islands in the north as a result of demographic pressure on Little Andaman or tribal warfare.

At present, the only recourse is to designate by geographic location - the people inhabiting the 700 sq km reserve demarcated in 1920, on the western margins of Middle and South Andaman are specified as the Jarawa, the islanders on North Sentinel are designated as the Sentinelese. Whether these are the same people who were cited as Jarawa in the past is a matter for conjecture. It is somewhat ironic that to this day we remain unaware of how the Jarawa actually allude to themselves, though some indications from my research suggest that they too speak of themselves as Onge.

Aggression and hostility: the British legacy

'Today the word Jarawa is synonymous with hostility. And hostile they are, but defensively hostile. Knowing their history, it is acceptable that they should have turned to violence with the outside world as a means of self-preservation' (Whitaker, 1985:66).

In 1931, Bonington of the British government in the Andamans at the end of a punitive expedition against the Jarawa expostulates: 'This expedition did not stop Jarawa raids; like the Bushman of South Africa, the Jarawa is implacable and will continue to fight to extermination' (cited in Whitaker 1985:13). In light of these comments, it may appear surprising that in the initial era of British occupation of the Andaman Islands, there was a very different picture painted of the Jarawa. When Lieutenant Blair first encountered them in 1790's he considered them more timid than hostile, and had less difficulty with the Jarawa than with the 'savage' Aka-bea-da, with whom friendly overtures were never successful. Moreover, Portman's comments draw attention to the fact that:

'As we became on friendly terms with the Aka-bea-da they prejudiced us against the Jarawas whom they described in the blackest terms, and the latter seeing us allied with the Aka-bea-da against them, resented or distrusted our friendly overtures, from timidity at first, and finally from downright hostility' (Portman 1899:704).

Portman is remarkably perspicuous when he notes:

'The Jarawas seem to be very much what we have made them. They were much less timid at the time of this [Lt. Colebrooke's] visit than they are now, and were merely given a bad name by our Andamanese because the latter were at enmity with them, and ignorant regarding them' (ibid.:711).

The first mention of the Jarawa as 'troublesome aborigines' is made in 1865 when Major Ford, Superintendent of Port Blair at the time, was engaged in making a road from the settlement in Port Blair, southwest through the forest to Port Mouat on the west coast. Gangs of convicts employed in clearing the forest around the settlement at Port Blair, were often confronted by the Jarawa. The convicts reported to the administrative officers that these people (the Jarawa) were not nearly as hostile as the other aborigines, but merely took the weapons and utensils the convicts had and then dismissed them without further harm. During this phase, expeditions were sent out in search of the Jarawa, any dwellings that were found were stripped of all belongings, with 'quantities of unsuitable presents' left in their place. E.H. Man directed some of the expeditions sent into Jarawa territory. In his opinion, such presents would more than compensate the Jarawa for the loss of their property. He remarks that 'our' Andamanese are afraid of the Jarawa and is unable to understand this, as he considered the latter quiet and inoffensive 'never molesting or annoying us, and only desirous of keeping away from us, while we were constantly annoying them' (cited in Portman 1899:718). Portman avers:

'It was unfortunate that, at the outset, the Járawas' huts should have been looted thus, and the presents left, being such things as matches, pipes, tobacco and looking-glasses, the uses of which were unknown to these savages, were useless to them, and by no means compensated them for the articles taken away' (ibid.:718).

This state of affairs continued until the 1880's, after which there was an escalation in the extent of forest clearing by the British. It is when Portman is appointed as administrator in 1879, that the pace of deforestation, in what was already known as Jarawa territory, was increased, so that:

'Expeditions in search of Járawas were able to move rapidly along these tracks with rations, etc., and thus I established headquarter stations in the Járawa country, and saved much time and toil by not working through the thick jungle' (ibid.:726).

As the Jarawa steadily retreated in the face of these incursions, the British stepped up their efforts to 'know more' about them and 'befriend' them. Every time a Jarawa camp was discovered in the forest, tracks would be cut from the nearest British clearing to the site, 'in order to use it as a headquarter station from which the Jarawa could be searched for' (ibid.: 729). In his Annual Report for 1882-83, Mr. Godwin-Austin acknowledges that:

'The Járawas have given more trouble during the past year than hitherto, which I am able to account for only in one way. During the past year much has been in the way of opening



Locating the Andaman Islands

The Andaman Islands are a cluster of 204 small and large islands in the Bay of Bengal, extending over 350 km in length and 52 km in breadth, covering a landmass of 8393 square km (Chakraborty 1990). The Andaman group of islands is divided into Great Andaman and Little Andaman. Great Andaman is made up of three main islands, North, Middle and South Andaman, and includes Ritchie's Archipelago, Interview Island, Rutland Island, and several adjacent lesser islets (Basu 1990). Port Blair is the administrative capital of the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands, situated at a distance of 1200 km east of Madras, and 1090 km south-east of Calcutta, midway between Myanmar and the northern tip of Sumatra.

out tracks though their country...which they probably took to be a move on our part to hem them in and so capture them on their first appearance' (cited in Portman 1899:735).

Not surprisingly, a beleaguered Jarawa response to this kind of harassment changed from retreat to one of outright attacks on anyone encountered in the forest. Exacerbating the situation was the Andamanese encroachment into these parts. Emboldened by the protection conferred on them by the British control of the islands, the Andamanese visited and occupied parts of the forest into which they would never have ventured without risking an encounter with the Jarawa. From this point onwards, convicts and Andamanese working or hunting in the forest were regularly attacked and killed by the Jarawa. Deploring the state of relations with the Jarawa, and the hopelessness of trying to track them in the dense forest, Portman appraises the situation:

'At the same time the present state of affairs is not without its advantages, and though I fear that the Járawas will continue for some time to be a source of annoyance to the Settlement, yet they will certainly shoot any runaway convict they may meet, and the knowledge of this acts, I think, as a deterrent to convicts who think of escaping' (ibid.:750).

As the Jarawa relocated from their former territory further northwards, into the forest previously occupied by groups of the Aka-bea-da who had become extinct, expeditions were sent out in their pursuit. If the rationale for such a course of action appears inexplicable, Portman is at pains to elucidate in his Annual Report for 1893-94:

'Our only chance of becoming acquainted with the Járawas who at present appear to be hopelessly hostile, is by capturing some of the young men, as was done with the Onges of the Little Andaman, and keeping them apart until they are really friendly. At present any meeting between them and the other Andamanese ends in a fight, and I have, therefore, instructed the latter in the Middle Andaman to capture such Járawas as they may meet, if possible without wounding them, and bring them in to me' (ibid.:756).

Even at the risk of further transmitting the epidemic of measles, these relentless efforts to bring the Jarawa within the British fold did not cease.

'I am of the opinion that the only way to catch the Járawas will be by sending out armed parties of Police and convicts, as was done on former occasions when they have been caught, and using our Andamanese merely as trackers, as they are too afraid of the Járawas to make any real effort to catch them when alone and unsupported with firearms. There are few Andamanese now alive who are acquainted with the Járawa territory, and those few are old' (ibid.:761).

No dissonance is perceived in acknowledging the dwindling Andamanese population with the efforts to bring yet another group within the domain of British control. Portman's final word on the Jarawa is as follows:

'In order to tame them, they must be caught, and it is this catching which is so difficult...Once caught, they might be kept with the Officer in charge of the Andamanese until they are to a certain extent tamed, and learn a little Hindustani; they might also be taught to smoke, thus establishing a craving which intercourse with us can alone satisfy;...Possibly, after this treatment, some of them, if returned to their own homes, might be the means of inducing the others to become more friendly. The principal difficulty, after they have been caught, in carrying out the above policy, is, that in captivity, the Járawas sicken and die' (ibid.:766) ¹.

The situation steadily deteriorated with a corresponding increase in the number of mortalities on both sides. At every census operation conducted by the British, (starting from 1901, and repeated at every ten year interval), large-scale punitive missions were mounted against the Jarawa.

Towards the tail end of the British control of the islands, Jarawa retaliation took the form of raids and attacks at the settlement itself. The Japanese occupation of the islands (1942-1945), and the death of four Japanese soldiers, prompted indiscriminate bombing and shooting in several parts of the islands, including the Jarawa territory, which is believed to have further compounded the situation.

The past two decades

The Jarawa have continued to display an unpredictable front, despite the concerted efforts made over the past twenty five years by the Indian administration to initiate and maintain 'friendly contact' with them. Sarkar (1990) discusses some of the 'momentous' occasions which are perceived as a major turning point in the ongoing ambivalent relations with the Jarawa. The continuities with earlier British policies are remarkable. More astonishing is that these connections are cited as an affirmation of present policy.

'In 1968, 3 Jarawa boys were captured...and brought to Port Blair, where they were kept for a month under the observation of 2 anthropologists of the Anthropological Survey of India. They were treated well and then set free near their area with a large quantity of gifts' (Pandit 1974 cited in Sarkar 1990:51)... 'In fact, the method adopted by Portman 1879-1894 was followed' (Sarkar 1990:51) ².

Whitaker and Whitaker (1984) note that:

'From 1974 onwards regular contact has been made with the Jarawa at their coastal camp at Chotaling Bang (Middle Andaman). In 1981, another group in South Andaman was contacted using the Chotaling Bang Jarawa as go-betweens. The latter were taken to Strait Island and shown the Andamanese settlement there.' (ibid.:13).³

The health hazards of such contact with outsiders is blithely ignored, and the enormity of the risk of taking the Jarawa to Strait Island where one or more Andamanese chronically suffer from tuberculosis is chilling. As Zai Whitaker (1984) urgently points out, 'even an influenza virus could prove fatal to people with no immunity to civilization's diseases' (70). She goes on to remind those who have become rashly forgetful of the tragic consequences of such imprudent tactics in earlier times in the case of the Andamanese and the Onge.

On the flip side of the 'breakthrough in the situation' are the continuing sequence of 'Jarawa incidents', when trespassers or poachers encountered in Jarawa territory are usually attacked and killed. Or the periodic raids that are made on nearby villages every month around full moon, for metal implements and utensils, bananas, coconuts and cooked rice (which are standard items given to the Jarawa during 'contact' trips). Roger Whitaker (1985) asserts that the most serious threat to the Jarawa in the present is the increasing human pressure on the islands, and the continuing encroachment into their territory which is prime hunting and fishing land.

He observes that the Jarawa now use metal for their arrowheads and are willing to undertake considerable risks to obtain it, raiding road-building camps, forest ('Bush' police) camps and farms. As the number and scale of 'Jarawa incidents' indicate, receiving media attention only if there are deaths on the Indian side, the settlers, illegal encroachers and the 'Bush' police, without formal government approval, take it upon themselves to launch a mini-war against the Jarawa. In this connection, an earlier Lieutenant-Governor, the highest executive authority in the islands was heard to remark that the Jarawa 'menace' could be ended once and for all, by rounding them up, and holding them in some place where they would be unable to 'cause trouble'. Meanwhile, the administration continues to allot land to settlers, or legalize encroachments along the borders of the contested forest tract. For the Jarawa too, as Mukerjee (1995:20) recognizes, it has been a declaration of war. She reports of an incident earlier that year when 'the tribe attacked a forest outpost, impaling a woman and slaying a calf'. Dogs and elephants, which are associated with settlers, are regularly killed, but 'in the process they have protected the pristine forests of their territory, along with its unique wildlife' (ibid.).

Some salutary lessons may be drawn from recalling the early days of British contact with the Andamanese, when similar 'plundering' by night and acceptance of gifts by day were regular occurrences. Portman cherished no illusions when he observed, 'we must admit the unflattering fact that it is not any particular love for us, but



Jarawa to meet the 'contact' boat. Photo: The author

chiefly the greed for [goods and] food which tempts them to the Settlement' (Portman 1899:412).

The current tragedy

A new crisis was precipitated in August last year with the outbreak of measles and subsequent respiratory complications, including tuberculosis and conjunctivitis, among the Jarawa (Ali 1999, Bedi 1999, Sekhsaria 1999). To date there have been 140 reported cases in a total estimated population of 300 people. These illnesses have followed stepped up efforts by the Andaman government to 'befriend' the Jarawa and intensified encroachments into their territory. Such chilling news reports trigger historical recollections of similar epidemics among the Andamanese and Onge during the British colonial period, which decimated their population, rendering several territorial groups extinct. They also recall the Whitakers' grim warnings issued during the early days of Jarawa contact.

To add to the ongoing crisis in August, a local lawyer in Port Blair, filed a writ petition asking for the 'rehabilitation' of the Jarawa like the Andamanese and Onge. The Port Blair based Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology (SANE) in turn, filed an intervention against such a move, arguing that it would only expose the Jarawa to further diseases. Survival International, a London based activist organization, issued a worldwide call to anthropologists and others to send testimonials denouncing the writ petition. At present, the case on behalf of the Jarawa is being handled by a human rights law firm in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, rallying to the cause of the Jarawa, anthropologists, local and international activist organizations and other concerned people are pressing the Andaman administration for all forms of contact with the Jarawa to be terminated, and to close the road running through their territory, but as yet to no avail. By ignoring the lessons of history across the world, and perpetuating the same process with the Jarawa, the Indian government and the Andaman administration, are, in effect, responsible for, and guilty of undertaking a process of genocide. Hence, it is a double-edged sword hanging over the Jarawa: death as a result of genocidal policies by the Indian government, or a slower one through the process of ethnocide, brought about by efforts to make available to them the enticements of the modern world. On the other hand, the Jarawa have withstood two centuries of onslaughts from two different colonial governments, consistently maintaining contact with the outside world on their terms, and may yet prove to be survivors of this latest crisis to befall them.

Notes

- ¹ It is not unduly harsh to characterize the British colonial effort as the first of the major drug-trafficking networks that have taken the forms that we see today.
- ² It should be mentioned that for want of any other alternative accommodation, the captives were housed in the Cellular jail.
- ³ These gestures are reminiscent of Portman's or other British officers' policy of taking the Andamanese and Onge to Port Blair or Calcutta to impress them with the 'wonders and pleasures of civilization'.

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THE ORANG KUBU OF SUMATRA

Deforestation and the People of the Forest:
the Orang Rimba or Kubu of Sumatra

Kubu or Orang Kubu¹ is a name applied to the forest dwelling people of southern Sumatra by the general Malay population. A small and scattered minority, the Kubu have been dominated, economically and politically, by the Malays and their polities, which were focused on the river-based kingdoms historically associated with Jambi and Palembang. The Kubu have tended to limit and sometimes even avoid contact with surrounding communities. Knowledge and understanding of the Kubu by outsiders have thus been limited or even highly distorted.

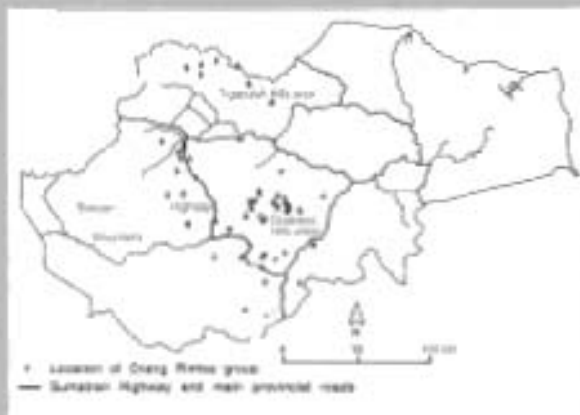
The Kubu or, rather, Malay myths about them, were discovered by the world of anthropology in the late 19th century when evolutionists were looking for true primitives or even 'missing links'. A number of anthropologists travelled to Sumatra in search of the Kubu. Among them was Bernard Hagen, who also systematized other reports and in 1908 published a monograph: *Die Orang Kubu auf Sumatra*, which has since been the standard source on the Kubu.²



By
Øyvind
Sandbukt

Orang Rimba.
Honey collection.
Photo: The author





Orang Kena family. Photo: The author



Combining extrapolation from his own observations of sedentarised or 'tame' Kubu with reports of 'wild' Kubu, who were thought not only to have existed in the past but might still be found in some isolated areas, Hagen proceeded to characterize what he assumed would have been a pre-Malayised, truly aboriginal Sumatran forest people. Exceedingly timid and fearful of external society these had a tradition of shunning or fleeing from any contact with outsiders. Forest produce was originally obtained from them by the so-called 'silent trade' in which goods would simply be left behind at certain sites. There they would be replaced with reciprocal gifts without any of the parties ever meeting face to face. This mode of exchange was later supplanted by a system in which an especially trusted Malay, entitled *jenang*, acted as middleman between the Kubu and the outer world.

In Hagen's schema, the 'wild' Kubu stood at a virtually sub-human level of evolution. Their 'pre-matriarchal' social organization was of the simplest kind, based on an egalitarian and 'loose' relationship between husband and wife. The children, as soon as they were able to procure their own sustenance, would separate from their parents and nomadise on their own. There were no transcendental conceptions of any kind and their dead and dying would simply be left behind. In sum, the wild Kubu were only slightly 'above those creatures without the power of speech that inhabit these forests alongside them'. It took nearly two decades before the anthropologist Paul Schebesta offered an alternative perspective. Having had extensive fieldwork experience among forest people in the Malay Peninsula, Schebesta in 1925 spent a couple of weeks in the general area visited earlier by Hagen. In Schebesta's view, the Kubu were of the same stock as the so-called proto-Malays in the Malay Peninsula. They had thus always had a tradition of swidden cultivation, but due to the depredations of Malays, they frequently did not dwell within their fields and some may have 'regressed' to a nomadic existence.³

The swidden cultivators: People of the Nine Chiefs

What was not known at the time was that there were two distinct ethnic groups behind the name Kubu. (This became clear only in 1985 when the author undertook a distributional survey of Kubu groups in Jambi and South Sumatra.⁴) The first are the traditional inhabitants of the very large midstream part of the area between the Batang Hari and Musi rivers. They are swidden cultivators and analogous to the groups inhabiting other major interfluvies formed by the main river basins in the eastern lowlands of Sumatra. This population is the one visited in 1906 by Hagen and in 1925 by Schebesta. These Kubu did in the past indeed evince considerable reticence in relations with the outside, including avoidance of unknown or

untrustworthy visitors, but to greater or lesser extents so did the other groups inhabiting the interior such as the Talang Mamak and the Sakai.

On the Jambi side of the border with South Sumatra province, although they still are generally known by the name of Kubu, they refer to themselves as Orang Batin Sembilan, People of the Nine Chiefs, or, more generally, Orang Dalam, People of the Interior. They have now intermarried quite extensively with migrants to the area, profess adherence to Islam, and are integrated into the 18 village entities (*desa*) that have been formed in their area. Their main problem is that they have to a great extent lost not only their forests but also their agricultural lands to a combination of large plantations and a large number of land-seeking migrants.

Nomads of the forest: Orang Rimba

The other ethnic group subsumed under the name Kubu has a different geographic distribution. It is found throughout an area of some 30,000 km² that covers the transitional zone between the plains and the foothills of the Barisan mountain chain within the Batang Hari and the Musi basins. This area is characterised by extensive riverine branching. As a result, the interfluves – or land areas between the major branches – are numerous and relatively small. Local groups of Kubu inhabit the forested interior of these interfluves while Malays live in riverside villages. Each local assemblage of Kubu groups has, historically, thus been surrounded by Malays and they have had to cross rivers in Malay canoes to establish contact with Kubu groups in other interfluves.

These upstream Kubu refer to themselves as *Orang Rimba* (or *Orang Hutan*), People of the Forest, and to the surrounding Malays as *Orang Terang*, People of the Open. The name *Orang Rimba* reflects an identity that is very strongly associated with the forest and at the same time sharply contrasted with that of the Malays. A number of cultural and organizational characteristics are associated with and reinforce this contrast. In some ways the most significant of these characteristics is the capacity of the *Orang Rimba* to live and subsist as nomadic foragers, the only such case in Sumatra (excepting the boat-dwelling nomads of the coastal zone that are known as *Orang Laut*, People of the Sea). They are thus capable of subsisting on the wild foods that can be gathered and hunted, although most of them normally opt for a mode of swidden cultivation that, subordinated to a mobile way of life, provides greater subsistence security for a smaller input of effort and time than the gathering of wild foods. As collectors of forest products for trade, the *Orang Rimba* may also obtain food from middlemen as advance provisions in support of their work, or as supplies purchased with the proceeds. They may also obtain food in return for agricultural work for villagers.

It would appear that *Orang Rimba* nomadism is most basically an adaptation to the exigencies of living within confined spaces that are claimed as territories by potentially hostile and exploitative village communities. Malay villagers as well as the *Orang Batin Sembilan* and comparable communities of swidden cultivators within the major interfluves in eastern Sumatra have a tradition of collecting forest products for trade similar to that of the *Orang Rimba*. While the *Orang Rimba* generally move to collecting areas within the forest as family groups, these other peoples generally operate from a sedentary or semi-sedentary base (a settlement or a swidden field house) and do so in all-male work parties while women and children remain at base. There is thus no ecological imperative linking forest collecting and nomadism.⁵

Within the interfluves that they inhabit, groups of *Orang Rimba* are generally associated with specific minor river basins where they claim rights to resources, such as fruit trees that have been generated as a result of past swidden cultivation, or certain giant trees that are tended because bees hive in them. While residential groups may leave these home ranges, sometimes for extended periods, they usually return. Movements to other areas, including other interfluves, are facilitated by networks of kinship that are generated by an uxori-local marriage pattern in which males are required to seek wives in other groups and take up residence with these. Local groups are thus generally based on closely related females, i.e. sisters or mother and daughters.⁶ Actual composition at any given time varies very considerably, however, as there is active visiting and temporary co-residence for a number of purposes, social, economic and ritual. The most stable co-residential group configuration is associated with a swidden complex in which several families share a location. However, after an initial period of guarding against pests and then harvesting, the field is often abandoned as a residential site and treated as a food depot where provisions, especially large stores of manioc tubers which continue to grow, are regularly fetched.

Their cultivation, though subordinated to a highly mobile residential pattern, is not the desultory effort that it may seem when compared to those of sedentary villagers, but a highly efficient production of a basic supply of dietary starch. When the forest fails to provide adequate livelihoods because it has been destroyed or over-exploited, they thus have recourse to agriculture provided that land is available. Planting fruit trees and other useful perennials in their fields has been an important part of their cultivation pattern, serving to mark rights to the land as well as to intensify the resources of the forest. While Malays have planted rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) in their swidden fields since the early years of the 20th century, and thereby transformed their economy from the earlier forest-based one, the *Orang Rimba* have until recently tabooed rubber planting. The implication of planting rubber, which then becomes a very important subsist-

ence resource, is a strong commitment to a given locality and a sedentary lifestyle that are not in keeping with their mobile one. However, in recent years, this taboo has been widely dropped because rubber plantings are now seen as the main substitute for dwindling forest products and thus their best guarantee for the future.

Deforestation and prospects for the future

The last couple of decades have brought drastic changes to the world of the Orang Rimba. Large tracts of the forest in which they have lived have been cleared to make way for transmigration projects and plantations, after first having been extensively degraded through logging.⁷ The remaining areas of forest are under very heavy pressures from both legal and illegal activities. The expansion and improvement of road infrastructure have facilitated access to areas that were previously isolated. In Jambi, which is the province where most of the Orang Rimba are found and for which the best information exists, their present situation and prospects may be shown by looking more closely at their three main areas or regions of distribution, which afford instructive contrasts.⁸

The region of the Sumatran Highway

The region transected by the Sumatran Highway in the westernmost part of the province is the most drastically transformed of the areas inhabited by the Orang Rimba. The road has facilitated large-scale development projects requiring huge tracts of land and, with its many feeder roads has provided very efficient access and thus acted as a magnet on migrants. The highway cuts across the major interfluvies and the home areas of the Orang Rimba. Even so, there are very considerable differences between the various interfluvies with regard to how far and how quickly deforestation has progressed, and thus with respect to the situation of the Orang Rimba groups found there. In all, there are some 1,260 Orang Rimba individuals dispersed throughout this region.

The Orang Rimba in the southernmost part of this area, i.e. between the Tembesi River and the South Sumatra provincial border (population: 484), are comparatively well off in terms of subsistence resources. Although deforestation is nearing completion here too, except in the upstream Barisan foothills, the Orang Rimba have on the whole had both the foresight and opportunity to secure reasonable agricultural resources by establishing holdings of rubber.

In contrast, in the neighbouring Tembesi-Merangin interfluvie deforestation has been far more rapid and wholesale because of the Pamenang and Kubang Ujo transmigration projects and the associated oil palm plan-

tations. Consequently, the Orang Rimba in this area (population: 312) have not only lost their forest habitat and resources, but have been left with inadequate land or without land altogether to develop alternative livelihoods based on rubber cultivation. Those who possess small pockets of rubber plantings in-between the oil palms are apt to tend these relatively intensively and even grow secondary crops among the trees. Villagers have cleared the remaining forest around the transmigration settlements and just about the only way additional land can be obtained by the Orang Rimba is by purchasing old swidden sites with or without rubber from the villagers at around 1 million Indonesian rupiah per ha, which, in fact, a couple of Orang Rimba households have managed to do. Although, in general, transmigrants and villagers alike informally recognize Orang Rimba land planted to rubber, their attitudes vary considerably from one village to the next, and there are instances of Orang Rimba land having been unfairly taken over. Interestingly, despite the devastation of their habitat and resources in their core areas in the Tembesi-Merangin interfluvie, only a few of its Orang Rimba inhabitants have abandoned it in favour of other areas.

The areas between the Merangin and Tabir Rivers and between the Tabir and the Pelepat, have also been extensively deforested by two large transmigration settlements, Hitam Ulu and Kuamang Kuning, the impact again compounded by linked oil palm plantations. In this area, the Orang Rimba inhabitants of the Teleh sub-drainage of the Tabir have sought refuge in the vicinity of the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park in the northernmost part of the province. Several groups in the Merangin-Tabir interfluvie (population: 101) are far less oriented towards cultivation than Orang Rimba in general, and maintain a highly nomadic existence. Some of them have specialized in procuring a range of magico-medicinal forest products, which the men peddle at a roadside restaurant, whereas women and children may engage in begging. The groups that remain between the Tabir and Pelapat rivers (population: 117), in contrast, are quite committed to cultivation and now systematically plant rubber in their swiddens and still have an opportunity to expand those plantings.

The interfluvie between the Pelapat and the Bungo rivers has so far not been subject to large-scale deforestation, but several large plantations are reportedly under planning for this area. Meanwhile, the agricultural frontier of villagers has encroached on the interior inhabited by the Orang Rimba to the point of nearly overrunning the traditional swidden locations of the latter, which used to be in fairly deep forest. The Orang Rimba groups (population: 145) in this area too are now planting rubber to mark their land rights and to establish a subsistence resource for the future in lieu of dwindling forest products. Rather than moving to the large tracts of hill forest further upstream, the Orang Rimba tend to focus on their more downstream

Orang Rimba. Rattan collection. Photo: The author



Deforestation in hilly terrain. Photo: The author



Orang Rimba in dwelling outside the forest. Photo: The author

locations probably in part because future dependence on rubber makes good access to transportation quite important.

The area between the Bungo River and the West Sumatra provincial border has by now been more or less completely deforested and, as far as is known, all the Orang Rimba in this area have left and sought refuge elsewhere, in the Pelepat-Bungo interfluvium, in the Bukit Tigapuluh area, and even in West Sumatra. The area is now dominated by the Rimbo Bujang transmigration project, one of the earliest of such projects in Jambi, and by more large-scale oil palm plantations developed more recently.

The remaining lowland forests in the areas bisected by the Sumatran Highway are highly fragmented and, given the high and increasing land use pressures, it is only a matter of time before they are cleared to make way for a mixture of plantations, settlements, and a mosaic of small-holder fields. What needs most of all to be done then as far as the Orang Rimba are concerned, is to restore land rights, through purchase if necessary, to those who have lost their land, and to provide security of tenure to all since experience has shown that they are especially vulnerable to various pressures or short-term incentives to part with their land.

This general region and particularly the hilly upstream parts to the west of the highway also belong to the wider buffer areas surrounding the Kerinci-Seblat National Park. While dwindling fast, the hill forests should be retained either as permanent production or protection forests to serve as a de facto habitat extension and buffer to the park or, in part, even be incorporated into the park itself. Protection of these forests could obviously be of benefit to the Orang Rimba, but depending on the management regime imposed might also imply restrictions where the Orang Rimba are deemed to be a threat, particularly to rare species. It might be appropriate, therefore, to incorporate support for the rubber planting activities of Orang Rimba, including actions leading to security of tenure.⁹

Bukit Tigapuluh region

The second region in Jambi inhabited by Orang Rimba comprises the northernmost parts of the province, namely the area between the Batang Hari River and the Bukit Tigapuluh hills where the Riau-Jambi border is situated. This area in effect constitutes the extended buffer zone of the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, which was established over 127,000 ha in 1995, straddling the provincial boundary. The buffer zone remains substantially forested with active timber concessions. Accordingly, the Orang Rimba in this area (population 364) remain strongly oriented towards collection of forest products. While they do practice swidden cultivation, they do so at widely scattered sites, which serve as base camps for their forest-oriented activities.

Although the forests in the area constitute a vital buffer and a habitat extension of the recently established Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, three of the logging concessions bordering directly on the park have been designated for conversion to wood plantations. Already one large plantation has been developed in conjunction with a transmigration project right in the middle of the fourth forest concession, radically increasing access to the area and starting an inexorable process of fragmentation of the remaining forest. There has been a huge increase in illegal logging by local villagers and other parties, which, if it continues unchecked, will soon degrade the forest to the point that conversion to plantations is a foregone conclusion. This concession was in fact designated by the Indonesian Department of Forestry as a model concession for sustainable natural forest management, with the support of a substantial technical project funded by Britain. As it is, the concessionaire, in addition to developing the timber plantation, is vying with other parties for rights to establish oil palm plantation on part of the remaining forest. The relatively small size of the Orang Rimba population in this fairly large area makes it unrealistic to argue for the retention of forest solely for the sake of their interests. The key, therefore, to advocacy on their behalf lies in combining their habitat and resource interests with other interests that require protection of natural forest. The interest of biodiversity conservation would be very importantly served by keeping permanently the buffer zone forest around the southern perimeter of the national park. When the park was established in late 1995, only 30,000 ha were added to it in Jambi. This area corresponded to the existing protection forest whose odd elongated shape and low surface to perimeter ratio render it poorly suited for park management. Retention of the buffer zone forests, relatively degraded though these may be, means lasting extension of the habitat available to many species in the park and will thus help ensure long-term viability of some species. The buffer forest will also help absorb a number of human activities that otherwise would be directed at the park itself. Moreover, the parts of the forests to the south of the park where the terrain is relatively level is an important elephant habitat, which the park itself does not afford on account of its extremely serrated terrain. As noted, steep slopes extend to much of what is now classified as limited production forest but designated for conversion to forestry plantations. According to existing regulations, slopes above 40 per cent (i.e. 18 degrees) should be completely protected, while the slope limit for plantations is 25 per cent. The rationale of these regulations is to limit erosion and protect hydrological functions.

To these public conservation interests can be added the equally public interest of retaining at least some natural production forest for the future even though short-term private profits may be better served by converting concessions to timber plantations. A major new factor in this equation is the presence of large paper pulp mills whose

technology is capable of handling almost the entire range of tree species. Hence there is now an immediate huge windfall in clear felling the forest whereas in the past this would entail a major expense. If any natural production forest is to be retained, it would make sense to locate it to the vicinity of national parks and other conservation areas where a number of useful functions would be served. The urgent need in relation to the public interests as well as the resource interests of the Orang Rimba, which can be accommodated to both protection and production function of the forest, is to produce the requisite documentation and strongly advocate retention of the forest surrounding the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park.

Bukit Duabelas region

The third of the regions in Jambi inhabited by Orang Rimba is centered on the Bukit Duabelas hills which constitute the geographical heart of the province where 5 of its 7 districts meet. The western parts of this area, which are close to the Sumatran Highway, have been directly affected by transmigration projects and oil palm plantations, and the remaining areas are under imminent threat of conversion of timber and oil palm plantations except, that is, for an area of about 26,000 ha that covers the actual hills. This area was designated as a nature reserve in the National Conservation Plan of 1982, and in 1985 proposed by the provincial government as a biosphere reserve, but neither has been implemented. The surrounding forest is subject to agricultural incursion and widespread degradation through illegal logging, which is now also threatening the designated reserve.

Already, the western approaches to the hills have been denuded by the Air Hitam and Kuamang Kuning transmigration projects in conjunction with extensive oil palm plantations. Timber and oil palm plantations are due to consume the permanent production forests to the east of the hills, and a timber and rattan plantation has been planned to replace the limited production forest to the north. The designation of the central hilly parts as the Bukit Duabelas Biosphere Reserve was apparently based on the assumption that this would take care of forest protection functions, conservation needs, as well as the resource interests of the Orang Rimba (population: 1,208).³⁹ As it happens, those interests are primarily linked to the more fertile and resource enhanced midstream and downstream parts of the rivers that drain the Bukit Duabelas.

Safeguarding the traditional resource and land rights of the Orang Rimba in the Bukit Duabelas area merits consideration as a national priority, and is worthy of international attention and support. Not long ago, two of the Orang Rimba were killed as they tried to restrict access of loggers engaged in operations leading to clear felling. Geographically and in cultural terms, this is the Orang Rimba core area, where the inhabitants more than else-

where maintain their traditional institutions and way of life. Theirs is a truly unique tradition that is rich in terms of environmental knowledge and ritual expression.⁴¹ The dramatic marginalisation of the Orang Rimba in other parts of Jambi makes it all the more important that they be allowed to maintain this central enclave where their culture and identity remain particularly strong. The idea is of course not to expect them to remain changeless, but to accord them the right and the opportunity to adapt to a changing world at their chosen pace. The minimal condition for this is that Orang Rimba are allowed to retain the key area between the hills and the Tabir River under their own traditional system of resource management. Most of this area is actually designated in official provincial plans as limited production forest which means that, as a matter of policy, it should be kept under permanent forest cover. As it happens, most of the area has been given to a state company to clear it for timber and rattan plantation development.

Precedence now exists for establishing this area under traditional law management. In January 1998 the Minister of Forestry made a path-breaking decision on forest management in Lampung. Some 29,000 ha consisting of protection forest and limited production forest were designated by decree as a so-called Area with a Special Purpose to be managed by local communities under customary law. The traditional communities in West Lampung have over generations enriched the area with useful trees, particularly dammar-producing trees. As noted before, the Orang Rimba have enriched their forest areas by planting or promoting a wide variety of trees and other useful plants in what may be characterized as a low-intensity silvicultural system. It might be proposed, therefore, that minimally the limited production forest, which is some 30,000 ha in extent, be designated as a special purpose area to be managed by the Orang Rimba in accordance with traditional law. This area would thus be adjacent to the biosphere reserve where there could thus be a greater stress on biodiversity conservation.

However, the intensity of the pressures building up around the area in question and the level of conflict and complexity characteristic of relations between the Orang Rimba and village communities make the above option a difficult one to develop and maintain over time. A simpler course of action would be to expand the proposed biosphere reserve to cover the key areas inhabited and utilized by the Orang Rimba. The intentions of the original proposal, namely to support conservation functions as well as secure the traditional habitat of the Orang Rimba, would thus be more adequately fulfilled. Moreover, this solution would immediately provide a more unambiguous legal status to the area and a clear overarching management authority, a prerequisite (but not a sufficient condition) for defending the area against encroachment. An innovative management regime could be developed in

which the Orang Rimba would have a key role based on traditional practices and institutions. A system of zoning developed on the basis of interactive research would integrate various forms of use with other key functions, such as biodiversity conservation and catchment area protection. In this way, the fundamental interests of the Orang Rimba could be combined with key public interests.

Action being taken

As part of the expansion of its activities into Asia (from its existing focus on the Amazon region in Brazil), the Norwegian Rainforest Foundation (NRF) has established a cooperation with the Sumatran NGO WARSI (Warung Konservasi Informasi). Under this cooperation a 5-year support project for the Orang Rimba and the protection of forest has been developed with financial support from NORAD (the Norwegian Overseas Development Cooperation Agency) and NRF itself, and been underway since mid-1997. The project is basically concerned with advocacy of Orang Rimba rights and sustainable forest management based on solid documentation, empowerment of the Orang Rimba themselves to take part, establishing networks and alliances for support, and engaging the media to amplify the message and putting additional pressure on decision makers. In line with the information and arguments outlined above, the main target of the project is to secure the implementation of an expanded biosphere reserve around the Bukit Duabelas. The process is already well advanced and a decision may be reached already this year by the competent authorities.¹²

The next target is to achieve protection for the natural buffer zone forest of the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, for which documentation work is also proceeding. In addition to conducting extensive field surveys in this area and developing GIS documentation using time series satellite images, the WARSI/NRF project has also contracted detailed topographical mapping (1:10 000) and slope modelling of the roughly 85,000 ha of hilly terrain to the south of the park. The purpose is to provide incontrovertible documentation of terrain that meets the criteria for forest protection, especially against clear felling and plantation development. The mapping is based on detailed aerial photographs compulsorily made for the timber concessions in the area several years ago. Obtained from government archives, these photographs are thus at last being put to good use.

WARSI's work in relation to the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park is a cooperation with a WWF Indonesia project based in neighbouring Riau province. The WWF project, which is supported by WWF Norway and NORAD, is a direct follow-up of a major multidisciplinary research cooperation, known as NORINDRA,¹³ between the University of Oslo, the Indonesian Institute of

Sciences and several Indonesian universities.¹⁴ The fieldwork was focused on the Bukit Tigapuluh area and in fact the national park came into being in large measure as a result of lobbying based on the research results. Implemented since 1994, the WWF project has primarily been concerned to safeguard the Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem through buffer zone management and sustainable community development also covering areas used by the Orang Rimba.¹⁵ Apart from the Orang Rimba, the inhabitants of the Bukit Tigapuluh region are the Orang Talang Mamak, an ethnic minority of swidden cultivators, collectors of forest products and rubber tappers, and traditional Malays, who form the majority and in subsistence terms do not differ much from the Talang Mamak. During the last few years, in response to hugely increased land use pressures and conflicts due to the recently opened Eastern Sumatran Highway, the WWF project has increasingly emphasised advocacy using direct and indirect approaches targeted at authorities with significant potential for influencing land use in and around Bukit Tigapuluh. There is close coordination and sharing of resources between the WARSI and WWF projects for advocacy action and the projects publish a joint quarterly advocacy and networking bulletin entitled *Alam Sumatera & Pembangunan* (Sumatra's Nature & Development).

As noted, the Orang Rimba in the western parts of Jambi province find themselves in what is in effect now the buffer area of the Kerinci-Seblat National Park. A major integrated conservation and development project (ICDP) for the park and its buffer zone supported by a World Bank Loan and a Global Environmental Facility grant is now being implemented in and around Kerinci-Seblat. Following criticism for having caused harm to the Kubu (Orang Rimba) through funding of transmigration settlements¹⁶ and acting on recommendations for taking the forest people into account in the Kerinci-Seblat project, the Bank eventually mandated that one of the conditions for approving a loan in support of this project was that it include a Kubu subcomponent. The subcomponent was first to produce a baseline study and impact assessment, and second an action plan for the Kubu.¹⁷ The impact assessment study has been conducted and has specified a need for some action to be taken within the context of the ICDP although the plan for such action, beyond preliminary indications, is yet to be formulated.¹⁸ Meanwhile, WARSI has taken the matter into its own hands by initiating action, albeit with very limited resources, in support of the Orang Rimba in this area. The activities implemented so far include identifying and measuring pieces of land claimed by the Orang Rimba with a view to registering them with the appropriate authorities. They also include lobbying local government from the village up to help prevent a further marginalization of the Orang Rimba.

Empowering the Orang Rimba to actively take part in the struggle for their rights at all levels is a key aim of the WARSI/NRF project. In 1999 representatives of the Orang Rimba in the Bukit Duabelas area were brought to Jakarta to take part in the first national conference of Indonesian indigenous peoples. They proved effective communicators and, dressed in their loincloths, attracted a great deal of media attention to their plight. Subsequently, Orang Rimba representatives have become leading members of the Jambi chapter of a nationwide organization for indigenous and traditional peoples. More specifically, representatives of the Orang Rimba of the Bukit Duabelas area have been recruited into a joint forum that regularly meets and is meant to evolve into an organizational vehicle for managing an expanded biosphere reserve. A key publicity event on the way to obtaining this reserve was the bestowal of the Kehati Award for the year 2000 on WARSI's nominee, an Orang Rimba headman from the Bukit Duabelas area, who won over 102 other candidates from all over Indonesia. Receiving this prestigious award for local environmental action from the hand of the Indonesian Vice President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, in a nationally televised ceremony attended by ministers and other notables has given a considerable boost to the Orang Rimba and their WARSI supporters. Even so, securing a viable future for the Orang Rimba is going to be a long and difficult struggle. And part of that process, clearly not the easiest part, will be for the 'People of the Forest' themselves to decide what they will be in an increasingly deforested future.

Notes

- ¹ Orang in the Indonesian language and in Malay dialects, as well as those of the Kubu, mean 'people' and is generally used in conjunction with a specific name to indicate identity of a group, ethnic or otherwise.
- ² Bernard Hagen, 1908. *Die Orang Kubu auf Sumatra*. Veröffentlichungen aus dem Städtischen Völker-Museum, Frankfurt am Main. Frankfurt am Main: Joseph Baer & Co.
- ³ Paul Schebesta, 1926. Kubu und Jakudn (Jakun) als Protomalayen. *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*. 56:192-201.
- ⁴ See Øyvind Sandbukt, 1988. Resource constraints and relations of appropriation among tropical forest foragers: the case of the Sumatra Kubu. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 10:117-156.
- ⁵ See reference in preceding note for an analysis of Orang Rimba resource management and organization.
- ⁶ For an analysis of Orang Rimba marriage and gender relations, see Øyvind Sandbukt, 1988a. Tributary tradition and relations of affinity and gender among the Sumatran Kubu. In: Tim Ingold, David Riches, and James Woodburn (eds.), *Hunters and Gatherers Volume 1: History, Evolution and Social Change*. New York/Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- ⁷ See Øyvind Sandbukt, 1993. *Evaluation of Impact of Transmigration Projects on the Kubu People in Jambi, Indonesia*. The World Bank.
- ⁸ Unless indicated otherwise, the following is based on Øyvind Sandbukt and WARSI Team, 1998. *Orang Rimba: Needs Assessment for Resource Security and Development*. The World Bank and the Government of Indonesia.

- ⁹ See Øyvind Sandbukt, 1995. *The Kerinci-Seblat National Park and the Kubu: Preliminary Assessment and Recommendations*. The World Bank.
- ¹⁰ The earlier count of 1,014 from 1998 has been provisionally increased to 1,208 by the WARSI field project (see below) as of February 2000.
- ¹¹ See Øyvind Sandbukt, 1984. Kubu conceptions of reality. *Asian Folklore Studies* 43: 85-98.
- ¹² As part of the networking activities of the project, a website has been developed: www.warsi.or.id. Readers are encouraged to visit the site for additional information and news, or, through the messaging facility, to become engaged in support of the Orang Rimba.
- ¹³ NORINDRA is short for Norwegian Indonesian Rainforest and Resource Management Project.
- ¹⁴ This project was funded mainly by the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs. Some 27 scientific papers from a wide range of disciplines represented in the project's fieldwork can be found in Øyvind Sandbukt and Harry Wiradinata (eds.), 1994. *Rain Forest and Resource Management. Proceedings of the NORINDRA Seminar Jakarta 25-26 May 1993*. Jakarta: Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI).
- ¹⁵ A description of the initial project and the underlying analysis is contained in the following document: Øyvind Sandbukt and Lene Østergaard, 1993. *Bukit Tigapuluh Rain Forest and Resource Management. An Integrated Conservation and Development Approach*. WWF World Wide Fund For Nature and the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, Ministry of Forestry, Republic of Indonesia.
- ¹⁶ See Øyvind Sandbukt, 1993 and Pratap Chatterjee, 1994. Indonesian tribe hurt by Bank, says auditors. <http://nativenet.uthscsa.edu/archive/nl/9406/0160.html>; 1994a. World Bank fails to help tribe it destroyed. <http://www.nativenet.uthscsa.edu/archive/nl/9408/0031.html>.
- ¹⁷ The World Bank, 1996. *Indonesia. Kerinci Seblat Integrated Conservation and Development Project. Staff Appraisal Report*. Agriculture Operations Division, Country Department III, East Asia and Pacific Region.
- ¹⁸ *Final Report. Kubu Development Study. Kerinci-Seblat ICDP Part B (Area/Village Development Component)*. Kerjasama antara Kerinci-Seblat ICDP Propinsi Jambi dan Pusat Penelitian IAIN Sultan Taha Saifuddin Jambi. Bappeda Propinsi Jambi. 1999.

Øyvind Sandbukt is a social anthropologist who received his education at the London School of Economics and Political Science and the University of Cambridge. In addition to major field research on Orang Laut/Kuala sea nomads and Orang Kubu and other forest dwellers in Sumatra, he has organized multidisciplinary research on forest and resources management for the University of Oslo. He has lately been based in Indonesia as a consultant in development and environment, also providing advisory support to the NGO projects described in the article. □



By Colin Nicholas

The Orang Asli are the indigenous minority peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. They numbered 106,131 in 1997 – representing a mere 0.5 per cent of the national population. The Orang Asli, however, are not a homogenous people. It is a collective term – meaning first or original peoples – for the 18 ethnic sub-groups officially classified for administrative purposes under Negrito, Senoi and Aboriginal Malay.

THE BATEK OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA: THE VICTIMS OF INDIVIDUALS



The Negritos (or sometimes referred to as 'Semang' by anthropologists), at just over 3 per cent of the Orang Asli population, is the smallest of these three categories. They are also the oldest and are believed by some to have been in the Malay Peninsula for at least 25,000 years. The present-day Negritos are the direct descendants of these early Hoabinhians, who were largely nomadic foragers, living in one location as long as the food supply was able to maintain the community. They still speak the Mon-Khmer (Aslian) languages of their ancestors.

While the Negritos are frequently portrayed as nomadic hunter-gatherers, the trend today is for them to increasingly live in permanent settlements. However, some groups still enter the forest for varying lengths of time, such as during the fruit season to practise opportunistic foraging, or to extract forest products (such as rattan and the incense-wood, gaharu) to be exchanged for cash. Such activities have often caused them to be labeled as nomadic and to be considered the more economically backward of the Orang Asli sub-groups.

Government policies (e.g. sedentism, integration) and government projects (e.g. hydro-electric dams, national parks) remain the major source of threat to the Negritos, especially to their traditional territories and to their ability to determine their own future. This is the case of the Jahai people of Northeast Perak and Kelantan, the Lanoh of North-central Perak and the Batek of Northeast Pahang and South Kelantan. The Kensiu people of Northeast Kedah, the Mendriq of Southeast Kelantan and the Kintak along the Kedah-Perak border are no less affected by the encroaching control over their lives by the state.

However, the state, as an ideological and political entity in itself, is not the only agency responsible for the Negritos' continued marginalization and impoverishment. The nature and source of control over the Negritos' lives are sometimes rooted in the perceptions and self-interest machinations of individuals or groups of individuals, with or without official backing. These individuals can, and often do, cause undue hardship to these peoples, further reflecting the latter's precarious position in the nation state that they now find themselves in.

The Batek community

To illustrate the 'power' some individuals can have, the case of the Batek community of Taman Negara, the National Park, is narrated here. In 1995, the Batek were unhappy with the private corporation managing the resort over losing their tourism business – especially for being displaced by others as guides for the lucrative Gunung Tahan trail, and also over an agreed royalty payment for the use of the image of a Batek boy on the resort's promotional products. The Batek protested and demanded their fair share.

The matter became a controversy in the local press because a German anthropologist, Christian Vogt, who was doing his doctoral fieldwork with the group, was accused of 'instigating and poisoning the minds of the Batek tribe to demand for their rights over a business deal with a local resort'. Despite positive statements supporting him and his work from his local academic sponsor, the Pahang State Chief Minister, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JHEOA), and even the minister responsible for Orang Asli Affairs, Vogt was forced to discontinue his studies and to leave the country. The local interests on the ground – the resort manager and some tour operators – thus succeeded in keeping the Batek in check and the promised royalty has yet to be paid in full.

In an October 1997 visit to this Batek community in Kuala Yong, Taman Negara, my colleague and I were not granted permission by the park management to go to the village, and no boatman would drop us off at the settlement. I was told that the settlement had been closed to all visitors, both local and foreign. Citing a complaint by the newly appointed Orang Asli senator, the Pahang State Government had apparently become concerned that tour operators in the national park were giving a negative image of Malaysia by allowing tourists to photograph the semi-dressed Orang Asli in their settlement.

Dress norms and tourist income

The State Culture, Arts and Tourism Committee Chairman, Shahrudin Moin, said that, 'Although it is natural for women of the tribe to live half naked in the village, their photographs may give a wrong impression that Malays here are dressed in that manner' (*The Star* 3.8.1997). The State Rural Development and Growth Centre Committee Chairman, Omar Othman, was then assigned to look into the matter (*Berita Harian* 3.8.1997, 4.8.1997, *Utusan Malaysia* 4.8.1997). A sequence of events soon followed that resulted in a ban on visits to the Batek settlement at Kuala Yong.

My colleague and I were however able to meet up with the Batek affected and got to hear their side of the story. Without doubt, the Batek were visibly angry at losing an important source of income, estimated at about RM 2,000 (USD 525) per month for the ten families normally resident there. They saw the issue as a dispute between the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and Omar Othman. Some months before, the latter had gone to Kuala Yong on an official visit. Several bamboo poles were cut to build an archway and to make the tables for the welcoming ceremony. The Batek say that the officers of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) at Taman Negara were angry over this and threatened to fine the politician RM 500 for each bamboo pole, with the total fine coming to RM 36,000.00 in all. In the ensuing tiff between the two parties, the



Traditional temporary hut in the forest. Photo: the Author

DWNP officers saw, in Omar's recent statements about the dress norms of the Batek, an opportunity to get back at him. Thus, the village was closed ('tutup') and the Batek were to blame their suffering as a result of the closure on Omar's action. (However, a senior officer of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks headquarters in Kuala Lumpur maintained in March 1999 that the department had no role in the ban on visits to Kuala Yong – suggesting that perhaps local DWNP officials may be acting on their own accord.)

But the Batek also began to see the whole affair as a ploy by the DWNP to remove the Batek's income source to force them to seek alternative income sources, particularly non-timber forest products such as gaharu and rattan. Although it is illegal to harvest both products, some of the DWNP officers are said to be middlemen for the trade in these items.

The tourists are now taken further downriver to the more permanent (and more 'presentable') Semoq Beri settlement at Sungei Tiang, also on the Tembeling River. The boatmen now get to collect a return fare of RM 90 (USD 24), instead of only RM 30 (USD 8) if they were merely to bring tourists to the nearer Kuala Yong settlement. Thus, as the Batek have analysed, closing Kuala Yong to tourists has served to benefit several others, all at their expense.

The headman and two others followed us back to district capital of Jerantut to lodge a formal complain with the JHEOA director there. The Director absolved his department from having anything to do with the ban, and promised to contact the Wildlife Department within the week to try to resolve the matter. However, as of December 1999, the matter has yet to be resolved amicably.

The power of individuals

Policy-wise, the official position on this issue is difficult to gauge. In 1994, the then Malaysian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Commission on Human

Rights, Musa Hitam, said in a speech to the UNCHR that,

'In Malaysia, we do not allow visits to indigenous settlements. This is not because of our fear of critical scrutiny but more because we do not want them to become objects of curiosity or tourist attraction'

However, the seventh strategy in the JHEOA's current Programme Summary involves 'Gearing up Orang Asli activities in culture and the arts not only to preserve their traditions but also as a tourist attraction.'

In the case cited above, ignoring the apparent contradiction in policy, it is quite clear that the episode came about because of individuals who could – and were allowed to – exercise control over some aspect of the Batek's lives.

The case of the lost botanist

These individuals need not always be people in positions of political power. Ordinary individuals often can affect the material position of the Negritos, wittingly or unwittingly, primarily because of the marginalized position of these indigenous communities. This contention can be illustrated with the case of a visitor to the national park, Taman Negara, who got lost and blame for which was laid on her Batek-Negrito guide.

In 1996, a group of three men and two women hikers had engaged two Batek guides for the trek to Mount Tahan, the highest peak in the Peninsular and the popular destination of the more adventurous visitors. It is a very strenuous trek involving 5 to 9 days, depending on the fitness of the hikers and the weather. After 5 days on the trail, the arduousness of the trek was taking its toll on one of the women, a botanist. Her pace became very slow such that the other members of the group decided to leave her behind with one of the guides while they set off ahead at a faster pace.



Batek family busy making bamboo crafts for sale to tourists. Photo: The author

According to the Batek guide, the botanist was soaking wet and had complained of uncomfortable shoes. During a snack break, she said she would go ahead first as she wanted to change into dry clothes. After loading up his backpack and relieving himself in the bushes, the guide treks down the trail but does not catch up with the botanist. Thinking that she had gone on at a faster pace, the guide proceeds all the way until the next base camp at Kuala Teku, a considerable distance away. At the base camp, the guide finds her teammates but no sign of her. Immediately, he goes up the trail again in an attempt to locate her. He finds one of her boots and her tracks. But her trail soon disappears at a stream.

A party comprising park rangers, Batek guides and Orang Asli para-military personnel searched a wide area downstream of where she was last known to have been. After three unsuccessful days they decided to check upstream. Sure enough, the botanist was found. She had ventured upstream instead of taking the logical way out by travelling downriver. (She is reported to have told a newspaper that she did so because she was unable to tell which way the stream was flowing!)

In the meantime, the distressed Batek guide became even more distraught when the blame for her being lost came to be centred on him (although clearly the weak leadership and team spirit of the group plus the actions of the botanist herself had a role to play in the incident as well). It is said that the Batek guide was so worried about the repercussions from the woman's family and friends that he hardly ate anything for a week. On the advice of an elder shaman, he hid in the forest for a month. However, after a month his brother advised him to stay longer and this he did, never to appear near the park headquarters even to this day.

In the meantime, however, the non-Orang Asli guides saw the incident as an opportunity to monopolise the lucrative guiding business to Mount Tahan. In the past when trekkers specifically asked for Batek guides, they were given various reasons as to why it was difficult to meet this request. The more common ones being that the

Batek are 'somewhere in the forest and cannot be located' or that it was not their turn on the roster.

With the case of the missing botanist, this gave the Batek's competitors an opportunity to deny the Batek any guiding jobs from then on. Thus, the Batek, who were at one time the only ones who guided visitors to Mount Tahan, they are today deprived from enjoying any opportunity of deriving pecuniary benefit from this activity.

The above seems to suggest that the Batek are incapable of standing their ground or resolving a situation to their benefit. On the contrary, in June 1999, a section of the Batek community in the Taman Negara area decided to vacate their Kuala Yong settlement (which, as we discussed earlier, was closed to tourists by the park authorities) and set up a new settlement on the opposite bank of the river, and therefore out of the park boundary even though it was just a short distance above the park headquarters. This allowed for greater accessibility to the tourists who wanted to visit their community.

This settlement appears to be a temporary site, established primarily to exploit the cash opportunities afforded by the tourists. During a visit in August 1999, at the height of the tourist season, the Batek's decision seemed to be paying off for as much as RM 300 (USD 80) were exchanging hands a day. The tourists were buying even the hastily crafted bamboo souvenirs despite the bamboo being still green and coarsely hewn.

In conclusion, I should add that this article makes no judgement as to whether tourism is good for the Batek or otherwise. The aim is merely to demonstrate how individuals and parties can, and do, influence Batek lives and opportunities, and how the Batek react to reject any attempt to control their lives.

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NEGRITO HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN THE PHILIPPINES TODAY



Indigenous peoples with a food collecting subsistence strategy continue to inhabit the world's most marginal environments. In the Philippines Negrito groups are among the few remaining hunters and gatherers in Southeast Asia. The Spanish conquistadores first called them 'Negrillos' (Negrito) or small blacks. In the traditional anthropological literature, the Negrito people were also referred to as the Philippine pygmies.

By
Sabino G. Padilla, Ph.D.



Agta mother and children waiting for the pisan (bundi) hunting party to return (Nanadulan, Cagayan Valley)
Photo: Lito Almor
(1994)

Filipino school children are still being taught the 'Negrito myth' - that the earliest inhabitants of the country were black mountaineers, a notion picked up by many writers during the heyday of 19th century social Darwinism. Henry O. Beyer, heralded as the father of Philippine anthropology, popularized this myth in his 'waves of migration theory' where his assertions continue to be the source of inspiration among Filipino historians on the origins of Philippine peoples.

The stereotype description of the Negrito is as follows: small in size, sporting kinky hair, wearing a g-string, lives in band inside the forest and subsists mainly by hunting. Negrito populations in the Philippines have been called Agta in Northern Luzon, Ayta in Zambales and Central Luzon, Ata in Kabikolan, Ati in the Vizayas, Mamanwa in Mindanao and Batak in Palawan. It is a common belief that the word Ayta was derived from the Malay *hitam* (black) or its cognate in the Philippine language *itim* or *itom*. The etymology of their self-ascription however means *tao* (person).

The Negrito population has been on the decline since the 1900's when the first estimate of their number was placed at around 35,000 individuals from Cape Engano in the north to as far as Surigao and Davao Gulf in Mindanao in the south (Beyer 1918, 1921; Blumentritt 1916, 1980; Garvan 1963; Keesing 1962). Today, anthropologists agree that there are 25 ethnolinguistic groups that constitute the Negrito with an aggregate population of 15,000 people (Headland and Early 1998; Headland 1989, 1993; Griffin 1985).

This article will describe two of these groups—the Agta in northeastern Luzon, and the Batak in the island of Palawan.

The Agta in northeastern Luzon

The Sierra Madre is the longest mountain range in the Philippines, forming a mountain barrier between the easternmost side of Luzon and the rest of the island. It stretches from the Palau Island at the northeastern tip of the island to as far south as Mauban in Quezon, southeast of Manila. With the passage of Republic Act 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Area Act of 1992, a large part of the range has been declared a protected area.

Almost stripped by the logging companies of most of its old growth forests, the Sierra Madre is the ancestral home to a number of indigenous communities, particularly many small Negrito communities. There are 9,000 Negritos speaking ten different languages in the northeastern Sierra Madre where they are better known as the Agta. They



A paramilitary Agta and his wife hauling a Narra log to exchange for some cash (Bolos River, Cagayan Valley). Photo: Danilo Galang (1994)

live on both sides of its watersheds and along the stretch of its coastal areas. Lowland settlers on the other hand call them Dumagat (from the word 'dagat' for sea) because they often build their lean-to (*sinariked* or *pinanahang*) on the riverbanks and the seacoast during the summer months of March to May.

The pre-WW II accounts of Worcester (1912; 1913), Vanoverberg (1937; 1938), Turnbull (1929; 1930) and Garvan (1964) described in details the traditional life ways of the Agta. A 1930 report on the other hand with photographs in the *National Geographic Magazine* (Goddard: 311-343) will complete the picture. In the early times, the

nomadic Agta hunted and gathered food in the forested mountains of the Sierra Madre. In the recent past, they have adapted their subsistence strategies to the many changes caused by external forces. The destruction of the Sierra Madre mountain range brought about by extensive commercial logging has caused environmental problems and near extinction of the fauna and other forest resources that are their principal food sources. These have spatially dislocated the Agta and resulted in the dwindling of game harvest. Navin Rai (1983; 1985; 1990) who studied the Agta in San Mariano, Isabela reported that the group occupied a rain forest area of approximately 'up to five square kilometers per capita'. However, the regularly exploited area of a particular group was around two square kilometers per person. Today, many have thus, settled permanently and have begun to practice swidden cultivation, sedentary agriculture, serving as farm workers and trading forest products.

In the early 1990's, Agta settlements in the western section of the mountain range belonging to the Dikamey-Ilagin Agta linguistic group retreated further upstream of both the Pinacanauan de Ilaguen and the Diwagao Rivers. In the 1980's the population of this group totaled 38 families or 149 individuals, 69 males and 80 females. The total number of camps was eight. The average distance of an Agta camp to another camp is normally 3.6 km, while to an agricultural *barrio* (village) it is 8.8 km. At present, estimates give not more than 30 individuals as the only remaining Agta population of the P. Ilaguen and Diwagao. Their retreat towards the upstream of the two rivers can have been brought about by the influx of non-Agta population particularly the loggers within their area. The destruction of the forest means scarcity of resources and always affects the foragers/hunter/gatherers, hence the transfer of camps.

The planned construction of the Ilaguen Small Hydropower Project by the National Power Corporation (NPC) in the area undoubtedly will further constrict the Negrito in their subsistence activities. The dam is 89

meters in height and will have a reservoir area of 580 hectares (NPC 1993). The site is around 10 kilometres upstream from the Kalinga village of Tappa and located between the municipalities of San Mariano and Dinapigue, and is expected to generate 88 megawatts of power. The Agta range is within the project site, particularly the catchment area. This area is also their hunting ground. It is possible that they are not the only ones that will be affected but that other members of the Dikamey-Ilagin Agta and other Agta of the nearby provinces of Quirino and Aurora will be too.

Added to these developments are the unending migrations of the land-starved peasant settlers that have driven the Agta away and estranged them from their ancestral hunting range and territories. The still on-going armed conflict in the countryside has not spared the Agta as they have been recruited as guides or guerrillas by the rebels as well as by members of the government's paramilitary units.

The Batak of Palawan

The Batak are the Negrito population of north central Palawan. James Eder (1987) describes their territory as approximately 1,200 square kilometres extending from the mouth of Babuyan River that flows from the slope of Mount Cleopatra's Needle to north of the Quinaratan River. The smallest in number among the Palawan indigenous communities, the Batak population in 1980 was 254 and Batak of mixed origin totaled 132. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) listed 300 Batak speakers in 1984. Traditionally hunters and gatherers, they have recently adopted swidden or slash-and-burn cultivation. Swidden is an agricultural system in which the fields are cleared, usually by burning, and cultivated for a short period normally between 1-3 years. After utilization, a fallow period is observed in which the fields are abandoned for a longer time to let the forest regenerate. However, recent reduction of years allotted for fallow reveal shortages of available forests for slash-and-burn cultivation due to state bias against this agricultural practice, dwindling forest cover and migrant settlers encroachment.

The Batak people still spend some considerable time in hunting. Wild pigs are the most important game for they are the focus of any ritual activity. They are hunted with dogs using spears, bows and arrows and blowgun. In communal hunts, a group of women creating a loud noise by shouting and beating the bush drives the pig towards the men waiting in ambush. Batak men and women fish singly or in pairs. The techniques include basketry traps, spears, hook and line, bows and arrows, damming the streams and using poison. Batak men also gather wild yams in the forest. During periods of food scarcity, groups of women and children assists the men in digging the

yams up and help carry them to the settlement. Collecting honey on the other hand is men's activity.

Contemporary development issues

Negrito groups inhabit a wide range of environments have never been entirely isolated. Trade between hunters and gatherers, swiddeners and the lowland population has been a feature of their social interaction since prehistoric times. Forest products such as honey, beeswax, rattan, bamboo, and resin (*copal de manila*) provide ready cash to the indigenous peoples. Proceeds from these transactions have presented them a new avenue for acquiring commodities such as textile, metal implements, beads and additional food supply.

In the past, the nomadic nature of hunters and gatherers was the target of government programmes for forced resettlement and sedentary agriculture. This erroneous notion stems from the failure to realize that mobility is interrelated with the availability of resources and its sustainable utilization. The state planners have viewed nomadic lifestyle as primitive and deplorable behaviour. For them, permanent agriculture is the yardstick of development and a measure of the intensity of the indigenous peoples' integration into and their acculturation to the dominant culture.

Wage labour, tenancy or servitude to migrant settlers has been increasing in recent years. By taking advantage of the unfamiliarity of the indigenous peoples with this kind of arrangement, many have been deprived of the fruits of their labour and ironically become instead deeply indebted to their employer.

Permanent agriculture has been introduced to the Negrito people in two ways: first, by adopting the agricultural practice of the migrant settlers either through imitation or as a result of their experiences while working as labourers in their fields. Second, through the state resettlement programme that has introduced the plough and draft animals and forced them to learn the techniques of lowland agriculture.

The forest continues to be the most important ecological zone for the Negrito and other indigenous peoples. Their resource utilization is the product of a deep understanding of and relationship with their environment. Most of them believe that this is the abode of deities and spirits that govern the existence of the community. Swidden fields are carved in the mature or secondary forest. The clearings are also used for secondary dwelling sites and gardens. The interior provides plants and tubers in time of food scarcity as well as for medical purposes, and serves as hunting grounds, and as sources of honey and other forest products for trade. The river and streams are sources of fish, crusta-

ceans and shells while its banks supply some edible plants.

Forest destruction has grave repercussions among the indigenous peoples. The consequences include the extermination of game, the loss of edible plants and eventually the destruction of their habitats. Indigenous peoples may require longer travel distance for foraging from their settlement and transporting commercial forest products to market. The Philippine forest cover has shrunk from 70 per cent in the 1900's to just over 20 per cent a hundred years later. Without the forests that sustain the way of life of the hunters and gatherers, will there be a future for the Philippine Negrito people?



Agta simariki (lean-to) in a camp site along the Malibu River (Cagayan Valley). Photo: Danilo Galang (1994)

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In 1994, 1996 and 1998, AnthroWatch organized a cultural mapping and survey of the Agta in the area. The three expeditions generated a large number of photographs capturing their environment, subsistence strategies, and relationships with other people.



HARVESTING FROM 'COUNTRY': CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS SUBSISTENCE IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE TITLE ERA



Bush tucker, foods harvested from Australia's native vegetation, plants and land and sea animals, is prominent in pamphlets, books and films aimed at luring overseas tourists to the continent. Foods strange to western tastes, such as witchetty grubs and lizards, are, along with more familiar fish such as barramundi, illustrated along with their harvesters, indigenous Australians who, for the most part, are portrayed as still living highly traditional lifestyles in remote parts of the country. And a taste of Australia – kangaroo kebabs, or witchetty grub soup – is now also offered to adventurous tourists, generally in expensive urban restaurants in cities such as Melbourne or Sydney.

By Elspeth Young

Successful young desert hunters,
with lizard. Photo: The author



This new bush tucker industry remains largely the sphere of non-indigenous entrepreneurs. But its growth is more widely significant. It is evidence of greatly increased understanding of the value of such Australian foods, an understanding that has, over the last three decades, been but one aspect of the growing visibility of indigenous Australians in political and other spheres. The resilience of indigenous ecological knowledge in all parts of the country provides remarkable proof of the strength of indigenous culture and its ability to survive despite two centuries of pressure aimed to eradicate spiritual and behavioural characteristics seen to be irrelevant in modern society. That strength is crystallised in the universal indigenous belief that they are at one with their ancestral territory, their 'country'; and that they are responsible for the healthy maintenance of that country – its waters and soils, its plants and animals, its sacred places – for both themselves and future generations. Because of indigenous land rights, and subsequent movement of families back to the bush over the last three decades, exercising that responsibility has become much more possible. Simultaneously the unique contribution of indigenous ecological knowledge to Australia's overall biodiversity conservation and long-term sustainability is becoming more highly valued. The future scenario for the survival of such knowledge, and for its practical application, thus appears relatively bright. But there are also many difficult questions to be answered. Negotiating

agreements between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians on sharing rights to such resources, and managing them in ways that are mutually acceptable, is arguably one of the prime challenges facing Australian society in the 21st century.

Australia's 'black' history': indigenous dispossession and cultural destruction

Over the last two centuries non-indigenous settlers have spread from Australia's coastal zones to the remotest parts of its interior. In the process they have misunderstood, denigrated and trampled on indigenous people's rights to use and manage the country's natural resources. The long held perception that the Australian continent was '*terra nullius*' – no-one's land – until claimed by representatives of agriculturally and industrially based European societies, provides graphic evidence of such attitudes. It demonstrates almost total ignorance of how indigenous hunters and foragers perceived their occupational and use rights, and of how the flexibility of their adaptive approaches to resource use, developed over a settlement period of at least 50,000 years, had contributed to the survival of Australia's unique natural habitats.

Non-indigenous exploration and settlement was essentially colonial. It resulted in widespread dispossession and the enforced relocation of indigenous people into



Controlled burning of spinifex for vegetation and small game hunting, central desert. Photo: The author

government and mission administered reservations and settlements, often far from their traditional lands. In removing people from their country dispossession broke the direct linkage between families and the natural resources on which they depended; and it also undermined their entire way of life. Their belief systems, their economic base, upheld through reciprocity and exchange systems rather than through individual wealth creation, their languages and fundamental elements of their culture all stemmed from those relationships to country, relationships that expressed total integration of people and territory. For each indigenous group, that integration provided their very foundation for living, their Law, or Dreaming.

'Everything come up out of ground – language, people, emu, kangaroo, grass. That's Law' (quoted in D.B. Rose, 1996:8)

Dispossession and enforced resettlement were also major factors in widespread indigenous population decline over at least the first century and a half of Australia's colonial era. While massacres and the intrusion of foreign infectious diseases provide direct evidence of this period of decimation, the social and cultural destruction that inevitably accompanied dispossession was also crucial, and the social fragmentation that still haunts so many contemporary indigenous communities provides proof of its persistence. It also forced many indigenous people into towns and cities, where, according to the 1996 census, 73 per cent of them now live. These indigenous city dwellers remain determined to retain their links to country; but it does make it harder to carry out their responsibilities. Under such circumstances it is all the more surprising that so much of the knowledge remains.

Living off country: the old way

The indivisible linkages between people and their resources created ties that bound particular groups to particular areas, ties that were, and still are, expressed spiritually and culturally and also, as shown by their specific ecological knowledge, through their subsistence activities. Complex rituals that affirmed responsibility for people's country and sites within it – rituals involving song, dance, painting and oral traditions – explained the Law for each group, enshrined through specific ancestral beings that were often part of that land. Prominent geological features, permanent waterholes, and foods plentiful in particular ecological settings all appear as ancestral beings. Northwest of Alice Springs, for example, where honey ant dreaming governs the Law for many extended family groups, the ants themselves still provide a highly prized item of bush tucker on the edges of the desert; and in Cape York and the Torres Strait islands dugong and turtle have similar significance for coastal dwelling groups.

For most groups, consuming your own ancestral being is strictly taboo. But people remain adamant that eating 'bush tucker' makes you strong and is essential even when other foods are available.

People's practical use of their country, and of its resources, differed according to the opportunities offered in different ecological regions. For example, in the arid and semi-arid interior, where periodic droughts disrupted water supplies for people, animals and birds, and also the flowering and fruiting of valuable plants, harvesting food was often unpredictable. Uncertainties of food supply then caused families to range well beyond their normal country, into the country of better-endowed neighbours with whom they knew they could share resources. This practice was widely accepted and did not lead to conflict. But in the monsoonal 'Top End' of northern Australia, where seasonal variations in rainfall were more predictable and food was generally more plentiful, families were normally able to sustain themselves from within a more clearly bounded country.

All of these elements of traditional natural resource use have, in various degrees, survived to the present. Their strength provides the foundation for contemporary indigenous resource management in Australia.

Rights to country, and contemporary indigenous resource use and management

As indigenous Australians have frequently stressed, they hold, as the First Peoples, prior customary rights to every part of the continent. However, in Australia's common law, this fact was not accepted until 1992 when the lie of *terra nullius* was formally discounted by the High Court's decision in favour of Eddie Mabo's claim for Native Title to country in the Torres Strait islands. During the three decades preceding this landmark decision, overt recognition of indigenous subsistence resource use had already expanded and practical support for its continuation, as a vital component of land rights, was firmly established. Significant events from this period include the passing of the 1967 Referendum, which gave Australia's commonwealth government overall responsibility for policy and programs for indigenous people; the formal institutionalisation of land rights through the passing of the commonwealth government's Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory), 1976, and later state legislations; the formation of government departments and programs specifically designed for indigenous support (e.g. Department of Aboriginal Affairs); and, in the 1990s, the passing of Native Title legislation following the Mabo decision (see Young, 1995; Bachelard, 1997).

Through these various processes today's indigenous peoples' ownership to around 14 per cent of the continent is now formally recognized (see map). In these areas they

make the primary decisions about the use of natural resources and, if these resources still exist, enthusiastically harvest bush tucker. In some areas, because of the widespread introduction of cattle grazing, agriculture and other forms of non-indigenous resource use, bush tucker resources have been heavily depleted and biodiversity loss and land degradation are obvious. People recognise this very clearly and often bemoan the destruction that has been wrought to the country their families once knew. Another important issue, as the map graphically shows, is that the geographical distribution of indigenous land is highly skewed towards the more remote arid and tropical regions. This reflects not only the effects of decades of dispossession and widespread alienation of better watered and more fertile areas, but also differences in land rights legislation between different states and territories.

In addition to lands formally granted under various land rights legislations, the Native Title legislation theoretically sets indigenous rights in a much more positive context, by enabling indigenous people to lodge claim for recognition of their prior rights over much wider areas of land, some of which has already been alienated as Protected Areas or pastoral leases. This introduces a new factor into the equation – the possibility that both indigenous and non-indigenous rights to the same area of country (including sea country) will be legally recognised. Such overlapping rights have long existed – many indigenous groups have been able to continue hunting and gathering on lands used for other purposes, such as cattle grazing, with, at least in some cases, relatively amicable arrangements between them and the non-indigenous pastoralists being established. But Native Title enshrines

these overlaps in law, with important implications in terms of possible conflicts in resource use (Young, 1999).

Land rights and harvesting the country

Land and sea rights, and variations between them, have clear implications in terms of contemporary hunting and gathering. These differ between areas where outright ownership is formally recognised; and areas where only recognition of usage rights may be possible. In broad terms areas shown on page 56 belong to the first category; examples of the second category can be drawn from many other parts of the country.

Hunting and gathering on indigenous owned country

While no contemporary indigenous groups live entirely from the natural resources of their land, subsistence hunting and gathering bush tucker makes a very substantial contribution to people's diets both in arid/semi-arid areas and in more humid regions. In Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory's Top End, for example, a detailed study in the 1980s (Altman, 1987) showed that people obtained more than 80 per cent of their protein from the bush; and a complementary study conducted in the coastal region (Meehan, 1982) showed that between 55 and 75 per cent of protein was derived from shellfish, with seasonal variations. Although desert regions are generally less well endowed with natural foodstuffs, bush foods could still provide around 75 per cent of total protein (Devitt 1988).



*Going hunting in central Australia's
Tanami Desert. Photo: The author*

Such figures are more than enough to justify harvesting bush tucker on economic terms alone. When the economic value is enhanced by the huge contribution that these activities make to social and cultural well-being and also, as I and others have discussed elsewhere (Davies and Young, 1995), to the longer term sustainability of the land through the opportunities provided for transfer of knowledge, the worth of such subsistence is very substantial. True, harvesting technology has been radically transformed – nylon fishing lines, rifles, iron crowbars, metal billy-cans, outboard motors and motor vehicles are all essential tools for the contemporary hunter and gatherer. But the inherent reasons for the activity have changed far less. Almost every hunting and gathering trip includes an element of education – older people showing country to younger people, telling stories, singing songs and passing on both ecological and cultural knowledge; and skilled hunters and foragers teaching others how to use their tools – how to wield a digging stick efficiently when you are digging up goannas or witchetty grubs, how to track animals, read the signs put out by budding and fruiting plants and where to fish (see photos). Gender divisions in harvesting bush tucker are also maintained – men usually hunt for larger game (e.g. kangaroos, emu, turtle) while women gather fruits, vegetables and smaller game, particularly lizards and snakes. And food consumption patterns also relate to the gender division – success is usually much more likely when women are collecting bush tucker because they rarely waste time on hunting for larger game that may be difficult to track; men can have totally unproductive expeditions while women obtain a wealth of different types of food. And since food distribution is closely related to the food providers, you may well eat better in the women's camp (Young, 1995).

Hunting and gathering in country where indigenous and non-indigenous rights overlap

While harvesting bush tucker makes very positive contributions to all aspects of indigenous people's well-being, the opportunities for carrying out this activity where resource rights overlap with those of non-indigenous land-holders are much smaller. Here hunting and gathering may be prohibited, or it may rarely be attempted because of open aggression on the part of the non-indigenous landholders. It is not uncommon for people to 'hide' when they hear station-owners vehicles coming; or to abandon key places, including spiritual sites, because these are also favoured by non-indigenous people.

People do, however, continue to harvest bush tucker if they feel comfortable about doing so; and the range of benefits that they gain from this are very similar to those mentioned by their more fortunate 'cousins' who have been able to resettle more permanently on their country. Thus, around Australia's seashores, coastal groups with

very limited recognition of resource rights continue to glean bountiful harvests of shellfish and catch larger fish. Inland people may be able to hunt game or forage on pastoral leases or other alienated land. And it is not only those who still live fairly close to their country who participate; others who, for some generations, have been living in towns and cities also travel out to join family in collecting bush tucker. Taking city dwelling indigenous children 'out bush' is seen as one of the best ways to help them understand their cultural heritage, and strengthen their sense of identity. Because Native Title legislation has given people legal recognition of their fundamental right of prior occupation, it has bolstered their confidence and made them more assertive when confronted by opposition and unpleasantness from other landholders.

Challenges for contemporary indigenous hunter/gatherers in Australia

Exercising rights to use natural resources for subsistence purposes is by no means easy. It poses many challenges, including the battle for recognition of indigenous natural resource knowledge, and for the application of that knowledge as an equal partner to scientific knowledge in managing resources; continued contention over exercising indigenous rights that co-exist with the rights of other stakeholders, and the dealing with the implications of this in terms of insistent non-indigenous demands for unambiguous definition of legally recognised boundaries; the problem of harvesting bush tucker sustainably when the available resources are drastically affected by intrusion of feral animals, plant invasions and other forms of land degradation; and trying to gain appropriate institutional support for the promotion of indigenous bush tucker harvesting. As yet, people have rarely been satisfied with the solutions to these battles. However some interesting initiatives have been shown, both on indigenous and non-indigenous sides. These raise hopes that much of the priceless detailed ecological knowledge of the indigenous Australians will be available for generations to come. Some of these initiatives are explored below.

Recognising indigenous ecological knowledge, and using it in resource management

Contemporary awareness of the unique fund of ecological knowledge held by indigenous peoples in Australia reflects not only greater media attention, but also the stress placed on such knowledge as a major factor fostering global biodiversity conservation and enhancing sustainability of future resource use. Gains have included an ever-expanding indigenous voice on these issues, articulated both through organisations such as land councils (e.g. B. Rose, 1995), and also through other publications

(e.g. Langton, 1998). Formal government-sponsored incorporation of indigenous knowledge into resource management has been fragmented, although Australia's best-known jointly managed national parks – Kakadu and Uluru Kata Tjuta in the Northern Territory – are widely publicised as successful models of collaboration between indigenous land-owners and scientists. Although some would question the total success of these models some interesting scientific and indigenous collaboration in resource management has taken place. Collaborative fire management and wildlife management, including planning for future reintroduction of native species, have both been incorporated into the plans of the jointly managed national parks, and mutual respect for different approaches to such problems has increased. Other more recent initiatives in the direct use of indigenous ecological knowledge in resource management have come not from government but from indigenous organisations determined to use such knowledge as a land use planning tool in combination with the more technical types of information that are conventionally applied. The Central Land Council (Alice Springs) and Northern Land Council (Darwin), for example, have pioneered such approaches, with the enthusiastic participation from traditional owners interested in sharing their knowledge and ideas with scientists. The resultant processes and plans, very different from those stemming from conventional land use planning, meet the needs of indigenous landholders much more closely (Mahney et al., 1996). Wildlife management for endangered species, such as bilbies (rabbit eared bandicoot) in the central desert, and dugong and turtle around the northern coasts, provides

another example of the integration of scientific and indigenous ecological knowledge (Davies et al., 1999). Efforts such as these all have implications for the continuing support of bush tucker knowledge.

Conflicting perceptions of resource use

Related to the recognition of indigenous resource knowledge are conflicts in indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions of how resources should be used. Fundamental problems often erupt between conservationists and indigenous groups, with the former favouring total bans on resource use, and the latter favouring continued sustainable use for subsistence purposes. Such conflicts underlie the attempts at co-management of dugong and turtle (both of which are highly prized tucker); and fire management, with indigenous people favouring regular controlled burning to allow natural habitat regeneration and keep the country from 'going to rubbish', and non-indigenous landowners, especially pastoralists, viewing all fire as 'bad'. Not surprisingly such conflicts are particularly liable to erupt when the two sets of resource rights overlap. In 1997, for example, Murandoo Yanner, then Chair of the Carpentaria Land Council in central north Queensland, was charged with violating the Queensland *Fauna Conservation Act 1974* when he used a traditional form of harpoon to kill two juvenile estuarine crocodiles for food, on land over which he claims Native Title. Not surprisingly this case drew wide media attention. Australia's federal High Court upheld Murandoo's appeal

Worlpi women with a basket of *solanum*. These desert fruits are a very good source of Vitamin C. Photo: The author



over this decision, on the grounds that, in taking the crocodiles, he was exercising or enjoying his native title rights and interests that were preserved by the Native Title Act. Murandoo's case not only illustrates the kind of confrontations with which indigenous Australians can be faced when exercising their traditional resource use rights; it is also an important test of the Native Title Act, demonstrating that the rights enshrined in the Act must be recognised in law.

Indigenous held lands may not be immune from such conflicts. Environment Australia, the commonwealth department responsible for environmental issues, has recently encouraged the establishment of a new model of protected areas, the Indigenous Protected Area (IPA). The IPA program, designed partly to enable Australia to meet its international obligations for biodiversity conservation in all natural habitats including those unique to remote indigenous-owned lands depends on indigenous groups agreeing to conservation on their own country. This has many attractions, not the least of which is the provision of more assured funding for indigenous land management activities that incorporate indigenous values. But it would not be surprising if some internal conflicts occurred, with those totally in favour of conservation finding themselves opposed by those who wished to continue harvesting bush tucker.

Resource rights, boundaries and co-existence

The issue of overlapping property rights, which has come to a head with Native Title, particularly in relation to the preservation of such title on pastoral leases, has important implications for subsistence harvesting. Legal recognition of overlapping rights has forced people to seek negotiated agreements on how their different interests can be accommodated and the complexities of this process has generated widespread non-indigenous anxiety over the security of their leasehold tenure and the economic security that comes from their enterprises. In some cases pastoralists who, in the past, informally accepted that indigenous people from whose country their leases had been excised would want to gather bush tucker, are now more wary. They are insisting on the need for 'mappable' or 'hard' boundaries – evidence of their ownership that can be marked in visible straight lines on the landscape. This contrasts with indigenous delineation of 'country' – 'soft' boundaries, invisible to those that lack the knowledge, and denoting not so much ownership as a shared kinship with the land. Hunting and gathering activities accord with these softer boundaries, and, as suggested earlier, can take advantage of their flexibility, enabling people to gather food on their neighbour's country in time of need. Such a scenario lends itself to conflict – indigenous people see no problem in harvesting on pastoral leases, or even in national parks, because they are not

harming the cattle or, if they behave responsibly, threatening conservation. Others see things differently.

Coexistence is essential for solving this problem. But, with a few exceptions, most of the adjustments needed to establish such coexistence, have come from the indigenous people who, throughout the 25 years of land claim history in the Northern Territory have proved very cooperative in reaching decisions on how to deal with the shared rights issue.

Shared rights to wildlife that move across hard boundaries, a problem that arises in Arctic regions of North America and parts of southern Africa, are less significant for Australia. Being an island continent this is inevitable. However such issues can arise in relation to marine mammals, particularly where they are affected by different national legislative systems. Dugong, for example, are increasingly managed in Australia under partnerships including indigenous owners and non-indigenous scientists and conservationists, who together recognise that the species is highly threatened, but also accept that it is a much prized food. Sustainable harvesting, combined with more effective monitoring and protection, are the main principles of such partnerships (Davies et al., 1999). But across the sea to Papua New Guinea to the north there is no such program, and checks on dugong harvesting are probably minimal.

Dealing with degradation

Contemporary indigenous hunters and foragers have also had to come to terms with degradation caused by non-indigenous mis-use of the environment. Comments about the scarcity of native animals, or the pollution of natural springs by cattle, are a feature of most hunting expeditions. And there is an overall sense that the land has been allowed to degenerate – it has lost variety in both plant and animal life, and is less healthy because of this. But, as B. Rose (1995) has documented for central Australia, people do not consistently express this loss as degradation in non-indigenous terms, using scientific and technical language that relates largely to ecological processes. For them, their failure to carry out their cultural responsibilities for country, reflecting their dispossession, is equally important.

The impact of feral animals, such an obvious sign of degradation throughout Australia, raises other complexities. Non-indigenous land managers generally view feral animals as bad. But several feral species, such as rabbits and buffalo, have, in fact, become very useful to hunter-gatherers. Programs to eradicate rabbits have not been universally welcomed because these animals have already replaced wild species that were formally important elements of sustenance. Rabbits are now 'bush tucker'. Wild cattle, horses, donkeys, camels and goats also, to some extent are now seen as part of indigenous country and people even occasionally speculate on the possibilities of 'bullocky' or donkey dreaming. Reasons for these

different perceptions are sometimes rather unexpected. In the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, for example, donkey-killing programs were contentious because people were loath to destroy an animal with such a sacred role in the Christian religion. And, moreover, people did not really see the donkeys as harmful – they 'belong to the country, like us'. Another difficult question arises in implementing programs to reintroduce threatened native species to their former homelands. Indigenous people on the margins of the desert west of Alice Springs understand the importance of protecting the rabbit-eared bandicoot (bilby), a species commonly replaced by rabbits, so that it can regenerate. But they are also delighted in the scientific program because it improves their future chances of hunting bilby for food.

Institutional support for hunting and gathering

Although the overall value of hunting and gathering is now much more widely recognised, Australian institutions, particularly government departments, have still to express this in practical terms. Suggestions for the development of subsistence support schemes, perhaps modelled on Canada's Income Security Program that supports hunting as a 'way of life', have come to nothing (Young, 1995). Instead the pendulum has swung towards the development of partnerships such as the government initiated joint-management arrangements established for an increasing number of national parks, and the Indigenous Protected Area program. However while indigenous people have benefited from such partnerships they also retain some cynicism about the true motives of such programs, and are concerned about the reality of the degree of empowerment they achieve through them. Interesting alternatives that have more local origins include some of the land management activities now practised through regional land councils and smaller local organisations. Examples include, in Cape York, the Kowanyama community's program to control non-indigenous commercial fishing on their country through establishment of shared catchment management to ensure the continuing viability of subsistence riverine and coastal fisheries; and in Yirrkala in Arnhem land, the establishment of Dhimurru Land Management, an agency designed to control non-indigenous recreational use of beaches and coastal waters and at the same time work intensively on sustaining resources valued by the indigenous landowners. Turtle have been a major focus of this project, and scientific and indigenous collaboration in turtle management is one of its major achievements.

All such developments are positive. However they still require financial support. Persuading governments, at commonwealth and state levels, to provide funding – not just enough funding, but funding that is appropriately delivered and gives the indigenous resource managers significant responsibility for determining how money will be spent – is still a prime challenge.

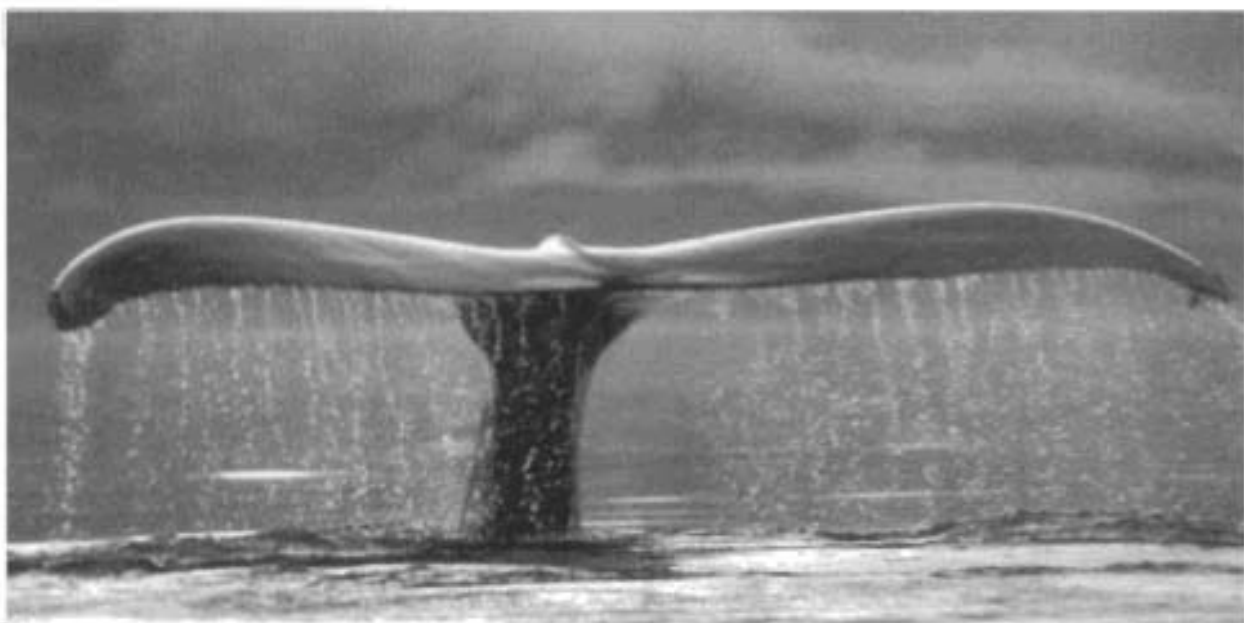
Bush tucker harvesting: the future

Predictions for the survival of the profound knowledge that supports contemporary indigenous bush tucker harvesting in Australia are relatively optimistic. Land rights, coupled with growing indigenous political activism within a global framework focused on sustainability issues, have vastly increased people's awareness of the uniqueness of these resources. But the potential contribution of bush tucker harvesting, not only to Australia's indigenous peoples but also to many others, will be undermined unless problems concerning overlapping resource rights are solved. Coexistence – sharing the land – rather than exclusion – shutting people out of country – has to be the goal.

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INDIGENOUS WHALERS AND TRADITIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE

by Tom Mexsis Happynook
Chairman
World Council of Whalers

My traditional name is Mauk-sis-a-noop, which means gray whale hunter. This name has been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years. My family comes from Cha-chu-tsi-us which is part of the Hnu-ay-ah First Nation which is part of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Group. We are located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada.

My family has been a hereditary whaling family within our tribe for thousands of years, so it is important to note that 1000, 3000, 5000 years from now there will still be a Happynook whaling family, it will never end.

The Nuu-chah-nulth

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Group, (which includes the Makah nation who are located on the north-western tip of Washington State, USA), have fully occupied, fully utilized and carefully sustained our lands, waters and natural resources for thousands of years. Our traditional governments are structured on behalf of our lands, waters and natural resources and all of our hereditary chiefs are raised from birth to be stewards of, and carry the responsibility to ensure that everything that has been bestowed upon us will be here for our people seven generations from now. To achieve this objective we consider ourselves to be relatives of all that is found within the environment. Unfortunately, we have not been able to meet this fundamental obligation for a very long time due to the oppression of our people, hereditary chiefs, traditional governments and cultural practices. Over the years many Canadian laws have been created and implemented to dismantle our traditional hereditary governments and assimilate our people.



The Nuu-chah-nulth did not have a written language, instead the histories and responsibilities of our hereditary chiefs and their families are depicted through images painted on large canvas curtains. The images that you will find on the curtains of the hereditary whaling chiefs clearly show that whales were extremely important to the cultural, spiritual, social and economic fabric of our societies. These majestic mammals were looked upon as one of the greatest gifts from the creator and are treated as such. When a whale drifted ashore or beached itself it was viewed as a sign that the creator was looking favourably upon us and it was incumbent upon us to utilize it as best we could.

For the Nuu-chah-nulth hunters the taking of any life was looked upon as the most sacred responsibility bestowed upon us. Because of this responsibility my grandfather taught me the Nuu-chah-nulth hunters had to pay dearly for that honour. This especially applied to the whalers because they hunted the greatest and largest mammal on earth.

The suffering of the whalers took many forms, hunger, pain, fatigue, months of preparation, endurance tests, spiritual tests, physical tests, bathing in ice cold water, fasting and praying just to name a few.

Why is whaling important to the Nuu-chah-nulth?

Of the many natural resources that we are blessed with in our part of the world the whale is the most important. It was the foundation of our communities' economic structure; it provided us with very valuable products to sell, trade and barter. It was our National Bank. Whaling also strengthened and preserved our cultural practices, unwritten tribal laws, ceremonies, principles and teachings; all of these elements were utilized throughout the preparations, the hunt and the celebrations. Whaling strengthened and preserved our spirituality through the discipline that the whaling chiefs exemplified in their months of bathing, praying and fasting; they taught through example. The whale strengthened our relationships with other nations and communities; people came from all around, (what is now, British Columbia and the USA), which often resulted in intertribal relationships and marriages. The whale strengthened the relationships between families; everyone was involved in the processing of the whale, the celebrations, the feasting, and the carving of the artefacts that can still be seen today in many museums around the world. The whale

strengthened the relationships between family members; everyone shared and benefited from the bounty that the whale provided to the community. Finally, it strengthened our people physically; clinical studies conducted over 25 years in the Canadian Arctic have proven that sea mammal oil is essential for good health, normal growth and assists in early childhood brain development.

Unfortunately, the protest industry is trying to convince the public that whale meat is contaminated and will kill us. The fact is, the food indigenous peoples are eating now, will kill us faster than if we went back to our traditional diets. What puzzles me is: if these people are truly environmentalists/conservationists then why are they not spending the millions of dollars that they solicit on stopping the pollution that is negatively affecting our traditional food sources. But the most important point that must be noted is that traditionally we did not suffer from obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis, rheumatism, or heart conditions. We attribute this to the fact that we ate sea mammal oil with every meal. Sea mammal oil is known by our elders to be medicine for a long, prosperous and healthy life; in those days our people were healthy and our communities were healthy.

Principles of Traditional Resource Management Knowledge

As a child I was fortunate to be raised and taught by my grandfather, 2 great grandmothers and 2 great aunts. I am still being taught by my grandmother who turned eighty-five on December 7, 1999. She was taught by her grandmother who died in 1958 at the age of 108. I am still receiving the teachings from the mid 1800's.

What did they teach me? I was taught that there is a natural law of nature which we must live by; that we are only one component in the web of life; that we are not dominant over the environment but in fact related; that we take only what we need and utilize all that we take; that everything is inter-connected and when one component in the environment or ecosystem is over exploited and then protected, the balance is lost; that people have a very important role to play in the environment which is to help maintain the balance through our relationship with the ecosystem; that one of the most important tools we have at our disposal to meet this obligation is respectful, responsible and sustainable utilization of the resources¹; and finally that we



must manage the relationship between people and the environment. Our teachings tell us that humans cannot be managed nor can the natural resources. It is the relationship between these entities that must be managed.

Cultural Bio-diversity

When we talk about indigenous practices we are in fact talking about responsibilities that have evolved into unwritten indigenous laws over millennia. These responsibilities and laws are directly tied to the environment and are a product of the slow integration of cultures within their environment and the ecosystems. Thus, the environment is not a place of divisions but rather a place of relations, a place where cultural diversity and bio-diversity are not separate but in fact need each other to maintain the balance required for survival of both the people and the natural resources.

The most important aspects of cultural diversity and bio-diversity are those that integrate people (the human relationship), with the ecosystems found within their environment. Some indigenous practices had cultural importance at the time they were being practiced, (arranged marriages, etc), but most indigenous practices, such as whaling, fishing, hunting have a much deeper ecological role. These indigenous practices maintained the balance within the environment. This is not about the morality of the indigenous practice, but rather the indigenous practice of responsibility to bio-diversity. It is from this perspective that we begin to realize that the realm of cultural diversity and bio-diversity are not separate from the environment but rather connected through our relationships with the ecosystem. This is **cultural/bio-diversity**; a practice that has been developed and nurtured over millennia; in our language 'Hishuk Tsawalk', everything is one, everything is connected.

In today's world, laws have been created around 'the human relationship aspect'. Unfortunately, these laws have established a system that leaves us outside or makes us believe that we are dominant over nature. We have even created a set of consequences for any broken human relations within this system; prisons, institutions, etc. On the other hand, indigenous peoples have lived within the 'law of nature'. It is within this boundary that our systems

of justice, unwritten indigenous laws, societies and cultural practices developed.

The Protest Industry

Over the past 30 years the environmental movement has evolved from individuals who were truly concerned about the environment to a protest industry which is now a multitude of multi-million dollar corporations collecting millions of dollars by preying on people who are unaware of the dynamics of indigenous cultures or coastal communities or our relationships to our environment and ecosystems: Cultural bio-diversity.

Over the past number of years the protest industry has been very successful in media manipulation, lobbying initiatives and misinformation dissemination. They have used the media to portray sea mammal users as unethical 'barbarians' without conscience through photography, costly newspaper ads, television segments and documentaries. As Mr. Watson of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has stated in his book *Earth Force: An Earth Warrior's Guide to Strategy*: 'A headline comment in Monday's paper far outweighs the revelation of inaccuracy revealed in a small box inside the paper on Tuesday or Wednesday' (1993:42).

One of the protest industry's most successful strategies to date has been the crusade towards 'Bio-diversity'. Regrettably, the protest industry has convinced the general public to overvalue certain parts of the environment, (whales, seals), and remove the cultural aspects, (human relationships), from bio-diversity. The result is an unbalanced environment and ecosystem. Until the cultural aspects of indigenous peoples are reinstated we will not find the compromises which will bring closure to these issues.

World Council of Whalers

The World Council of Whalers officially opened its doors as an international non-governmental organization, (NGO), on February 1997. The formation of the World Council of Whalers was in response to the protest industry. We recognized the need for an international organization who could bring the

whalers from around the world together under one umbrella, provide them with a unified voice on the international, national and regional levels, educate the general public and dispel the myths and rhetoric that the protest industry has been spoon feeding the general public through media manipulation, lobbying initiatives and misinformation dissemination over the past thirty years.

As chairman of the World Council of Whalers I am in the unfortunate position to witness all of the injustice that is being concentrated towards indigenous peoples and coastal communities around the world. Regrettably, there are a number of issues that these hunter-gatherer societies and communities face each and every day, but, the most misunderstood issue is whaling.

Global Whaling

Around the world you will find a large and diverse number of countries, indigenous peoples and coastal communities who depend on the cultural, nutritional and economic benefits that whaling provides. In most cases their traditions have existed for millennia; in all cases, concern for the continued health of the community is directly linked to the whalers' concern for the continued health of the whale stocks. Whalers of today are a far cry from the self-regulated industrial whalers of the past 300 years who slaughtered whale populations to feed a global demand for whale oil, ambergris and bone. These markets no longer exist. Today the whaling issue is about food, (food security), and in many cases may represent the difference between communities' life and death.

There are many whaling communities within countries such as Canada, the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Greenland, Norway, Russia and the Caribbean states who continue to benefit from small-scale, sustainable whaling. Some of these countries are members of the International Whaling Commission (IWC); many are not because they know that the IWC will never meet their cultural, economic and nutritional needs. Some have even chosen to affiliate themselves with smaller regional management organizations such as the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), the Inuit Hunter and Trappers Association, the Japan Small-Type Whaling Association, and the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters in Russia.

In all cases, none of these groups engage in the self-regulated harvesting of whales; indeed, many hold membership in both regional and international organizations, and are therefore subject to even greater controls. There are no 'pirate' whalers nor is there any illegal whaling.

But the most important distinction that must be made, and understood, is the difference between the self-regulated industrial whaling of the past and the sustainable commercial whaling of today.

The International Whaling Commission

In 1946 the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) was created.

Out of this convention was born the International Whaling Commission. Unfortunately, due to intense lobbying by the protest industry over many years the IWC has not even come close to fulfilling its mandate which is 'to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry' and 'to provide for the conservation, development and optimum utilization of the whale resources, taking into consideration the interests of the consumers of whale products and the whaling industry'. Even in view of this mandate it is important to put the IWC into perspective. The IWC only has jurisdiction over 5% of all whaling. There are over eighty species of cetaceans; the IWC is only responsible for the seven large cetaceans. It is also important to note that within the ICRW there is a provision for scientific research.

The Japan Whaling Association has been given the mandate by the IWC to conduct scientific research in the Antarctic. Unfortunately the protest industry would have you believe that the 'Each year the Japanese are slaughtering 440 Minke whales in the Antarctic'. What they don't tell you is that it is out of an IWC conservative stock estimate of 790,000 animals. This equates to less than 0.01% of this Minke whale population.

Japan

The Japanese whalers have been mistreated, victimized, physically abused and unjustifiably painted as the enemy by the protest industry for a very long time now, yet





their whaling traditions stretch back, unbroken, over many generations.

Currently only 3 species of cetaceans are hunted in Japan: 54 Baird's beaked whales per year, 100 Pilot whales per year, and 20 Risso's dolphins per year. Prior to the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling they also hunted Minke whales.

For more than ten years now the Japan Small-Type Whaling Association has been asking the IWC for a relief quota of 50 Minke whales for their small-type coastal whalers and their communities. To put this request in perspective they are asking for 50 Minke whales out of a local stock of 25,000 animals. The sad part to all this is that this particular stock of Minke whales has been recognized by the IWC scientific committee as a stock which could easily sustain a harvest of over 200 whales per year. The coastal whalers are only asking for 50.

There is a commercial aspect to the Japanese whaling but it should not be associated with the industrial harvesting of the past. The 440 Minke whales, which are harvested in the Antarctic, are sold at local market auctions and the revenue generated helps pay the costs of the scientific research which is conducted on behalf of the IWC scientific committee. The other cetaceans that are harvested are sold within the communities from which they are harvested. Some of it does reach other parts of Japan, but none of it leaves the country and the entire whale is utilized including the organs, cartilage, skin, meat and blubber.

Norway

Norwegian histories indicate that the people of Norway have been whalers for approximately 8000 years. They are one of the oldest whaling cultures in the world. At the onset of the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling Norway filed an objection under the rules of the ICRW. This put Norwegian whaling under the control of the Norwegian government.

The commercial whaling that takes place in Norway is a far cry from the 'pirate whaling' that the protest industry has pinned on them. The Norwegian harvest is very small. The quota for the 1999 whaling season was 753 Minke whales but due to bad weather they did not meet the quota. In view of this the Norwegian government has decreased the quota from 753 to 655 for the 2000 season.

These animals are harvested out of a combined North Atlantic stock of approximately 184,000 animals. This equates to less than 0.5% of the Minke whale population in Norwegian waters.

Over the past number of years Norway has accumulated approximately 600 tons of blubber which sits in cold storage. The Norwegians do not have a taste for blubber, but because they believe, very strongly, that the blubber should not be wasted they have no way of disposing of it. The answer of course is very simple and logical; the Icelandic people love to eat blubber but because of the Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Norwegian government cannot export the blubber to Iceland, so it continues to sit in cold storage.

Faroe Islands

Pilot whales have been an integral part of Faroese culture since 820 AD and they have kept meticulous records of their pilot whale drives since 1584. As a whole these records provide the most comprehensive, long term documenting of a wildlife population ever.

The Faroese pilot whale drive is a communal affair. When the pilot whales arrive the schools are closed and employees are allowed to leave work to participate in the pilot whale drive which is to gather food for the winter. The annual take is approximately 1000 pilot whales out of a stock of 778,000 which equates to less than 0.2% of the population.

All the Faroese are entitled to a share of the bounty. Even the Faroese who do not eat pilot whale are still entitled to their share which they can take to the local supermarket to sell. Again, there is a small commercial aspect but it certainly isn't at all what the protest industry would have the public believe.

Over the lifetime of their pilot whale drives the Faroese people had developed the most effective way of harvesting their food. In recent years the Faroese were convinced by scientists to adopt an alternative method in response to concerns raised by the protest industry. It was quickly determined, however, that the traditional method was the most humane method, and it was immediately re-instated.

Due to the geographical location, climate, isolation and the astronomical cost of importing food, the pilot whale drives are essential; whaling is indispensable.

Greenland

Greenland Inuit have been whalers for at least four thousand years. Throughout the 18th and 19th century, (like many indigenous whaling peoples), the Greenland Inuit watched the industrial whalers decimate their traditional food source. Community based whaling was re-established in the mid 20th century when small fishing vessels took small numbers of Minke, Fin, Sei and humpback whales for local consumption. In more recent times, an even smaller scale of whaling has emerged called 'collective whaling'. Collective whaling was designed to allow those living in isolated communities to sustain themselves and their communities, culturally, economically and nutritionally. In the subsistence economy of the Greenland Inuit the meat and *mattak* provide money, which is essential to the survival of the families who live in the coastal communities.

Here again the geographical location, climate and astronomical cost of importing food make whaling essential.

Russia

Currently Russia's whaling community consists of the Chukotka Inuit who are located in the Chukchi region of northeastern Siberia. The recent collapse of their established supply lines have left these peoples isolated and in dire straits. In a region where harsh winters dominate, starvation is a very real and ongoing threat. The only means they have available for the survival of their children and families is to look to the whaling traditions of their ancestors.

At a recent meeting of the World Council of Whalers, a representative of the Union of Marine Mammal Hunters was given the mandate by her people to seek assistance for the survival of their children, families and culture. What is significant, and must be noted, is that the request was not for monetary aid but instead a plea for the means to reinstate their traditional way of life by providing their sea mammal hunters with the equipment to hunt for food. They believe that this is the only way that they will survive as a people.

I am very happy to report that during the middle of November the Chukotka Inuit got a Bowhead whale. This

is significant because they now have a nutritional food to feed their children and families when no other sources of food are available due the severe climate and inability to import food.

Philippines

There are over twenty species of cetaceans found within Philippines waters. Traditional harpoon whaling occurs in a small number of communities in the south central and southwestern part of the Philippines. These hunts involve a number of village families and all the meat is sold in the village market or between families.

In light of the recent dramatic increases in certain cetacean species, the Philippine government is currently reviewing its ban on whaling.

Indonesia

Indonesian whalers hunt the most abundant cetacean species in the world, the sperm whale. The sperm whale population is currently estimated to be around 2 million. The hunt is conducted in the traditional method, whereby the whalers go out in small hand-made wooden boats and use hand held harpoons. In 1998 only 26 sperm whales were harvested. This equates to less than 0.01% of the sperm whale population. For many Indonesian peoples who live in these coastal communities the hunting of sperm whales is the difference between life and death.

Caribbean

Limited whaling is an essential part of life in communities found within Grenada, Saint Lucia, the Commonwealth of Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The short-finned pilot whale is the most widely consumed cetacean and is sold in the local markets. This harvest is small and equates to an average of 300 to 450 animals per year.

In Bequia, one of the Grenadines islands, humpback whaling is an essential part of island life and has been



going on for many generations. In recent years the number of whalers was reduced to one elderly man. This gave the protest industry a great deal of comfort because they believed that when this Bequian elder passed away humpback whaling would end for good. To the protest industry's surprise the old gentleman has been passing on his knowledge to the younger generations who are now going out on the hunts. The passing on of the knowledge will assure the local people of a reliable and abundant supply of healthy food.

In countries, such as the Caribbean states, where people have depended on the sea for centuries, these limited harvests are no threat to the whale populations, but is essential for the continued sustenance and health of individuals, families and the communities that they live in.

Tonga

In July 1999 a fisherman came upon a mortally wounded humpback whale. He immediately notified the Tongan fishery department who deemed it legal to tow the dead whale back to the capital city where word of the humpback whale spread like wildfire. In a very short time the Tongan people filled the shoreline and were waiting for a chance to once again taste a traditional food staple; humpback whale meat, blubber and oil. The last time they had tasted humpback whale was twenty-two years ago, it was clearly evident that they had not lost their taste for it.

Over the last several years the Tongan government has been gathering information to support the resumption of humpback whaling in Tongan waters; this event was very timely.

Iceland

The Icelanders are able to boast the oldest democratic government in the world: it has been in place for over eleven hundred years. In 1999 the Iceland cabinet passed a resolution to resume whaling as soon as possible. Iceland is another country where geographical location, climate and the cost of importing food dictates

that they live off their traditional food sources found within their waters.

United States of America

Although the United States played a huge role in the decimation of the whale stocks during the days of industrial whaling it now takes a very strong stance against whaling at the international level. The USA has never stopped being a whaling nation. It has always defended its obligations to the Alaskan Eskimos and only recently has finally met its 1855 treaty obligations to the Makah nation.

Alaskan Eskimo whaling is conducted from nine traditional whaling communities. A current quota of 51 Bowhead whales is hunted from two islands in the Bering Sea and a few coastal villages along the northern Alaskan coast. They also hunt Beluga whales, gray whales and sometimes Minke whales if the opportunity arises.

In the indigenous spirit of cooperation, generosity and sharing, the Alaskan Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), (a co-management/support organization for the Eskimo whalers), agreed to share their IWC Bowhead quota with the Chukotka Inuit, who in turn agreed to share their IWC gray whale quota with the Makah. Such ties between distant whaling communities may seem contemporary, but in reality clearly express the ongoing ancient trade networks and technological exchanges which have existed amongst indigenous peoples for millennia.

Canada

The whaling peoples of Canada include the Western Arctic Inuvialuit, the Eastern Arctic Inuit and the Nuuchah-nulth nations. All of these Canadian whaling peoples and their communities have the right to hunt whales. This right is protected under the Constitution of Canada, the highest law found within the Canadian legal system.

Canada ranks 3rd in the world in whaling right behind the Faroe Islands and Greenland respectively. This has created some controversy in international circles, particularly because of the limited Canadian Inuit bowhead





whale hunts conducted in the Arctic; however, science has clearly concluded that this limited hunt will not negatively impact the bowhead population.

Over the years the member states of the IWC have passed resolution after resolution against Canada, and the United States has even gone so far as to threaten economic sanctions if the Canadian Inuit bowhead hunt continues, but such threats need to be placed in context. As stated above, the Alaskan Eskimos also hunt bowhead.

Canada's refusal to reinstate its membership in the IWC clearly shows its increasing awareness of the central importance of indigenous rights, and the effectiveness of local management regimes based on science and traditional resource management knowledge.

Incorporation of Traditional Resource Management Knowledge

Recently, the Inuit have taken over control of their beluga hunt without a quota. This is a very significant development because over the past number of years there has been tremendous lip service given to indigenous peoples, the importance of their traditional resource management knowledge and their relationship to their environments.

If you look hard enough you will find wonderful words enshrined in many international conventions and declarations, but as usual that is all they are, 'words'. So, for indigenous peoples and coastal communities there are several fundamental questions that need to be addressed and supported: Is there genuine support within national and international fora for indigenous peoples and coastal communities? Do the representatives that attend these national and international fora really speak for, and represent sustainable users? Are indigenous peoples and coastal communities involved in an appropriate manner? Is indigenous traditional resource management knowledge being used in decision-making? If it is, who is using it? Is it being used properly?

As chairman of the World Council of Whalers I raise these issues because the WCW represents individuals, organizations and communities from 25 countries and these questions are inherent to all of them. In view of this, the World Council of Whalers strongly supports and promotes the concept that: *Traditional resource management knowledge must be incorporated with science and well*

founded modern resource management techniques and administered through regional regimes which include indigenous peoples and coastal communities in the decision making process.

In closing: It is extremely important that everyone is respectful, understanding and supportive of the hunter-gatherer peoples from around the world; we have a lot to offer.

Note

- ¹ The gray whale population on the west coast of North America is a perfect example of that responsibility. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans has confirmed, and other US and Mexican scientists have acknowledged, that in 1999 the gray whale stock reached the carrying capacity of their food supply which resulted in approximately 100 gray whales being found dead from starvation.

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Tom Mexsis Happynook is the Chief Executive Officer for the Natural Resource Board of the Hnu-ay-wht First Nation, and he is involved in all aspects of the health, welfare, and cultural preservation of his people, one of the Nuw-chah-nulth First Nations. As the chairman of the World Council of Whalers he is at the forefront of the effort by the world's whaling people to secure their traditional rights that are so important to the perpetuation of their individual cultures. He lives on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Canada) and is married to Katherine Ann. They have two sons and a daughter. They share their home with Tom's 85 year old grandmother. □

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HUNTER- GATHERERS OF THE GRAN CHACO



The Gran Chaco is an extensive area of plains extending across the borders of three Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. Its name, of Queshwa origin, means 'hunting place' or 'game preserve', denoting an area in which this activity is habitually carried out. The northern limits can be traced from the south of Mato Grosso in Brazil, then to the east it reaches as far as the Paraná and Paraguay river systems, to the west the sub-Andean mountains and to the south the pampas plains. It is a sedimentary plain with a number of long low hillocks. Through the hollows that are formed flow watercourses and, consequently, the areas close by are prone to flooding, forming lakes and marshlands. The region's climate is hot and tropical with high summer temperatures (up to a maximum of 50°C) and heavy rains from November to April. The main rivers are the Pilcomayo, the Bermejo and the Salado del Norte. The first two originate in the Bolivian mountains. The Pilcomayo is 1,100 kms in length with a basin of approximately 130,000 km² and the Bermejo is 1,060 kms long with a basin of 94,000 km². The Salado del Norte marks the southern boundary of the Chaco and its course runs 1,150 kms.

By Morita Carrasco

Photo by Alejandra Parillada



It is a region rich in forests and native wildlife, although a marked process of ecological degradation and growing desertification is being noted due to the impact of non-indigenous human populations which, in successive waves, have made use of the environment in an uncontrolled manner and without any rational management. In a study undertaken in 1991, it was established that the indigenous peoples living in the region had at their disposal 28 classes of mammals (including peccari, corzuela (*Mazama americana*), deer, tapir, armadillo, jaguar, puma, wolves, anteaters and rodents); 10 classes of reptiles; 17 classes of birds (American ostrich, herons, *charata* (*Ortalis canicollis*) doves, parrots, birds of prey) 21 classes of fish (shad, dorado, surubi, pacu, sandsmelt, piranha, *patí*); 20 varieties of forest honey (*lechiguana*, *moro*); and more than 70 species of forest vegetation, to which must be added 12 cultivated plants. With regard to wood, the Chaco is characterised by its abundance of hardwood trees, such as the white quebracho, two varieties of coloured quebracho, guayacan, *lignum vitae*, carob and several varieties of palm trees, along with other softwood trees of great importance to indigenous life such as the *palo borracho*, *chañar* and *jube*. All these trees can be found in the form of isolated patches of forest between which extend vast areas of pasture. Along the banks of the Pilcomayo River are reed banks where enclosures of native crops were cultivated.

The rich and varied fauna and flora of this immense forest is today in danger of extinction, despite the fact that the indigenous population continue to rely on it for their basic resources. As you penetrate inwards towards the west, the landscape becomes dryer and the soils poorer.

The collective social image that circulates, even today, in the three countries bordering the region is that of an immense and mysterious zone inhabited by savage untamed peoples, closer to animals than human beings. This image is the result of an historic construction the roots of which can be found in the 'encounter' between indigenous and Spaniards that took place in the 16th century, when it was the ambition of these latter to find the road to El Dorado, a mythical mountain where gold was said to be found in abundance. Since then the Chaco's image has been one of hostility and savagery. Throughout the colonial era, and up until the beginning of the last century, the area was the scene of many attempted conquests, aimed at converting its native inhabitants into Christians and rural labourers. These efforts were undertaken initially by religious missions and later by military campaigns that were fought until they overcame indigenous resistance.

Three broad groups could be distinguished amongst these native peoples. Firstly, those belonging to the Mataco-Mataguayo family, made up of the *Mataco* (*Wichí*), *Mataguayo*, *Iyawa* or *Chorote* and *Nipacklé* or *Chulupí*. Secondly, those belonging to the Guaikurú linguistic family, made up of the *Toba*, *Pilagá*, *Mocoví* and *Abipón*.

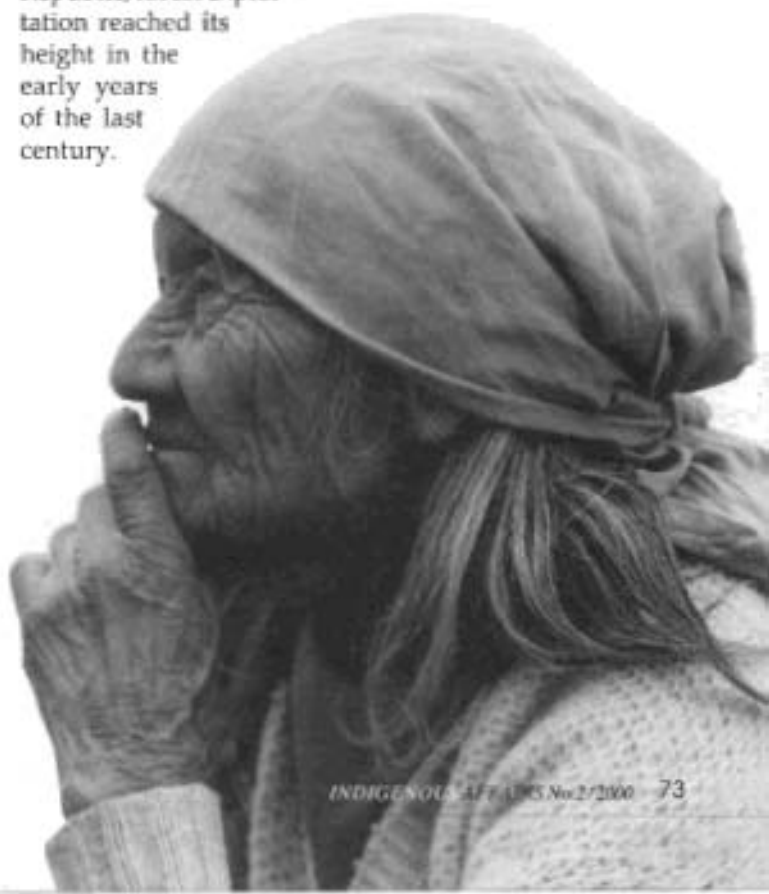
Finally, that of the *Lule Vilela*, who some authors consider to have disappeared. However, according to oral testimonies, *Lule Vilela* families still live in the Argentinian province of Santiago del Estero.

All were hunters, fishers, and gatherers of forest plants and honey, undertaking a form of exploitation that we would term 'diversified and complementary use' of the natural resources. In particular, they made use of the fruit of the carob tree. In the rainy season, they cultivated maize, beans, watermelon, melon, pumpkins and so on.

The conquest of the Chaco

In 1884, the military campaign to conquer the Chaco began in Argentina, with the aim of occupying the lands and converting the indigenous into a rural work force. Once the campaign came to an end, a system of *native reserves* was established in order to meet indigenous subsistence needs during the period when their presence in logging works or on farms was not required. Through the reserves and the religious missions, the plan for sedentarisation and conversion was complete, the indigenous being organised into nuclear settlements in the form of communities. From this moment on, the autonomy of the indigenous socio-economic system was destroyed, becoming increasingly linked to the processes of capital expansion and contraction, although their security with regard to subsistence and social reproduction remains to this day linked to the environment. Economic expansion in the region has developed on three fronts: logging, cattle rearing and industry (cotton and sugar, depending on the area).

Although it had its roots in the early days of the Republic, forest exploitation reached its height in the early years of the last century.





The tanneries captured the interest of British, French, German and national capital but it was the British company the Forestal Land, Timber and Railways Company Limited which, from 1906 on, exercised absolute hegemony in the exploitation of the quebracho tree. During the timber boom, nuclei of populations directly or indirectly depending on the activity grew up around the most important logging works. These groups demanded a high consumption of meat, and it was this that determined the introduction of cattle rearing into the area.

Cattle activity in the Chaco has been a factor of enormous influence in defining the indigenous territories and the use of natural resources. The current ranchers, called *Criollos* or *Chaqueños* by the indigenous, have occupied the territory in a disorganised and disproportionate way. In general, they are people who began as managers of farms neighbouring onto indigenous settlements and who somehow managed to form their own herds and establish themselves freely on any area of scrub land, but generally close to indigenous communities. The type of cattle rearing they use, without enclosures or pasture, means that the cattle roam freely in the open, destroying all vegetation. This does not recover and causes immense arid plains and the consequent salinisation of the soil.

For decades, the indigenous people moved for the sugarcane and cotton harvests. But the boom was brief. In the 1960s, when machines began to replace labour, the hopes of many immigrants and temporary labourers

began to dwindle, leading to more misery and the expulsion of the workforce towards neighbouring zones.

The traditional use of resources

A synthesis of the regional economic processes up to this point cannot avoid the particularity of the regional indigenous economy. Although it became linked to capitalism early on, indigenous security in terms of social reproduction has always been associated with the land and the rivers. Combining and alternating the use of natural resources and the market has led, not without contradictions, to conflict and penury, for their strategies for exploitation are diminished each year due to the destruction of the Chaco environment. The dry months of winter - April/May to August - provide fish in abundance in the rivers, lakes, marshes and watercourses. August, September and October are generally considered the most difficult months: the fish have run out but the rains have not yet arrived, preventing the appearance of forest flowers and fruits. The rainy season of summer - November to April - enables areas to be prepared for cultivation. During these months, cucurbitáceas, maize, tubers, water melon and melon are planted and harvested for domestic consumption. At the same time, forest fruits are collected; carob beans, *chañar*, jujube, *sacha sandia* and wild beans, and different varieties of forest honey are harvested. Throughout the whole year small animals such as rabbits are hunted, along with birds such as the ostrich, *churata*, and parrot etc.

This traditional use of resources, although vastly changed by the ecological devastation of the region, continues to this day, alongside the sale of seasonal labour to the neighbouring farms or settlements and the most common of temporary activities *changuero*¹ in the urban areas closest to them.

As a result of the processes of conversion and sedentarisation, these groups have today become mixed, even those groups who were previously in rivalry or conflict with each other. This is not to say that there had never been matrimonial alliances between them, or temporary alliances to fight against the *conquistadores*. And for its part, military activity between different bands or groups of relations was not unheard of. This could include revenge and recompense occurring over a period of time, in different ways thus establishing a history of political links that have survived to this day.

Ethnographically, these were quite small groups that joined together into larger groups with the appearance of fish and carob fruits. At this time, they formed groups of up to a thousand people between whom they formalised matrimonial and political alliances. There were no group leaders beyond the residential groups, and these were known by a word that today translates as chief or *cacique*. Their power resided mainly on the basis of personal



attributes, particularly skills in re-establishing the balance between intra- and inter-group relationships and their technical knowledge of the environment that enabled them to know in advance and precisely where and when to find the necessary food resources. These leaders remain more or less unchanged to this day. Even now, their power lies in 'the right word' or 'good advice', which is needed all the time. Whenever there was a problem, the chiefs of the two groups would meet to try to come to an agreement.

A brief overview of the current situation

The Chaco region is home to the greatest diversity of hunter-gatherer societies in Argentina, societies which have both individual and generic characteristics. Amongst the latter can be mentioned: a wide social flexibility that permits the fusion and fission of its social units; non-authoritarian leadership, hereditary or not; the absence of exclusive notions of land ownership; the practice of sharing - especially food - amongst relatives; and wide family and personal autonomy. Within families, financial decisions are taken independently and there exists an enormous amount of individual freedom - parents do not impose restrictions on their children and never punish them - in contrast with the search for consensus as a method of collective decision-making within the community. Political alliances are always temporary and last as long as the situation requires, later to be quite simply forgotten.

Following the above mentioned processes of colonisation and their consequent effects in terms of displacement and relocation, many indigenous people now live in fixed settlements, in rural areas or in quarters close to towns. Few are farmers although some exist by practising some kind of traditional economic livelihood, disrupted by the serious environmental degradation that has occurred in the region due to the irrational management of cattle rearing, the relentless felling of native forests and the lack of legal regulation of settlements.

A considerable number of young people move out, generally seeking to migrate to the urban areas. The successive crises in the region's agricultural and livestock economy have left thousands of workers without jobs or homes, forcing them to migrate to the towns.

Indigenous communities have emerged due to the influence of the process of evangelisation. As one elderly person said, *the people were simply collected up by the missionaries*. Families or residential groups of nuclear families from different ethnic backgrounds lived in these communities. The areas they occupy were part of the traditional dominions of nomadic groups but the vast majority of lands are now owned by the State. The communities thus find themselves in a dangerous situation of

legal uncertainty. In the province of Formosa, a process of providing community land titles began in the 1980s but the indigenous population very soon realised that the areas provided were insufficient and they are thus now demanding their enlargement. The fundamental laws of the country and of the Chaco provinces recognise the community ownership of indigenous lands. There also exist indigenist laws that prescribe the way in which lands must be provided, but the real situation of the communities is very different from that prescribed by law. The greatest demands of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco region thus focus on the struggle for titling of their traditional territories.

As one elderly leader expressed it,

'we are claiming our food, the fruits of the land. Now the best carob trees are being fenced off and we are left with wasteland where there are no fruits and it is here that we have to find our food. It is increasingly difficult. More difficult than ever. It is for this reason that we are in a hurry for the government to find a good solution for us. We are asking for a fair solution because many previous governments wanted to give us land, but not what we were asking for. They wanted to give us the tiny plots where we live and no more. And if we accept this, we will all die.'

The criteria for demarcation are not uniform, the provincial governments try to create rigid settlements with clearly demarcated boundaries whilst the indigenous organisa-



tions consider areas traditionally occupied or used, including places considered of religious or ritual importance, to be indigenous territories. But due to the long process of conquest and colonisation, these former places have changed, the communities making the most of the spaces that were left vacant after the Creole occupation. And in the vast majority of cases these were lands degraded by the over pasturing of cattle and the indiscriminate felling of native trees, with river waters contaminated from the spillage of toxic substances. For example, 6,000 indigenous people from five different peoples live in the Salta region of the Chaco: the *Iyofioja*, *Wichí*, *Tapiete*, *Toba* and *Chulupí*. They have formed the Association of Native Communities of Lhaka Honhat, whose objectives are to obtain the property title to their lands, to rehabilitate the environment, to live in peace and to be respected. The government's response to these demands has so far been one of silence.

Nevertheless, the Association continues its programme of environmental rehabilitation with the aim of demonstrating that this devastated area can be recovered if it is freed from the cattle that are still roaming its territory. Its dream is to reconvert this traditional environment into a sustainable place for all indigenous families. Until this occurs, the men and women of the Association continue to search for food over the land and in the rivers, sometimes travelling more than 30 kilometres to find something to take home. This is how one elderly Toba man put it,

'Before the sun is up, the men and their dogs have already gone. They spend all day searching, and if they find an animal at four, they'll be home by the time it gets dark with something to eat. Then it needs to be prepared. The kids are happy and there is food, maybe rabbit, and then the man is happy because he's found food for the children. There's usually fish, sometimes not. Some days nightfall arrives and there is nothing. Poor family. They have to go to sleep with their stomachs rumbling and see what tomorrow will bring.'

Their hopes for rehabilitation are based on the results that have so far been achieved in four zones located within different communities.

Other Chaco hunters are now living on lands that were sold to private individuals by the local government. They are weighed down by the possibility of expulsion and plundering of their native lands. The struggle is centred around gaining land titles by means of expropriation. Their path is that of lobbying the offices of the Provincial Legislature or the National Congress. Recently, in the province of Chaco, a territory of 140,000 hectares was handed over to the communities of the Association of the Toba Meguesoxochí People. This territory was reserved for the 'Toba of the North' by Presidential decree in 1924 and it is only in the year 2000 that its allocation has become concrete. This perhaps illustrates the level of importance given to the situation of the indigenous communities in Argentina or perhaps the State's slowness in implementing laws.

In any case, the hunter-gatherers of the Chaco region are committed to achieving better living conditions for themselves and for their future generations. Although they differ from other neighbouring indigenous peoples in the strategies through which they wish to realise their aims, they have for some time been forming organisations to represent them.

Since the reform of the provincial constitution in Chaco and Salta and the indigenous conquests in Formosa, community members have been taking an increasingly active role of involvement in issues relating to the defence of their rights and participation in affairs that directly or indirectly affect their interests. The leaders are undoubtedly facing an enormous challenge: to satisfy the current demands for improvements in daily living conditions and at the same time to begin the creation of a political programme that will enable them to articulate claims and demands that go beyond government plans and activities, without losing their identity or their autonomy to manage their own political projects.

Note

- ¹ Any type of work of a few hours per day: cutting grass, sweeping patios, clearing areas. In general they are paid not in money but in kind: old clothes, a kilo of flour, a little sugar, etc.

Morita Carrasco is an anthropologist. She is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Buenos Aires, and has among other works co-authored the IWGLA document No. 18 La tierra que nos quitaron (1996 and only in Spanish) on the indigenous peoples of Argentina and their land struggles. □





Dr
BWIRE
KAARE

1954-2000

My valued friend and colleague Bwire Kaare died on May 1st in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He had been ill since Christmas

Bwire was an exceptional man, very greatly admired and respected. He was born and brought up in rural Tanzania, obtained his BA in Sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1985 followed by his MA in 1989. For his MA he conducted research among the Hadza, hunter-gatherers in Northern Tanzania, and wrote to me to ask for copies of my papers, which I sent to him. He in turn sent me his MA thesis, which I was impressed by and encouraged him to come to the London School of Economics to take a PhD.

His PhD research was on another Tanzanian hunter-gatherer group, the Akie Dorobo. After he completed his PhD in 1996, he returned to Tanzania and took up his previous post as Lecturer in Sociology at the Dar es Salaam Institute of Finance Management. At the time of his death he had just been appointed as Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Dar es Salaam.

Bwire was both gifted as an academic and highly committed to the cause of the low status people whom he studied. His thesis and his publications on the Akie and on the Hadza are distinguished works. It is highly unusual for African scholars to work among very low status African groups, but Bwire was exceptional in this respect. I think that his research among the Akie was the first full-scale field research by any African scholar to be carried out among an East African hunter-gatherer or former hunter-gatherer group. It may even be the first such research anywhere in Africa. He was truly a pioneer in his willingness and, indeed, enthusiasm to carry out such difficult research.

He was always willing to use his knowledge and skills in the interests of those whom he studied. When they were considering new land rights legislation, Bwire addressed Tanzanian parliamentarians about the necessity of recognizing the land rights of nomadic Tanzanians, both hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. He told me that he had great difficulty in persuading them of the merits of the case he was making. Last year he organized a meeting in Dar es Salaam for some Hadza who were themselves lobbying for rights over their land. This land issue was of central importance to Bwire. He was ashamed, he told me, of the way that nomads were treated in Tanzania.

Last year both he and I were invited to talk to IWGIA's board members in Copenhagen about the position of the Hadza. Nobody who was present at that meeting is likely ever to forget Bwire's account of how some Hadza children, mostly girls, had been taken by Tanzania Assemblies of God preachers to work more than a hundred miles from their homes as almost unpaid house servants and child minders. With deep emotion Bwire told us how he regarded this disgraceful episode as a form of slavery.

Bwire was, I believe, a truly good man – brave, honest, forthright, committed to his family, friends and colleagues including the hunter-gatherers among whom he worked. The death of someone so able and so committed is a tragedy. If he had lived he would have accomplished greater things, both academic and in the field of human rights.

James Woodburn



CENTRAL AFRICAN HUNTER-GATHERERS
IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

CHALLENGING ELUSIVENESS

KAREN BIESBROUCK / STEFAN
ELDERS / GERDA ROSSEL / ETC.

ELUSIVE PYGMIES

A book review

by James Woodburn

A Review of Challenging Elusiveness: Central African Hunter-Gatherers in a Multidisciplinary Perspective edited by Karen Biesbrouck, Stefan Elders and Gerda Rossel. Research School for Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, University of Leiden, 1999.

The book can be ordered from Publications Research School CNWS, Universiteit Leiden, Nieuwenburg 1-3, PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.
E-mail CNWS@Radboud.LeidenUniv.nl, US\$25.00 + postage

Almost everything about the Pygmies of Equatorial Africa is controversial, even their name. Their biology, their archaeology, their history, their past and present linguistic status, their uses of their environment, their relationships with their neighbours, their rights as citizens of the countries in which they live, their entitlement to live as they choose in the present and to work out their own future – all these and much more evoke vigorous differences of opinion among those who have dealings with them, both local people and foreigners. There are many reasons for the strong and passionately propounded differences of opinion about the Pygmies and their ways of life. But one thing is certain. Pygmies and their ways of life are in most contexts treated as low status and are stigmatized in the countries in which they live. Ethnic status differentiation and ethnic stereotyping are interlocked. Each feeds the other. Low status magnifies negative stereotypes. And, as the history of the Romany and other travellers in Europe illustrates, where ethnic stereotyping of a low status minority proliferates, facts become hard to obtain and, even when obtained, become matters of dispute. One obvious response to low status and negative stereotypes is to be elusive – to avoid not just control and authority but also commitment, controversy and confrontation, especially in dealings with people outside one's own community. Facts about the people and their life become elusive like the people themselves.

For this and many other reasons our knowledge of the Pygmies, accumulated in thousands of publications over the past hundred years (see, for example, Liniger-Goumaz 1968 and Plisnier-Ladame 1970), is still modest. Work with them, whether it be development work or research, is never easy. Not enough of the work is yet of sufficient depth. Sadly it is still the case that very few researchers or development workers among the Pygmies appear to have become reasonably fluent in the language spoken at home by the Pygmies among whom they work. This requirement is doubly important where negative stereotypes are so strong that people are much less likely to talk openly and straightforwardly in any language other than their own. But, little by little, the situation is improving. In spite of the obstacles, we are gradually developing a much more solidly based knowledge of the Pygmies and, most importantly of all, an increasingly demythologized knowledge of their present situation. *Challenging Elusiveness* represents an important step in this direction.

What this book does, and does very well, is to bring together data and opinions of an unusually wide range of people from different disciplines who have done systematic work among the Pygmies or on Pygmy issues. The eighteen papers, fourteen in English and four in French, add significantly to our knowledge and challenge much of what we thought we knew. The aim of the colloquium on which the book is based – to bring together people from diverse backgrounds who would not normally meet each

other or read each other's works to discuss a shared interest in the Pygmies - was, I believe, successfully achieved.¹ I was, however, sad to see that the authors or editors have failed to give Pygmies an initial capital letter in English. I feel sure that this must have been entirely unintentional without awareness of the implications. Only low-status groups such as Gypsies and Pygmies are today often denied their capital letter in English just as Jews were in some writings during the anti-Semitic 1930s.

I was excited by Thilo Schadeberg's paper on the term *Batwa* which, he shows, is used in Bantu languages over much of sub-Saharan Africa apart from Cameroon, Gabon and the Congo (Brazzaville) as an ethnic term, not just an occupational term, for peoples including many Pygmies living by hunting and gathering or who have a recognized past as hunter-gatherers. There is no way that a term with this distribution could be a product of European notions and we can infer from this scholarly paper that the category 'hunter-gatherer' is not a product of European nineteenth-century evolutionary categorisation applied to Africa, but is a long-standing African category. In many cases those referred to as *Batwa* have no other external ethnic designation, so mode of subsistence can become more significant in local attribution of ethnic difference than language and culture. However, this is not true of farmers whose ethnic terms invariably distinguish them in terms of perceived linguistic and cultural differences. It is, of course, characteristic of the categorisation of stigmatised peoples by those doing the stigmatising that they are often grouped together with minimal attention to the cultural differences within the category. The term *Gypsy* is an obvious example in Europe.

Roger Blench's paper is novel and genuinely radical. Using an extraordinarily wide range of source material, he argues that, far from being the truly indigenous inhabitants of the equatorial forests who lost their languages and much of their culture after the area was colonised first by Adamawa-Ubangian and then by Bantu speakers perhaps four thousand years ago, the Pygmies are actually the same people as the invaders who came with them and developed into a partially endogamous specialist hunter group. Their smallness is, he suggests, a direct product of living and hunting in the forest and is analogous to the smallness of both forest-dwelling wild animals and forest-raised domestic animals. The argument is that smallness must provide some form of selective advantage in forest conditions for both animals and people. His argument is presented in testable form and certainly will be tested as better data become available, but I would have to say that on present evidence I am not convinced. I would attach much more importance than Roger Blench does to the fact that his view is in dramatic conflict with the opinions of the different peoples of the forest, both the Pygmies and their farmer neighbours, who almost unanimously agree that the Pygmies are quite different people

from the farmers and that the Pygmies were there first. This prior occupancy is perceived as important and is marked out in many of the most important rituals of the farmers. Of course this could be mythology, a product of thought about perceived differences between Pygmies and farmers, but the extremely widespread notion of prior occupancy, which applies not only to Pygmies but to hunter-gatherers and recognized former hunter-gatherers outside the forest, strongly suggests to me that the notion of prior occupancy has some basis in fact. Sadly the utility of Roger Blench's paper is damaged by the fact that his bibliographical references do not appear in the composite bibliography. I would urge the publishers to deal with this serious omission by printing his bibliography and including it, if necessary as loose sheets, with every copy of the book sold.

Whatever the truth of Blench's argument turns out to be, neither the Pygmies nor other contemporary African hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers are, of course, to be treated as relatively unchanged and unchanging survivors from the pre-agricultural period or even from the more recent past. In the Pygmy case Kairn Kleiman provides interesting evidence, mainly linguistic, that their societies underwent two distinct periods of historical change which coincided with changes among neighbouring farmers. Around 1000 A.D. many agriculturalist and hunter-gatherer communities linked with them began to diverge and to form new linguistic and ethnic communities, probably to establish new economic specialisations in developing systems of long-distance trade. A second major period of historical change coincided, she tells us, with the height of the Atlantic trade between about 1500 A.D. and 1700 A.D. when increased violence and demand for resources by coastal entrepôts diminished the status of primary producers including hunter-gatherers. Linguistic evidence suggests a further and final divergence from agriculturalists at the period perhaps to evade capture and slavery. The author suggests that this divergence may have been accompanied by a lowering of the status of Pygmies to its present level.

Barnard Clist presents important new data on the archaeology of Gabon some of which is in conflict with part of Roger Blench's hypothesis. Clist argues that archaeological data demonstrate that hunter-gatherers were present in forested areas before the arrival of sedentary farmers in the forest, during their arrival and after their arrival. Some were present in the Gabon forest as far back as 40,000 years ago. There is, then, no question of the use of the forest being dependent on farmer/hunter interdependence. What is not yet known is whether these early forest hunter-gatherers were short statured or have any other connection with present-day Pygmies.

The paper by Gerda Rossel illustrates how the presence of particular items of vocabulary, in this case vernacular names for crops and cultivars, in the languages of a region can be used to trace the historical movements and

changes in affiliation of Pygmy groups. She applies her analysis to the Pygmy groups of North Congo.

Stanley Frankland objects strongly to what he sees as the romanticisation of Pygmy life in the works of Colin Turnbull and other writers. He urges us to recognize that the Pygmies studied by Turnbull were not as isolated as Turnbull implies but were profoundly affected by many outside influences including tourism. He argues that Turnbull's ethnography, so widely used in anthropological teaching and so widely read by anyone interested in the Pygmies, is both selective and distorted. In its misleading claims to authenticity, it effectively denies legitimacy and meaning to the way of life of Pygmies like the Sua in Western Uganda who are particularly heavily involved in the tourist economy.

Emmanuelle Olivier and Susanne Färniss's paper on Pygmy and Bushman music is another paper which seeks to displace conventional thinking, in this case probably conclusively. In recent years it had become widely accepted that the similarities in the polyphonic music of the Pygmies and the Bushmen indicated a possible historical relationship between these groups. Olivier and Färniss succeed in showing that the similarities are superficial and that both the musical structures and the organisation of music within its cultural context are quite different in the two areas. Sadly it seems that we may have to give up any idea of a historical connection in the music of Equatorial and Southern African hunter-gatherers.

Wilhelm Dupré provides a helpful summary of Father Paul Schebesta's work on African Pygmies in four expeditions between 1929 and 1955. While the account is useful, I was disappointed that the tone is uniformly adulatory and that there is no discussion of some aspects of Schebesta's personal dealings with African Pygmies and South-East Asian Negritos which today would be regarded as reprehensible.

Mitsuo Ichikawa, in a sophisticated account of Ituri forest ecology illustrated by satellite imagery, shows how human activities can potentially improve the forest environment as a habitat for hunter-gatherers. Many of the Mbuti's most important plant foods grow best in gaps in the forest caused by trees brought down by storms or lightning but also caused by felling trees to obtain honey or to make forest camps. Agricultural peoples in the area clear land for their crops and later abandon their fields which revert to secondary forest rich in wild foods. While recognizing the danger of unsustainable rates of felling, it is important also to recognize the value of some felling for the hunting and gathering way of life. This work is also a pointer to the difficulties that could arise if conservationists seek to zone the forest into areas in which felling is permitted and conservation zones in which it is prohibited.

Justin Kenrick's paper is a welcome analysis of the central ritual of the Mbuti, the *molimo*. We know relatively little about the operation of Pygmy ritual and this paper

represents an important increment to our knowledge. Kenrick demonstrates that the *molimo* cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of Maurice Bloch's theory that the irreducible core of the ritual process in human society is concerned with legitimising domination and shows that it is here instead about expressing and experiencing fundamental shared values of equality, cooperation and sharing similar to those involved in net hunting. It is valuable to have another instance analogous to the central ritual of the !Kung Bushmen, the trance dance, in which the main ritual actors, the trance dancers, far from gaining any increment of power, wealth or status for themselves or others, are obliged to share the yield of their curing abilities with other members of local !Kung community – men, women and children – just as successful hunters are similarly obliged to share out the meat of animals they kill without building power, wealth and status for themselves or others (Lee 1984:109-13, Marshall 1969, Woodburn 1998:56-57). After discussion of the *molimo*, Kenrick develops a broader analysis of Mbuti relations with the environment, of Mbuti economy and Mbuti sociality. His presentation is intricate and ties in with long-standing debates in anthropology about these issues.

Christian Leclerc compares two groups of Medzan Pygmies in Cameroon, the most northern Pygmies in Africa. The two groups are culturally similar but one lives in the forest, the other in the savannah. The savannah community are more efficient farmers and combine to deal with invasive weeds. The forest community do not cooperate effectively to deal with the weeds but tend to neglect their own plantations and instead do plantation work for their farmer neighbours for pay. Leclerc tells us that savannah hunting in the past necessitated more cooperation and poses the question whether the greater cooperation in agriculture is a product of past cooperation in the hunt. But he comes to the conclusion that this explanation is insufficient. An additional factor is relevant. The savannah community is in an area where there are frequent markets and more circulation of people and goods, of ideas and practices. These also influence the nature of agricultural cooperation.

Karen Biesbrouck writes interestingly about the process of sedentarization among the Bagyeli. She discusses the difficulties of definition. The Bagyeli make a crucial distinction between a base camp (with rectangular huts and surrounded by agricultural fields and by fruit trees) and a hunting camp (which consists of simple huts at a site where there is good hunting). People in each base camp have several hunting camps which they can call their own and they can also use hunting camps belonging to their relatives. Between two and six months a year is usually spent in hunting camps. Biesbrouck tells us that Pygmy mobility is usually discussed in terms of the movements between base camp and hunting camp. But there are also frequent moves from one base camp to another and the whole base camp moves to a new site every four to thirty

years. She notes that those living in a base camp are not a fixed community but are simply a temporary aggregation. The units which move from one base camp to another are individuals and nuclear families. Moves from base camp to hunting camp are to a large extent to do with obtaining subsistence. Few Bagyeli cultivate enough to live on. To get access to agricultural foods they either obtain bushmeat to trade with their villager neighbours or else carry out agricultural work for them. In the 1960s the government put pressure on the Bagyeli to build their base camps along the roads. When the pressure from government eased, most Bagyeli moved their base camps away from the roads. They said that they disliked both competing for land with the villagers and other tensions deriving from constant criticism of them by the villagers. Villagers valued only agricultural labour on one's own plot as real work and treated living in the forest as unsuitable for human beings. The villagers' respect for Bagyeli appeared to be proportionate to the resemblance of their behaviour to villager standards: cultivating, living along the road, sending children to school, learning French, paying taxes and so on. Bagyeli were spoken of and treated as children, even as animal-like, and their behaviour was often contrasted with that of 'people'. It is clear that much movement here is not economic but is induced by conflicts with and disdain from farmer villagers.

Joris van de Sandt presents a perceptive comparative study of Bagyeli relations with their Fang villager neighbours in five villages where land pressure is a problem and Bagyeli struggle with Fang over land and forest resources. Relations between Bagyeli and Fang are often strained and are affected by outside factors – government policies, logging, etc. But the main factors are internal – the weakening of notional kinship ties and commitments between Bagyeli and Fang, the weakening of systems of authority and prestige in both communities, current uncertainty about tenure rules which are subject to constant reinterpretation, lack of effective means of resolution when disputes occur. He shows how the difficulties are worse in some villages where Bagyeli numbers are small, where they hold land in areas into which Fang wish to expand and where Bagyeli are stigmatized because of deficiencies in their agricultural production and because of their lack of self-sufficiency. The Bagyeli are politically weak, often seek to avoid confrontation and may be evasive and docile in dealings with villagers.

Axel Köhler's paper provides an intriguing contrast to Biesbrouck's and to de Sandt's. The Baka whom he studied are almost all settled in roadside villages in N.W. Congo. Their transition to a more sedentary, though still flexible, lifestyle seems to have been less problematic than in the case of the Bagyeli. In the area where Köhler worked the Bantu population is stable and there is no shortage of land. There is neither logging nor regular bushmeat trade to urban centres outside the area. Köhler argues that the potentially negative effects of sedentarization for the Baka

have been cushioned by the increasing isolation and marginalization of the area. Roads have deteriorated. Cocoa cash-cropping has ended and opportunities for obtaining cash are very limited. The lowering of living standards since the 1970s and 1980s is perceived by the Bantu as narrowing the gap between them and the Baka. Köhler links the willingness to settle in roadside villages to fundamental Baka beliefs and attitudes which he explores with care stimulated by the writings of Peter Wilson, Tim Ingold and Nurit Bird-David. He suggests that the Baka have 'a distinctly undivided perception of the environment the essence of which is the experience among themselves of an equivalence of all living beings' (p.209) Far from dividing themselves off from Bantu villagers, they accept greater integration, provided that there is an equivalence in social relations with the Bantu. Indeed there is a need 'to situate the current sedentarization process within an overall Baka strategy to attain full integration within national society and, in particular, to gain more respect and recognition from their Bantu neighbours.' (p.209) I am greatly intrigued by the apparent differences between the Baka case presented by Köhler and the Bagyeli cases presented by Biesbrouck and de Sandt. In the Baka case roadside settlement is acceptable. For most Bagyeli it is not. Do the Bagyeli have, as one might expect, similar inclusive beliefs and values to those of the Baka? Do the Baka have, as one might expect, the same problems with stigmatization by their Bantu neighbours that the Bagyeli do? If the two societies are similar in these respects, then perhaps we should look partly to additional political and economic factors to account for the difference. Obviously the previously mentioned abundance of land and less marked economic differentiation between Baka and their Bantu neighbours are relevant factors. But are there others? Are the sheer numbers of Baka in relation to their neighbours greater? With the weakening and withdrawal of state institutions in the Congo, was it more difficult for the Bantu to coerce and intimidate the Baka than for the Bantu to coerce and intimidate the Bagyeli in Cameroon? Are tenure rules more protective for the Baka? Are Baka more economically self-sufficient than Bagyeli?

Manuel Thuret's paper on the Aka-Mbenzele who live near the town of Ouessou in the Congo shows how Pygmies who have been settled for more than thirty years remain distinctive. In terms of their housing and their material culture they have to a large extent assimilated to villager practice. They are much involved in the money economy and even buy corned beef, sardines and vache-qui-rit cheese in Ouessou market. They are tied to villager patrons who own guns with which the Pygmies hunt for the patron. Access to guns has been a major incentive for settlement. But they continue to define themselves strongly as people of the forest rather than people of the village. Villagers recognize their superior knowledge of animals and of the forest. They remain committed to activities with

a rapid yield – gathering forest products to eat and to sell, hunting for the patron, labouring – and remain reluctant to devote much time or effort to activities with a delayed yield, especially cultivation of their own food crops.

Maryvonne Bretin-Winkelmoen provides a fascinating account of some new thinking about development options for Pygmy communities. At last we have serious attention given to notions which go beyond the conventional provision of ordinary education, ordinary health facilities and ordinary agricultural training, all implicitly or explicitly tending towards the elimination of occupational and cultural differences between Pygmies and their neighbours. Such conventional provision, based on models drawn from services designed for sedentary populations, may either be rejected by the Pygmies themselves or lead to their long-term dependence on those providing the services. What is needed is for the Pygmies themselves, researchers and developers to together think out and test new paths for enculturated Pygmy self-development. The starting point has to be a recognition of continuing social and cultural differences between Pygmies and their sedentary neighbours.

Most Pygmy societies clearly fall into the category of societies which have what I have termed immediate-return social systems. In these societies most people most of the time deploy their labour to secure immediate yields. The production cycle is short-term. Production is followed by immediate consumption rather than by storage or investment for the future. This orientation to the present is linked with an emphasis on obligatory sharing, on equality and on freedom of movement (Woodburn 1979; 1982). The whole social and cultural orientation to time and to space is, as Bretin-Winkelmoen points out, quite different from that of sedentary farmers. It is striking that these practices and values tend to persist even when much else changes. In spite of ever-increasing pressure on Pygmies to become self-dependent farmers, again and again it is reported that they prefer instead to work for others and to be rewarded with frequent payment even when these payments are meagre and even when in such work they are treated as inferiors. There are obvious advantages in immediate yields. People can, potentially at least, withdraw from oppressive situations without serious material loss and they can retain their sense of freedom to live and work where and with whom they choose. The problem for the Pygmies, as for other peoples with immediate-return social systems, is that these values and practices make it easy for other people to steal their land and to stigmatise them (Woodburn 1995). Bretin-Winkelmoen suggests that Pygmy self-development, supported by development agencies, might be approached through a system of short-term contracts – which she sees as their privileged relational mode in their dealings with ‘the exterior’ (p. 263). She stresses the central importance of recognizing and valorizing the richness of Pygmy cul-

ture and of Pygmy knowledge in the process of enhancing their position in society. I think that this is a particularly thoughtful paper with much value for those concerned about the future for the Pygmies.

Dorothy Jackson provides a splendidly clear and well-focused review of the impact of internationally financed projects – for roads, for logging and for oil – on the land rights and the resource use of forest-dwelling indigenous communities in Equatorial Africa. She discusses important and continuing international initiatives to define and to protect the rights of forest dwelling communities and to constrain breaches of these rights especially when these breaches occur in internationally financed projects. She highlights the fact that governments in Equatorial Africa usually treat forests as state property and deny or override most of the rights of forest communities. Forest hunter-gatherers are particularly vulnerable to dispossession and Dorothy Jackson discusses the newly created indigenous organisations of hunter-gatherers and dispossessed former hunter-gatherers working on their own behalf. She reviews the international laws which now recognize indigenous peoples’ rights to self-determination, to representation through their own institutions and to control over their own lands and resources. The struggle ahead is to get these rights applied by international companies and agencies as well, of course, as by African governments and local elites.

In his paper Espen Waehle takes as his starting point Jerome Lewis’s and Judy Knight’s book *The Twa of Rwanda* (1995) which shows how the very small Twa Pygmy minority in Rwanda who constituted no possible political threat to anyone suffered disproportionately in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. A higher proportion of Twa died than Tutsi or Hutu but, because of their low status, they died almost unnoticed. Although, as far as is known, no other Pygmy groups have been subjected to such genocidal attacks, there are striking and worrying parallels with these other groups which suggest to me that all are potentially vulnerable in times of extreme political turmoil. Waehle shows how all suffer from negative stereotypes, all are vulnerable to theft of their land, all have less access to education, health and other state-provided facilities than most other citizens, all are denied the political opportunity to negotiate their own choices of development options. Waehle provides additional valuable discussion of the political application of the term ‘indigenous’ and how it may be used in the struggle for rights by stigmatised African groups including the Pygmies. In his introduction to this book, Waehle stresses that it is not inevitable that Pygmies will become even more impoverished and marginalised, but there certainly is a grave danger that this will occur.

The title of this fascinating book is curiously ambiguous. The nature of Pygmy culture, society, history and development is certainly elusive – not easy to define and charac-

terise, not easy to be sure about. Is the title suggesting that the various authors are challenging this elusiveness, are seeking to tie it down or does it instead refer to the Pygmies themselves? Are they challenging us with their elusiveness? I prefer this second interpretation. What seems particularly challenging to many outsiders, both Africans and others, is Pygmy present orientation – their concern with the immediate rather than with the past and the future. Many Pygmies, and many members of other African hunter-gatherer and former hunter-gatherer societies, have the ability to live each day as it comes, to enjoy a short-term world with much freedom of movement and with few long-term commitments. Orientation to the present, which tends to be disconcerting to outsiders, is highly political and greatly valued. It is also sensible and meaningful in their situation and needs to be treated with respect. It is perhaps this orientation, more than anything else, which contributes to the perception of them as elusive.

The papers in the book indicate a paradoxical situation. The evidence of these papers strongly suggests that whatever their present way of life, Pygmies tend to identify strongly with hunting, with the forest and with knowledge of the forest. Yet, at the same time, they appear in most areas to be spending an ever-increasing amount of time in villages and an ever-diminishing amount of time in forest camps. When in the villages, there is evidence of assimilation to villager custom in a number of respects – in house style, in tools and equipment used, in dress, in willingness to carry out some agriculture – but evidence of rejection of assimilation in a number of other respects, most notably in a lack of willingness to carry out agriculture in a planned and systematic way in order to obtain yields comparable to those of villagers and which would provide something close to self-sufficiency in basic agricultural foods in most years. We are told that almost everywhere farming is not a problem for the Pygmies, but planned, systematic and ultimately successful farming is very problematical even where Pygmies are living all year in villages. We do not need to look far for an explanation for the reluctance to adopt a fully agricultural lifestyle. It lies in the continued sense of identity as hunters and with the present-orientation which is strongly associated with life in the forest.

I have thought it worthwhile to give this long review of the papers in this book in order to try to bring out the richness

and the stimulating character of these contributions. Nobody seriously interested in the Pygmies or indeed more generally in the current political and economic situation of African hunter-gatherers and former hunter-gatherers could fail to benefit from close study of this material. For those concerned with the future of the Pygmies, there is much to think about here. We have a great deal of evidence in this book that the Pygmies are changing and adapting as they have always changed and adapted. But there is also a sinister negative trend. In many places the escalating scale of theft of their land and the dramatic reduction of their options to develop a changing way of life which they find reasonably satisfactory are evident. Political means, national and international, must somehow be found to prevent further humiliation and impoverishment and to give them continuous opportunities to work out their own futures for themselves.

Notes

- ¹ I should say that my comments here are not entirely detached or neutral. I was a participant for part of the colloquium held in Leiden at which the papers in this book were presented and discussed but had to leave early because of teaching commitments in London. I presented a paper but could not offer it for publication because it was already in press elsewhere (Woodburn 1997).

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Severin Cécile Abéga



PYGMÉES BAKA

LE DROIT À LA DIFFÉRENCE



INADES FORMATION

PYGMÉES BAKA LE DROIT À LA DIFFÉRENCE

A book review
by Karen Biesbrouck

PYGMÉES BAKA; LE DROIT À LA DIFFÉRENCE

By Séverin Cécile Abéga

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The staff of development projects aiming at Baka hunter-gatherers in southern Cameroon often sighs: 'We explained things so well to them, but they do not understand.' The motto of this book, on the contrary, is 'We do not understand them.' Therefore, the main aim of this book is to facilitate the establishment of an effective dialogue with Baka; it addresses an audience of people working in the administration, NGOs, the mission, and donor organizations.

Abéga, the author, is an anthropologist at the Catholic university of Central Africa (UCAC) and his endeavour is to come up with solutions, or codes, for the problem of the communication with Baka. In doing so he leans heavily on the Action-Research and Training department of INADES at Yaoundé, and those readers privileged enough to know Maryvonne Bretin-Winkel-molen, who manages this department, will immediately recognise her influence throughout the book. The objective of this department's Baka project is to allow Baka to express themselves and be understood, to be recognized as a minority, and to find a road towards development while taking their culture into account. It is also this very same organization that distributes the booklet.

About the book

The first three chapters constitute a miniature ethnography of the Baka. Without underestimating his audience, Abéga provides a nice overview of the information readily available on the Baka. He deals with Baka social organisation and religion, and with their economic activities including Baka involvement in exchange and trade. He then comes up with a near complete overview of all the activities aimed at Baka development by the Cameroonian state and numerous non-governmental organisations. These projects' main focus is on sedentarisation and the stimulation of agricultural activities, also in view of reducing Baka dependency on Bantou farmers. The more interesting part of this section is Abéga's description of the ways in which 'development' announces itself on the Baka doorsteps: the road - with various manifestations of accessibility -, western-style health care, and Christianity.

Turning to what he calls 'Baka culture' the author, who already in his introduction honestly admits that there is no easy blueprint for effective communication, chooses to deal with a number of key issues (space, time, mobility, work-ethos) that definitely play a role in interactions between Baka and outsiders. In my view, it is a pity that at this point Abéga does not include some appropriate Baka quotations, or some descriptions of concrete interactions. These would definitively have made his text more lively and familiar for his audience.

He sets off by revealing the importance of forest space. The forest is an area where Baka feel themselves at home

and safe, a place where God provides them with the products necessary for their survival. Nowadays, however, poachers and logging companies also take their share of the forest, thereby fundamentally changing its character.

Next, Abéga contrasts Baka cyclical perceptions of time with the linear ones that commonly underly the planning by development agencies. He explains that Baka forms of cooperation are usually only temporary, dissolving after the accomplishment of that specific task.

Spatial mobility allows Baka to make use of vast stretches of forestland, and their egalitarian social organisation is designed to suit this. In the process of sedentarisation, Baka life has come to alternate between that in the base camp and that in hunting camps. Development agencies, however, usually act based on assumptions as to the permanency of residence and to the presence of a permanent leader who can represent the group.

Apart from hunting and gathering for their survival, Baka rent out their labour force to do heavy jobs for neighbouring farmers and commercial enterprises. Often, their remuneration is unfair and Baka subsequently, and without further announcement, refuse to show up. This makes these outsiders value Baka work-ethos rather negatively. Even development agencies have to deal with this Baka 'policy of the empty seats'.

In fact, the book can also be seen as a roundabout way of promoting the 'contract approach' such as developed by INADES-Formation. This contract approach, according to Abéga, will provide a suitable format for communication with Baka on developmental issues. In the last chapter, he gives some rough clues as to the attitude with which to approach Baka, and to the phasing of decision-making. He also states that Bantou farmers have to be taken into account too, if only to prevent them from sabotaging the cooperation between the development agency and the Baka. But that's where it ends: descriptions of experiences in working with this contract approach are dearly lacking, and so are the lessons learnt.

What makes this book special?

In general, I appreciated Abéga's attitude towards Baka. His formulations and choice of topics shows his engagement, without him ever getting pedantic.

Yet I particularly liked the book for its more philosophically oriented questions and remarks. Let me explain this by giving an example. Towards the end of the book, Abéga indicates how conventional agencies (state, mission, NGOs) each judge Baka by aspects of human behaviour that are crucial to these outsiders: being a full-fledged citizen, a good Christian and having an open attitude towards 'development'. Abéga then touches the sore spot: '(...) they seem to force Baka to make a choice, by making the latter understand that they have no alternative. Well,

these choices imply abandoning things that are familiar, leaving behind part of one's identity, and all this in order to arrive at something new of which one cannot yet oversee the consequences. A refusal will only lead to increased pressure.'

Which fundamental questions remain after reading the book?

It is somewhat tricky to discuss a book and then point at questions it did not answer, but let me take the plunge. In view of Abéga's philosophical remarks, I hoped he would come up with a reflection on the framework within which we should see the book and the contract approach to Baka development. Are Baka actually needy and unhappy? Just what are development projects, including those by INADES, doing? Has the complex of development projects not become a kind of business? Projects more or less hamper each other nowadays in getting at these hunter-gatherers, and sometimes the word 'coordination' appears to be just a euphemism for 'competition'. Bagyeli hunter-gatherers in the western part of southern Cameroon are about to be driven crazy nowadays by all these projects each asking them for the direction into which they want to develop themselves. Bagyeli patiently participate in these meetings, and some of them voice their views over and over again. Each time there is hope that *this* project will get them some tangible results, but it is usually followed by deception. It may well be that such is not the case among the Baka, yet this type of questions remains to be answered.

Did the book arrive at its goal?

The aim of the book was to create a basis for better communication with Baka. A reader then expects to get information that more or less allows him to put himself in a Baka position. This projection is a precondition for good communication. Abéga's text, however, does not succeed in picturing Baka as people of flesh and blood. The reader remains an outsider, but perhaps it is better this way. Inscrutability may well be one of the last resorts for Baka to keep control over their own lives. His book may well be entitled '*The right to be different*', but I am convinced that Abéga consciously chose to respect the Baka's right to preserve their secrets and privacy.

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