

# Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

---

Volume 10  
Issue 1 *Issues 1 & 2*

Article 1

---

1-1-2012

## The Aché and Guaraní: Thirty Years after Maybury-Lewis and Howe's Report on Genocide in Paraguay

Richard Reed  
*Trinity University*, rreed@trinity.edu

John Renshaw  
*University of Kent*, john.renshaw1@virgin.net

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti>

 Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Reed, Richard and Renshaw, John (2012). "The Aché and Guaraní: Thirty Years after Maybury-Lewis and Howe's Report on Genocide in Paraguay," *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 1, 1-18.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol10/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact [jcostanz@trinity.edu](mailto:jcostanz@trinity.edu).

ARTICLE

---

## The Aché and Guaraní: Thirty Years after Maybury-Lewis and Howe's Report on Genocide in Paraguay

**Richard Reed**  
Trinity University  
reed@trinity.edu

**John Renshaw**  
Honorary Research Fellow  
University of Kent  
john.renshaw1@virgin.net

For decades, scholars have wrestled with the moral issues raised by their privileged knowledge, skills and power. These issues came to a head in Latin America in the 1970s, as the worsening conditions of indigenous peoples' galvanized activists to create institutions for immediate action. In quick succession, The Anthropological Resource Center (ARC), Cultural Survival, Survival International, and The International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) were organized to marshal information and raise public awareness of the plight of indigenous peoples. Articles were published, reports written and scholars became public figures in the ethical and political debates of lowland, forest peoples. Over thirty years have passed; it is useful to return to some of this early work and reassess its place, both in indigenous peoples' struggles and in the history of our own activism. The following explores one of these early reports, Cultural Survival's investigation of the reports of genocide of the Aché and Guaraní peoples of Eastern Paraguay.

In 1978 USAID invited David Maybury-Lewis and Jim Howe to investigate the conditions of indigenous peoples of Paraguay. This was a period when U.S. foreign policy was shifting away from its cold war support of General Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship and the State Department was beginning to pay more attention to reports of journalists and anthropologists who claimed the Paraguayan government was engaged in genocide against the country's indigenous peoples (Münzel 1973, 1974; Arens 1978). The subsequent report, published by Cultural Survival (Maybury-Lewis and Howe 1980) proved controversial. On one hand Maybury-Lewis and Howe did not find evidence of an explicit government policy to exterminate indigenous peoples. On the other, they argued that the government's failure to protect indigenous groups was a *de facto* policy of destruction of native peoples and their way of life (Maybury-Lewis and Howe 1980:110-112). This is not the place for an examination of the debate about the veracity of Münzel's charges that has been accomplished elsewhere (Survival of Tribal Peoples 1993; Harder-Horst 2007:80-93). The following analyzes Maybury-Lewis and Howe's work in the context of the last thirty years of history of the Guaraní and Aché in Paraguay and an anthropology of action.

Much has changed over the last three decades. The dictatorship of General Stroessner was overthrown in 1989, and Paraguay has been struggling to establish the basic institutions of democracy. In 2008 the country finally broke with sixty years of Colorado Party rule and elected Fernando Lugo, previously an activist priest and Bishop of San Pedro, as President. The population has also shifted from being predominantly rural to an urban majority, and the traditional rural economy, based on the production of cotton and timber, has been replaced by a booming agro-industrial and ranching economy. The once-extensive forests of the Atlantic Forest have been largely felled, and the small farmers have been pushed off their lands to make way for the mechanized production of soy and wheat.

It is perhaps a good moment to revisit the work of Maybury-Lewis and Howe and to reassess the situation of some of the indigenous peoples they investigated. Of special concern then and now are two groups, the Aché and the Guaraní. It should be noted at the outset that neither of these groups have, in fact, disappeared. Nor have they prospered. After decades of struggle against seemingly insurmountable forces, both groups have won some victories but have lost considerable ground. Nevertheless, the Aché and Guaraní continue an increasingly independent fight, protesting for their rights to land and arguing for greater political participation. The forces they encounter, identified and explored by Maybury-Lewis and Howe, have yielded prospects and problems that were unforeseen in the original study.

## PARAGUAY IN THE 1970s

In the mid-1970s most countries in the Southern Cone of South America were ruled by military governments. Paraguay, which had already experienced more than twenty years of dictatorship under General Alfredo Stroessner, suffered a new wave of repression. It began in December 1975 with the arrest of the Paraguayan anthropologist, Miguel Chase Sardi, and three of his colleagues, who had established Proyecto Marandú to provide indigenous peoples with information about legal rights (cf. Chase Sardi 1972). This was followed in March and April 1976 with the widespread harassment, imprisonment without trial and in some cases torture of both the intellectual elite of Asunción and members of the remaining opposition parties. The second wave coincided with the coup d'état and the dirty war in Argentina—there is no question that at this time the military governments of the Southern Cone collaborated in the kidnapping and murder of dissidents that had taken refuge in neighboring countries. It also coincided with a remarkable change in the priorities of the U.S. government.

Until 1976, the U.S. government had tolerated and perhaps even encouraged the widespread use of torture, imprisonment without trial and murder as the price for Paraguay's fervent anti-communism. The government of President Jimmy Carter, which came to office in January 1977, took a different moral position. It emphasized the importance of "human rights"—a new concept in the political dialogue between the U.S. and Southern Cone countries. President Carter appointed Robert White as Ambassador in Asunción in an attempt to put political pressure on the regime. The Government of Paraguay did make some concessions: political prisoners were tried for subversion rather than being imprisoned without trial and it is likely that fewer people were murdered or disappeared; by the end of the decade most of the political prisoners were freed. Stroessner hung onto power for another decade, but the regime suffered a growing sense of economic and political instability. The Government of Paraguay never recovered the support of the United States government and became increasingly concerned with strengthening economic and political ties with Brazil. The two countries embarked on the construction of the Itaipú dam, which is still the largest hydro-power project in the world, and the Paraguayan Government began to encourage the sale of land to Brazilian ranchers and development companies, which bought and divided up large tracts of land for colonization by small farmers from Southern Brazil.

At the height of Stroessner's drive to extirpate opposition and dissent, Richard Arens, a professor of law from Temple University, edited a book entitled *Genocide in Paraguay* (1976) that brought together a series of reports claiming the Aché—usually referred to in those days as the Guayaki—were being subjected to a policy of genocide, aided and abetted by North American evangelist missionaries from the New Tribes Mission. It is important to remember that genocide, as defined in 1948 by the United Nations Geneva Convention, refers not only to killing the people belonging to a specific national, ethnic, racial or religious group, but also to imposing conditions intended to destroy the unique identity and the continuity of the group as such, for instance by imposing measures to prevent births or forcibly transferring the children to another group. The charge of genocide was originally made by the German anthropologist Mark Münzel in two reports (Münzel 1973, 1974) published by the International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). The reports were repeated in the *Washington Post* (Omang 1974) and the *New York Times* (Kandell 1974). British

journalist Norman Lewis then wrote a lengthy piece that appeared in the Sunday Times Magazine (Lewis 1975) that was syndicated in a number of other publications. Mark Münzel and Norman Lewis contributed the first-hand accounts that appear in Professor Arens' book while the other contributions included pieces by Eric Wolf and Elie Wiesel, the latter comparing the situation of the Aché with the Holocaust.

In 1977 Richard Arens was invited to visit Paraguay; he spent about a month in the country and visited various indigenous communities, including the New Tribes Mission at Cerro Morotí, one of the places where the genocide was alleged to have taken place. Although at the time of the mission, Professor Arens informed the people who accompanied him that he believed it was difficult to justify the accusations of genocide, his subsequent report, published by the British indigenous rights group Survival International, repeated many of the claims in his book (Arens 1978). At this point, apparently as a result of the controversy, USAID invited David Maybury-Lewis to review and report on the status of indigenous peoples in Paraguay. With the collaboration of James Howe, Maybury-Lewis made two trips to Paraguay and visited the communities that had attracted international attention, including Cerro Morotí in Eastern Paraguay and the New Tribes Mission station for the Ayoreo at Faro Moro in the Chaco. Maybury-Lewis and Howe analyzed the problems of land and health among the indigenous peoples of the country, and discussed the role of government agencies, missionaries, indigenous groups and *indigenista* NGOs.

Their report, published by Cultural Survival as *The Indian Peoples of Paraguay: Their Plight and their Prospects* (1980), provided what is perhaps the most objective and cogent assessment of the situation of Paraguay's native peoples at the time. It lacks the sensationalist rhetoric that was—and unfortunately still is—an almost obligatory part of the discourse of many of the international NGOs that advocate of behalf of indigenous peoples. Maybury-Lewis and Howe recognized that the indigenous peoples of Paraguay faced desperate conditions, but did not find evidence for a state policy of genocide. Rather they argued the native population was being reduced by wider social and economic forces that were affecting the rural areas of Paraguay. The report details the problems of land and labor resources, of maintaining subsistence and adequate health, and the climate of political prejudice and inadequate legal protection. Indigenous peoples were suffering, but the cause was not unlike that which was disrupting indigenous societies throughout lowland Latin America: “the power of settlers, extractive capitalism, and the expanding national society” (Cultural Survival 1980:110).

Much has changed in Paraguay since David Maybury-Lewis' and James Howe's visits, and the changes have been especially significant for the country's indigenous peoples. Legislation, land titling, indigenous organizations and a large number of economic, social, and health projects have helped to ameliorate some of the conditions identified in the original report. On the other hand, the situation has in many ways become worse. The massive expansion of cattle ranching and soybean production has led to the clearing of over three-quarters of the forests in Eastern Paraguay, and the commercial development and expansion of the agricultural frontier into the rural hinterlands have exacerbated problems hardly evident thirty years ago.

## INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS

Maybury-Lewis and Howe identified control over land as the foremost issue for native peoples. At the time they visited the country, most of Paraguay's indigenous peoples had no formal recognition of their land rights. Nevertheless, the expansion of ranching and farming and the demands of the burgeoning peasant population were creating problems for even the more the isolated indigenous communities.

In 1978 a few indigenous communities had secured rights to land as a result of efforts made by national NGOs, particularly the *Asociación Indigenista del Paraguay* (AIP), which along with the *Misión de Amistad* had supported two projects, *Proyecto Pa'i Tavytera* and *Proyecto Guaraní*, both of which had been working to regularize indigenous titles to land. The Guaraní of Eastern Paraguay had already begun to feel the effects of colonization by Paraguayan and

Brazilian ranchers and small farmers, especially the Paĩ Tavytera in the frontier Department of Amambay. In the Chaco, most native groups either lived in poverty as ranch hands of privately owned ranches or lived as wage laborers in the worker villages of the Mennonite Colonies in the Central Chaco. To be fair, by the late 1970s the Mennonite development agency, ASCIM (*Asociación de Cooperación Indígena y Mennonita*) had settled about half the indigenous population of the Central Chaco in agricultural colonies that replicated the Mennonite system of landholding on a miniature scale, but most indigenous people remained economically dependent on wage labor for the Mennonites and were obliged to conform with the Mennonites' religious beliefs. Land in the agricultural colonies was held in trust for the indigenous cooperatives by ASCIM and individual heads of household were required to be baptized members of the Mennonite Church in order to become members of the cooperatives.

Maybury-Lewis and Howe lauded the efforts of the organizations that were seeking to set aside land for native groups. Nevertheless, they affirmed that any longer-term solution would require a strong policy of land distribution, based on expropriation not purchase, along with legislation to allow land titles to be held in common by the members of the indigenous communities.

There were two primary obstacles to guaranteeing land for native groups. First, the *Instituto Nacional del Indígena* (INDI)—the government agency for indigenous affairs—had little reliable information about the native communities. Many groups had little contact with the state and it was not until 1981 that the first census of the indigenous peoples was carried out. Second, although land could be reserved for indigenous peoples, there was no legal provision for community landholding other than by formally constituted cooperatives. Indigenous communities' rights to land were recognized under legislation dating back to 1904 that guaranteed land to small farmers that had worked the land for over twenty years. This provided an entitlement to individually owned plots of twenty hectares in Eastern Paraguay but made no provision for collective landholding by indigenous communities (Equipo Nacional de Misiones 1987:18). Paraguayan farmers generally worked small plots that often lacked legal title, but in principle they accepted the concept of an individual having ownership of land. Indigenous peoples, on the other hand, rejected the idea of land as a commodity that could be alienated by individuals and, where they accepted the idea of land titling (up to the 1980s many Mbyá Guaraní rejected the idea that land could be “owned”) insisted on collective ownership. Indeed, this is probably one of the key concepts that distinguish indigenous peoples from other sectors of the Paraguayan population. Few indigenous peoples ever took up the option of holding land as peasant farmers.

The years since the 1980 report have seen dramatic changes in rural areas, especially in Eastern Paraguay, exacerbating the land problems identified by Maybury-Lewis and Howe. Thirty years ago the entire national population numbered slightly over three million people, with an average population density of less than twenty people per square mile. A large part of this population was clustered as peasant farmers in the region immediately surrounding Asunción, the capital city. Outside of this densely populated *central* region, most land was held by large landholders, either as ranches or the remnants of Paraguay's nineteenth century *latifundios*, immense forested tracts. The rural agricultural economy was primarily based in commercial sugar production in the south and peasant production of cotton and tobacco on overworked lands near Asunción. Unimproved ranching continued in the Chaco. The demise of logging and the harvesting of *yerba maté* (*Ilex paraguayensis*), which were the principal forest extractive industries at the turn of the twentieth century, left the forests of Eastern Paraguay largely intact. When Maybury-Lewis and Howe visited the Aché, for example, they were forced to follow oxcart tracks and ford rivers through the remnants of the massive landholdings of *La Industrial Paraguaya*. The community of Cerro Morotí was surrounded by forest that stretched hundreds of miles up to the Brazilian border.

The demise of these forests began well before the end of the Stroessner era, in response to demands of both the growing cattle and soybean elite and small farmers whose holdings were no longer large enough to be viable. Increasing frustration with the country's traditional power and economic structures caused the government to undertake a wide-ranging effort to expropriate land from the traditional extractive companies and redistribute it to small peasant farmers. Most significantly, commercial agriculture and cattle ranching

began to transform the rural economy, converting Paraguay's once vast forests into mechanized farms and ranches. Soybeans were first produced in Paraguay commercially in the 1970s, but within fifteen years the annual production covered two million acres, produced 3.8 million metric tons and accounted for over fifty percent of the national GNP. The soy was grown in rotation with wheat, to reduce soil erosion, and indeed the introduction of mechanized farming was originally encouraged by government, through projects such as the *Plan de Trigo* and the World Bank financed Project 1418, as a way to reduce dependence on imports of wheat. Quickly however, the export potential of soy became more important and other crops, such as oats (*aveia preta* in Portuguese) were incorporated into the crop cycle to protect the soil; the corporations and investors snatched up the cheap land along the Brazilian and Argentine borders and, aided by massive road building projects, converted the region into one of the world's leading zones of soybean production. While U.S. soy production stagnated, Brazilian production grew at twice the world rate of increase—and Paraguay's rate of production increase was even higher. By 1987 soybeans covered some 718,800 hectares, more than any other crop in Paraguay, with an annual output of one million tons and export revenues of approximately USD \$150 million. As the world market strengthened, more roads were cut, drying and storage facilities sprung up, the forest was pushed into massive windrows for burning, and fields replaced the forest canopy. Today, Paraguay ranks fourth in world soybean production, with corporations planting approximately 100,000 hectares of new soy each year to reach almost three million hectares planted in 2012 (Markeley 2011).

Throughout this same period, small farmers were allowed to leave the overworked soils of the traditional peasant areas and cut homesteads in the outlying areas along the Brazilian frontier. Paved roads were built to Brazil and Argentina and a network of secondary roads were cut into the forests. Massive colonization schemes for small farmers were organized by the *Instituto de Bienestar Rural* (IBR, now renamed INDERT), providing plots of land, originally of twenty hectares, and basic services, including agricultural extension and access roads. The government promoted the distribution of forested land, as contrasted with a land *redistribution* program that would have more rationally used agricultural resources (Hetherington 2009). Rather than moving these farmers onto the large landholdings of the elites that supported the regime, tens of thousands of small farmers were moved deep into eastern forests.

Despite the changes in rural Paraguay, poverty remains a critical problem for both indigenous and mestizo populations. Forty-one percent of the rural population lacks the income needed to purchase basic necessities. The top ten percent of the national population enjoys 43.8 percent of the total income, while the lowest ten percent has only 0.5 percent. Despite land distribution to colonists, land concentration in the Paraguayan countryside remains among the world's most extreme: ten percent of landholders control 66 percent of the land, while 30 percent of rural people are landless (Marió, Silva-Leander, and Carter 2004).

The development of the rural commercial sector also has been at the expense of the country's forests. The forested lands that were controlled by government—most of which had been expropriated from largely foreign-owned companies—were sold to private individuals, often by the military, members of the government or local Colorado Party officials, and were cleared for agriculture and ranching. From 1970 to 1990, Paraguay's rate of deforestation was among the world's highest, destroying roughly 2.5 percent of its forests each year. Between 1973 and 1989 the area of forest in Eastern Paraguay was reduced by half.

The coup d'état of 1989 exacerbated the situation. The downfall of Stroessner's dictatorship ushered in a period of political uncertainty and neoliberal reforms. On one hand, neoliberal policies led to the expansion of international investment in Paraguayan agro-industries. Government lands were titled and sold to corporations and individuals interested in large-scale, capital intensive mechanized agriculture. On the other, political uncertainty increased the rate of land occupations by small peasant farmers. Initially small farmers and local party bosses occupied and divided up the land belonging to Stroessner's closest supporters, but within a year or so land invasions became commonplace. Organized groups of *campesinos* realized that they had more freedom to act, and almost any area that had forest cover was at risk of being invaded, on the grounds that it was "irrationally exploited."

As early as 1980, Paraguay ranked as high as fourth in world rates of deforestation, with 3.5 percent of the forest cover being removed each year (Allen and Barnes 1985). Rates

increased in the subsequent two decades. Landsat images show that the forests were reduced to 40.7 percent of their original amount by 1989 and were down to 24.9 percent by 2000 (Huang et al. 2007). From 1980 to 1996, the rate of deforestation and the total portion of cover removed were second only to Indonesia, with up to 170,000 hectares being cleared annually. Only twenty percent of this loss can be attributed to small farmers; eighty percent of this destruction was by large landowners for commercial agriculture or cattle. Five years ago, it was estimated that only fourteen percent of the original forest canopy remained and that half of the remaining area had been seriously degraded by logging (Huang et al. 2007:461). These remaining forests exist as small and isolated parcels that retain little of the bio-diversity of the original expanses [1].

The sale and clearing of Paraguay's rural areas have imposed serious constraints on indigenous people's access to land. In 1981, the first national census of indigenous people enumerated 38,703 indigenous people and estimated the total population at 45,330. At that time, less than a quarter (twenty-four percent) of the known indigenous population was on land that assured by the government. Forty-four percent of the identified population was on private land or mission stations, often precariously situated on *latifundios* owned by the Paraguayan elite or foreign corporations (INDI 1982). In the ensuing years, large holdings and government land were sold for development. As indigenous people began to demand rights to their land, sale deeds began to include a stipulation that the land be cleared of any inhabitants, and groups were forced to relocate into the remaining areas of forest.

Even as the forests were being reduced, a considerable effort was being made to title land to indigenous communities. Only two years after Maybury-Lewis and Howe's visit, the *Estatuto de las Comunidades Indígenas (Ley 904/1981)* was passed, allowing indigenous communities to hold communal title to their lands. Lauded in the popular press at the time, the law received a more measured enthusiasm by indigenous groups. First, in Eastern Paraguay the law guaranteed a *minimum* of twenty hectares per family, but it was clear that the law would often be interpreted as allocating *only* twenty hectares to each family, the amount traditionally considered necessary for a small farmer to support a family from traditional cotton farming. In practice, even in designated national reservations, many received far less. Some communities with thirty or more families were allocated 1,500 hectares; smaller communities found the amounts they received reduced accordingly.

These small allotments made no consideration for the fact that for centuries these communities had been hunting, fishing, farming and collecting (often for trade goods) on vast areas located beyond the borders of their immediate community. As the borders of their lands were measured and demarcated, adjacent lands were opened up for colonization and development. As most indigenous communities in Eastern Paraguay were situated along the headwaters of the rivers that run into the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers, these were some of the most sought after areas for peasant farms and cattle ranches. Within a few short years, lines drawn on maps were converted to *piques* cut through the forest, and then to fences erected to mark the boundaries, restricting indigenous people to the reservations they had been allotted. Logging gangs, small farmers (especially Brazilian smallholders) and bulldozers cleared the rest of the forests that indigenous people had relied on for their subsistence and commercial production. To the outside world it looked as if indigenous communities had been granted something; the communities themselves experienced the process as a loss, not a gain.

Decreased subsistence production in the areas adjacent to the reservations has resulted in increased cash production on the lands that are directly controlled by indigenous peoples. As analyzed elsewhere, garden size rose dramatically as farmers sought to expand into cotton production, which at that time was the mainstay of the traditional peasant economy of Eastern Paraguay. In some areas, commercialization of indigenous agriculture resulted in a twenty-three percent increase in the rate of forest clearing (Renshaw, Reed, and Nikiphoroff 1989).

In conjunction with an increase in land clearing, timber was being sold from indigenous forests. Even before the titles to indigenous lands were transferred to the communities, native peoples had a right to market the hardwoods from the gardens they cleared. The right to market these timbers created an additional incentive to clear large gardens. As the logging industry expanded from the Brazilian frontier into the rest of Eastern Paraguay, loggers

found ample opportunity to push onto indigenous peoples' land to buy timber. In some cases they simply took the timber or used a mixture of threats and bribery to coerce indigenous leaders into authorizing the sale of their timber. In addition, as INDI moved to regularize land claims, agency personnel facilitated the sales of timber, often for personal gain. Other communities requested permission from INDI to sell their timber to raise money for a school building or health center and found ready business partners within the agency who were willing to both identify and market the timber and act as the contractor for the building construction (Diálogo Indígena Misionero 1985).

Initially Law 904/81 had little or no impact. Indeed, it was only because of the efforts of one of Paraguay's national NGOs, *Servicios Profesionales Socio-Antropológicos y Jurídicos* (SPSAJ) that in 1985 the first indigenous communities in Eastern Paraguay were able to obtain full legal titles to their land. Once the precedent had been created, others followed. They included many communities whose land had to be titled to satisfy conditions of various World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank loan agreements.

Although significant progress was made on titling lands, there are many native communities that do not yet have title to their land. As we see below, many smaller and more isolated communities missed the initial wave of titling, when there was greater international pressure and available forested land. In addition, there has been an ongoing process of population growth and community creation, which often results from political conflict and fission within established groups [2]. The result has been an intensifying struggle to maintain and grow the limited land that indigenous groups control.

## INDIGENOUS POPULATION

David Maybury-Lewis was clear that indigenous groups had survived almost five centuries of European contact, and were not about to disappear. Thus individuals, national governments, and international agencies were called upon to attend to them. However, few predicted the growth that has been experienced by indigenous populations over the last decades. This is particularly pronounced in Paraguay, where estimates used in the Cultural Survival report (1980:18) generally estimated a total population under 50,000.

Even as forested land has become scarcer, the years since 1978 have seen a dramatic increase in the population of Paraguay's indigenous population. The national census recorded 38,703 people in 1981 and estimated the total population as 45,330 (INDI 1982). The 1992 census, taken from the registers of the National Census, enumerated a total population of 49,487 (DGEEC 1997), while the 2002 Census enumerated 87,099 indigenous people (DGEEC 2003). In those two decades, Paraguay's indigenous population appears to have grown at an average of nearly 4.3 percent annually. Even if one takes into account some under-enumeration in the 1981 and 1992 census figures, the rate is clearly far higher than the growth of the national population; which grew at a rate of 2.9 percent from just under 3 million people in 1981 to over 5 million by 2002 and is almost triple the global average growth rate of 1.6 percent per year.

First, there is no doubt that the first indigenous census, taken in 1981, underestimated the indigenous population due to a variety of factors. In the Lower Chaco, there was difficulty reaching the most dispersed groups, especially on isolated ranches. There was also no systematic way of identifying indigenous people living in urban areas, not only the few families that had migrated to Asunción, but also people that were working there, for instance women employed as domestic servants.

In Eastern Paraguay, the census effectively enumerated the populations in the larger communities that had established relations with the larger society. However, the census takers had more difficulty reaching the more isolated and smaller communities, and had a hard time identifying the scattered households of families who had established a rural presence as smallholders. In addition, the majority of the Mbyá-Guaraní communities refused to participate in the Census. Their leaders rejected the authority of the government to carry out a census and, perhaps rightly, saw paper (*kuati'a*), a concept that encompasses literacy and all that literacy represents, the authority of lawyers, and the notion of private property as a threat to



their way of life. This is an idea encompassed by the Spanish term *letrado*, which connotes a self-interested slyness that is seen as dangerous for simple indigenous people. Indeed, in the early 1980s many Mbyá leaders refused to accept that land and the forest—the gift of the Creator—could be owned, bought or transferred. This was a moral issue and not ignorance of the ways of the national society. They also understood that acceptance of legal title would be tantamount to foregoing their rights to the much larger areas in which they used to hunt and gather. Since then, pressure on their land has forced the Mbyá to accept land titles. In the south, in the departments of Caazapá and Itapúa, some of the more isolated Mbyá communities, such as the Tekoha Guazú of Yuquerí (a community that under the leadership of the late Angelo Garay comprised twenty-one distinct settlements), have been dispersed. Some families sought refuge in the remaining area of forest in the Cordillera de San Rafael; others live surrounded by the farms of German, Japanese or Brazilian immigrants on tiny plots that look like islands in a sea of soy or winter wheat.

In addition to the under-enumeration in the 1981 and 1992 censuses, there is no question that since Maybury-Lewis and Howe published their report the indigenous population has enjoyed high rates of population growth, as have many lowland South American groups (McSweeney and Arps 2005:16). In 1981, rates of infant mortality cut sharply into the population. On average, 22.2 percent of indigenous children died before reaching their second birthday, a rate that climbed to 26 percent by the fifth birthday. This disturbingly high infant mortality was three times the national average (INDI 1981:67). The census suggested that this could largely be traced to common transmissible diseases, such as measles and rubella. Although there is little data available concerning current indigenous mortality rates, it is evident that improved medical care has led to decreased rates of infant mortality. Intensive vaccination programs began in the 1970s, and now reach nearly all the indigenous population of Paraguay. The immunization programs had a dramatic impact on the transmissible diseases that kill infants: the circulation of measles was broken in 1995; the last case of diphtheria was recorded in 1995; and by 2000 pertussis and neonatal tetanus had been reduced to rare occurrences (Castillo-Salgado 2004:13).

One of the unforeseen consequences of this dramatic increase in the indigenous population was that the initial land guarantees to indigenous peoples, even as they came to be titled to native communities, proved to be insufficient for the expanding population. As land development forced more indigenous people into direct relations with the larger society, and as the populations on reservations stripped the resources of these limited tracts, they created a demand for new lands. This growing demand for land occurred just as the available areas of forest became scarcer and as land became more expensive.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, indigenous communities began to actively search for small plots of land that could be occupied and demarcated. Indigenous leaders were adept at settling on land that had ambiguous titles or been taken as collateral by banks and *financieras* for unpaid loans. They made endless trips to Asunción to demand that INDI begin the process of expropriation. At the same time some of the politicians that were working in INDI saw the acquisition of land for indigenous communities as an opportunity to enrich themselves, taking a “commission” for the land they purchased—perhaps on behalf of the Party. One is still serving a jail sentence in Asunción’s Tacumbú prison; another is now a Senator. Despite the corruption and bad management that has characterized much of the land regularization, hundreds of new areas have been regularized since Maybury-Lewis and Howe’s visit.

As the number of titled communities has increased, their average size has decreased. Where the initial lands demarcated in Eastern Paraguay before 1978 sought to provide fifty hectares per family, or at least guarantee communities a contiguous plot of 1,500 hectares, the more recent reservations are often made up of the small corners of land that remained unclaimed after larger land claims have been settled.

## POLITICAL ACTION

Other consequences of the increasing density of settlement on reservations have been an increase in the power of nationally recognized indigenous leaders and increasing conflict within the communities (Reed 1995:214-216; Blaser 2004). Law 904/81 that created the provisions for titling land to indigenous groups also stipulated that each community needed to develop an institutional structure with a defined membership and an officially registered leader or leaders. This structure helped to empower those native leaders that had experience with the regional and national bureaucracy (and the languages and social skills which that entails) at the expense of religious leaders. Indigenous *caciques* have mediated relations between the communities and the national societies for decades, perhaps centuries, but their power over other members of the communities has been limited by the flexibility of indigenous communities. Without fixed membership, residents who found a local indigenous leader overbearing simply relocated to a new community in which they had relatives, or if no attractive opportunities presented themselves, established a new settlement in one of many possible locations throughout the region. With no more lands to escape to, dissatisfied members are forced to remain with unpopular leaders or, as often happens, try to break away and demand title to new areas of land. In the process, conflicts over leadership often translate into requests for additional areas. This makes it very difficult, even for the most committed individuals working for INDI, to determine whether a claim for land has any real foundation or is simply a means that will allow an aspiring leader to establish his own group. At the same time the way that the law is applied ensures that the structure of national control asserts itself at the local level within the communities.

The changing face of political leadership has been part of a more general shift in indigenous relations with the nation-state. Maybury-Lewis and Howe pointed to indigenous peoples' dependence on intermediaries in their relations with the national society and government. In the most basic terms, the acquisition of land titles has allowed indigenous groups greater independence from state control, missionaries, and *indigenista* organizations.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of indigenous organizations, especially regional federations based on the country's departmental structure or representing individual ethnic groups, has provided native peoples with more direct access to the state structures and international assistance. The Marandú Project, which was started in 1974, resulted in the creation of the *Asociación de Parcialidades Indígenas* (Renshaw 2001:28), which for many years served with varying effectiveness as the main national-level coalition of ethnic groups. In its first years after it was founded, API received international funding from the Inter-American Foundation and was able to build a network of leaders of the seventeen ethnic groups and maintained an office in Asunción. With the reorganization of INDI as the *Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena* in 1981, a representative from API was given a seat on INDI's administrative council. API has always suffered a problem of ensuring legitimate representation and although the position on the council gave API greater access to the decision-making levels of government, it exacerbated internal political conflicts and compromised API's position as an independent representative body.

More limited and often more focused political action is being undertaken by several individual ethnic groups. In several cases, institutions such as the Paĩ-Tavytera *Asociación de Comunidades Indígenas* have been organized to lobby government agencies in Asunción. More commonly, the growing space for participation in politics allows less organized groups to take action. Increasingly, large groups, often entire communities, travel to Asunción and occupy a plaza or protest in front of a government ministry and use the media to make their case for action on political issues. The Aché and Mbyá both have found voice in the streets of Asunción, speaking out through the press and, in the case of the Aché, making a striking media statement by protesting in front of the offices of INDI or the Environment Secretariat (SEAM) wearing body paint and carrying their traditional bows and arrows.

Finally, as elections are beginning to shift power from rural *caudillos* to ballot boxes, indigenous peoples are in ever-greater demand as a source of votes. Since they occupy some of the area's most sparsely settled regions, their numbers may represent the balance of power in regional elections, especially in frontier departments, like Amambay, San Pedro and

Canindeyú. In the Chaco three departments are largely dependent on the indigenous vote (Reed 2003:256-257).

As the forests of Paraguay have been sold and cleared for commercial agriculture and ranching, some national and international environmental agencies have attempted to protect the last tracts of this unique habitat. The two largest remaining tracts of forest in Eastern Paraguay—San Rafael on the boundary of the departments of Itapúa and Caazapá and Mbaracayú in the department of Canindeyú, have added a new dimension to the struggle of indigenous peoples. The Nature Conservancy, The World Wildlife Fund, the Aché and the Mbyá-Guaraní communities, even as they build alliances behind common projects, face a conflict of interest over the steadily decreasing resource (Reed 2008). As the report of Maybury-Lewis and Howe focused on the situation of the Aché and the Mbyá Guaraní, it is instructive to look at the present situation of these peoples.

## ACHÉ

The Aché were of particular concern to the report published in 1980. Seen as reclusive and vulnerable forest nomads, they captured the international imagination as most vulnerable to Paraguay's institutionalized violence. Until the late 1960s, many Aché remained as foragers in the forests of Eastern Paraguay. The last group of nomadic Aché left the forests of northeastern Paraguay in 1978; they settled briefly in the Ava-Guaraní community of Mboí Jagua, and later moved into the Catholic mission of Chupá Pou, located between the towns of Curuguaty and Igatimí. When Maybury-Lewis and Howe visited the Aché in early 1979, they found no "death camp" (1980:44) or policy of extermination. Nevertheless, land clearing and peasant colonization had not only degraded the hunting, but had forced the Aché out of the forest and onto roads and into towns where they were subject to a new wave of rural violence. Those that sought the protection of missions and Paraguayan patrons were subject to the disruptive and destructive forces of evangelizing and exploitation.

In settled contact with the national society, the Aché also suffered from epidemic diseases, such as colds and influenza. Maybury-Lewis and Howe's evidence suggests that many died of exhaustion and malnutrition. When a small foraging band is hit by an epidemic there is often no one left to take care of the subsistence tasks; the sick are simply left without food or even water. As adults died, orphaned children were left to fend for themselves; some were taken by Paraguayans, a few were adopted, including two adopted by Peace Corps volunteers and brought up in the U.S. In 1981 only 377 Aché were enumerated in the census and the total population was estimated at 650 individuals (INDI 1982: 45). Most were living in two religious missions: the Catholic (*Verbo Divino*) mission of Chupá Pou and the Protestant (New Tribes) mission that was established at Cerro Morotí. A third group was living in an independent settlement called Cantina-kue in the property of the Tuparendá Company in Caazapá (Hill and Hurtado 1996: 53-55). Finally, there was a small group of thirty-six people in the Protestant mission of Puerto Barra. Others were dispersed, working on Paraguayan farms and ranches or living with Paraguayan families, as *criados*, a condition that varied from adoption into the family to virtual slavery and in some cases, forced into prostitution.

Thirty years after the original study, the situation of the Aché continues to attract international attention. In some ways the problems remain the same. Health remains a serious issue and maintaining access to the forest for hunting is an ongoing struggle. Moreover, governmental efforts to protect the Aché have been hampered by lack of capacity on the part of INDI and by the power of the religious missions. Nevertheless, the Aché are increasingly engaged in political action and economic efforts in their own defense.

One of the striking changes of the last decades has been the steady growth of the Aché population. After the initial contact-related death by disease and violence, the population rebounded quickly. The population pyramids from the 1981 census show that the worst mortality of the contact period occurred in older adults and young children in the years 1971 and 1972, and since then there has been a dramatic increase in the number of young children. By 1987, almost 40 percent of the Aché population was under ten years old. In addi-

tion to climbing birth rates, the Aché benefited from falling mortality rates. Hill and Hurtado (1996:194, 215) show that age-specific mortality rates climbed dramatically during the six years immediately surrounding contact, but fell to more than half the historic rates for Aché forest groups.

Although improved relations with the larger society have reduced violent deaths among the Aché, most of the declining mortality rates can be credited to health care. Public and private aid, funded by groups such as Swiss Red Cross, Conservation International, and USAID, has sought to protect the Aché population from disease and ameliorate many of the health problems generated by increased relations with the national society. It is interesting to note that infant mortality in the Protestant missions, which have smaller populations and are in more direct contact with missionaries, are significantly lower than in the Catholic missions (Hill and Hurtado 1996:216). Even Maybury-Lewis and Howe noted that while contact-period epidemics had greatly reduced the population of the Aché, there were no deaths recorded at the mission of Puerto Barra, where Rolf Fostervald and four Chamacoco assistants had nursed the sick—and had fed them—during the critical outbreaks of influenza. The total Aché population reached 1,190 in 2002 when the government performed the last census, and is almost certainly higher today (Grünberg et al. 2008).

Even though the local, national, and international medical efforts have been remarkably successful among the Aché, the rates of infant mortality, respiratory diseases, parasitic infestations, and gastrointestinal illnesses remain high. Tuberculosis continues to be a serious problem. Aché exhibit an immunological deficiency in resistance to tuberculosis, rendering the infected portion of the population twice as likely to develop active tuberculosis as the general population (Hurtado et al. 2003). This led in 1999 to a rate of active cases eighteen times the national average (MSPBS 1999) and ten-fold the average observed in 1993 in other Paraguayan indigenous groups (Galeano-Jimenez 1995). As for infant mortality, the steady improvement in conditions has reduced the extremely high rates of the initial contact period, when one in seven children succumbed in the first year of life, to current rates, which are probably closer to or perhaps lower than in the pre-contact period. Nevertheless, the rates remain high. The most recent data suggest that the first-year mortality rate was about ten percent in 1992 (Hill and Hurtado 1996), and at least two and a half times the national average (Marió, Silva-Leander, and Carter 2004).

Access to the forest remains a serious problem for the Aché, despite national and international efforts to secure land for them. As international concern about forest destruction has spurred efforts to protect these regions, the Aché have been forced to contend not only with loggers, cattle ranchers, and peasant colonists, but also with international conservation agencies.

The Aché today have legal access to seven parcels of land scattered in various areas through the region in which the Aché previously foraged. Chupá Poú retains 6,000 hectares, but most are much smaller, as in the case of Ypetimi with 1,600 hectares; Cerro Morotí where the Aché have access to only 1,000 hectares; those of Arroyo Bandera have approximately 700, and Tapy has 821 hectares. The situation of Kuetuvy, detailed below, is presently being debated in Congress.

Until the middle 1980s, the northern Aché (*Aché Gatu*) had largely unrestricted access to a vast stretch of unbroken forest situated between Curuguaty and the Brazilian border. They foraged over an area of 5,000 square kilometers (Hawkes, Hill, and O'Connell 1982:381). Today they are restricted to approximately one percent of that area. While they previously could move among numerous small areas of concentrated food resources, they are now restricted to a few relatively small forested reservations, which are now surrounded by ranches or vast fields of soybeans. The reduced access to land makes hunting and gathering difficult to depend on, and in response, the Aché are now involved in subsistence and commercial agriculture. Puerto Barra, for example, has cleared 120 hectares that are devoted to mechanized soybean production.

The loss of land to small farmers and commercial agriculture has created a new form of conflict for the Aché. As they move into the last remnants of the forest, they find they are in competition with conservation organizations and other indigenous groups. The 60,000 hectares of the Mbaracayú Reserve is one example. Until 1970, the Aché foraged throughout the region, having only occasional and generally hostile contact with Ava-

Guaraní horticulturists and itinerant Paraguayan yerba collectors. In 1988, The Nature Conservancy identified the ecological importance of the region and placed the 54,000 hectares of forest under the aegis of a Paraguayan conservation group, The *Fundación Moisés Bertoni*. As part of a management plan, The Nature Conservancy allowed the Aché access to the Mbaracayú Reserve, but they were not allowed to establish a permanent settlement on the land.

The Aché were compensated for their loss with an area of around 6,000 hectares of forest located some thirty kilometers away, adjacent to the Catholic mission of Chupá Po'ú. However, the title to this land is still the subject of dispute; in 2007 the Aché staged a lengthy protest in front of the Parliament building in Asunción. Other Aché settled on the boundary of the reserve, where they struggle to retain their self-sufficiency and control areas that are suitable for foraging. Arroyo Bandera, one of the areas, which is now titled to the Aché, has suffered invasions by Paraguayan *campesinos* supported by local politicians from the nearby town of Villa Igatimí. Another group of Aché has settled at Kuetuvy, an area known as Finca 470, which is one of the last remaining areas of forest left outside the Mbaracayú Reserve, located on the southern periphery of the reserve. From a beleaguered minority, depending on the protection of missionaries, anthropologists and *indigenistas*, the Aché are increasingly appealing directly to government for support. This has been evident in the case of the Aché of Kuetuvy. This has led to conflict between the Aché and a small number of Avá-Guaraní families. The Finca 470, which comprises some 4,620 hectares of relatively pristine Atlantic forest bordering the Mbaracayú Reserve, was purchased from a Taiwanese landowner and the title transferred to the Secretariat of the Environment (SEAM), as part of the environmental and social mitigation programs with the Inter-American Development Bank for the operation that financed *Ruta 3*, a road that links Asunción with San Estanislao. However, since the Aché reoccupied the area they have demanded the land be titled in the name of the community.

In March of 2011, Aché occupied the offices of SEAM in an effort to force the issue, which stimulated the Avá-Guaraní to take up residence in the Plaza Uruguaya in downtown Asunción. Both events were widely reported in the national newspapers, drawing considerable public support and in May 2011 a law to transfer the title to the Aché community was approved by Congress, but was later vetoed by President Lugo. Since then, the veto has been overturned by Congress and the title to the Finca 470 should be transferred to the Aché in the coming months.

## MBYÁ-GUARANÍ

Maybury-Lewis and Howe also analyzed the situation of the Guaraní of Eastern Paraguay, focusing on the Paĩ-Tavytera and the Ava-Guaraní. Events of the last thirty years have shifted the focus of concern to a third Guaraní ethnic group, the Mbyá-Guaraní, about whom little was known at the time of Maybury-Lewis and Howe's study. Like the Aché, the Mbyá have suffered dramatic loss of land and been forced into alliance and conflict with environmental groups interested in conserving the remnants of the forests.

At the time of the research in 1978, the Ava-Guaraní (then called "Chiripá") and the Paĩ-Tavytera were far more accessible to *indigenistas* and received greater assistance from international organizations. In contrast, most Mbyá communities maintained limited relations with the national society, refusing schools, government census-takers, medical care and above all any attempt at evangelization. Thus, although most Guaraní communities received some guarantees to land, many Mbyá-Guaraní suffered the first waves of forest encroachment with little support from outside.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Mbyá forests in the south-central regions of Eastern Paraguay underwent unprecedented development. Access roads were cut through the region, the Itaipú hydroelectric project spurred tremendous growth in Ciudad del Este, and the world soybean market brought colonists and the expansion of agro-industries. The first wave of development came in the early 1970s, when the road from Asunción to Ciudad del Este (then called Puerto Presidente Stroessner) on the Brazilian border was paved and was linked to Foz de Iguazú in Brazil by the Puente de Amistad ("Friendship Bridge"). The

lands the Mbyá had traditionally occupied in the departments of Caaguazú and Caazapá were occupied from the east by a group of Mennonite farmers that had broken away from the Mennonite colonies of the Central Chaco. The farmers purchased 44,000 hectares and began logging, ranching, and commercial agriculture in the forests the Mbyá had previously relied on for hunting and farming. The Mennonites employed Mbyá workers, but refused to acknowledge Mbyá rights to the land. In 1984, in response to one of the first direct appeals of the Mbyá to the Paraguayan state, INDI expropriated land for the Mbyá communities, forcing a violent confrontation between the farmers and the Mbyá (*Diálogo Indígena Misionero* 1987:6). As in many cases of Paraguayan indigenous groups and land conflict, government support for indigenous rights was weak and ineffective. Ultimately, the government acquiesced to the agro-industrial development and removed the Mbyá (Reed 1995:203).

In the early 1980s the construction of a second paved road from Encarnación to Ciudad del Este opened up the forests of Caazapá, Itapúa and southern Alto Paraná to Brazilian colonists. The dispersed Mbyá communities were caught between two distinct *polos de desarrollo*. Paraguayan Mennonites, small farmers and ranchers encroached on the region, moving south from Routes 2 and 7, linking Asunción and Ciudad del Este, while Brazilian farmers, intent on producing soybeans for the international market, began to colonize the fertile red soils of Parana basin moving along Route 6 and then north into the *Cordillera de San Rafael*.

Even at the time of Maybury-Lewis' and Howe's original publication, there were reports of Guaraní being driven off their lands and camping along the major highways. Generally, these groups sought out sites that offered the possibility of wage labor for the men. The paving of the Asunción-Ciudad del Este created a wave of economic activity: settlements sprang up around the highway construction sites, which quickly turned into gas stations and commercial centers for the rapidly expanding transportation infrastructure. Tenuously holding onto bare house sites and a few possessions, the Guaraní had little opportunity or incentive to plant gardens. Most subsisted on whatever work they could find, the men clearing the forest for their *patrones* and the women selling fruit or handicrafts along the highway; some, attracted to the bright lights of these highway camps, found cash in prostitution or recycling garbage. The landless Mbyá became a common sight, hanging around the edges of these roadside settlements to look for work, panhandle or just to watch the rough life of the *transportistas* and highway crews.

More recently, this dislocation has led to the urbanization of many Mbyá. From the roadside, many Mbyá were drawn toward the three major urban centers of Paraguay. The country's two major paved highways run between Encarnación, Asunción and Ciudad del Este. They came for a variety of reasons: to visit INDI to demand land, to seek medical treatment, find day labor or simply to look for any other opportunities. They rarely traveled alone. Most came to the city in family groups, or in small groups of young men or young women.

Ciudad del Este drew the greatest number of these early migrants in the years before 2000. As the Mbyá took refuge along roadways, most found themselves within sixty kilometers of Ciudad del Este, which was expanding rapidly as a trade and marketing center. The Mbyá joined a larger population of displaced peasants who were seeking a place of refuge and economic gain in the urban areas. As small farmers were bought out or displaced, land in rural areas became harder to find, and between 1980 and 2000 the number of people in cities and towns roughly doubled; the urban population shifted from 42 percent to 53 percent of the national total. The Mbyá camped in vacant lots, slept on city sidewalks and became a visible and extremely vulnerable sector of the urban population.

The second stage in the process of urban migration had more to do with the decline in the economy of Ciudad del Este in the last twenty years. The development of Mercosur—the common market of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay—undercut Ciudad del Este's position as a center of industry and commerce. The casual smuggling of commercial goods was superseded by the legal flow of goods. The decline of Ciudad del Este's informal economy occurred as the travel infrastructure of the country improved. New highways and paved roads brought the farther corner of the country closer to the capital of Asunción.

Thus, starting some fifteen years ago, indigenous people began to appear on the streets of Asunción, carrying their meager belongings and often panhandling at city street corners.

The new indigenous migrants present an image of extreme poverty. Dressed in threadbare rags, unwashed and unkempt, the Guaraní began to show up at traffic lights, panhandling to middle-class mestizos. Young mothers carrying their infant children would sit disconsolately on the curb as their young children moved between the rows of traffic looking woefully into the stopped cars. These new migrants saw Asunción as the last stop on a downward spiral by which they had lost their lands, their forests, and their homes.

In a striking example of the difficulties of indigenous migrants to Asunción, many Mbyá have collected along the river near the municipal dump “Cateura” in the neighborhood of Lambaré. The first families were attracted to the refuse for foraging and empty land for squatting. Other families followed. The group has grown to approximately 200 families, adopting the name Cerro Poty, “Flower of the Hill.”

The site exposes Mbyá migrants to a severe form of environmental injustice. Asunción hugs a bend of the Paraguay River; Cerro Poty is a marshy lowland immediately downstream from the city center. A mixture of muddy banks and swampy growth, the flats are considered unsuitable for urban development; even other urban squatters avoided these stagnant waters and bottom lands. Cateura adds pollution to the uninviting terrain. The dump is the primary repository for Asunción’s garbage, and as the mountain of trash has outgrown its borders, the municipality has failed to find alternate locations for waste. Garbage spills into the water and toxic effluent seeps into the soils. Annual flooding adds the fetid discharges from the city to the noxious overflow and inundates the low marshy mud plain of the small group. Lacking both storm drains and sewage systems, the contaminated water sits for days before finally draining off, leaving a residue of pathogens as it recedes.

The future of this urban minority remains unclear, but one should be cautious in equating urbanization with ethnocide. Increasingly throughout Latin America, we are seeing indigenous minorities assert their ethnic identity in a new, multi-ethnic environment (McSweeney and Jokisch 2005). As they establish themselves in this urban backwater, the Mbyá of Cerro Poty are asserting their indigeneity in new ways. Women weave and men carve animal figures which they sell on the city streets to tourists and Asunceños alike; the group has formed a community group espousing indigenous values; and has appealed and received aid for house building, water and electricity.

In their rural homelands, some novel alliances are offering the Mbyá hope for continued access to some areas of forested land. Until the 1990s, the Mbyá had refuge from the land clearing in southern Paraguay as they retreated into a forest that covered the hills of the Cordillera de San Rafael. As the forests of Eastern Paraguay were reduced to approximately one-seventh of their original size, San Rafael like Mbaracayú has become a critical remnant of the biodiversity of the Atlantic Forest. In 1992, the Paraguayan government declared the remaining 72,000 hectares in the Cordillera de San Rafael to be a *Reserva de Recursos Manejados*, a “resource management reserve.” The land was to remain privately owned, but subject to limitations on logging and forest clearing.

The plan continues to be hampered by inefficiency and lack of funds. The Forestry Service and the National Parks Services are understaffed and lack sufficient resources to effectively protect the forest. It took five years to even delimit the boundaries of the territory. In the absence of effective national administration, landowners have developed a level of local organization for the reserve. Nevertheless, the region has become anarchic, subject to violent land invasions, illicit logging and the cultivation of marijuana, organized by criminal gangs with ties to Brazilian drug traffickers.

Not surprisingly, land is being cleared within the protected area; this last refuge of the Mbyá and their forests is under direct threat. One of the Mbyá communities that has received title to land in the San Rafael Reserve, Arroyo Claro, was invaded by three separate groups of “landless” *campesinos*—each affiliated to a different political party or faction, and when they were finally evicted, with great difficulty, the *campesinos* burned down much of the forest. Some conservation agencies are trying to purchase areas of forest from non-resident owners, but at present they are unwilling to title these areas to the Mbyá communities that have not yet received titles.

National and international protection of San Rafael may eventually lead to conflict with the rights of the Mbyá. According to the plan, much of the area will be designated as private nature reserves, set aside as offsets for lands that have been developed for soybean production elsewhere. As such they are under the protection of neither the government nor the indigenous population. Mbyá hunting has been restricted to specified zones, leading to the over-exploitation of those regions and a decline in hunting returns. As the alliance between private landowners and the Paraguayan government legitimizes the current landholding structure, it may frustrate Mbyá attempts to win recognition of exclusive rights to their own forests. The situation may eventually be exacerbated by efforts to market carbon offsets to private industry, notably oil and gas corporations service providers.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nearly 30 years after the mission, time has shown the value of Maybury-Lewis' and Howe's study. The situation of Paraguay's indigenous groups has undergone many of the changes envisioned in the report. In identifying land as the primary area of concern, the report pointed to the ultimate privatization, commercialization and destruction of Eastern Paraguay's natural resources. The struggle for land continues to be critical for the indigenous peoples of the region. In other areas that were analyzed in the study, marked improvements are evident. Direct intervention by national and international health agencies has resulted in a dramatic decline in infant and maternal mortality and a recovery of the indigenous population. In political organization, indigenous groups have opened up direct communication with the national government, and increasingly use the religious missions and *indigenistas* as resources, rather than relying on them as intermediaries.

The work of Maybury-Lewis and Howe provided a direct and accessible assessment of the conditions of Paraguayan natives in 1980. Even as conditions change, the report stands as a useful snapshot of the road that has been traveled. And despite the passing decades, it remains a valuable analysis of their prospects for the future.

The report has further importance, and perhaps greater interest today for its place in helping to define a role for anthropology in the increasingly politicized world of our scholarship. The 1970s was a time of rising awareness of the devastation that was being inflicted on indigenous peoples in Lowland South America. Popular and academic interest spurred the creation of a variety of indigenous rights organizations. The International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) was formed in Denmark in 1968 by anthropologists and scholars concerned about conditions in the Amazon Basin. Soon after, Survival International was established by the adventurer Robin Hanbury-Tenison in London in response to writer Norman Lewis' reports in the British Sunday Times of genocide among Brazil's indigenous groups. Cultural Survival was incorporated in the United States in 1972 by David and Pia Maybury-Lewis, bringing together anthropologists and some of Harvard's academic elite (e.g. Irvén DeVore, Harvey Cox, and Orlando Patterson) who were concerned about the situation of indigenous groups around the world. Finally, the Anthropological Resource Center (ARC) was established in 1975 by Sandy Davis and a network of activist anthropologists as a public-interest research organization. ARC, funded by small contributions, was devoted to analysis of the effects of development policies on indigenous peoples and the environment in the Amazon and western United States.

The seventies was a decade when all of these groups were seeking to establish their place in the struggle to defend the rights of indigenous peoples. As Cultural Survival moved toward self-definition, the work of David Maybury-Lewis and Howe served to delineate an approach to activism that emphasized anthropology's ability to provide accurate and detailed accounts of the conditions of indigenous peoples, without resorting to inflammatory remarks or imposing first-world meanings on indigenous experience. Most importantly, the work sought to exemplify the kind of contributions that experienced anthropologists could make to the formulation of public policy for the protection of the world's indigenous peoples.



Maybury-Lewis and Howe's report caused considerable consternation in the indigenous rights community. Accepting a contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) raised concerns about the independence of the report. In finding that genocide was not a state policy in Paraguay, the work directly contradicted what had become a rallying point in the activist anthropological community. In refuting the claims of Nazi activities, the study discredited one aspect of the accusations that had the broadest international appeal. The work did its best to avoid inflammatory statements and misleading associations. But it also seemed to go out of its way to present imagery that challenged the visual materials of the original reports. Rather than photographs of diseased and dying individuals, healthy young men are pictured talking and laughing with visitors (1980:43), Aché children were presented smiling on burro-back (1980:44), and Ayoreo boys are shown laughing and playing on the roadside (1980:68).

Rather than interpreting these measures as a gauntlet thrown down before other indigenous rights groups, the work can be seen as an important step in the development of a more engaged anthropology in lowland Latin America. First, Maybury-Lewis' and Howe's report takes a clear stand that only objective descriptions by a trained observer can provide the information necessary for engaged political action. It draws its authority from the idea that the experienced anthropologist, and perhaps only the experienced anthropologist, has the capacity to make judgments across social and cultural divide between indigenous peoples and the larger society. In his own words, Maybury-Lewis' approach was "scholarly, rather than journalistic" (Survival of Tribal Peoples 1993:7). At a moment when indigenous peoples were being pictured as naked and vulnerable on the pages of the Sunday Times, the New York Times and the Washington Post, Maybury-Lewis wanted to avoid "sensationalism" (Survival of Tribal Peoples 1993:7). The work serves as a strong statement against objectifying the Aché and Guaraní as impassive and powerless in the face of the larger world. In its clear-eyed and direct approach, the work was a template for later work by Cultural Survival. Maybury-Lewis and Howe refused to fan the fires of a spectacular publicity campaign that would ultimately work against indigenous peoples' interests.

Second, in addition to its direct and honest approach, the report sought to shift the debate away from a narrow discussion of the policies of a dictatorship. It moved on to a more general discussion that detailed the larger political-economic factors that determine the situation of indigenous peoples. Even before the report was published, voices within and outside the country were pointing to what were considered other and more serious threats facing Paraguay's indigenous population. Horowitz (1978:181) observed that Münzel's work suffered from an exclusive focus on the rapaciousness of the Paraguayan political system, ignoring the economic factors that were driving many of the changes that were affecting the Aché and other groups. In focusing on the economic factors that were supported by the Stroessner government (but ultimately independent of it), Maybury-Lewis and Howe might be seen as following the lead of Sandy Davis. In 1977, Davis' *Victims of the Miracle* published what came to be a classic study of the effects of the Brazilian economic "miracle" on the country's indigenous peoples. Likewise, Maybury-Lewis' and Howe's work emphasizes as the greatest threat to indigenous people the disruption caused by the large-scale capital-intensive economic development of rural areas; it points to rapacious economic development and the government policies that support it.

Finally, in contemporary research, in an era when the barrier between academics and action has been largely eradicated and when socially engaged research is acceptable within the canon, it is useful to remember that the distinction between "pure" research and "applied" social science was for decades central to the definition of anthropology's project. The rising awareness that all research is situated in a web of power relations has resulted in a variety of approaches: activist anthropology, action anthropology, engaged research, and applied anthropology, to name a few. In retrospect, the publication of Maybury-Lewis' and Howe's report can be seen as a foray into what we now consider central to our purpose and project as anthropologists. They showed their confidence that non-inflammatory, scholarly research would provide information that would be the most valuable in indigenous peoples' struggle to create their own futures.

## NOTES

1 To its credit, in 2006 the national government passed a landmark forestry protection law that (combined with the fact that little timber was left standing) dramatically reduced the rate of forest destruction.

2 The historic process of community divisions in the forest is discussed in Reed (1995). More recently, the best documentation concerning reservations is the case of the Aché of Chupa pou, Kuetyvy and Keutuyvyve (Hill n.d.).

## REFERENCES

- Allen, Julia and Douglas Barnes 1985 "The Causes of Deforestation in Developing Countries." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 75(2):163-184.
- Arens, Richard 1978 *The Forest Indians in Stroessner's Paraguay: Survival or Extinction?* London: Survival International Report.
- Blaser, Mario 2004 "'Way of Life' or 'Who Decides': Development, Paraguayan Indigenism and the Yshiro People's Life Projects." In *The Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization*. Mario Blaser, Harvey A. Feit, and Glenn McRae, editors, pp. 52-71. New York: Zed Books and Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Castillo-Salgado, Carlos 2004 "Country Profiles: Paraguay." *Epidemiological Bulletin of the Pan American Health Organization*, 25(2):12-16.
- Chase Sardi, Miguel 1972 "The Present Situation of Indians in Paraguay." In *The Situation of the Indian in South America*. Walter Dostal, editor, pp. 173-218. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Davis, Shelton 1977 *Victims of the Miracle: Development and the Indians of Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diálogo Indígena Misionero (DIM) 1985 "Nacionales: Pai-Tavytera Denuncian Tala de Bosques." *Equipo Nacional de Misiones*, 5(19):10-14.
- 1987 "Sommerfeld: Continua Presion Mennonita." *Equipo Nacional de Misiones*, 8(26):6-9.
- Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC) 1997 *Pueblos Indígenas en el Paraguay*. Asunción: Secretaría Técnica de Planificación.
- 2003 *II Censo Nacional Indígena de Población y Viviendas 2002: Pueblos Indígenas del Paraguay—Resultados Finales*. Asunción: Secretaría Técnica de Planificación.
- Equipo Nacional de Misiones 1987 *Algunas Consideraciones sobre el Estatuto de las Comunidades Indígenas*. Asunción: Equipo Nacional de Misiones, Conferencia Episcopal Paraguaya.
- Galeano-Jiménez, Adolfo 1995 "Tuberculosis y Sida en el Paraguay." *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana*, 118(3):248-253.
- Harder-Horst, Rene 2007 *The Stroessner Regime and Indigenous Resistance in Paraguay*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Hawkes, Kristen, Kim Hill, and James F. O'Connell 1982 "Why Hunters Gather: Optimal Foraging and the Aché of Eastern Paraguay." *American Ethnologist*, 9(2):379-398.
- Hetherington, Kregg 2009 "Privatizing the Private in Rural Paraguay: Precarious Lots and the Materiality of Rights." *American Ethnologist*, 36(2):224-241.
- Hill, Kim and A. Magdalena Hurtado 1996 *Aché Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Hill, Kim n.d. "Aché." <http://www.public.asu.edu/~krhill3/Ache.html>.
- Horowitz, Irving 1978 "Taking Lives in South America." *The Nation*, 18 February.
- Huang, Chengquan, Sunghee Kim, Alice Altstatt, John R.G. Townshend, Paul Davis, Kuan Song, Compton J. Tucker, Oscar Rodas, Alberto Yanosky, Rob Clay, and John Musinsky 2007 "Rapid loss of Paraguay's Atlantic Forest and the Status of Protected Areas—A Landsat Assessment." *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 106(4):460-466.
- Hurtado, A. Magdalena, Kim R. Hill, Wilhelm Rosenblatt, Jacquelyn Bender, and

- Tom Scharmen 2003 "Longitudinal Study of Tuberculosis Outcomes Among Immunologically Naive Aché Natives of Paraguay." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 121(2):134-50.
- Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena (INDI) 1982 *Censo y Estudio de la Población Indígena del Paraguay 1981*. Asunción: Paraguay.
- Kandell, Jonathan 1974 "Slavery Just One Threat Facing Paraguay Tribe." *The New York Times*, 21 January.
- Lewis, Norman 1975 "Manhunt." *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 26 January.
- Marió, Estanislao Gacitúa, Annika Silva-Leander, and Miguel Carter 2004 *Paraguay: Social Development Issues for Poverty Alleviation*. Social Development Paper No. 63. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- Maybury-Lewis, David and James Howe 1980 *The Indian Peoples of Paraguay: Their Plight and Their Prospects*. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival.
- McSweeney, Kendra and Shahna Arps 2005 "A 'Demographic Turnaround': the Rapid Growth of Indigenous Populations in Lowland Latin America." *Latin American Research Review*, 40(1):5-27.
- Ministerio de Salud Pública y Bienestar Social (MSPBS) 1999 *Casos Nuevos de Tuberculosis por Grupos de Edad y Diagnóstico*. Asunción: MSPBS.
- Münzel, Mark 1973 *The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*. International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs Document No. 11. Copenhagen: IWGIA.
- 1974 *The Aché: Genocide Continues in Paraguay*. International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs Document No. 17. Copenhagen: IWGIA.
- Omang, Joanne 1974 "Paraguay, Brazil Hit Over Indians." *The Washington Post*, 9 November.
- Reed, Richard 1995 *Prophets of Agroforestry: Guaraní Communities and Commercial Gathering*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 2003 "New Rules for the Game." In *The Politics of Ethnicity: Indigenous Peoples in Latin American States*. David Maybury-Lewis, editor, pp. 30-39. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 2008 "Two Rights Make a Wrong: Indigenous Peoples Versus Environmental Protection Agencies." In *Applying Cultural Anthropology: An Introductory Reader*. Aaron Podolefsky, Peter Brown, and Scott Lacy, editors, pp. 327-338. Minneapolis: McGraw-Hill.
- Renshaw, John, Richard Reed, and Basilio Nikiphoroff 1989 *Analysis Socio-Economic y Cultural de las Poblaciones Asentadas en el Area de Influencia de la Reserva Mbaracayú*. Asunción: Fundación Moises Bertoni.
- Renshaw, John 2001 "Miguel Chase-Sardi." *Anthropology Today*, 17(5):28.
- Survival of Tribal Peoples
- 1993 "Denial of Genocide." London: Survival International.