INDIGENOUS
AFFAIRS

IWGIA

content

Cover photo: Anette Palm-Wigardt

CONTENTS

IWGIA joins celebration for the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

On the 13th of September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly, the highest body of the United Nations system, in an historic session adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, after more than 20 years of intensive negotiations between nation-states and Indigenous Peoples.

The vote won with an overwhelming majority in favour, 143 with only 4 negative votes cast (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Columbia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa, Ukraine). Indigenous peoples from around the world, many of whom have worked tirelessly for the adoption of the Declaration since its inception, were present to witness its passage at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Declaration adopted by the UN General assembly recognises the wide range of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. Among these are their right to self-determination, use and control of lands, territories and other natural resources, as well as their rights in terms of maintaining and developing their own political, religious, cultural and educational institutions along with the protection of their cultural and intellectual property. The Declaration highlights the requirement for free, prior and informed consent, as well as indigenous peoples participation in activities of any kind that have an impact on them. The Declaration also provides for fair and mutually acceptable procedures to resolve conflicts between indigenous peoples and States.

The adoption by the General Assembly of this long-awaited human rights instrument is a great collective achievement, after over twenty years of work by government representatives and

Indigenous leaders working in close collaboration. As Les Malezer, Chair of the Global Indigenous Peoples' Caucus stated in his statement to the UN General Assembly on the 13th of September "The Declaration does not represent solely the viewpoint of the United Nations, nor does it represent solely the viewpoint of the Indigenous Peoples. It is a Declaration which combines our views and interests and which sets the framework for the future. It is a tool for peace and justice, based upon mutual recognition and mutual respect."

The real challenge ahead is now its practical implementation. IWGIA calls on all States to seize the historic opportunity presented by adoption of the Declaration to enter into a new relationship with Indigenous peoples based on the commitment of States and the whole international community to protect, respect and fulfil indigenous peoples collective and individual human rights without discrimination.

Subscribe to IWGIA's publications - 2007

SUBSCRIPTION RATES	INDIVIDUALS			INSTITUTIONS		
	Overseas	Europe	Denmark	Overseas	Europe	Denmark
	US$	EUR	DKK	US$	EUR	DKK
Indigenous Affairs / Asuntos Indígenas	35.00	27.00	200.00	45.00	36.00	265.00
The Indigenous World / El Mundo Indígena	30.00	24.00	175.00	40.00	32.00	235.00
Books / Libros	60.00	47.00	330.00	80.00	63.00	445.00
Indigenous Affairs + The Indigenous World Asuntos Indígenas + El Mundo Indígena	65.00	51.00	375.00	85.00	68.00	500.00
Indigenous Affairs + The Indigenous World + books Asuntos Indígenas + El Mundo Indígena + libros	125.00	98.00	705.00	165.00	130.00	940.00

Migration is a global phenomenon affecting ever greater numbers of people, many of whom often migrate very long distances. Current migratory processes are massive and global in nature, sometimes involving whole countries or regions. Indigenous migration forms a part of this process, sometimes the most important part if a majority of the migrants are indigenous.

The articles in this issue of *Indigenous Affairs* bear witness to various aspects of the phenomenon of indigenous migration, its features and the processes it involves. Above all, however, they offer an insight into the way in which these people experience their migration. Its aim is not to examine migration in detail but rather to offer individual snapshots of indigenous migration as it takes place in different parts of the world.

The causes of indigenous migration are many. Poverty or a lack of land resulting from the growth in size of the communities' populations, external pressure on the communities' natural resources, depletion of resources such as water or animal fodder, droughts, natural and environmental disasters, armed conflict and forced displacement are all causes, as is the increasing dependence of local economies on external trade circuits, as this leads to a monetization of their economies and the local labour market.

The massive scale of migration and its root causes are thus setting a global scene of deterritorialized communities, establishing human groups which, for one reason or another, are losing or have lost their links with their ancestral territories, inhabited since time immemorial. This is particularly the case in migratory processes that involve a break - often a violent one - with their native territories, such as forced displacements due to war, drugs trafficking or policies of genocide and extermination, as in the case of Guatemala.

Pressure on the communities' natural resources is also causing population movements and forced migrations. Many communities are pressured into such displacements because governments and states ignore their special rights to natural resources such as forests, water and subsoil. Such is the case of the indigenous migration from the Cordillera region in the north of the Philippines, as noted in Flora Belinan's article. This situation is widely repeated across the world.

This abandonment of their territories also has its roots in the environmental crisis that many countries are experiencing. In these cases, migrants leave their land because it can no longer provide sufficient resources for their survival. This is the case of the Mbororo in Cameroon and the indigenous pastoralists of Kenya. Both the Mbororo and the Kenyan pastoralists can no longer feed their livestock because of the scarcity of land and its poor quality and so they are forced to leave for the city where they encounter problems in adapting and difficult living conditions.

However, deterritorialization is also giving rise to processes of reterritorialization and transnationalization among indigenous people and communities. It is clear that, in many cases, migration entails a separation and a breakdown of community ties and yet, as some of the articles in this issue demonstrate, there are many experiences that show that migration is also a process by which the native community, through its migrant members, becomes a part of a chain of discontinuous spaces and different social experiences.

But migration and the consequent creation of intercultural interaction and contact leads not only to discrimination and exclusion. Some of the articles show that the migration of indigenous peoples has become a process that enables a reaffirmation of identity through new intercultural learning and experiences. Migration brings individual and collective experiences together that are often decontextualized from the native communities but which manage to organise around a reaffirmation or re-creation of identities.

Similarly the cities are not always synonymous with hostility; they are also spaces in which new social bonds are built. As Frank Sejersen shows in the case of Greenland, urban centres form a key setting for cultural creativity and production between Greenlanders and Inuit in general. Migration therefore implies new challenges for the adaptation of indigenous identities, which are moving towards spaces of greater multiculturality.

Migration also forms part of a family strategy by which particular community members and families are intended to provide continuity to the community

project. Migration enables new bonds and forms of community attachment to be constructed, creating a process of continuity and change. This is why, for some indigenous peoples, migration has become a process of "successfully adapting" to globalisation. Such is the case of the Kichwa-Otavalo people of Ecuador, although their situation is not without its problems given that the centrality of migration to this group's economy has introduced new dynamics of socio-economic differentiation that have an impact on the native communities.

Migration concerns not only individuals or individual experiences of moving in search of better living conditions. It is generally a question of whole families and even whole communities and ethnic groups that have accepted migration as a way of surviving and adapting to the new conditions imposed by globalization. For indigenous peoples, this pattern of spatial mobility is nothing new. Since time immemorial the Mapuche in Chile, for example, have moved within their territories and within adjacent national and international spaces, now living in large numbers in the country's capital.

The nature of indigenous migration in a globalized context raises a series of questions as to the future of indigenous peoples and their native territories, as well the conditions they face at their destinations. These questions are also linked to the role states must play both in tackling the causes of migration and addressing the living conditions of urban migrants. There is also a challenge facing the international human rights framework in general and that of migrants and indigenous peoples in particular, as these need to be adapted to the new conditions of the world's indigenous peoples. One basic principle must be that the rights of indigenous peoples are applicable to all members, regardless of where they live. Cities must also be viewed as multicultural spaces and not as areas hostile to diversity.

Alvaro Bello M.

Philippines - Photo: Hanni Hammerlund

Alvaro Bello M.

INDIGENOUS MIGRATION IN CHILE: TRENDS AND PROCESSES

Introduction

The migration or displacement of people from one place to another is a phenomenon and process that has been occurring among indigenous peoples for centuries. Over time, indigenous displacements have taken place in Chile outside the framework of nation states as well as within them or influenced by them. So although mobility may be a specific feature of these indigenous peoples, the conditions under which these movements occur must also be taken into account. The current importance of migration to indigenous peoples must be considered in particular, with economic migration – caused by a decline in local and community economies, a scarcity of land and the subordinate political, social and cultural status of indigenous peoples - representing a fundamental break with the greater autonomy of the past.

The large indigenous territories are thus being transformed to service a resource extraction/primary export economic model. The forestry sector is one example, with more than a million hectares of exotic tree plantations producing cellulose in the south of Chile, and the expansion of the large mines in the north is another. These are changing the nature of migration, along with the links between communities and urban areas and the socio-political demands related to these processes.

This article will describe and analyse the main trends and processes involved in the indigenous migration in Chile, with particular focus on the Mapuche. It will establish a number of factors of continuity and change in the indigenous migrations, from a perspective of greater breadth and diversity.

Indigenous migrations:
specific moments and general trends

The current migratory processes of indigenous peoples in Chile are more or less following the same parameters as in other Latin American countries. The only exception is the fact that a large part of the migration is taking place within the national territory, probably due to the country's relative isolation, and other historical and sociological reasons. In line with the processes occurring in other Latin American countries, indigenous migration in Chile has therefore been linked to two key factors: access to and control of the land and natural resources of the ancestral indigenous territories and the modernisation processes that have been affecting rural parts of the country since the 1940s.

Indigenous migration is thus just another component of internal migration and tends to fluctuate over time, sometimes in line with the rest of the population, sometimes not. The main problem in studying indigenous migrations, however, continues to be the availability of information and the approach to take when tackling the issue. In the first case, it has only been in recent years, particularly with the 1992 and 2002 population censuses, that a disaggregated database has been available with which to distinguish the trends, volumes and features of indigenous migration in Chile. Prior to this, studies into indigenous migration were based on partial censuses, historic studies, ethnographies and qualitative data in general which, despite offering useful information on particular migratory moments or periods, did not enable the magnitude of the processes, their quantification or different waves over periods prior to the 1990s to be assessed. To this day there is thus still the challenge of bringing knowledge of the movements of Chile's indigenous population back on track so that it is possible to shed light on the different processes and their different causes and consequences over time. This leads us on to the issue of approaches, perspectives and emphasis when analysing indigenous migrations.

A global study of indigenous displacements must distinguish between the different migratory processes that have taken place over time, including those population movements in the context of nation states and those that took place during the indigenous peoples' period of "independence" which, in Chile's case, lasted until the end of the 19th century. Population movements caused by the people's "own" (or relatively autonomous[1]) economic, political and cultural dynamics, for example, along with the Mapuche movements to the Argentine Pampas up to the 19th century therefore have to be distinguished from the economic migrations now being caused by the country's modernisation processes, which are taking place in a context of neocolonialism and internal colonialisms (Valdés, 2007). Forced displacements that occurred as a product of the new territorial and political orders brought about by nation states through the establishment of borders and boundaries, both national and international, land policies, natural disasters or epidemics must also be distinguished from movements created by the new economic conditions, which have dislocated the territorial communities. It is this latter phenomenon that has pushed the community members into sea-

sonal or permanent migration, a situation that can be seen more clearly from the mid-20th century on, in both the north and south of the country.

The lack of information or studies enabling an analysis of the more historic migratory processes makes it difficult to distinguish between the different modes and causes of migration over time. However, it is possible to deduce some key moments in indigenous spatial movements in Chile from the available ethnographic and historical information. Older census information can also be used, such as partial population records (Gundermann, Vergara and Foerster, 2005).[2]

Indigenous migratory processes in the north of Chile

In terms of northern Chile, there are various studies that bear witness to the migratory processes of the peoples of the *altiplano,* such as the Aymara, Quechua, Linkan Antay and Colla. Some of them are linked to

Photo: Pablo Díaz - Periódico Azkintuwe

transhumance imposed by cattle-rearing activities following the Spanish Conquest. Such activity continued over long periods of time until the national borders were established following the War of the Pacific, which brought Chile, Peru and Bolivia into conflict. In some cases, this dynamic lasted throughout the 20th century, although with growing difficulty in terms of transnational movements. The current migration of peoples from the Chilean *altiplano* began, according to Gundermann (Informe de la Comisión, 2003: Section I, p.27), some forty years ago, with ebbs and flows in the northern and southern *altiplano*. Migration from the valleys, meanwhile, dates back much further, beginning in the 1930s as a consequence of the impact of the saltpetre crisis on regional economic activity (Idem).

For Chile, the War of the Pacific signified the annexation of vast areas of Peru and Bolivia, territories where the most stable population was made up of the indigenous peoples. Both the war and the process of integrating into the new national situation deeply affected indigenous ways of life, their territories, settle-

ments and spatial mobility. The impact of these changes can be appreciated if we consider that this integration took place alongside a process of modernisation and capitalist expansion, through the mining of, first, saltpetre and, later, copper.

In the case of the Aymara, the population dynamics from 1880 onwards began to be marked by the Chileanization campaigns conducted by the authorities, particularly during the first three decades of the 20th century. These were aimed at increasing and marking out the sphere of influence of Chilean national identity in areas and territories that had previously belonged to Peru. This situation became more acute around 1929, when Tacna was reincorporated back into Peru and Arica annexed permanently by Chile following a referendum. The Chilean state's strategy thus contributed to breaking the links between the populations of the *altiplano* and the inhabitants of border areas with Peru and Bolivia. This situation was, albeit in a different way, repeated at the time of the border conflicts between Chile and Bolivia during the military dictatorship of Pinochet (Informe de la Comisión, 2003 and Gundermann, 2001).

On the basis of the new economic dynamics that arose from mining activities adjacent to the Andean communities and the pressure from population centres along the coast such as Arica, Iquique and Antofagasta, the rate of migration increased throughout the twentieth century, particularly from the 1970s onwards. Trade routes linked to a market-oriented agricultural economy introduced new forms of spatial oc-

cupation and put pressure on the highland Andean populations to migrate from the countryside to the city, with a consequent relative depopulation of their historic settlements. The use of the valleys as a basis for the agricultural economy, founded on greater demand from the cities, created dynamics and flows that linked spaces such as the city - where agricultural products were sold - with the valleys - where they were produced - and the *altiplano*, where the ancestral communities continued to exist. The corporated communities tended to become diluted into a group of new settlements very often interconnected amongst themselves, and between which the population moved on a daily or seasonal basis. The development and persistence of these processes over the last fifty years has pushed the Aymara population towards urban areas, such that most of them now live in the coastal cities.

Factors in Mapuche migration to the cities

In the case of the Mapuche, the establishment of the national borders and a situation of neocolonialism from 1883 onwards meant the end, in relative terms, of free movements between the nearest territories and through the Andes, at least as they had taken place up until the campaigns conducted by the nation states. "Mapuche country" thus found itself limited to clearly marked out and controlled areas, while the rest of the old Mapuche territories fell into non-indigenous

Photo: Wladimir Painemal - Periódico Azkintuwe

hands, with ownership mapped out on the basis of European and national settlement, spontaneous occupation, the establishment of towns and villages, the opening up of roads and railway lines and the administrative demarcation of the Chilean state. The period 1883 to 1930 was thus a time of constant and traumatic movement on the part of the Mapuche population. On the one hand population displacements were occurring as a result of military action, both in Chile and Argentina and, on the other, the policy of "southern ownership" that was being established in Chile led to the movement of large numbers of people between indigenous areas. The establishment of European settlements meant that people were displaced, and they had to move to other areas inhabited by the Mapuche, causing intra-ethnic tension and different adaptations that disrupted the territorial, social, economic and cultural structures of the Mapuche people.

From 1883 to 1910, the Mapuche territory was the setting for a number of migratory processes, from internal migrations caused by epidemics and forest fires that affected vast areas of the former indigenous territory to cross-border migrations to Argentina. In the mountainous regions of Araucanía and Valdivia province, such as Panguipulli, Villarrica, Cunco and Melipeuco, population movements took place towards the neighbouring Argentine provinces of Neuquén and Santa Cruz. A significant segment of this population was to return in subsequent years, par-

ticularly following the stabilisation of the Mapuche situation on both sides of the Andes.

In any case, the occupation of Mapuche lands by settlers and occupiers did not put an end to indigenous cattle trading, or to commercial trade in general, and the border at Araucanía became a porous line. Mapuche contact between Araucanía, Neuquén and Santa Cruz thus continued throughout the following decades. Despite the effects of the military occupation, the Mapuche continued to trade cattle both among indigenous populations and with the new inhabitants of the Pampas, particularly settlers and occupiers, as these people could not access products of the kind made by indigenous people, such as articles made of silver, wool and leather, in any other way.

In spite of everything, the persistent desire of the Mapuche to continue their way of life, linked for centuries to the territories of the Pampas, led to a harsh military policy of controlling the mountain routes and passes. In addition to mountain forts, the authorities put in place a range of measures such as the movement of indigenous border peoples, a ban on the movement of indigenous-owned cattle and the establishment of sanitary barriers. All these measures ended up destroying the cattle-rearing base of the Mapuche economy, particularly for those groups living in the mountains and for whom this was their only source of food and money (Bello, 2004).

In subsequent years, the Mapuche migration from Chile to Argentina followed a different course. A seasonal labour force migrated temporarily while, for some, it was a permanent migration. The former was linked to work on ranches and fruit plantations. Migration for the apple harvest, to work on cattle ranches and in market gardening had been common since the 1940s. This kind of migration affected primarily the communities situated on the Chilean border, adjacent to the mountain passes, but stories of this kind of migration can also be found in the coastal communities and those of the Araucanía central valley. A significant proportion of those who migrated intended to settle permanently on Argentine land. The depopulation of the Pampas following the "Desert Campaign" in Argentina meant that the Argentine authorities were aware of the need to repopulate vast areas such as Neuquén, Santa Cruz and Chubut. Paradoxically, many of the people who commenced this repopulation process were Mapuche from Chile.

From the mid-20th century on, the Mapuche migration took other directions in terms of its flows and volumes. There was a gradual and growing movement towards the large Chilean cities, particularly Temuco, Concepción, Santiago and Valparaíso. The migration of groups of Mapuche to urban areas has been interpreted as a consequence of the Chilean state's land policy which soon began to suffer the effects of the subdivision of land into areas insufficient for family subsistence, at a time when families were increasing in number. However, the Mapuche migration from the countryside to the town was also a result of the influence of modernizing processes, such as the boom in and diversification of urban work and the attraction of salaried work and city life for some community members. Salaried employment and the cash income that entered the community in this way were important for the reproduction of community life, as well as for facing up to the gradual impoverishment of indigenous reservation economies, particularly after 1970. The Mapuche communities thus became increasingly dependent on migrant remittances (Bengoa and Valenzuela, 1984).

Over this period, migration for the most part related to men but, from the 1980s on, women began increasingly to enter into domestic service, while the men concentrated on bricklaying, building, baking, shop work and general unskilled labour. Mapuche integration into the cities was poor and marginal and their presence outside of a community context made them stand out, subjecting them to discrimination in the workplace, as migrant Lorenzo Aillapan relates in Munizaga's classic work.

"I encountered many difficulties and opposition at work from the beginning. Everyone thought I was uneducated and that I would always make mistakes in my work, in other words, whatever I did it would be bad. They told me that people of my class should work in a bakery, or as a domestic help in a private house. They told me that we prefer bad habits above all else and that if we do well we become proud and ungrateful to others." (Munizaga, 1971a)

From the 1960s to the 1980s, various studies identified this migration, its possible causes and its impact on the communities. They also depicted the life of migrants in Santiago, their social and working life, the situation of women, and so on (Munizaga, 1961, 1971b, 1971b; Bengoa and Valenzuela, 1984; Montecino, 1990).

In 1984, Bengoa and Valenzuela indicated the possible causes of the Mapuche migration to the cities:

"The relationship between people and land broke down very rapidly, giving rise to very strong waves of migration in the 1950s and 60s. Not only did infant mortality rates fall, causing a rapid rise in growth of the indigenous population but pressure on the land also became unsustainable." (Bengoa and Valenzuela, 1984: 93-94).

After some decades, permanent and sustained migration has brought about the emergence of small neighbourhoods and districts of migrant workers in Santiago, on the basis of the successive migratory waves of the last few decades. This fact has only recently been demonstrated (Valdés, 1996), highlighting the existence of districts with Mapuche population concentrations of up to 20%, and in which 57% of the Mapuche population of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago live. The existence of urban concentrations of people could mean the creation of conditions appropriate to the reproduction of indigenous identities in urban areas.

In recent decades, and despite the fluctuations in migration as a result of economic transformations, community dynamics and state policies, the Mapuche have continued to migrate, not only to the cities but also to smaller towns closer to their places of origin. In this context, migration, its quantification and size, has taken on new meaning.

Indigenous diasporas in Chile today

The 1992 Population Census was the first to include a specific question on ethnic belonging at national level, and this continued with the 2002 Census, which again asked a question about ethnic origin. The problem was that the question changed between the first and second census, making data comparison difficult.[3] In fact, the size of the indigenous population as calculated by the 1992 Census was 998,385, of which 928,060 were Mapuche, while the 2002 Census gave a total indigenous population of 692,192, or 4.6% of the country's total population. This enormous difference is significant not only in terms of the drastic decline in number of people identifying themselves as indigenous but also because the number of indigenous peoples included in the question increased in the 2002 Census and the question was extended to all people, not only those aged 14 or over, as in 1992. In any case, Valdés (2006) indicates that this decline is not a demographic one but related to the kind of census questions involved and the way in which the issue of eth-

nic identity was processed in order to enable projected figures to be obtained.

This difference in figures between the two censuses clearly has an impact on migration figures and on the number of urban indigenous inhabitants, which is fundamental when considering recent migratory processes. In the case of the Mapuche population living in the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, the figure fell from 409,079 people in 1992 to 182,918 in 2002 (Millaleo, 2006).

This decline between the censuses may be due to a number of factors. The first and most obvious is the change in question. This assumes that the question on self-identification in 1992 was far more open to over-declaration, that is, the possibility of non-indigenous peoples declaring themselves to be indigenous, while in the latter census the question was more precise, with less room for doubt as to how people had to respond. There are other possible hypotheses that can be mentioned in addition to those related to the kind of question asked, such as the political and social context and moment when both questions were asked. In 1992, there was a social fervour in favour of recognising Chile's indigenous peoples, a draft law was being discussed in parliament and the 500 years since Columbus' arrival were being commemorated in Chile and Latin America. This led to huge indigenous demonstrations in support of a recognition of their rights. In 2002, on the other hand, the situation was very different. The so-called "Mapuche conflict" was taking place in the south of the country, in a context of a criminalization of social protest. From that point on, the indigenous image being portrayed in the mass media was a negative one, which could prevent self-recognition as indigenous, given the hostile environment and devaluing of all things indigenous. Some others consider that the "decline" of the indigenous population in the census may have raised a concern in some sectors regarding a reduction in state budgets for indigenous peoples (Sanderson, 2006: 112). In any case, this hypothesis has thus far not been proven. A third hypothesis is that, regardless of the context in which they were applied, these census questions had different logics, and one managed to capture data on the indigenous population better than the other. It may be possible to make a better analysis of the possible causes of this discrepancy at the time of the next census, provided the question does not change again.

In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted on the basis of the 1992 and 2002 census information. In some cases, the censuses have confirmed or refuted ideas put forward on the basis of case studies or samples. Among other things, the censuses confirmed some of the findings made by studies prior to 1992, which indicated a growing process of masculinisation of the Mapuche population in rural areas as an effect of the significant migration of women. The women who leave are generally those of reproductive age, thus presumably affecting the reproductive processes of the rural Mapuche population in general.[4] One study conducted on the basis of figures from the 1992 Census confirmed the existence of this trend but also offered an additional finding: of the women who migrate, most of them between 18 and 28 years of age, a very high percentage – 50% - return to their communities, most of them from Santiago, while the men do so to a lesser degree from Argentina (Bengoa, 1997: 23). On this basis, Bengoa comes to a very important conclusion or hypothesis. Firstly, he assumes that a significant number of these women will return with their children in order to look after their elderly parents in the village. If this is the case, this forms an important migratory counter-tendency, "given that it would offer better reproductive conditions for Mapuche society" (Idem.).

Bengoa's second finding was an increasing trend towards salaried work in the indigenous communities. The expansion of the forestry sector, bordering onto the indigenous communities, is one pole of attraction for this workforce although temporary work harvesting export fruit crops in the country's central region is also important, along with a series of other new jobs in the large cities.

The 2002 Census showed that the indigenous population migrate more frequently than the non-indigenous (INE/MIDEPLAN, 2005: 41). It also showed that, among the indigenous population, the Rapanui are the group that migrates most frequently (11.57%) while the Aymara migrate the least (3.44%), with the Mapuche more or less in the middle.

Despite the difficulty of comparison with the 1992 Census, the 2002 Census also confirmed the trend for indigenous men, all groups considered, to migrate more than women, in contrast to other countries of Latin America. The exception to this is in the case of the Mapuche from the Bío Bío and Araucanía regions, where migration is higher amongst the women. The census also showed that the main poles of attraction for the migrant indigenous population are the Metropolitan Region of Santiago, Araucanía region and Los Lagos/Los Ríos regions. These are the regions that are experiencing the highest levels of out-migration, which shows that a great deal of migration centres around areas historically inhabited by indigenous peoples. When migration is towards more distant ar-

eas, the destination tends to be Santiago (INE/MIDE-PLAN, 2005: 42-43).

The 2002 Census enables us to confirm a trend towards the salaried employment of the rural Mapuche workforce. However, 43.5% of the rural indigenous population work as farmers, while most of those in the city are unskilled workers, employees, office workers and sales people, according to the census categories.

Indigenous migration to the cities

Over the course of the last few decades, indigenous migratory trends in Chile have followed the same course, to the point where 64.8% of the indigenous population now live in urban and 35.2% in rural areas, although these figures are below the national totals (86.6% urban and 13.4% rural). This not only demonstrates the significance of the indigenous rural-urban migration but also probably reflects a greater self-identification on the part of the urban indigenous as such. If this is the case it would show that, whilst migration to the cities is a factor of cultural loss (lack of use of language, weakened links and social interac-

tions on the basis of ethnicity, etc.), it does not necessarily mean a loss of identity, as was once thought.

According to the 1992 Census, most of the Mapuche population were living in urban areas, and specifically in the urban districts of the Metropolitan Region, where 43% of Mapuche aged 14 years or over were living. Some of the districts with the highest percentage of Mapuche were: Lo Prado (16.2%), Renca (15.3%), San Ramón (15.1%), La Pintana (15.1%) and Pedro Aguirre Cerda (15.0%). These districts had large Mapuche populations (15 districts with a concentration of more than 10% Mapuche) and were also among the urban districts with the highest levels of poverty.

In the workplace, the most common jobs for people living in these districts were, according to the 1992 Census: self-employed trading activities, office workers, public sector employees, bricklayers and other building-related jobs, domestic work, freight transport workers, teachers (particularly the women), cashiers, secretaries. Most of the work is low skilled and hence low paid, and this seems to have a structural aspect because Munizaga recorded a similar composition in the employment structure at the start of the 1970s (Munizaga, 1971a), which explains the

poverty in which urban Mapuche live and how it is also closely linked to the quality of - and access to - education.

On the basis of the 2002 Census, the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (CONADI) conducted a study in selected districts, gathering data that would enable it to illustrate the growing urbanization of Chile's indigenous population (Sanderson 2006). 76.3% of the Aymara population were found to be living in urban areas and 23.6% in rural areas. Most of the Aymara were involved in trade (23%), agriculture (21%) and transport (10%), three economic activities that they have linked through small family enterprises. Among the Atacameño or Likan Antay of the Antofagasta region, the situation is much the same: 79.9% of the population is urban, while 20.3% is rural. According to the census, the Quechua numbered 6,175 people in Chile, i.e., 0.8% of the country's total indigenous population.

There are deep inequalities between men and women within the Mapuche work structure. While the men become involved in areas of work that allow them some degree of social mobility, the women continue to be trapped in the "captivity" of domestic work.[5] This situation has deeply marked relations between the productive and reproductive spheres at family and community level, along with that established by Mapuche men and women.

Another important fact that was already highlighted in the 1992 Census is the high number of people migrating to study. A significant number of young people who migrate do so to complete their primary and secondary school education, and thus both censuses show an increase in numbers of people with higher levels of education. This is important as it means that the profile of the population in terms of its training and preparation for the working world is changing and the possibilities for upward social mobility are improving. In fact, the migration of some family members or even whole families to the city is related to strategies linking the move to the need for their children to continue their education, which they would not be able to do if they remained in the countryside where there are neither the resources nor infrastructure for this. Some families even have two homes, one in the town and one in the country, between which family members move. Many of these second homes, located in poor sectors of medium-sized towns such as Temuco, Concepción or Villarrica in the south of Chile, or Arica, Iquique or Antofagasta

in the north of the country, serve to house children in secondary or higher education.

As another study has indicated (Bello, 2002), the indigenous migration, particularly the Mapuche migration to the cities, is creating new challenges for the rural world, for the Mapuche's political projects and their demands for recognition of their rights. One of the visions that exists within the organisations is that the political struggle must take place essentially on the ancestral lands, in the old communities and, although there has recently been some integration of urban and rural political processes, the rhetoric and demands of the Mapuche continue to highlight their interest in the rural sphere, tending to overlook the city as a space in which to make demands. This does not mean that urban demands do not exist; the problem is that they carry less weight in general within the Mapuche political strategy, as it is thought that a move towards the urban sphere would weaken this strategy.

Several works have, however, shown an increase in urban indigenous organisations, and an increased visibility of indigenous people in the cities through the resumption of traditional fiestas and ceremonies or the creation of organisations and organisational spaces in general (Millaleo, 2006; Bello 2002). These processes can be interpreted as part of a strategy of ethnic reaffirmation and promotion of their identity in a context (the city) that has generally been hostile to indigenous people, whether Mapuche, Aymara, Rapanui or other. In addition, the implementation of a state indigenous policy from 1992 onwards has had a strong impact on indigenous organisation in general. The existence of state programmes and projects has encouraged the formation of different kinds of organisation in the city, increasing indigenous visibility and creating spaces for migrants that previously did not exist, despite the lack of an explicit policy for them.

This is important if we consider that migration, as we have said, does not imply an automatic loss of identity. On the contrary, the migrants – or at least some of them – take with them a great deal of knowledge and a whole range of practices that they re-create and develop in the cities (Abarca, 2006; Bello, 2002).

Despite this, the state's concern for migrants and for the urban indigenous population has been relatively minor. It has implemented programmes and policies which, whilst recognising the existence of an urban indigenous population, have not managed to grasp the magnitude and impact that migration has on its subjects and their communities. In the Chilean context of neoliberal modernization, migration goes hand in hand with economic transformation, with higher levels of salaried employment and with a transformation of rural life into something now closely linked to the city. The main problem lies in recognising the rights of migrants and implementing specific policies for the urban population. Only recently has a policy aimed at the urban indigenous population begun to be developed (Comisión Asesora Ministerial, 2006). The aim is to begin to have a more integrated view of those who have migrated to the cities and who, because of their indigenous status, continue to be the victims of direct discrimination or of a more complex form of discrimination that takes place by means of meagre incomes and jobs, exclusion, poverty and less opportunities in general. However, this policy is not aimed at addressing the problem of migration itself but rather the situation of those already living in the cities.

One of the problems with this new policy is the state's insistence on treating the "indigenous problem" as a poverty-based issue that can be resolved by means of welfarist policies "with identity" which, basically are no different from any other social policies. It is clear that the arrival of migrants into the cities represents a challenge for the state in terms of improving services, working conditions and overcoming discrimination. However, the search for welfarist solutions does not enable the deeper issues facing indigenous people in Chile today to be confronted.

The alternative to welfarist policies would be the implementation of a policy that takes account of the different causes and effects of indigenous migration. Rather than a disjointed view of the indigenous reality, rural on the one hand and migrant on the other, migrants on the one hand and permanent urban residents on the other, this would require a policy of recognition of rights that would enable actions and measures to be formulated in relation to different spheres, approaches and views.

Finally, indigenous migration in Chile raises the need to revise concepts of what is rural, interactions between the countryside and the city, between community identities and identities that develop in urban areas. Otherwise, indigenous migration will continue to be seen as a factor linked only to the countryside, as a world apart from the city. ❑

Notes

1   It would be foolish to conceive of colonial and Republican indigenous dynamics in Chile without the clear influence of the neighbouring states in formation. The interaction and inter-ethnic relations were key to the processes of transforming indigenous societies, even before the processes of neocolonial incorporation and subordination, which began towards the end of the 19th century.
2   Such as the 1907 Census, which recorded the Mapuche population in la Araucanía and the more southerly provinces.
3   In 1992 the question was one of self-identification whilst in 2002 it was about belonging. Thus the 1992 question, addressed to people of 14 years or more, asked "If you are Chilean, do you feel you belong to one of the following cultures?: Mapuche, Aymara, Rapanui, None of the above". The 2002 question, put to all people, was "Do you belong to one of the following native or indigenous peoples?: Alacalufe (Kawaskar), Atacameño, Aymara, Colla, Mapuche, Quechua, Rapanui, Yámana (Yagán), None of the above".
4   Women migrate in high numbers but the migratory trend is slightly towards men if we look at global indigenous migration figures.
5   Nationally, the figures for Mapuche women in domestic work are 26%. In the urban districts of Santiago with a high population of Mapuche (mentioned above), the percentage varies between 19% and 24%. The city of Temuco has the highest figure, 38% of the economically active female population are in domestic work. Own calculations. Source: 1992 National Census of the Population.

Bibliography

Abarca, Geraldine (2006): *Migración indígena a las ciudades: éxodo mapuche a la capital de Chile*, Paper given to the VII Latin American Congress of Bilingual Intercultural Education, 1 to 4 October 2006, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Bello, Álvaro (2002): Migración, identidad y comunidad mapuche en Chile: entre utopismos y realidades, in *Asuntos Indígenas*, N° 3-4, (2002), Copenhagen, IWGIA, pp. 40-47.

Bengoa, José (1996): "Población, familia y migración mapuche: los impactos de la modernización en la sociedad mapuche, 1982-1995", in *Pentukun* No. 6, December, pp. 9-28.
    1997: *Los mapuche: comunidades y localidades en Chile*, Santiago, INE, SUR.

Bengoa, José and Eduardo Valenzuela (1984): Economía mapuche, pobreza y subsistencia en la sociedad mapuche contemporánea, Santiago, PAS.

Castro R., Marisol (2001): "El proceso migratorio de la población mapuche en Chile: Su adaptación e integración a la vida urbana", in: *Scripta Nova, Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales,* University of Barcelona N° 94 (19).

Comisión Asesora Ministerial (2006): *Propuesta para la generación participativa de una política indígena urbana*, Advisory Committee Report, Santiago de Chile.

Gundermann K., Hans (2001): Procesos regionales y poblaciones indígenas en el norte de Chile. Un esquema de análisis con base en la continuidad y los cambios de la comunidad andina, in *Estudios Atacameños* No.21, pp. 89-112.

Gunderman K., Hans, Jorge Iván Vergara del S. and Rolf Foerster G., (2005): Contar a los indígenas en Chile. Autoadscripción étnica en la experiencia censal de 1992 y 2002, in *Estudios Atacameños* N° 30, pp. 91-115.

INE/MIDEPLAN (2005): *Estadísticas sociales de los pueblos indígenas en Chile*, Santiago, MIDEPLAN-Orígenes.

Informe de la Comisión de Verdad Histórica y Nuevo Trato de los Pueblos Indígenas: Sections I, II y III, submitted to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Chile, 28 October 2003.

Millaleo, Ana (2006): *Multiplicación y multiplicidad de las organizaciones mapuches urbanas en la Región Metropolitana ¿Incremento de la participación mapuche o fragmentación organizacional?* Santiago, School of Sociology, ARCIS.

Montecino, Sonia (1990): Transformación y conservación cultural en la migración mapuche a la ciudad, invisibilidad del mapuche urbano, in *Revista Rulpa Dungún* n°7, Santiago, Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo de la Mujer.

Munizaga, Carlos (1961): Estructuras transicionales en la migración de los araucanos de hoy a la ciudad de Santiago de Chile, in *Notas del Centro de Estudios Antropológicos* No. 6, Santiago, University of Chile.
    1971a: *Vida de un araucano*, Santiago, Department of Anthropological and Archaeological Science of the University of Chile.
    1971b: Estudios recientes sobre los araucanos chilenos, Santiago, University of Chile, Department of Anthropological and Archaeological Science.

Sanderson, Jorge (2006): La población indígena en Chile, el censo y las encuestas territoriales, en *Pueblos indígenas y afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe: información sociodemográfica para políticas y programas*, Santiago, ECLAC.

Valdés, Marcos (1996): "Notas sobre la población mapuche de la Región Metropolitana. Un avance de investigación", Temuco, in *Revista Pentukún* N°5, Instituto de Estudios Indígenas de la Universidad de la Frontera.
    2006: *Reflexiones metodológicas en torno a los censos de 1992 - 2002 y la cuestión Mapuche*, at: www.mapuche.cl

Valdés, Marcos (2007): *Migración indígena y no indígena en América Latina*, in www.mapuche.cl

Alvaro Bello M. *holds a doctorate in Social Anthropology from the Faculty of Humanities of UNAM. He is currently working as a researcher for the Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights Watchdog of Chile (Observatorio de Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas de Chile) and lectures at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and the Catholic University in Temuco. He is also a member of the International Network for Intercultural Studies (Red Internacional de Estudios Interculturales - (RIDEI).*
Email: alvaro.bellom@gmail.com

ETHNOCIDE AND IDENTITY IN THE MEXICAN EXILE OF THE GUATEMALAN MAYA

Carlos Camacho Nassar[1]

The Maya of Guatemala have long crossed the border into Mexico to work on the coffee plantations of Chiapas, and this migration in search of work has become one of their strategies for material reproduction. This article describes another, qualitatively different, migration, caused by the violence of the early 1980s onwards and which led to significant transformations in Mayan identities. This migration, associated with genocide and ethnocide, continues to this day, towards both Mexico and the USA, because the structural causes that led to a four-decade-long war have still not been remedied.

In 1972, the *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* ('Guerrilla Army of the Poor') crossed the Mexican border into Guatemala. Their political agenda included ethnic issues and their political and military leadership incorporated Maya.[2] Exclusion, discrimination and poverty were prevalent in the areas where the guerrillas established themselves and, consequently, the seeds of organised support for the insurgents could be seen among local peasant farmers.[3] This was the justification used by the army for their indiscriminate targeting of the civilian population. To them, women, children and the elderly were their enemies and this was how they rationalized their massacres and scorched earth operations.[4]

The Guatemalan Maya lived primarily in small, relatively isolated, rural hamlets, farming largely for subsistence[5] and with links to the market at municipal level.[6] There were almost no basic public services in these small villages and linkages with the national state were poor. The victims of the appalling genocide unleashed by the Guatemalan army were massacred and thrown out by an entelechial state that was, in practical terms, a remote structure whose only contact with the Maya was to dispossess them of their lands, compel them into forced labour, recruit them into the armed forces and charge them taxes that were beyond their capacity to pay.

Initial migration: from the *altiplano* to the northern plains

The contradictions present in Guatemalan society, and in particular the lack of land in the most populated *altiplano* (highland) areas, led to zones along the agricultural frontier being settled from the 1960s onwards. The border regions with Mexico were the main pole of attraction, in particular Ixcán in Quiché department and also the department of Petén.

Colonization of the northern forests was also underpinned by a religious legitimisation. For the Maya, it was a question of building a just society on a new land, untainted by segregation and social injustice. This population flow represented a founding movement that left forced labour, the exploitation of the plantations and racism behind. In Guatemala, this was tantamount to a criticism of the *status quo* and, as such, for the army and the oligarchy it placed these pioneers in an ideological niche that was closer to the former Soviet Union than their Mayan ancestors.

"The State could not tolerate the existence of a cooperative movement that was outside of its control, and so it resorted to violent repression. The most tragic instance was that of the Ixcán Grande RL cooperative. This covered an area of 2,288 manzanas and incorporated 2,200 families (...) Family income increased from 300 to 2,000 dollars between 1970 and 1976. The cooperative's success was dangerous for the government as it represented a model that could be followed by other peasant farmers (...) Army action in Ixcán between 1975 and 1982 resulted in the loss of 773 civilian lives, justified by a counter-insurgency campaign in the region."[7]

The need for land, along with a desire to free themselves from seasonal migration and from poverty, were at the root of the settler movement. And this movement found its ideological legitimisation in the Mayan interpretation of the Bible, which embraced the mosaic concept of the Exodus. At around the same time, just like in Guatemala, the Maya of the Altos de Chiapas were migrating to the Lacandon Forest and to the Mexican Ixcán, also with the support of the Catholic church. This migration could also be considered a founding movement.

"Their catechism firmly underlined the analogies between the migration of the Tzeltal to the forest and the departure of the Hebrews for the Promised Land (...) "God wants us to leave for freedom like the ancient Jewish people," the religious leaders said. "The Jewish people were living on the lands of another people (...), the land was not theirs. They were working as slaves, suffering many needs. Then God spoke into the heart of one of the leaders and told him: I have seen the suffering of My people, I have heard their cry because of the men who make them work. I have come down to save them from their suffering and I shall take them to a better land." [8]

This drew the Maya communities of the Guatemala/Mexico border together in a spirit of organisation that surpassed the bounds of traditional communities. The Guatemalan and Mexican Ixcán formed an economic, social and cultural region that took no account of borders and had a socio-economic dynamic that was, in some ways, unaffected by developments in either country.

Second migration: from hell to Mexico

The Guatemalan state's policy of genocide, which was at the immediate origin of the exodus of Guatemalan refugees, was a tragedy that will never be forgotten by those who suffered its effects. The Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification established that the Guatemalan army had committed genocide against the Maya. And, with this, it unleashed political, social and cultural processes that caused changes in the way in which ethnic and cultural identities were defined on both sides of the border.

The Maya living in the war zones found themselves faced with the dilemma of remaining in their villages with the risk of further massacres, fleeing elsewhere in the country or abandoning it altogether for Mexico, Honduras or Belize.

"There is no explanatory provision in the divine system of the Ixil for the destruction of entire villages, massacres of children, the rape and dismembering of women and the torture of men, women and children". [9]

Most recall the topic of daily conversation on the difficult journey through the forest as being centred around how soon they would be able to return. Little did they know that they would spend more than a decade abroad and that their culture and the structure of their social relations would suffer transformations that were to give a whole new shape to their identity.

During the government of General Efraín Ríos Montt, a minister in the Church of the Word,[10] the repression took on a religious aspect. Catholics were associated with the uprising and, as such, were watched, persecuted, kidnapped, beaten up, tortured, disappeared and murdered.[11]

The concrete representation of this tragedy could be seen in the flight to Mexico, Belize, Honduras and other countries, even as far as the USA, of more than 100,000 people, of which around 47,000 obtained their refugee status in Mexico and a little over 2,000 in Belize.

"...what with helicopter bombardments on the one hand and army attacks on the other, what could we do? There was nothing for it but to go so we left for Mexico. As my house was 30 minutes from the border, and we had even bought food in Mexican shops, I knew the way. By ten o'clock I was at the border, I crossed it and then I could relax, I was out of danger now." [12]

Through exile, the refugees' awareness changed in two important ways: first, the provincialism of their native villages became transformed into a national vision in which the borders of the community expanded until Guatemala was conceived of as their country and, second, the violence acquired a political and social explanation that became a factor of cohesion and identity.

The refugees' organisational history was related to the process of rebuilding their identity. The exodus and refuge meant adding new points of reference to their symbolic order of identity. An understanding of the political as a category that surpasses the boundaries of local traditionalism was one unexpected element in this new discourse.

Despite the proximity of Mexico, travelling through the dense tropical forests with children, expectant mothers, the wounded, elderly and sick, with no food and carrying the few belongings they had rescued from their poor villages was a difficult journey.

"...we passed by where a massacre had taken place eight days previously in order to reach a refugee camp called Fortuna. We were four families, but there we had to walk around the dead bodies that had been left by the army along the path, in the bush. Once, we found a pile of bodies covered with leaves, we didn't stop to find out how many, all we wanted to do was get out of there ..." [13]

The arrival of the refugees in Mexico created a difficult situation along the border. The first groups that

Guatemalan refugee - Photo: UNHCR - M. Vanappelghem

Photo: Karine Mery

settled in the border area were relatively small in number and it seemed unlikely they were going to increase in the near future.

> "When they arrived they were anaemic, malnourished and exhausted. They were a group of families that had come from the cooperatives, that had fled their villages in May of that year. In other words, they had been walking through the forest from May until October, trying unsuccessfully to find a way of getting into Mexico but there were always obstacles in their path. Hounded by the military, the only way they could avoid being seen was not to start any fires and so they ate no cooked food throughout all this time. They lived on roots, fruits and leaves. Within a week we had already buried around a hundred of them, particularly children, the children were dying on us like flies."[14]

Many of the Guatemalans who fled to Mexico did not obtain recognised refugee status. They settled in Mexican communities, most of them as farm labourers and some of them renting land to farm.

In Chiapas it is estimated that there were around 23,000 refugees in 128 camps concentrated in the areas of Comalapa, Las Margaritas and La Trinitaria. Ninety percent of these were Maya peasant farmers. Among the Maya, the Q'anjob'al (51%), the Mam (16%) and the Chuj (15.6%) were the most prevalent groups, all from the department of Huehuetenango on the border with Mexico. In lesser proportions were the Jakaltekos (7.2%), the K'iche' (0.2%), other ethnolinguistic groups (0.3%) and non-indigenous people (9.7%). Of these, 75% were women and children and 6.5% were female-headed households. Estimates for Quintana Roo indicate that there were around 6,000 refugees in four settlements, also mostly Maya from the following groups: Q'anjob'al (32%), Mam (31%), Q'eqchi' (20%), K'iche' (5.5%), Jakalteko (4.5%), Kaqchikel (2.5%) and others (3.5%). Here, 56% of the refugee population was under the age of 15. In Campeche there were approximately 12,500 refugees, predominantly from the following groups: Mam (27%), Q'anjob'al (20%), K'iche' (13.1%), other indigenous groups (8%) and Spanish speakers (28.7%).[15]

This combination of people from different ethnolinguistic groups, backgrounds and experiences led to rapid socio-cultural change. Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples with different traditions and languages had to understand each other and face up to the new conditions that were thrusting them upon each other in a foreign land and where their status implied restricted movements.

> "...to avoid problems during the migration, indigenous women stopped wearing their traditional dress so that they wouldn't be recognised (...). Elderly women were opposed to this, considering it disrespectful to leave behind the clothes that they had worn since childhood and to start the last stage of their lives in light clothes in which they felt uncomfortable."[16]

Neither the refugees nor the Mexican peasant farmers thought that this situation was going to be a long-term one. Social and economic links were thus created on the basis of an incorrect assumption. In other words, when the refugees arrived, the Chiapas farmers offered them all the support their scarce means permitted, from hospitality, food, medicines and clothes to land on which to live and grow food. But conflicts arose. Scarce services, land and jobs were insufficient for both refugees and locals and rivalry erupted, the intensity of which depended on the nature of each area of refuge. Although the Mexican farmers in the border areas were aware of the widespread conflict in Guatemala, the mass exodus had still come as a surprise.

While the refugees acknowledged the Mexicans' hospitality and the efforts of the local Chiapas farmers to help them adapt to a different reality and even overcome the communication problems that arose, they were also aware of the problems their presence caused to some communities:

> "We realised that we were affecting our Mexican brothers, because trees were being used up, the hills were becoming bare. They never told us to go. But we realised that we were causing them problems..."[17]

The Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas bought land on behalf of Mexican cooperatives which it allocated temporarily to the refugees; once they had returned to Guatemala it was to be given permanently to the cooperatives.

Even in the context of these problems, particularly problems deriving from a lack of land, relations between the Chiapas communities and the refugees never caused unmanageable levels of conflict. Since 1994, it has not been possible to dissociate these relationships from the Zapatista uprising:

> "...this changed (...) with the armed conflict that arose in Chiapas. Then the communities suffered, as did all the Mexican communities in the area, the problems of the army's presence, and the problems of internal displacement that was occurring in Chiapas. Conflicts did arise in some cases between the

two communities but this was a factor that complicated their presence in Chiapas and could be seen in the issue of land, which was not a passing problem but a structural problem of Chiapas state (…). On closer inspection, however, in their cooperative community or indigenous community environment in general, their relationships were viewed positively by both cooperative members and cattle farmers in the area. In general, the Guatemalan presence in the region was viewed positively. The problem arose from 94 on, when everything became confused and problems of confrontation, social polarisation arose and so then the refugee issue no longer enjoyed the same sympathy as in the past."[18]

Finding themselves in a different society, with neither the repression nor the appalling racism they had experienced in their country of origin, the refugees were able to take a critical look at their culture. The Maya women organised and reflected on their situation as women and their specific demands. Analysing their reality, they found a patriarchal structure that restricted their possibilities as people. This gave rise to a process of changing gender relations that overturned the traditional structures of Mayan society.

The intensification of the conflict in Guatemala and the fact that the army believed the refugees were acting as a cross-border base for rebel groups meant that camps close to the border were subjected to armed raids. The Guatemalan army were the cause of many border incidents. Sergio Aguayo[19] recorded a total of 68 between May 1980 and May 1983.

Third migration: from the border to the interior of Mexico

The refugees' insecurity in the border zone and the lack of land on which to settle were both factors in the Mexican government's decision to move some of the refugees to the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo. For the refugees, who still believed they would soon be able to return home, leaving the border created increased feelings of uprootedness.

To these difficulties were added the fact that the journey implied a greater physical and mental dis-

tancing from Guatemala and, to a certain extent, a kind of final and permanent destination in an exile that they had thus far considered temporary. Settling in Campeche and Quintana Roo involved significant changes in the lives of the refugees. In these camps, land was available for farming, there were jobs for the young people in the towns and on modern farms, and opportunities to study. Here, the refugees faced another process of socio-cultural change, intensified by a socio-economic integration that enabled them to abandon their dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Fourth migration: the return

On 8 October 1992, representatives of the Guatemalan refugees in Mexico signed agreements with the Guatemalan government enabling them to return collectively and with dignity.

The collective and organised return was a continuation of the organisational processes of the Ixcán and El Petén cooperatives during the 1960s. The migratory flow to these areas of the agricultural frontier represented the first experience of organising outside traditional structures. The links created during the migration and in the cooperatives continued during their exile and were reproduced once more on their return, which was a symbolic replication of their first migration to the forest, leaving their villages.

Returning to Guatemala meant rebuilding social, economic and cultural ties with the old communities and the people living in the villages around the returnees' settlements. Just as they had done in exile, they again had to integrate as if they were foreigners. Returning meant abandoning fifteen years of history, experiences and hopes in Mexico. And they also had to convince those born or brought up in Mexico to return to a territory which, in the collective memory of their people, was synonymous with terror.

For many young people and, in particular, for the women, the return represented a step backwards in their social, cultural and political development, and also in their hopes for the future. There were no educational opportunities for young Maya in Guatemala, even less so in the areas they were returning to, and no opportunities for work outside of agriculture. The women suddenly found themselves back in a patriarchal society and with the gender violence they had begun to overcome in Mexico. The same leaders, comrades, sons, partners and relatives who had encouraged them to organise and fight for their rights now made it clear to them that the return meant re-establishing the traditional rules of women's exclusion.

Fifth migration: to the north

Years after their return, the returnees' expectations had still not been fulfilled. The resettlement areas lacked infrastructure, housing, funding, schools, drinking water. This led to worsening poverty, food insecurity and a lack of future prospects. It brought about a last journey, the genesis and cultural symbolism of which were far removed from the first four long journeys of the Maya. The fifth journey was one of economic refuge in the USA or illegal return to Mexico, where it was possible to find work.

The iconography of a journey

To begin with, the Maya left their villages in the interior, under the guidance of religious leaders, with the goal of building a new life on virgin land. Then, the violence made them embark on a new journey, escaping from hell to Mexico and other countries. The third journey took them deeper into the Republic of Mexico, further from the border with Guatemala. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, they encountered other Maya and the old cities of their ancestors. As in Chiapas, the Maya of Guatemala discovered the universality of their identity and also their original nationality. Guatemala country, for them, was no longer an entelechy but a symbol of identity. Their return implied rebuilding their society once more. Returning to their old lands or to new farms, to form cooperatives, symbolically replicated their first journey. The similarities established a symbolic mimicry between one process and the other.

The reality of the return, as expressed in poverty, a lack of work, services, schools and clinics, etc., was the reason behind the return to Mexico for some, urban marginalisation for others and a long journey north for yet more. Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Boston have ended up being the last leg, for the time being, of the long journey of the Maya. They are no longer searching for the Promised Land but simply for survival. In order to support their families and lands, many opted for illegal immigration. This way, at least, their relatives could continue to live in the community. This journey, unlike the others, is a more solitary one. The community disappears and links with one's home village are established in a different way. The telephone, the Internet and financial remittances now characterise the relationship. And this is perhaps why the long journey that commenced with genocide will now, instead, end in ethnocide.   ❑

Notes

1   Anthropologist. diezajpu@yahoo.es
2   See Mario Payeras. *Los días de la selva.* Mexico, Published by Joan Boldó i Climent, 1989.
3   See Paul Kobrak. *Huehuetenango: historia de una guerra.* Huehuetenango, Centro de Estudios y Documentación de la Frontera Occidental de Guatemala (CEDFOG), 2003.
4   Some researchers, such as David Stoll ('Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala'. New York, Columbia University Press, 1993) maintained the thesis that the Mayans were the victims of an armed conflict between the guerilla and the army. The conclusions of the reports of the Commission for Historical Clarification (Guatemala: Memory of Silence) and the Guatemalan Church´s Project for the Recuperation of Historical Memory (Guatemala Never More) demonstrate the Guatemalan army's policy of genocide.
5   See Félix Webster McBryde. *Geografía cultural e histórica del suroeste de Guatemala.* Guatemala, Published by José de Pineda Ibarra, 1969 and Sol Tax. *El capitalismo del centavo. Una economía indígena de Guatemala.* Published by José de Pineda Ibarra, 1964.
6   See Carlos Camacho Nassar. *Mercados e identidades étnicas: la construcción de espacios virtuales en el altiplano guatemalteco.* Paper presented to the 1st Central American Congress of Anthropology. San José, 1994.
7   Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (EAFG). *Las masacres de Rabinal: estudio histórico antropológico de las masacres de Plan de Sánchez, Chichupac y Río Negro.* Guatemala, EAFG, 1997, page 79.
8   Carlos Tello Díaz. *La rebelión de las cañadas.* Mexico, Cal y arena, 1995. Page 57
9   Benjamín N. Colby. *Prolegomena to a comparative study of revolutionary and traditional texts in Guatemala.* Speech given to the 9th International Systemic Workshop, Current Applications of Systemic Theory. York University, Toronto, Ontario, 1982. mimeo. Quoted in Andrea Althoff. *Clase, etnicidad y reformismo en el proceso de transformación del discurso de una organización campesina guatemalteca.* Thesis, Gerhard-Mercator Duisburg University, Germany, 2000.
10 The Guatemalan Church of the Word (*Iglesia del Verbo* in Spanish) is a local branch of the Gospel Outreach church based in Eureka, California.
11 For more information see: Manuela Cantón Delgado. *Bautizados en fuego: protestantes, discursos de conversión y política en Guatemala (1989–1993).* Monographic series 9. La Antigua Guatemala: CIRMA and Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1998.
12 Interview with Diego Lorenzo, Cuchumatán, Quintana Roo, Mexico. 4 September 1996.
13 Interview with José Leiva Espinoza, Quetzal Edzná, Campeche, Mexico. 31 August 1996.
14 Interview with Alfredo Wichi Cerstari, UNHCR Regional Representative for Central America. Costa Rica, 1996
15 Consejo Nacional de Instituciones de Desarrollo (COINDE). *Diagnóstico sobre refugiados, retornados y desplazados de Guatemala.* Guatemala, COINDE, 1991. Pages 32-34.
16 Testimony of Víctor Montejo and Kaxh Pasil in: Víctor Montejo and Q'anil Akab'. *Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab' (Guatemala).* Rhode Island, Department of Political Science, Providence College, 1992. page 27.
17 Interview with Sebastián Torres Paiz, Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapas, Mexico. 2 October 1996.
18 Interview with Erasmo Sáenz Carrete, Mexico DF. 15 August 1996.
19 Sergio Aguayo. *El éxodo centroamericano.* Mexico, Ministry of Public Education, 1985. Page 135.

Bibliography

Aguayo, Sergio (1985): *El éxodo centroamericano.* Mexico, Ministry of Public Health.

Althoff, Andrea (2000): *Clase, etnicidad y reformismo en el proceso de transformación del discurso de una organización campesina guatemalteca.* Thesis, Gerhard-Mercator Duisburg University, Germany.

Camacho Nassar, Carlos (1994): *Mercados e identidades étnicas: la construcción de espacios virtuales en el altiplano guatemalteco.* Speech given to the 1st Central American Congress of Anthropology. San José.

Cantón Delgado, Manuela (1998): *Bautizados en fuego: protestantes, discursos de conversión y política en Guatemala (1989–1993).* Monographic series 9. La Antigua Guatemala: CIRMA and Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies.

Colby, Benjamín N. (1982): *Prolegomena to a comparative study of revolutionary and traditional texts in Guatemala.* Speech given to the 9th International Systemic Workshop, Current Applications of Systemic Theory. York University, Toronto, Notario. mimeo.

Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico de las Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos y los Hechos de Violencia que han Causado Sufrimientos a la Población Guatemalteca (CEH) 1999: Guatemala Memoria del Silencio. Guatemala, CEH. Consejo Nacional de Instituciones de Desarrollo (COINDE) **1991:** *Diagnóstico sobre refugiados, retornados y desplazados de Guatemala.* Guatemala, COINDE.

Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (EAFG) (1997): *Las masacres de Rabinal: estudio histórico antropológico de las masacres de Plan de Sánchez, Chichupac y Río Negro.* Guatemala, EAFG.

Kobrak, Paul (2003): *Huehuetenango: historia de una guerra.* Huehuetenango, Centro de Estudios y Documentación de la Frontera Occidental de Guatemala (CEDFOG).

Montejo, Víctor y Q'anil Akab' (1992): *Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab' (Guatemala).* Rhode Island, Department of Political Science, Providence College.

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG) (1998): Guatemala Nunca Más. Informe del Proyecto Intediocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica. Guatemala, ODHAG.

Payeras, Mario (1989): *Los días de la selva.* Mexico, Published by Joan Boldó i Climent.

Stoll, David (1993): Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala. New York, Columbia University Press.

Tax, Sol (1964): *El capitalismo del centavo. Una economía indígena de Guatemala.* Published by José de Pineda Ibarra.

Tello Díaz, Carlos (1995): *La rebelión de las cañadas.* Mexico, Cal y Arena.

Webster McBryde, Felix (1969): *Geografía cultural e histórica del suroeste de Guatemala.* Guatemala, Published by José de Pineda Ibarra

Carlos Camacho Nassar is anthropologist.
diezajpu@yahoo.es

INDIGENOUS URBANISM REVISITED
THE CASE OF GREENLAND

Frank Sejersen

Introduction

The majority of Greenlanders (Kalaallit), the Inuit people of Greenland, have been living along the 2,670 kilometre coastline of western Greenland, the world's biggest island, for centuries. Only a minority have inhabited the east coast. The status of Greenlanders as indigenous is grounded in their colonial relationship with Denmark, which dates back more than 250 years. Throughout this period, Greenlanders have changed their settlement patterns quite dramatically. The Danish government has pursued different settlement policies ranging from decentralisation to centralisation, depending on its specific resource and welfare strategies. In the post Second World War period urbanisation was, for example, seen by the Danish government as a necessary step to improve conditions in Greenland. Greenlanders, on the other hand, very often considered urbanisation to be a destructive colonial project, as the improvements in living conditions were also linked to a radical change in their way of life and cultural orientation. Today, 80% of the population in Greenland lives in cities, and numbers are increasing (Grønlands Statistik 2006: 79).

Since 1979, Greenland has had regional self-governance, and the Greenland Home Rule, which is dominated by Inuit, is in full charge of most domestic matters and policy-making. Today, the Home Rule government is promoting centralisation and urbanisation based on arguments that are quite similar to the former Danish colonial and post-colonial policies. This apparent paradox can only be fully understood if it is appreciated that contemporary urbanisation is the government's strategy by which to strengthen Inuit self-determination. Thus in Greenland, urbanisation of the indigenous population, promoted by its own government, casts a new perspective on some issues related to the urbanisation of indigenous peoples in general.

Colonisation

Whereas the Danish preferred a decentralised settlement pattern when Greenland's primary resources were marine mammals (seals and whales), the centralisation of the population was seen as an advantage from the beginning of the 20th century on, when the emerging fishing industry depended on a stable and accessible workforce. After the Second World War, two Danish political initiatives (G50 and G60) designed to encourage (among other things) urbanisation led to the closure of a number of smaller communities. The movement of parts of the Greenlandic population to a handful of towns was seen by the Danish government as a way of implementing modernisation, industrialisation and improved living conditions. In 1968, for example, the Danish government decided to close down the mining town of Qullissat because it was considered unprofitable (Dahl 1986: 51). More than 1,000 people had to be moved to other places in Greenland.

In the few towns selected as the primary engines of development, substantial investments were channelled into infrastructure, housing, production facilities and educational as well as health institutions. The construction and running of these fast growing cities was primarily in the hands of Danes and, increasingly, Greenlanders felt like bystanders in the development of their own homeland. Consequently, they very often perceived urbanisation, and the city itself, as a Danish colonial project. During the 1960s and 1970s, Greenlanders fighting for self-governance used the cities as a symbol of *Danification*, i.e. the colonial process of assimilating Greenlanders into a Danish way of thinking and behaving. Not surprisingly, the hunting and fishing way of life in the smaller communities was singled out by these political activists as more in line with the Greenlandic culture and way of thinking than the hectic urban city life.

Social problems

As part of the critique of the urbanisation and modernisation policy pursued by the Danes, Greenlanders moving to the city were portrayed as free hunters being turned into (seasonal unemployed) workers. Values associated with gender roles, being on the land, traditional skills, family etc. were challenged in the city, which many saw as being culturally and socially destructive. In fact, the 1950s and 1960s are often con-

sidered as the period when Denmark's colonial presence had its strongest impact.

For many, urbanisation was traumatic, and people still talk of city life as being 'non-Greenlandic'. Nuuk, the biggest city in Greenland, is for example often referred to by Danes and Greenlanders alike as a non-Greenlandic town in the following way: "If you've only been to Nuuk you've not seen the real Greenland". The town was seen as *the* place of acculturation and modernisation - a point of view that often led to city life being described as one of anonymity and loneliness. This is not unique to Greenland. Referring to Iqaluit, the capital of Inuit-controlled Nunavut in northern Canada, journalist Jane George (2001) says that: "Nunavut's capital can be a cold place, where — unlike any other community in Nunavut — passers-by don't automatically greet each other on the street". This understanding of urban life as destructive of the cohesive mechanisms that maintain traditional social order and life in the small communities has dominated theories of urbanisation since the end of the 19th century.

For many Greenlanders, moving to the city meant facing up to a number of problems (if not personally then as part of city life): alcohol abuse, domestic violence, suicide attempts, social fragmentation and cultural disorientation. Added to these were unemployment, housing problems, language shortcomings and health issues. Many explain the root of the problem in the following way: "The development took place too fast".

Self-governance

1979 was a turning point for the Inuit in Greenland. Home Rule was introduced and a regional government was established that was quite rapidly handed responsibility for most domestic matters (Nuttall 1994). Every year, the Inuit-dominated government receives a considerable block grant from Denmark in order to ensure the financial basis on which to provide welfare services for the region's estimated popu-

lation of 57,000 (including approximately 6,500 Danes). Only a few matters remain under the control of Denmark. Foreign policy is one political area in which Greenland has tried to gain more influence over the last decades. In 2005, an agreement was finally reached between Greenland and Denmark that gave Greenland a far bigger say in foreign policy, as well as the possibility of pursuing limited independent negotiations with foreign states.

Today, it is Greenland's ambition to obtain a greater degree of independence from Denmark, and economic dependence on the yearly block grant has been singled out as the main obstacle to establishing a more self-sustained Greenland capable of developing on its own terms. A Greenlandic Commission on Self-Determination recently suggested a reorganisation of the economic structure in order to advance this process. In its report, the Commission puts great emphasis on changes that may result in more cost-effective production and administration. The concentration of people in cities is only mentioned indirectly insofar as

the preconditions for the proposed development are based on the idea that production should be located where the conditions are best. This means where overheads are as low as possible and where an educated workforce is available. Due to the high costs of transport, water and electricity in Greenland, and in the Arctic in general, this has to mean the towns. The Greenlandic government decided to follow the Commission's suggestions and implemented real-cost prices for transport, water and electricity. So it has now become more expensive to live in remote areas than in densely-populated areas, where costs can be maintained at a lower level. This policy encourages centralisation in a few centres and thus threatens the livelihoods of thousands of Greenlanders living in smaller communities. Centralisation, which has been noted by Greenlanders as being a colonial Danish project, has now turned into a prerequisite for the development of a truly self-sustained non-colonial Greenland. But this admirable goal may also have its negative side-effects.

Contemporary urbanisation

Compared to the rapid increase in size of other cities around the world, Arctic cities are definitely small, scattered and invisible in the global economy. Many people therefore often feel uncomfortable talking about urbanism and urbanisation in the Arctic. It does indeed sound a contradiction in terms. But cities like Iqaluit (Canada), Nuuk (Greenland), Yakutsk (Siberia), Anchorage and Fairbanks (Alaska) are important drivers of development in the Arctic. In Greenland, three major cities can be singled out: Nuuk – the capital - (15,000 inhabitants), Sisimiut (6,000) and Ilulissat (3,000). 40% of the population of Greenland live in these three cities. What's more, over 80% of the Greenlandic population live in cities. These cities are major economic drivers. Six out of ten land-based industries in Greenland are, for example, based in Nuuk, as are seven out of ten consultancy firms (Nielsen 2005). It is a fact that urban life is the reality for a major part of the population, and even the remotest small community in Greenland is tied structurally into the urban centres and depends on them for a number of services. The vulnerability and resilience of smaller communities is thus closely linked to the development of urban

Photo: Kathrin Wessendorf

centres. Because of this structural integration Greenland can, as such, be termed an urban society.

What is interesting is not the size of the Greenlandic cities, even though this does of course influence urbanity. The importance of these cities lies in the significance Arctic people ascribe to them and what social, cultural and economic capital they invest in them. Arctic cities have indeed become movers of change with respect to education, employment, politics, administration, art, sport, recreation, investment, healthcare and so forth. The urban centres constitute a primary arena for cultural creativity and cultural production among Greenlanders, and Inuit in general. In the urban areas, a multiplicity of Inuit identities and numerous strategies by which Arctic peoples can engage in modernity and post-modernity can be found. These urban centres are, for example, arenas for experimenting with new ways of understanding communication, conflict resolution, neighbouring, sociality, family life and family obligations. The urban arena in Nuuk is also a setting where Danish entrepreneurs and Thai restaurant owners add to the cross-cutting social and cultural life. This multicultural setting may establish new ways of understanding belonging and social organisation. In the Arctic cities, fragmentation of the social order, and of the economic and social heterogeneity of Arctic communities, is becoming evident and, at times, it is being mapped out in the urban space. Areas of poor and marginalised Inuit are developing as well as areas of rich and successful Inuit. Unbearable housing problems, homelessness and social polarisation are also facts of urban Arctic life.

But we also see that Arctic city dwellers definitely engage, invest and flourish in the cities. Nuuk is always referred to as a Danish town. It is not supposed to reflect the real Greenland. But 26% of the Greenlandic population actually lives in Nuuk and a study by Danish anthropologist Bo Wagner Sørensen (2005) indicates that the inhabitants of Nuuk like it, and have made the city their own. This should not come as a surprise, as Nuuk and other big cities in Greenland have become more attractive and now constitute dynamic arenas where Inuit and human cultural and social creativity can be lived out, exposed, challenged, transformed and communicated. Cities are doing their best to promote themselves as attractive. This was seen, for example, in 2006 and the spring of 2007 when the cities of Nuuk, Sisimiut and Maniitsoq competed to appear as attractive to investment as possible. At stake was a potential agreement with a foreign company to establish a large aluminium smelting plant which could lead to the creation of several thousand new jobs. Such competition over limited resources (including an educated workforce) is quite frequent.

When Greenlandic cities stand for possibilities and welfare they attract people (especially the young) as well as industry. This urban orientation has increasingly made it more difficult for smaller communities to maintain their position in the modernisation process defined by the Home Rule. If this continues, it will most likely be ever more difficult to maintain a livelihood in small and remote communities, and part of the Greenlandic population will probably feel like bystanders in the development being pursued by the Home Rule's policy to strengthen the economy and independence of Greenland.

Urban cultural and political platforms

When young urban Greenlanders engage creatively in the hip-hop culture, present themselves on Myspace

or are attracted to a career as a mining engineer, it is a part of contemporary Greenlandic culture. This is because they enact and fulfil themselves as Greenlanders in a – for them – meaningful and self-ascribed way. When the Inuit-run Home Rule government aims to strengthen self-determination for Greenland by creating an effective economy in which urbanisation, industrialisation and globalisation are central elements, it can be seen as a part of Greenlandic culture and society. The endeavours of the indigenous people of Greenland to strengthen their society and to break the asymmetric relationship with Denmark – a process termed *Greenlandisation* - have increasingly been based on claiming their right as political agents to determine their own future rather than on the basis of a well-defined cultural agenda. Even though *Greenlandisation* may, for many, entail a degree of specific cultural perspective, I claim that it primarily entails the wish that Greenland should be run by Greenlanders (Sejersen 2004). It can therefore be claimed that the future of Greenlandic culture and society is based on the *possibility* of making choices and dealing with the positive and negative consequences of those choices, rather than on the *content* of the choices. The focus on the political possibility of making choices rather than the content of the choices does, of course, not rule out the fact that governments may take uninformed and devastating choices that may have consequences for parts of the population. The degree and direction of urbanisation is one of these difficult choices.

The case of urbanisation in Greenland shows that there is no one-to-one relationship between urbanisation and indigenous peoples. In the post Second World War period, urbanisation was part of a colonial and modernising project determined and operated by the Danish authorities. Today, urbanisation is determined and operated by the Inuit-run government as part of a strategy to create a more self-determined Greenland, loosening its colonial ties with Denmark. The temporal and spatial specificities of urban forms and processes therefore have to be acknowledged as they offer an appreciation of the alternatives for organising urban societies (Leeds 1994: 52).

It is also important to appreciate that the Greenland case is quite unique. Few indigenous peoples around the world have the same political and economic possibilities that may make urbanisation a viable strategy. The Greenlandic political institution of the Home Rule and the municipal councils discuss, coordinate and evaluate decisions. Quite in contrast to this situation, millions of indigenous people living in urban areas worldwide have to make uninformed and uncoordinated choices on an individual or family level, where the "urban dream" often turns out to be a life of extreme poverty and socio-cultural disorientation.

This century has been named the urban century, as more people now live in cities than in rural areas. An increasing number of individuals belonging to indigenous groups also live in urban areas for a number of reasons (Dahl and Jensen 2002) and they face a structurally enforced culture of poverty and discrimination. The potential to make urban life meaningful and viable for indigenous peoples may lie in the creation of urban political platforms through which they can articulate their demands and raise their problems in more coordinated ways. Such urban platforms, founded on the awareness and rights of indigenous peoples, may even hold the potential to improve the lives of indigenous peoples living outside urban areas, and of non-indigenous peoples sharing similar living conditions in the city. ❏

References

Dahl, Jens (1986): *Arktisk Selvstyre*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

Dahl, Jens and Marianne Jensen (2002): Indigenous Peoples and Urbanisation. *Indigenous Affairs* no. 3-4: 4-7.

George, Jane (2001): Iqaluit becomes a city on April 19. *Nunatsiaq News* March 30.

Grønlands Statistik (2006): *Grønland 2006. Statistisk årbog*. Nuuk: Grønlands Hjemmestyre og Grønlands Statistik.

Nielsen, Jens Kaalhauge (2005): Urbanisation. In Nuttall, Mark (ed.) *Encyclopedia of the Arctic* (pp. 2110-2112). New York: Routledge.

Leeds, Anthony (1994): *Cities, Class, and the Social Order*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Nuttall, Mark (1994): Greenland: Emergence of an Inuit Homeland. In Minority Rights Group (ed.) *Polar Peoples. Self-determination and Development* (pp. 1-28). London: Minority Rights Publications.

Sejersen, Frank (2004): Local Knowledge in Greenland: Arctic Perspectives and Contextual Differences. In Anderson, David and Mark Nuttall (eds.) *Cultivating Arctic Landscapes* (pp. 33-56). New York: Berghahn Books.

Sørensen, Bo Wagner (2005): Nuuk. *Tidsskriftet Antropologi* nr. 48: 185-200.

Frank Sejersen - Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

EXTREME POVERTY AND SURVIVAL: CORDILLERA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS MIGRANT WORKERS

Flora Belinan

Extreme poverty in the countryside of the Cordillera region of the Philippines has pushed indigenous peoples towards the urban centers in the hope of finding economic relief. The Cordillera experience shows that migration to Baguio City has not addressed such poverty, given the prevalence of joblessness and underemployment. Because of this, the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera have become the urban poor in Baguio. Also striking is the trend among the Cordillera indigenous peoples to migrate abroad as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) when the economic hardship in their homeland becomes unbearable.

In general, the social costs of this migration are the same for all communities or countries on an equal economic footing with the Philippines. The OFWs' problems begin as soon as they decide to work abroad because before they leave they are already in deep debt. Many are deceived by "fly-by-night" recruiters who defraud them and run away with their money. Some make it abroad but end up jobless and facing the threat of either imprisonment or deportation. Money is then required to process the necessary papers at exorbitant fees. On top of this, they are charged excessive processing fees by recruitment agencies. Many are forced to mortgage or sell their meager properties. Among the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, selling property is traditionally greatly discouraged, even supposedly taboo. But, as a matter of survival, we have been forced to this.

While extreme poverty is a common factor in emigration from poor countries, the specific feature of national oppression of indigenous peoples is an added cause, thereby making the whole process twice the cost and dilemma. What is striking is that this has resulted in a process of ethnocide, with a tendency towards the rapid disintegration of indigenous culture and a weakening of the tight social fabric of the indigenous communities.

National oppression and extreme poverty

As Filipinos, the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera face the same basic problems as the rest of the nation. As indigenous peoples, we additionally suffer the specific problem of national oppression and ethnocide at the hands, previously, of foreign colonial powers and, now, the present Philippine state and its foreign masters.

The very existence of national oppression and ethnocide violates our inherent right to self-determina-

Joining the WTO Ministerial protest in 2006

Manila

tion: state denial and non-recognition of our rights to collective ownership; priority use and management of our ancestral lands and resources; development aggression (imposition of destructive socio-economic projects in the name of "national development" or the "national interest" such as mega dams, large-scale mines, mega-tourism, national protected areas and agricultural liberalization); militarization; political misrepresentation; commercialization of indigenous culture; institutionalized discrimination; violation and non-recognition of our indigenous socio-political systems and processes; and the government's failure to provide basic social services to indigenous peoples.

The destruction of our ancestral lands and villages, the bastardization of our indigenous culture and ways of life, militarization and the breakdown of social order within indigenous communities all wipe out the material bases of our existence as a distinct people. And, once separated from the land that nurtured generations of our peoples, we fall prey to ethnocide.

Furthermore, the present ruling system denies us our full rights to our ancestral lands and the resources these hold under the framework of the Regalian Doctrine, as the state and foreign capitalists have treated the Cordillera region as a resource base for extraction and plunder. The state and big business use brute military force and political assassinations of members and leaders of protesting communities to squeeze the remaining riches from the land.

And now, despite the riches of the Cordillera, there is the irony of extreme poverty and national oppression that beset the Cordillera indigenous peoples, where drastic measures have to be taken to temporarily overcome the threat to our survival. This situation of extreme poverty and marginalization forced and

displaced us out of our villages and into urban areas, where we thought we could find relief. But the urban centers are no friendlier to us, and livelihood opportunities are scarce, if they exist at all. The situation is twice as harsh when one is forced out of one's country due to economic hardship, into a strange land where no clear future awaits. We become estranged from the land of our ancestors, and driven into foreign lands only to be confronted by further tragedies.

This is the unfortunate irony: the Cordillera region is rich, yet its people are poor. We are therefore forced to find risky, alternative means of survival to provide for our families. Forced because we have no choice, and many of us have had to sell our remaining properties or obtain loans from sharks to temporarily offset this marginalization.

Cordillera indigenous peoples as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

This diaspora of indigenous peoples, like other Filipino workers, illustrates the severity of the socio-economic crisis in the Philippines, as manifested by massive unemployment and very low wages.

In the case of indigenous peoples, both our lands and people have been commoditized. The result is twice the impact and gravity, with a weakening of community ties and cultural disintegration.

Independent Philippine-based databank IBON Foundation reports that, during 2006, 3,400 Filipino workers were leaving the country every day to work as overseas contract workers (OCWs), while there are around 9 to 10 million documented OFWs

Cordillera Day in Hong Kong - 2001

Stop killings campaign

in 192 countries all over the world. Around 120,000 Filipino domestic helpers live in Hong Kong, of which 10,000 are from the Cordillera region. In 2003, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration-Cordillera Administrative Region (OWWA-CAR) documented 50,836 OFWs, mostly women and domestic helpers. This figure would be even more if those who apply outside the Cordillera region and those who leave illegally were included.

The life of many OFWs is very difficult. They have to bear the emotional and psychological impact of leaving their loved ones behind. They have to adjust to a new and different setting with an unfamiliar culture, language and physical environment.

Cultural disintegration additionally confronts the Cordillera indigenous peoples as migrant workers, being far away in a foreign land, with a new and strange way of life, being forced to assimilate foreign values, cultures and lifestyles to survive and feed their families back home. Most often, OFWs have to adapt to the culture of their employers if they are to be accepted for work in the family. There are employers who are adamant in this regard, and could make this a reason for terminating a contract. Some convert to other religions through loneliness and homesickness as this provides some spiritual upliftment. As strangers in a foreign land, they do not know much about the language, traditions, laws and policies of the host countries.

While working abroad can bring economic improvement to the family situation back home, it is still an artificial arrangement because it is a temporary situation while they are working abroad. The artificial improvement in living standards mostly results in unhealthy family relations, especially when these standards are not maintained. Some couples separate because the spouse who is left behind becomes obsessed with a lavish lifestyle and squanders the income from abroad on gambling, alcohol and womanizing. Some children get hooked on drugs because of the absence of the parent/s working abroad and the availability of extra cash. It is mainly the long separation between loved ones, however, that creates emotional and psychological problems for the OFWs and their families. Many families are shattered.

On top of these hardships, many OFWs are exploited and mistreated by their employers. They experience wage and racial discrimination, and are denied basic rights as foreigners. They do not obtain adequate protection from the Philippine government, despite their enormous contribution to the country's economy through their remittances. They often fall victim to their employers' false accusations and are imprisoned. Worse, some are killed. Sexual abuse from employers is a common problem. Loneliness sometimes leads to partners seeking other relationships.

Migrants also suffer the exploitative policies of host countries, such as the wage cuts that were imposed on migrant workers by the Hong Kong government, drastically reducing the existing monthly minimum wage by HK$400 in 2001.

The Philippine government does nothing to address these problems. Instead, it has enacted laws to intensify its labor-export policies as a priority, offering a temporary way out of the chronic financial crisis by exporting cheap and docile labor, and extracting money from the OFWs.

Commoditized lands, commoditized people

In 2003, President Arroyo signed the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Omnibus Policy institutionalizing the forced collection of US$25 from OFWs and limiting membership to working migrants. It makes no mention of services for repatriating OFWs in distress, for medical assistance or support for OFWs suffering from mental illness.

The Arroyo government's anti-OFW policy intensified the policies and programs of earlier administrations that arose from the permanent socio-economic crisis in Philippine society. While past governments fueled the exploitation of migrant workers through legislation (e.g. the Labor Export Program under Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino's economic recovery program, Fidel Ramos' globalization policies and Joseph Estrada's mechanisms for training a cheap and docile workforce), it is the Arroyo government that has ultimately completed the "global sale" of Filipino women. It has continued to regard overseas employment as a way of providing jobs for the growing number of unemployed in the country and has needed the remittances to prop up an ailing economy. One million Filipinos are sent abroad yearly as part of the government's job creation program. It is responsible for the exodus of indigenous workers and professionals seeking employment abroad as an alternative because they see no future in this country, thus leaving our ancestral villages.

Challenges facing migrant workers and indigenous peoples: the Hong Kong experience

Faced with these problems, Cordillera migrant workers in Hong Kong have been consistent in defending their rights as migrants. They are actively involved in organizing and educating their ranks to further strengthen the capacity of their organizations as an expression of their unity as migrant workers and indigenous peoples abroad. Along with other migrant organizations in Hong Kong, they have unceasingly and bravely asserted their rights as migrants.

There are currently two large migrant workers' alliances of Cordillerans in Hong Kong, the Abra Tinggian Ilocano Society (ATIS) and the Cordillera Alliance (CORALL). Established in October 1997 during the Tribal Filipino Sunday celebration, at the height of the protests and campaign against large-scale mining in the Cordillera, CORALL is now an alliance of 22 organizations from the different provinces of Kalinga, Apayao, Mountain Province, Benguet, Baguio City and Ifugao. ATIS is an alliance of around 22 organizations of OFWs from the province of Abra. CORALL was founded with 11 member organizations.

The two alliances serve to raise awareness among their members around asserting their rights and the welfare of OFWs, and they support the ongoing struggle for the defense of their ancestral lands, life and resources in the Cordillera homeland. Significant gains have been achieved over the years.

During the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005, the Arroyo government further promoted the International Exchange for Human Resources or the "GATS Mode 4". As if this were not enough, to further squeeze the OFWs President Arroyo then issued the New Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Guidelines requiring OFWs to undergo skills assessment or training before deployment, prompting over 10,000 Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong to protest in the streets. CORALL was one of the organizers of the protest rally opposing the guidelines as another means of extorting money from the OFWs.

Member organizations of these alliances are scattered throughout the Central District. Many can be seen at Statue Square, especially during the early morning and late at night during their holidays. Some have their "*tambayan*[1]" as if it is their ancestral domain, such as the Kalinga tribes and Bontoc tribes at Ice House Street. This is due to the cultural value placed by the Cordillera peoples on being together. Through these organizations, efforts are also being made to preserve, promote and practise the traditions and cultures of the Cordillera indigenous peoples, despite their distance from their homeland and the threat of cultural assimilation. One concrete example is the annual Cordillera Day in Hong Kong, which provides a venue for both cultural exchange and awareness raising among Cordillera migrants.

Inspired by increasing membership, the alliances consistently support struggles on the home front, including burning issues. Cordillera Day and the Tribal Filipino Sunday are held in Hong Kong, and these also serve as a venue for discussions around the current situation in the region, and to gain support in these struggles. CORALL has invited speakers and guests from the Cordillera region, particularly from the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, to provide updates on these struggles. Such exchanges and activities bring renewed commitment to support and participate in the struggle of the Cordillera people, even from distant lands.

We are still reminded that such struggles can be won through the concerted efforts of all Cordillera peoples and Filipinos. The struggle of the Cordillera people will not be achieved until Philippine society is free from foreign domination, feudal exploitation and bureaucratic capitalism. Only then will the Cordillera peoples be able to take control of their ancestral lands and their lives, and only then will forced migration from the Cordillera region be minimized, if not eradicated.

Convinced that we will not be in foreign lands such as Hong Kong forever and that there is no place like home, we will one day return to our Cordillera homeland where we can draw our sustenance, our identity, our life, to the homeland where our struggle for our collective rights will be primarily pursued.

As migrant workers and indigenous peoples, we say, "We are worth more than the dollars we send. We dream of a society where families are not broken up by the urgent need for survival. We dream and will actively work for a Cordillera homeland where there is the opportunity for indigenous peoples and everyone to live a decent and humane life". ❏

Note

1   Tambayan is a Filipino word which literally means "meeting place".

Flora Baniaga Belinan is a Kankanaey indigenous woman from Sagada, Mt. Province in the Cordillera region, Philippines. She worked in Hong Kong as an OFW for 12 years (1993-2003) where she was an organizer and leader of Cordillera migrant workers. She was one of the founding leaders of CORALL before becoming its Adviser. Back home in Baguio City, she became the Founding Chairperson of MIGRANTE-Metro Baguio, and a member of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance Regional Council. Ms. Belinan is the Third Nominee of Gabriela Women's Partylist (GWP) at the House of Representatives.

MIGRATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN KENYA TO URBAN AREAS

Johnson Mali ole Kaunga

This article describes some aspects of rural–urban migration among indigenous communities in Kenya (who are mainly hunter-gatherers and pastoralists), with a particular focus on the indigenous youth.

Certain indigenous families and/or households have become permanently urbanized and rarely visit their traditional homes despite their emotional and social connection with their ancestry. A few of these households have become successful in their own way and have formed a magnet attracting their relatives to the cities. But the majority of those who have migrated to urban areas have joined the slum dwellers as a source of cheap labour for the ever increasing urban demands.

Given ever increasing levels of poverty, environmental change, social disruption of community life and social institutions, it is safe to assume that the number of indigenous peoples moving to urban areas in Kenya will increase sharply. There is no strategy or any existing mechanism that can be used to arrest rural-urban migration and, as such, it is only apt to devise strategies for making individuals, households and communities understand the impact and consequences so that they can prepare, plan and make the most of it.

There are no organizations or projects addressing the urban-based indigenous peoples' needs and challenges as a specific target group. In most circumstances, they tend to be considered "temporary urban residents" who will, at some point, go back to their ancestral homes. As such, it is perceived that their or their family's needs can be better addressed in their home districts.

The terms urban and rural have different meanings and connotations to different people, institutions and societies and, as such, it is important to capture the indigenous peoples' notion and understanding of the term. In Kenya, pastoralists consider any trading centres with some shops, social amenities such as a dispensary, school, government department offices and a concentration of different communities as an urban centre.

Unique cultures

The pastoralists are one of the most disadvantaged sectors of Kenyan society. The pastoralists' districts or occupied areas, mainly the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), have the highest incidences of poverty[1] and the lowest levels of access to basic services: education, communication, infrastructure, public health and nutrition to name but a few.

Despite decades of continued marginalization, domination by mainstream societies, non–recognition, top-down development approaches and assimilationist education policies, the pastoralists have largely managed to conserve and maintain their unique way of life, cultural practices and identity. The pastoralists' identities and cultures, in their diverse forms, are considered the backbone of Kenyan national heritage.[2] There is no doubting their contribution to Kenyan cultural diversity. They also contribute greatly to the national economy and to biodiversity conservation. The indigenous peoples who have moved into urban areas are struggling to maintain their own identities and to be constant flag bearers of their communities' identities wherever they are.

It is not known exactly when the Kenyan indigenous peoples began trickling into urban centres. However, we can explore some of the positive and negative factors and the day-to-day challenges they encounter in the urban environment.

Formal education as a driving force

The experience of the Maasai pastoralists living in the Laikipia District of northern Kenya serves as one example of the start of the migration process. Some Laikipia Maasai elders who were interviewed on this subject gave an account of how the rural–urban migration process began in Laikipia. There were very few schools established and all of them were in the urban centres and so their children could not make it to school and back in the same day. This forced some households to move into the towns and rent a house where all the children of one family stayed and attended school and then moved back to the village during the school holidays. Until 1989, there were no high schools in the areas inhabited by the Laikipia Maasai and all children who qualified for high school had to move to Nairobi or Nanyuki.

There are still no tertiary institutions in the rural areas and more and more indigenous youth who have completed high school are moving into the urban centres to enrol in colleges of further education such as computer schools, tourism colleges and universities. Experience has shown that only a small percentage ever return to the rural areas they came from. This is

due to a lack of employment opportunities or gainful occupation back in the village and so they tend to stick around the major urban areas where they can gain access to information via the Internet and newspapers and make contacts regarding potential opportunities.

Formal education prepares the indigenous youth for employment in the urban centres, where they can potentially achieve a good life, a good house, a car etc. It is thus understandable that some find solace in the towns and prefer this kind of life to that of the village, where they would face the same challenges as those who have not been to school.

Menial jobs and low social status

The frequent and prolonged droughts and the frequent and violent incidents of so-called cattle-rustling[3] in Kenya have continued to decimate the livestock and other assets of the pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, leaving households with no means of rebuilding their livelihoods and hardly any means of survival. The droughts have disrupted the entire social support network and the ensuing impoverishment, hopelessness and frustration force an increasing number of pastoralists and hunter-gatherers to move to the cities in search of work. However, most pastoralists and hunter-gatherers are illiterate and can find hardly any employment other than menial jobs.

There is no disaggregated data on the number of indigenous peoples who have moved to urban areas. It is, however, important to note that more than 50% of security guards in the major cities are from pastoralist and hunter–gatherer communities. The pastoralists and hunter–gatherers are known to be trustworthy and tend to easily find employment as security guards.

Pastoralists are endowed with cultural and heritage resources that make them renowned tourist attractions worldwide. The culture of the Maasai and Samburu has been a driving force in the growth of tourism in Kenya and some urban indigenous youth find employment in the tourist industry. Young girls and boys living around the popular tourist destinations are being lured to work as tourist attractions, as dancers, for example, often for low pay. There are a high number of young Samburu *morans* (Maasai word for young warrior) who migrate to major urban centres such as Mombasa and Malindi along the coast. Here they work as beachboys, roaming the beaches selling traditional artefacts and performing as dancers. Due to their illiteracy, these indigenous youth are often exploited by the hotel owners. The *morans* often perform traditional dances in the hotels by day and work as night guards by night.

The young Maasai and Samburu who have moved to the cities have become innovative in using their culture as a source of income. The Maasai *morans* are famous for their long, plaited hair and they use their traditional skills of hair plaiting to make an income by plaiting women's hair.

Some of the indigenous youth who have migrated to the cities have learned skills such as driving and have ended up becoming tour guides. Some have also acquired skills in starting and running small enterprises.

The illiterate youth face serious challenges, such as social and language barriers, that end up making them socially discriminated – to a level that limits their interaction with the rest of urban society.

The majority of indigenous youth streaming into urban areas suffer from high levels of illiteracy and cannot negotiate fair and proper payment or working conditions. Most of them end up being employed on a temporary basis for as long as they continue working.

Consequences of migration in the rural areas

Newly initiated youths[4] and able-bodied men are increasingly streaming into the cities and leaving the children, elders and women back home. This has increased the workload of women, who have to play both the traditional male roles and their own.
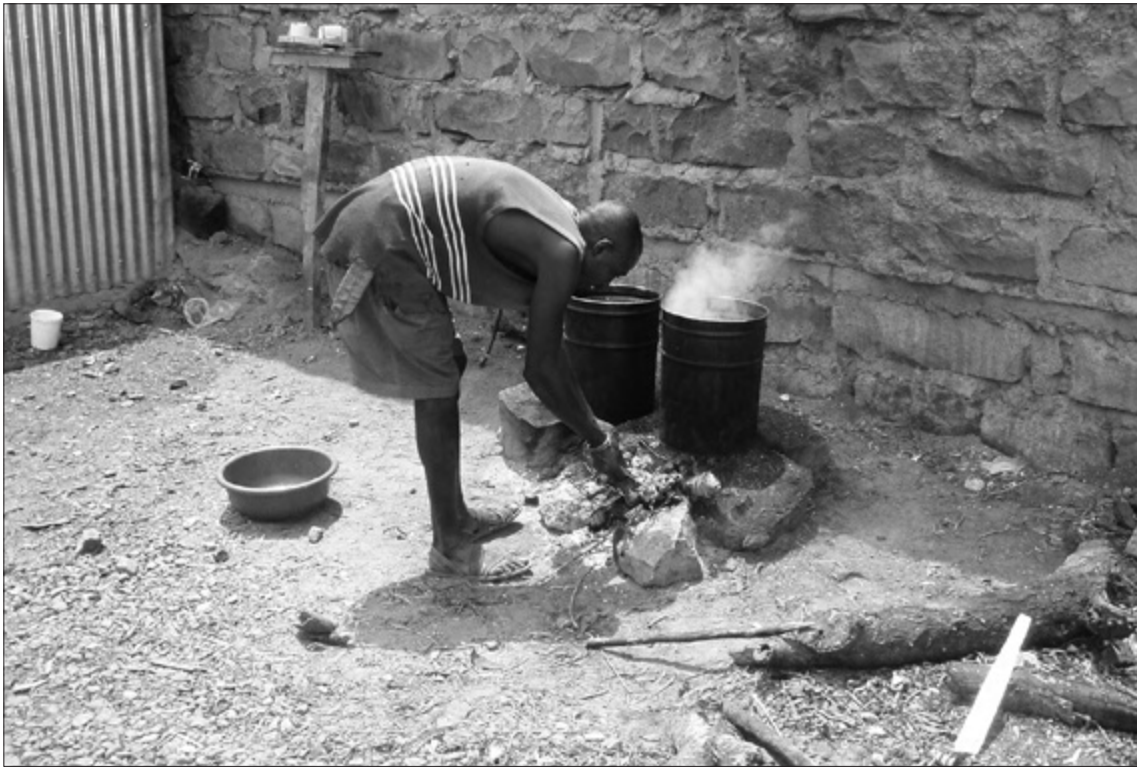
This urban migration of able-bodied men also weakens the local traditional leadership structures since the pool from which potential new and competent leaders are chosen is becoming limited. Traditionally, it was the role of the community to contribute to the welfare and upkeep of their leader to ensure that he would never leave the community in search of work.

Creative and constructive use of urban environments

The urban environments are very challenging and indigenous peoples who end up there are forced to be creative and innovative. As described above, many indigenous youth live in highly difficult circumstances and end up in the most menial and low paid jobs. However, many also manage to use the new urban opportunities in creative and constructive ways.

Urban indigenous youth often become an important source of information and channel of communication to and from their own rural communities. For instance, they pass on important information to their siblings and families about new developments such as government recruitments and services and they provide

THE LAND SHOULD BE RETURNED TO the MAASAI not the GOVERNMENT

END OF COLONIAL TREATIES HAS COME ALL THE LAND must GO TO THE RIGHTFUL OWNERS

OUR LAND OUR RIGHTS OUR LIFELINE!!

SUNSET FOR BRITISH AND SUNRISE FOR THE MAASAI

information about meetings that the rural communities often cannot access due to lack of regular newspapers and the non-existence of electronic media.

Those who end up in decent jobs generally create important social networks that link them with all the youth and members of their communities in the same urban centre. These social networks become a strong pull factor, as unemployed relatives will use them as a launch pad from which to begin their efforts to find a job.

The urban indigenous youth are increasingly becoming an important voice that represents their communities in urban centres. They attend meetings and raise issues relevant to their communities both in the city slums and in the rural areas. They are also members of various social movement forums in their rural areas and they volunteer their services to represent the communities' interests. The *Laikipia Maasai Association* is an example of how indigenous peoples based in urban areas such as Nairobi have organised themselves in order to articulate the voice and aspirations of their rural home communities, in this case the Laikipia Maasai. It is a membership organization that consists of professionals, students and other volunteers, and the broad membership base helps the organization to widen its contact network. The association also organises fundraising for members who are in extreme financial need. For example, in September 2007, the Laikipia Maasai Association contributed over 100,000 Kenya shilling (approximately 1,500 US$) to a fundraising activity aimed at improving the Soit Oudo primary school in Laikipia.

Another example are the Maa-speaking women based in Nairobi who have established an organization called the *Reto Women Association* with the objective of helping to build and strengthen solidarity among and between the Maa-speaking social groups. One of their main activities has been to organize a large annual Maa Cultural Festival to which they invite the Maasai leadership in Kenya and Tanzania. This initiative has helped and contributed to uniting the Maasai leadership and has consolidated the voice of the Maasai people. The Reto Women Association has also started Maasai classes for Maa children based in Nairobi as a long-term strategy of ensuring that Maasai children meet, talk and identify with their culture and heritage.

The urban migration also has significant economic importance for the rural indigenous communities. It can be estimated that up to 50% of the livelihoods in pastoral areas are actually being supported by low-paid pastoralists and hunter-gatherers working in urban areas, as security guards for example. Such security guards earn as little as 3,000 Kenya Shilling (equivalent to 44 US$) per month. And yet they are still able to remit part of this meagre income to support their families and rela-

tives. They use the income to reconstruct their traditional livelihood by purchasing livestock that end up becoming key assets for the household.

Potential for coping strategies

As a way forward, the indigenous youth in urban areas should be supported through training and skills development to increase their chances of finding good employment. Indigenous peoples' organizations can assist by helping to organize the youth and support skills needs assessments and inventories that reflect the true needs and aspirations of the youth. The indigenous organizations need to give priority to the youth when it comes to on-the-job training and skills development.

The ultimate responsibility lies with the government, and the indigenous peoples' organizations will need to lobby the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports Development to ensure that the recently formulated National Youth Policy and the National Youth Fund take cognizance of the needs and aspirations of the indigenous youth.

The youth are the backbone of any community and they need to be supported to organize themselves and participate in community life and planning. Capacity building for youth in all areas should remain a priority and the governments need to be lobbied to undertake serious projects. ❑

Notes

1   Pulling Apart, 2004: Facts and Figures on Inequality in Kenya, Society for International Development.
2   Indigenous Affairs: 2004, Johnson Ole Kaunga: Indigenous peoples' experiences with the formal education system.
3   Cattle rustling involves violent raids organized by different indigenous communities who steal livestock from their neighbours. With the increasing and continuing proliferation of small arms, these raids have become extremely violent and cause many deaths, mainly among the women and children. Indigenous communities are using cattle–raids as a means of rebuilding their livelihoods, having lost most of their livestock during severe drought.
4   Transition from childhood to adulthood is defined through traditional initiation ceremonies that are accompanied by circumcision. The boys and girls are initiated into "adulthood" at a tender age, between 10 and 15 years, and they are expected to start building their identity and livelihood.

Johnson M. Ole Kaunga, is team leader of the organization "Indigenous Movement of Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation" (IMPACT) and a part-time consultant to the International Labour Organization, Project to Promote ILO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

INDIGENOUS MIGRATION FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS
THE CASE OF CAMEROON

Ibrahim Njobdi

In recent years, in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular, there has been a steadily increasing movement of rural people to the cities. This rural exodus has not spared the indigenous people of Cameroon, particularly the pastoralist Mbororo of the eastern, northern and north-western savannahs of the country.

The Mbororo are a semi-nomadic cattle-rearing people spread throughout Cameroon, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and Chad, and inhabiting the savannah areas of these countries in particular. They depend solely on cattle rearing and do not cultivate crops since they move from one area to another in search of pasture for their animals. Farming has never been a part of their culture as it has for the other farming populations of Cameroon mainstream society.

The Mbororo have never lived a communal sedentary life and that is why you will not find an Mbororo village or town in Cameroon. However, there are Mbororo settlements with houses dotted here and there on the savannah plateaux.

Cattle rearing has, by and large, framed the way of life of the Mbororo people. Traditional cattle rearing requires vast spaces and each family will therefore strive to be alone on a particular hill so that their cattle can get enough land to graze and roam freely without disturbance from the herds of other families. This is why families live apart and never unite in communal life as a village.

This factor has fundamentally contributed to the political marginalisation of the Mbororo because, in Cameroon, representation in the political system and in decision-making bodies starts at the village level, where each village has a rural council with an elected mayor and councillors plus a member of parliament. Being spread all over, the Mbororo people tend to be minorities in all the village jurisdictions in which they find themselves.

Recently, there has been an increasing demand on the part of the Mbororo elite and NGOs for the government of Cameroon to appoint Mbororo representatives to parliament, after consulting the people. The government has not yet responded to this demand. The Mbororo hope to receive a response soon, however, and are keeping up the pressure.

Photo: Ibrahim Njobdi

Factors causing migration

A number of reasons could be advanced as to why the Mbororo people, and especially the youth, are increasingly migrating from the rural savannahs of Cameroon to the cities and towns.

The primary and most fundamental reason is the enormous and steady decrease in cattle wealth. In recent years, the Mbororo people have grown poorer and poorer as cattle stocks have diminished by the day while the Mbororo population has increased.

This decrease in cattle has largely been caused by a reduction in land. Farmers have invaded large areas of grazing land to establish their farms, and this dispossession has led to the death of many cattle.

Another factor is the increase in cattle ranches, which has further dispossessed the Mbororo of their land, led to the death of their cattle and made them even poorer. The only alternative is for them to migrate to the cities for their survival.

Yet another reason is the cattle pest that has impoverished the Mbororo, as many cattle die every year from this and other cattle diseases.

Many Mbororo families have grown very large due to a lack of family planning, given that the Mbororo culture is against birth control. The mouths to feed have largely outnumbered the amount of milk and meat produced, with the consequence of hunger and poverty. The only solution is to adventure for a better life in the cities.

Mbororo people in the cities

Due to interaction with other communities, the Mbororo have now discovered amenities, such as electricity, which are only found in cities. Some Mbororo youths tend to migrate to cities to enjoy the facilities offered by electricity, such as night clubs etc.

Some Mbororo youths now have primary school education and this opens them up to the world. They do not want to remain on the hills herding cattle but prefer to venture to the cities for a better life.

The search for employment has also pushed many Mbororo youths to the cities. Most of them engage in unskilled jobs, as security guards and so on, given that they are unable to read or write. A number of them work as drivers, while some are engaged in petty trading.

Over 500 Mbororo youths of both sexes can now be found in the big cities of Douala, Yaoundé, Bafoussam, Bamenda and Bertoua, and in smaller towns.

Advantages of migration

The migration of Mbororo youths from rural to urban areas in Cameroon has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages are the following:

For many Mbororo youths, whose cattle wealth has been drastically reduced or even destroyed, the migration to urban areas at least offers an alternative living - even if it is still a miserable life. Most urban Mbororo youth live on an average of one dollar per day!

A few urban Mbororo youths - especially those with at least primary school education -have succeeded in learning skills such as driving, tailoring, shoe mending, carpentry and so on, and are working in the cities.

Some urban youths have also become involved in petty trading, for example, selling basic necessities. Some have small stores while others are mobile traders moving from street to street with their goods on their heads or shoulders.

Some Mbororo youths who have migrated to major cities such as Douala and Yaoundé have obtained employment in restaurants, supermarkets, or in private residences as security guards, cleaners, etc.

Migration to the cities has also given the Mbororo youths an opportunity to sell their traditional medicine. The Mbororo are well-known for their traditional herbs (medicinal plants), which can cure a number of diseases. Some Mbororo youths have become traditional doctors in cities like Yaoundé and Douala, and are managing to make a living out of it.

Another advantage of migration is the social integration with other communities and the opening up of the Mbororo people to the outside world. By living in the cities and coming into contact with different people and other cultures, they become aware of the complexities of the world as a global village. This enriches their minds and is a source of learning, increasing their capacity to advocate for a better life for their communities. Mbororo youths who have migrated to the city have also become aware of social justice issues and some have been empowered to demand their rights. One example of this is a group of Mbororo youth in Douala who have recently formed a pressure group called "SURAMAMA". They have established an office where they meet to discuss the problems affecting their lives in Douala.

(right) Mbororo youths in Yaunde - Photo: Marianne Wiben Jensen

Disadvantages

There are, however, also a number of disadvantages to the Mbororos' urban migration:

When Mbororo youths migrate to the cities, they are not used to urban life and, given the fact that most of them have never been to school, urban life can become too complicated and difficult for them to stand.

In most cases they do not have the means to feed and lodge themselves nor to obtain medical care. This has pushed many urban Mbororo youths, especially the boys, into crime, for example burglary and highway robbery. Recently, a group of around ten Mbororo youths attacked a passenger bus on the Yaoundé - Bafoussam highway and robbed the passengers of their money, mobile phones and other valuables. One of the boys was strangled to death by the passengers while the rest ran away.

Similar incidents involving Mbororo youths have been reported in Bafoussam, on the road between Ndu and Mbo-nso in north-west Cameroon. Following investigations, it was discovered that all the boys were Mbororo youths who had migrated from their villages and were now living in Bafoussam town.

Yaunde - Photo: Marianne Wiben Jensen

Images of the city of Yaunde - Photos: Marianne Wiben Jensen

Some of them were killed by shots fired by the Cameroon police, some escaped and yet more were arrested and are languishing in various prisons in Cameroon.

While the boys are engaged in banditry, the girls have turned to prostitution to earn a living in the cities and towns. A number of Mbororo girls aged around 20 can now be seen loitering around bars, night clubs and the streets of Douala, Bafoussam, Bertoua and Bamenda. In Bamenda city for example, they can be found in a neighbourhood called "Old Town". Twenty years ago, one would hardly see an Mbororo girl living in the cities because they would be married as young as fifteen.

Another serious and damaging problem is the spread of contagious diseases within the Mbororo community. When the Mbororo girls and boys from the city visit their families in rural areas they spread diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which were previously unknown in indigenous communities living in isolation from the mainstream society.

Due to the contact with the city, the Mbororo people are rapidly losing their culture. This is because the youths in the city tend to influence their relatives in the villages and inspire them to admire the modern way of life. They then start to abandon their old way of life and culture.

There has been a steady increase in the urban slums around Yaoundé and Douala. These two main cities receive thousands of unemployed youths from rural areas, including indigenous youths, and this leads to an increase in the slums and shantytowns. Good examples are the "New Bell" neighbourhood of Douala, "Briqueterie" in Yaoundé and the Old Town neighbourhood of Bamenda, where one can find as many as ten people sharing one room with no electricity!

Failure of the government

A number of non-governmental organisations have blamed these problems of urban migration and degradation of indigenous cultures on the Cameroon government. The government has failed to implement rural development projects that could keep these youths in rural areas. It has made no efforts to introduce modern cattle grazing to the Mbororo, which could allow their cattle economy and way of life to continue to exist despite the reduction in land.

The failure of the Cameroon government to ensure that the education system is suitable to indigenous cultures is also a problem. Education becomes assimilation and hence an abandonment of indigenous culture.

Prospects for the future

A number of measures could be taken by the Cameroon government and other stakeholders, including NGOs, to discourage the migration of Mbororo pastoralists to urban areas. The introduction of modern methods of cattle rearing would enable the Mbororo pastoralists to rear their cattle in a sustainable way while also contributing to solving the problem of land scarcity.

The provision of basic social amenities such as electricity, clean water, hospitals and so on would help to improve life in the villages, thereby discouraging migration and also attracting youths back to their settlements.

Finally, projects should be initiated to mobilise and support the Mbororo youth who have already settled in the cities, enabling them to earn a living there. For example, they could be offered training in driving, tailoring and other professions that do not need a high level of education.   ❑

Ibrahim Njobdi is Mbororo. He is a journalist by profession and holds a bachelor's degree in English language. He has been active in the advocacy work for the rights of indigenous peoples in Cameroon - especially the Mbororo pastoralist - since 2001. He has been involved in this process both at national and international levels in his capacity as the press officer for the Mbororo Socio-Cultural and Development Association (MBOSCUDA). Ibrahim Njobdi is currently the president of LELEWAL - a young indigenous organization, which he founded in 2006 with the main goal of disseminating information to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples in Cameroon notably the Mbororo pastoralists and the pygmies.

IWGIA – INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

IWGIA's aims and activities

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - IWGIA - is a non-profit making, politically independent, international membership organization.

IWGIA co-operates with indigenous peoples all over the world and supports their struggle for human rights and self-determination, their right to control land and resources, their cultural integrity, and their right to development.

The aim of IWGIA is to defend and endorse the rights of indigenous peoples in concurrence with their own efforts and desires. An important goal is to give indigenous peoples the possibility of organising themselves and to open up channels for indigenous peoples' own organizations to claim their rights.

IWGIA works at local, regional and international levels to further the understanding and knowledge of, and the involvement in, the cause of indigenous peoples.

The activities of IWGIA include: publications, international human rights work, networking, conferences, campaigns and projects.

For more information about IWGIA's activities, please check our website at: www.iwgia.org

Publications

IWGIA publishes a yearbook, *The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena*, and a journal *Indigenous Affairs/Asuntos Indígenas*. Furthermore, a number of books thematically focussing on indigenous issues are published each year.

IWGIA's publications can be ordered by
- **e-mail: iwgia@iwgia.org**
- **fax: +45 35 27 05 07**

BOARD

Espen Wæhle (Chair), Diana Vinding, Jenneke Arens, Mark Nuttall, María Teresa Quispe, Robert Hitchcock and Christian Erni

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Acting director: Lola García-Alix
Administrator: Anni Hammerlund

Coordinators of programmes:
- *South and Central America:* Alejandro Parellada
- *Africa:* Marianne Wiben Jensen & Dina Berenstein
- *Asia:* Christian Erni
- *Russia:* Maja Hojer
- *Human Rights:* Lola García-Alix
- *Communication & Publications:* Kathrin Wessendorf

Administration: Inger Dühring & Zoya Shahbazian
Secretarial staff: Annette Kjærgaard & Käthe Jepsen
Website: Miguel Vega & Sille Stidsen
Photo archive-library: Berit Lund
Student assistance: Kristina Weibel & Camilla Kjerulf Christensen

Coordination of publications:

The Indigenous World/El Mundo Indígena: Sille Stidsen
*Indigenous Affairs:* Kathrin Wessendorf
Asuntos Indígenas: Alejandro Parellada

Graphics, layout and typesetting: Jorge Monrás

ADVISORY BOARD

Alberto Chirif
Albert Barume
Ana Cecilia Betancourt
B.R. Shyamala Devi
Benedict Ole Nangoro
Birgitte Feiring
Carlos Romero
C.R. Bijoy
Chandra Roy-Henriksen
Dalee Sambo Dorough
Efraín Jaramillo
Geoff Nettleton
Georg Henriksen
Inger Sjørslev

Jannie Lasimbang
Kim Carstensen
Kuupik Kleist
Morita Carrasco
Paul Oldham
Pedro García Hierro
Peter Jull
René Fürst
Sarah Pritchard
Sharon Venne
Sidney L. Harring
Suhas Chakma
Terence Turner

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS - THE UN SPECIAL RAPPOTEUR
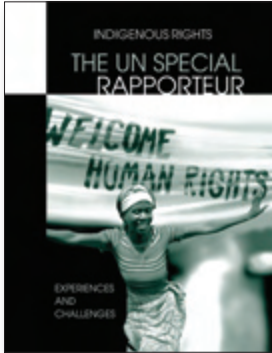
This publication is a result of the dialogue from the International Expert Seminar on Best Practices for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples. The purpose is to look at the Special Rapporteur mechanism, the function, and what has been achieved so far. Finally, the publication gives recommendations on best practices to the Human Rights Council and to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on how to strengthen the mechanism and finally to the UN system in general.

**CANADIAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITEE -
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY & IWGIA - 2007**
ISBN 9788791563270 – 57 pages

REPORTS OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION'S WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS/COMMUNITIES

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO - SEPTEMBER 2005

The African Commission's on Human and Peoples' Rights established a Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in 2001. This Working Group has, during 2005, undertaken research and information visits to the Republic of Burundi and the Republic of Congo. The report from each of these visits give an account of meetings held with government authorities, civil society organisations, indigenous communities and other stakeholders. The reports describe the situation of indigenous populations in the each of the countries and make recommendations to the respective governments. The reports are published in a combined English-French version.

AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS & IWGIA - 2007
ISBN: 9788791563317

LANGUAGE OF THE LAND
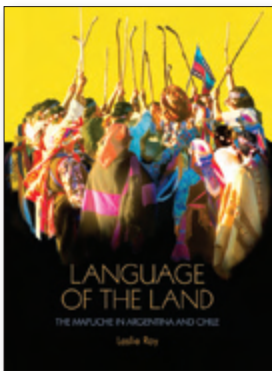
THE MAPUCHE IN ARGENTINA AND CHILE

This is the first book in English to examine the contemporary Mapuche: their culture, their struggle for autonomy within the modern-day nation state, their religion, language and distinct identity. Leslie Ray looks back over the history of relations between the Mapuche and the Argentine and Chilean states, and examines issues of ethnicity, biodiversity and bio-piracy in Mapuche lands today, their struggle for rights over natural resources, and the impact of tourism and neoliberalism.

IWGIA - Document 119 - 2006
ISBN 97-88791563379 – 292 pages

Leslie Ray

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

THE EUROPEAN UNION