



# STORIES AND LIVES

21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TRIBAL PEOPLES





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**SURVIVAL IS A WORLDWIDE ORGANISATION SUPPORTING TRIBAL PEOPLES. IT STANDS FOR THEIR RIGHT TO DECIDE THEIR OWN FUTURE AND HELPS THEM PROTECT THEIR LIVES, LANDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS.**

There are more than 150 million tribal people worldwide in more than 60 countries – but all too often their voice is not heard. Survival is working to help tribal peoples – about 80 tribes at any one time – see that their legal rights over their ancestral homes are upheld. Without this, their destruction is inevitable. In some cases their fight is against the forces of economic ‘progress’ and the ensuing invasions of, to name only a few, ranchers, loggers or mining multinationals. In others, they are fighting governments which brand them as ‘primitive’ people because they live in harmony with the land, in a way which has been ‘sustainable’ for thousands of years and long before the notion became fashionable. In yet others, their struggle is against guerrilla armies, banks, the diseases of the ‘developed’ world or the aggressive cultural homogenisation of the West. What these tribes have in common is that they are small, disregarded, and often isolated communities battling for their survival against the might of overweening giants. But in many many cases they are winning and thanks to the thousands of individuals around the world who support Survival, there will be many more success to come.

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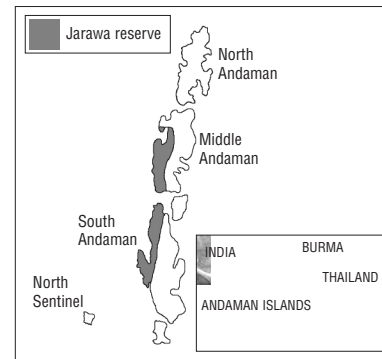
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## JARAWA

# COURT RULES FOR SURVIVAL OF 60,000 YEAR-OLD FOREST TRIBE



### Andaman Islands, India

The woman came out from the forest at the side of the road. She was stark naked apart from a thong of braided red around her loins. She waved to stop the bus. As it slowed the passengers could see that delicately drawn patterns in white clay adorned her face and body.

Those in the bus were fascinated, and wary. For tens of thousands of years the Jarawa people have lived in isolation in the rainforest of the Andaman Islands, remote in the Indian Ocean. Their reputation is of a hostile tribe ready to keep strangers at bay with bows and arrows. But now, for the

first time, they have started to emerge from their forests.

Nobody was quite sure what the woman wanted. No one among the Indian community speaks her language. And only one or two Jarawa speak Hindi. But she held out her hands as if requesting something.

The Jarawa are ethnically distinct from the Indians who run their island. Anthropologists suggest they are descended from the first humans to come out of Africa – DNA tests suggest their closest relatives may be the ‘Bushmen’ of the Kalahari. It is possible they have lived in the Andamans for as long as 60,000 years.

Throughout that time these nomadic hunter-gatherers have survived in bands of 40 to 50, hunting pig and monitor lizard, fishing with arrows, and gathering seeds, berries and honey. They use the plants of the islands to make bows, spears, ropes, huts, ornaments and even bee-repellent.

It is only in the past 150 years that the islands have been settled, first by the British, who set up a penal colony, and

**FOR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS THE JARAWA PEOPLE HAVE LIVED IN ISOLATION IN THE RAINFOREST OF THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS, REMOTE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.**

The Andaman Trunk Road, which cuts through the interior of South Andaman and Middle Andaman islands, poses the biggest danger of all to the Jarawa.



This Jarawa woman is seeing a camera for the first time.

then by the Indians. Slowly the settlers have cleared the forest. The Indian government set aside an area of rainforest for the Jarawa but it saw them as 'primitive'. Its officials took gifts of food and cloth to the edge of the forest: the Jarawa accepted them, but mocked the officials by urinating on their feet and squirting breast milk at them.

More recently the authorities built a trunk road through the reserve, and the tribal people fled deeper into the forest.

But five years ago, they began to emerge. Perhaps because settlers were poaching too much of the reserve's game. Perhaps because loggers were clearing trees in quantities which altered the environment on which they depend. Perhaps because in 1996

one Jarawa youth, named Enmei, was found immobilised with a broken leg and taken to hospital where, during five months treatment, he learnt Hindi and returned with the news that the settlers were friendly.

Either way the Jarawa began to surface, some in parties with Enmei, others just appearing by the trunk road or in villages. Local people assumed they were starving and organised food. When the settlers did not offer food or clothes the Jarawa would arrive, with their bows and arrows, and take things. Police advised locals not to protest.

And despite the 'Beware of Jarawa' signs, and the posters announcing 'Do not allow the Jarawa to get into any vehicles' and 'Do not give any eatable items to the Jarawa', the interaction with the island's original inhabitants has become a source of entertainment.

The negative consequences of this are becoming clear. New diseases are sweeping through the native people. In 1999 a measles and pneumonia epidemic affected up to half of the native population. Young Jarawa have begun bartering for alien goods, such as chewing tobacco and the narcotic betel leaf. And an Indian lawyer filed a case demanding that the Jarawa be settled, stating that it was 'high time to make them acquainted with modern civilisation'.

Survival International has been instrumental in helping the Jarawa put their case to the Indian authorities. Evidence it presented – showing that forced resettlement was fatal for other tribes, introducing diseases, destroying self-sufficiency, undermining self-esteem and leaving them vulnerable to

alcoholism, suicide and despair – was decisive in two ways. The Indian government, after receiving some 200 letters a day from Survival supporters, two years ago dropped its plans to resettle the Jarawa.

Survival then presented evidence to the Indian Supreme Court, citing the example of the Great Andamanese tribe, of whom only 28 people now remain in government 'breeding centres'. Today three of the Andaman tribes are virtually extinct. Only the Jarawa and the Sentinelese, who live on an island uninhabited by settlers, from which they fire arrows at approaching boats, remain.

Last year the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Jarawa. It ordered that the trunk road be closed, that logging and poaching in the area be banned, and that some settlements be removed. It was one of the biggest successes in Survival's history. 'Now the challenge is to see that the order is implemented', said Survival's director, Stephen Corry. 'The Jarawa are a people whose lives are synchronised with their environment. More they do not need. Only recognition of their right to own their land and to make their own choices about how they live.'

As for Enmei, he is back in the rainforest, coming out only when he needs medical treatment, as he did last month. 'Even if I have to stay outside for a few days, I like to return,' he said. 'The jungle is better.'

© Paul Vallely, *The Independent* originally published as, 'Under threat: an ancient tribe emerging from the forest.'



Enmei is the only Jarawa person to have come out of the forest and learnt to speak Hindi. No one outside the tribe speaks the Jarawa language. Survival is working to ensure that when they do tell their story to the outside world it is not one of destruction and invasion.

**THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT, AFTER RECEIVING SOME 200 LETTERS A DAY FROM SURVIVAL SUPPORTERS, DROPPED ITS PLANS TO RESETTLE THE JARAWA.**





GUARANI-KAIOWÁ

# A BLOOD-STAINED STRUGGLE FOR ANCESTRAL LANDS



## Panambizinho, Brazil

The earth in Mato Grosso do Sul is a distinctive terracotta red. It is the colour of labour and old blood and it clings stubbornly to the flesh. Against the coppery tones of the Guarani Kaiowá indians, it is hard to see where earth ends and skin begins.

Mato Grosso do Sul, a state in the south-west of Brazil which borders on Bolivia and Paraguay, means 'thick forest' in Portuguese. The Guarani Kaiowá were here long before the trees were cleared for the cattle ranches and soya plantations that now stretch endlessly towards the horizon. These people were among the first to be

contacted after the Europeans arrived in South America, but the last 500 years have not been favourable for them.

Two hundred years ago the Guarani Kaiowá occupied about eight million hectares of land in what is now known as Mato Grosso do Sul. Today 30,000 of them occupy just 1 per cent of this land. All too often, this figure accounts for pitiful encampments hemmed in between the road and the barbed-wire fences that keep them off the land.

As you drive past, you see dozens of families hunched under roofs made from refuse bags. They are condemned to misery and hunger; without land they are unable to sustain themselves through their traditional methods of hunting, fishing and planting.

Occasionally, they are hired by the farms as badly-paid labourers, or may be temporarily employed to work 13-hour shifts in the nearby alcohol distilleries. But that often leads to depression and alcoholism, which in turn leads to conflict with the tribe and to suicide; 320 Guarani-Kaiowá

Survival is working for the return of the Guarani-Kaiowá's land. With their land secure, they will survive.

**ONE YOUNG PERSON JUST DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE ANYMORE BECAUSE THERE WAS NO REASON, IN HIS OPINION, TO CARRY ON LIVING – THERE IS NO HUNTING, NO FISHING, AND THE WATER IS POLLUTED.**

committed suicide between 1986 and 2000. The youngest was aged nine.

One reason why expulsion from their traditional lands can lead to such a desperate act is the profound spiritual link that these people have to the land. For the Guarani, land is the origin of all life, and is considered to be a gift from the 'great father', Ñande Ru.

Their religion also states that death should occur on the same land where a person was born. 'Then we know it is pure land. We know that it will give us good food,' explained Nelson, a *capitao*, or chief counsel, of the tribe in the small village of Panambizinho, home to 325 Guarani.

But there are also pragmatic reasons behind the epidemic of suicides. Amilton Lopes, a Guarani man in Mato Grosso do Sul, said: 'Suicides occur among young people because they are nostalgic for the past. Young people are nostalgic for the beautiful forests, they want to eat fruits, go out and find honey, and use natural remedies from the forest. One young person told me he just didn't want to live anymore because there was no reason, in his opinion, to carry on living – there is no hunting, no fishing, and the water is polluted.'

The Brazilian constitution recognises the Indians' rights to their 'social organisation, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions'. The government acknowledges its responsibility to demarcate the Indians' traditional lands.

However, taking back such lands from the farmers who have moved onto it is a laborious and painstaking process, said Michael Feeney of the Technical Juridical Educational Institute, an

agency working with the Guarani which is also supported by Survival International.

All members of the community are involved: from the first meetings in which the religious chief identifies the territory to be reclaimed, to the moment they decide to occupy it. The community usually decides to stage the walk-in early in the the morning, which typically summons the Federal Police. Anthropologists are then consulted on the location of ancient cemeteries, and the testimonies of village elders are heard in debate.

The process can last for years and is sometimes violent. Last January, one of the most important Guarani leaders, Marcos Veron, whose work was supported by Survival, was shot and killed as he staged a walk-in on traditional land used by cattle ranchers.

Panambizinho is one such arduous reclamation. Off a dirt track that runs from the main road between Campo Grande and Dourados, the village has been recognised as indigenous land since 1995. Yet, despite official recognition from the Ministry of Justice, the community is only able to access 75 hectares of the 1,250 recognised as belonging to it, because the current landowners are still awaiting compensation.

Such a proportion of land cannot bring self-sustainability and, once a month, the village receives government food parcels containing basic items such as oil, sugar, rice, beans and milk. 'If we had enough land, we would plant everything,' Nelson said.

At night, the men sneak into a nearby forest reserve, where they hunt small

pigs and deer with snares, rather than firearms, to avoid being caught by farmers. A nearby lake provides them with fish.

Yet there is some semblance of traditional Kaiowá life here. Apart from the few dozen mud huts, there is the typical communal prayer house, which resembles a large hangar. There are small plantations of corn, sweet potato, bananas and pumpkin. Hens cluck amongst the skinny legs of children running about. The *capitao* continues to give counsel to families and settle disputes, but the community no longer has a *cacique* or religious leader to lead the songs that are designed to halt the rains, or shake his sacred rattle.

Balbina Aquino, the 102-year-old widow of the village's last *cacique*, said: 'Before the landowners came, this whole area was covered with forest. There was much more hunting back in those days. All the teenage boys had the traditional lip piercing then.'

For the elder members of the community, the lack of land has led to an irreplaceable loss of indigenous culture and has bred a new generation of people who aren't interested in the old stories and customs.

'Now the mobile phone has replaced the rattle,' Nelson said. 'The suicides happen when there is not enough land, but they also happen when there is not enough spiritual guidance. Where tradition is strongest, suicides are less.' Nelson recalls a time when there were 250 *caciques* in the area. Now there are none. Asked what they want for their children, the elders reply that they want the young people to stay on

the ancestral lands and to learn to pray and sing.

The village has a state-built school that provides a traditional Guarani education for students up to the age of 11, but the children then go on to attend a Protestant school in Dourados. Some say they should stay in the village for their entire education.

Yet there is an obvious taste for some aspects of modern life in the village. One community member who lobbies for the village's rights with local government gets dropped off from town in a car, a mobile phone protruding from his top pocket and a video player tucked under his arm. The *capitao* said that the village will accept government funding for brick houses so that they can replace the mud huts.

As I leave under an amber sky, a man is singing to the setting sun in Guarani, shaking his rattle in time to his prayers. But his song is soon drowned out. Brazil's most popular nightly soap opera is starting, its maddeningly kitsch overture wafting from the mud hut next door.



Marcos Veron, Brazilian Indian shaman and a leader of the Guarani-Kaiowá people, was brutally killed in 2003.

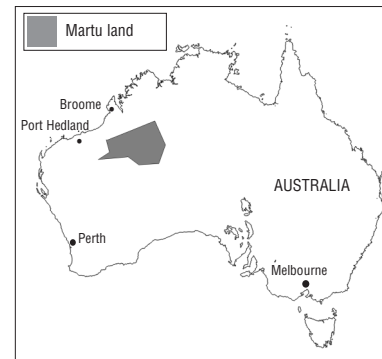
Marcos was an old friend of Survival. He visited Europe in 2000 to speak about his fight for land rights and to launch Survival's ground-breaking book, 'Disinherited' – the first major publication ever to challenge Brazil's refusal to recognise Indian land ownership.





MARTU ABORIGINES

# THE 'STOLEN GENERATION' RETURN TO THE LAND OF THEIR BIRTH



## Perth, Australia

Fifty years after Doris Pilkington was forcibly separated from her family, she persuaded her mother, Molly Craig, to take her back to the place where she was born; under a mulga tree on a cattle station in Western Australia's remote Pilbara region.

As mother and daughter drove through Balfour Downs Station, Doris caught sight of one tree and was struck by a peculiar sensation. 'I said, "That's the one." We stopped, and she said, "Yes, that's it." We sat under the tree and talked. There were feelings of warmth all around me, and a breeze was passing through. It was like the spirits

of our ancestors were welcoming me back. It felt like a special place for me, the earth itself. I took my shoes off and stood on it, my birthing place.'

The connection with the land described so eloquently by Doris in an interview at her home in Perth is the core of Aboriginal tradition, spirituality and beliefs. So the appropriation of their ancient lands was an especially cruel blow for Australia's indigenous people, who were subjected to a government policy of removing mixed-race children from their parents and assimilating them into the white community.

Doris, 66, is a member of the 'stolen generation', as is her mother, whose story inspired the internationally acclaimed feature film, *Rabbit Proof Fence*. Molly and two other girls, all taken from their families, escaped from an institution in 1931 and walked 1,600 km back home by following a fence that ran the length of Western Australia.

Doris's father belonged to the Martudjara people, who were evicted in the 1950s and resettled in government camps on the fringes of the Great

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'We are painting, as we have always done, to demonstrate our continuing link with our country and the rights and responsibilities we have to it. We paint to show the rest of the world that we own this country and the country owns us. Our painting is a political act.'

Galarrwuy Yunupingu, leader of the Gumatj people





Aborigine children drinking from a river, using a traditional technique which does not disturb the water.

Sandy Desert. The area was later used by the British to test ballistic missiles.

In the early 1980s, the Martudjara began moving back to their desert homelands, setting up two new communities, Parnngurr and Punmu, with the help of Survival International.

Survival funded water boreholes for the two communities. It also supported the Martudjara in a lengthy battle to reclaim ownership of their ancestral lands, which culminated in a High Court decision last year recognising their 'native title' rights to 136,000sq km, an area the size of England.

It was the largest victory for Aborigines, who have lodged a series of similar claims since a watershed High Court ruling in 1992 that indigenous people owned the land before European colonisation. Survival's International campaign is thought to have helped sway public opinion.

For Aborigines, afflicted by chronic health and social problems, the restoration of native title rights is mitigating the historic effects of dispossession and alienation. It is also assisting the psychological recovery of those belonging to the stolen generation, who were brought

up in Christian-run missions and orphanages, cut off from their language and culture. 'The first step in the journey of healing is to reconnect with the land,' Doris said. 'The land symbolises so much to us: it's our family, our parents, our grandparents. It's the umbilical cord, the bond between mother and children.'

Molly was taken – abducted, in effect – from Jigalong, a remote township on the edge of the Western Desert, under a policy introduced early last century and not abandoned until 1965. Conceived in response to the perceived threat to 'White Australia' from the intermingling of Aborigines and Europeans, its aim was to integrate mixed-race children into white society and 'breed out' their colour. The 'full-blood' Aborigines, it was believed, were becoming extinct.

Molly was taken to Moore River, a mission north of Perth. Aged 14, she ran away with her sister, Daisy Kadibil, and her cousin, Gracie Fields. After their mammoth trek, she moved to a cattle station, married an Aboriginal stockman, Toby Kelly, and had two daughters, Doris and Annabelle.

But when she went to Perth for medical treatment, the authorities took the two girls. So in 1941 Molly absconded again, managing to take Annabelle with her, and returned to Jigalong, again walking most of the way. Doris, then aged three, grew up in Moore River, believing she had been abandoned by her mother. In the mission, she was beaten for speaking her native language. 'They taught us Aboriginal culture was evil, that Aborigines were pagans and devil worshippers,' she said. 'They taught us

to be ashamed of our own people. They tried to deprive us of our identity.'

In 1962, she was reunited with her parents and has since written three books about her family's experiences, including one on which *Rabbit Proof Fence* was based. She is relearning her native language and plans to use it to write children's books. She is close to her mother\*, who is 87 and living in Jigalong, but Annabelle – taken from Molly again at five and brought up in a children's home – is estranged from the family.

But the two communities established by the Martudjara, about 1,000 people who speak 12 different languages, are thriving. Many lead traditional lives, hunting local game and participating in ancient rituals.

It is a spectacle that thrills Doris. 'It has been amazing for them to re-establish themselves on their traditional lands,' she said. 'They are reconnecting the umbilical cord. They're very strong communities. They're protecting cultural sites, rediscovering their language, reviving their Creation stories.'

'My father's land is not desolate land now. There are the sounds of children's laughter, of arguments, of everyday living. The life is there. The spirits of my grandparents are there and will always be.'

\* Since this article was written, Doris Pilkington's mother has died.



'Hello, I'm Doris Pilkington Garimara. The feature film *Rabbit Proof Fence*, based on my book, tells how my mother Molly, my aunt Daisy and their cousin Grace – and dozens of Aboriginal children like them – were taken from their families by the government and sent to live hundreds of miles away.'

'Survival helped my father's people, the Martudjara of the Western Desert region of Western Australia when they returned to their traditional land in the 1980s.'

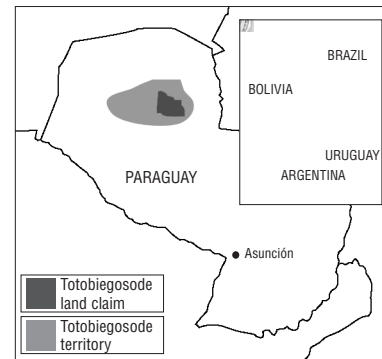
By Kathy Marks © *The Independent*  
Originally published as, 'A return to the land of their birth for 'Stolen Generation.'





AYOREO

# BULLDOZERS THREATEN DEATH FOR FOREST TRIBE



The burring noise came closer and closer, then a roaring, then the aching sound of falling trees. It was the dry season, and the forest garden was in full bloom: melon, beans, pumpkin and corn. Surely the big, yellow bulldozer had come to eat the fruit, and then eat the family who had planted it.

Ibore dropped the carob fruit she had just picked and ran. Her husband Parojnai, dropped his tools, bow and rope in the scramble. Seeking shelter in the dark foliage, the family were scattered. One relative was not seen again.

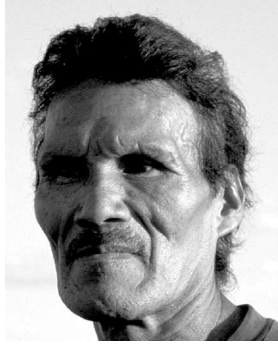
The bulldozer is a defining moment in Parojnai's fugitive, fragmented life. Although there are thought to be up to 5,000 members of his tribe, the Ayoreo, living in Paraguay and Bolivia, his family had been isolated from their people for years. Intensive missionary activity and the invasion of farmers on their traditional lands had forced hundreds of them to abandon their huts and live rough in the forest.

Eventually Parojnai and Ibore, who belong to one of the most isolated Ayoreo sub-groups, the Totobiegosode, became tired of their lonely existence and anxious to find partners for their children. But they knew little of the *cojñone*, or 'weird people', the Ayoreo word for whites, who awaited them beyond the forest. The first contact was in 1998. As another bulldozer's jaws closed in on the family, Parojnai summoned his elder sons to decide who would accompany him on his mission.

On the edge of the forest they came across a white man. The forest-dwellers approached, gesturing with their hands, their strange sounds of

**HUNDREDS OF LETTERS FROM SURVIVAL SUPPORTERS GALVANISED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S OFFICE INTO HALTING LOGGING OPERATIONS.**

The Ayoreo live in the vast scrub forest south of the Amazon basin known as the Chaco. Some members of the tribe are still uncontacted – the last totally isolated Indians outside the Amazon.



We, the Ayoreo of Arocojnadi, have gathered to write this letter to the outside world.

Gabide (above): 'We don't want to lose our traditional land because our forefathers lived here, we are still living here and, when we die, our children must live here.'

Eduejai: 'I don't want the whites to have our land because it is my homeland. We want your help, we don't want the whites to have our land, because if we give them the land they won't look after it, they will destroy it all, but we look after the land.'

reassurance lost on the frightened Spanish speaker. 'I kept saying don't be scared, *cojñoi*, although he was scared of us,' Parojnai says. 'It was in his face, he was always moving his head looking around in fear.'

But then began a ritual of trust: water was offered to the Indians, who offered their bees' honey. 'He brought white, strange biscuits. And other things which we now know were *empañadas* (pastries).' As conversation between the two was fruitless, Parojnai offered a necklace made of *purugode* (black seeds). A red-striped football shirt was given which Ibore still wears.

After this first fearful, yet friendly contact, the family returned to the forest. Months later, they found themselves at the boundary of a cattle ranch, and decided to approach the whites again. This time their words were not incomprehensible. They had stumbled upon a fellow Ayoreo, who

was working with the *cojñoi* as a farmhand.

Their new friend took the family to a tribe of several hundred Ayoreo in a camp run by the American fundamentalist group New Tribes Mission. But the family could not flourish away from the woods and their traditional sources of food, and, like many fellow tribespeople, became desperately ill. Survival International likened conditions in the camp to 'semi-slavery'.

But due to the work of one of Survival's partners, a Paraguayan organisation called the Totobiegosode Support Group, Parojnai and Ibore are now living in a community of 12 Ayorean families in an area the Paraguayan government bought for them from landowners. 'Life on the run from the bulldozers was very hard for me,' Ibore says. 'We moved with all our things from one place to another. Even though

*Ibore, an Ayoreo woman, acts out the story of her first encounter with white people. Her family spent years isolated in the forest as ranchers' bulldozers carved up their territory, before they were forced out in 1998. In March 2004 another group of 17 uncontacted Ayoreo emerged, and issued a plea for the bulldozers to stop destroying their forest.*

I am a woman I still had to hunt for anteaters. I got so tired. Now life is easier. We have our house; we have our things stored in our house.'

The couple are desperately concerned for their relatives, living uncontacted in the forest. Footprints and deserted huts suggest there may be hundreds of Ayoreo living a precarious life. But there is cause for hope. Thanks to a 20-year campaign by Survival International, the New Tribes Mission has abandoned its practice of using contacted Ayoreans to hunt isolated relatives and bring them into camps.

The question of land ownership for the Ayoreo people is more slippery. Although the government is required by international law, and its constitution, to buy and hand over traditional Ayoreo lands to the tribes, so far, only a quarter of the traditional territory is back in Ayoreo hands.

Injunctions against landowners that prevent them selling the land to developers have little effect. As recently as last September one firm sent bulldozers into the heart of Ayoreo land. The tracks of another company penetrate the core of the Totobiegosode-Ayoreo forest; only hundreds of letters sent by Survival supporters galvanised the attorney-general's office into halting 300 men about to start logging operations there.

Verena Regehr, a Swiss anthropologist who works for the Totobiegosode Support Group, fears the invasions could result in deaths by violent clashes or disease transmission. 'These people are still hunter-gatherers who exist on the land. If these companies invade their gardens and woods, extinction is a real danger.'

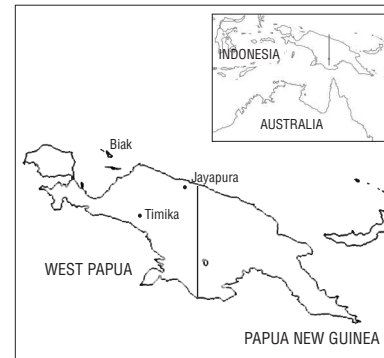
Louise Rimmer © The Independent  
Originally published as, 'Roar of the bulldozers could sound the death knell for tribe of forest-dwellers.'





TRIBES OF PAPUA

# TRIBES STILL LIVING IN FEAR OF INDONESIA



## New York, USA

Sitting in the Deluxe Café on Broadway, just south of Columbia University on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, John Rumbiak is far from his native land.

Home is Papua, a province of Indonesia the size of France which has suffered violence for nearly forty years. And it seems set to become worse.

Rumbiak belongs to one of the indigenous groups who inhabited Papua before the Indonesians arrived. His people are from Biak, an island just off the coast of Papua, which is home

to some of the most remote tribes in the world except for Brazil.

The tribal leader says that West Papua, formerly Irian Jaya, is in, 'a life or death situation'. Rumbiak, now teaching at Columbia, is the head of an indigenous human rights coalition in West Papua called the Institute for Human Rights Study and Advocacy (ELSHAM).

Its mission is peace for the province, which has been fighting for freedom since 1962 when its former colonial masters the Netherlands ceded it to Indonesian control.

Human rights observers calculate that the Indonesian military's tactics to suppress independence have taken no fewer than 100,000 civilian lives. It has been compounded by the avarice of foreign firms for lumber and minerals. West Papua occupies the western half of New Guinea, the eastern end is independent Papua New Guinea. With only 0.01 per cent of the world's population, it is home to 15 per cent of the planet's known languages.

It also has an abundance of lumber, copper and gold. When the Dutch

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'You can kill me, cut off my head if you will, but my body will walk back to that land. It is ours.'

Papuan man imprisoned over a land dispute.

surrendered West Papua to Indonesia it was on the understanding that there would be a referendum on independence. But the vote in 1969 was fixed by the Indonesian authorities. The result left West Papua in Indonesian hands. Frustration spawned an armed independence group called the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM, or the Free Papua Movement).

The Indonesian military was brutal in its response. Meanwhile, Jakarta, with support from the World Bank, set up a transmigration policy, encouraging different ethnic groups from other islands in the Indonesian archipelago to settle in West Papua. The aim was to rob the indigenous peoples of political and economic control. Meanwhile, foreign companies were invited to draw wealth from the land. Most infamous has been the American mining company, Freeport McMoRan and Rio Tinto which extracts gold and copper.

A recent study by Yale University alleged that the 'Indonesian government has shown a callous disregard for the basic human dignity of the people of West Papua'.

Human rights group Survival International assisted local people in blocking plans for a Scott Paper pulp mill. It threatened serious environmental harm. Survival was also among the groups that managed to persuade the World Bank to stop funding transmigration.

Tensions eased somewhat after Indonesia's President Suharto was ousted from power in 1998. In 2001, West Papua was offered political autonomy and an increased share of mining revenues. But the government

of President Megawati Sukarnoputri has changed direction. It is moving to divide West Papua into three provinces, apparently to weaken the pro-independence movement. The fact that East Timor finally did break away after bloodshed and international intervention in 1999 does not bode well for West Papua.

'The independence of East Timor has produced a fear...', Rumbiak explains. 'They are not going to let any other parts of the country follow East Timor.' It is the violent precursor to independence in East Timor that concerns him.

This year has seen Timbul Silaen become West Papua's new police chief – the same job that he held in East Timor during its bloody independence drive. (Silaen has recently sued Rumbiak and ELSHAM for allegations it made about recent killings and police involvement.)

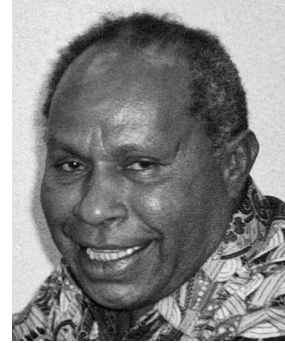
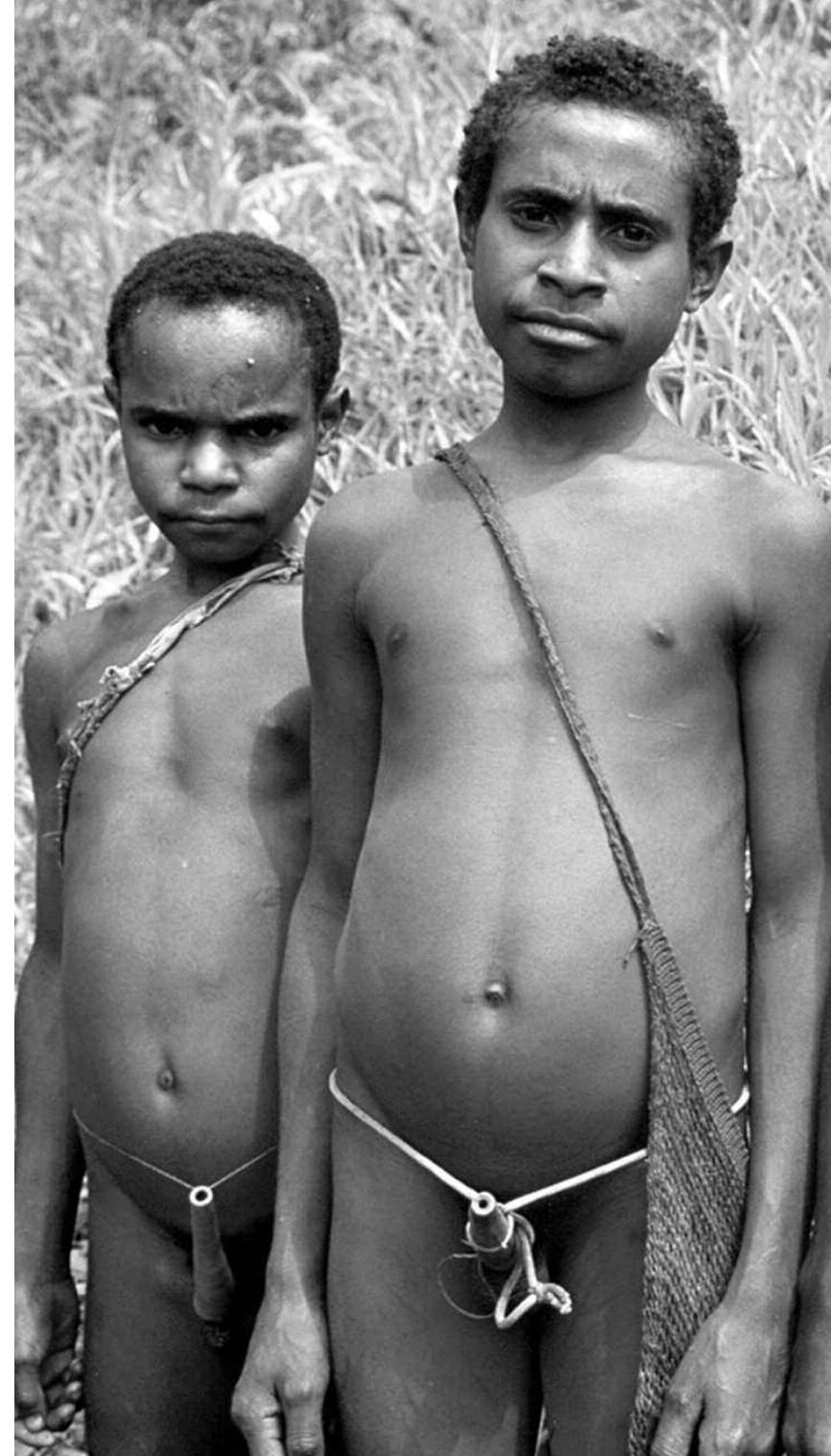
More alarming are reports by ELSHAM of the recent arrival in West Papua of Eurico Guterres, the leader of anti-independence militia in East Timor blamed for much bloodshed.

'With the biggest Muslim population in the world, they need Indonesia as a friend,' he says. Rumbiak knows he must return to West Papua. But in recent months, he has faced another challenge: threats against his life.

© David Osborne, *The Independent*  
Originally published as, 'Papua's tribes live in fear of death and extortion by invaders.'

The tribal peoples of Papua are calling increasingly loudly for their right to decide their own future, to be independent from Indonesia and to live on their own lands in peace.

**WITH ONLY 0.01 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, WEST PAPUA IS HOME TO 15 PER CENT OF THE PLANET'S KNOWN LANGUAGES.**



'Any negotiations, which are linked to our land and which are being held between the government and Indonesian as well as foreign companies, always occur without the consultation or the consent of the indigenous people of West Papua. So we conclude that foreign people see us, not as human beings, but as creatures that are still in the evolution stage to becoming human beings. Consequently, these peoples – especially the companies and the Indonesian government – treat us like animals.'

Tom Beanal, Amungme chief talking at the United Nations human rights commission.





INNU

# IN CANADA, DESPAIR CLAIMS EVEN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN



Life is surely as comfortable as it has ever been for the Innu Indians of Labrador province in eastern Canada. Only a few decades ago, they were still living in tents and roaming their lands year-round living off caribou and fish. Today, they have houses with running water and there are toys for their children at Christmas.

Thanks for this change in circumstance are due to Catholic missionaries who, in the fifties and sixties, concluded that the Innu should join the mainstream of society, and to the Canadian government which has pumped hundreds of millions of

dollars into settling them. But the Innu are not giving thanks.

Something seems to have gone terribly wrong in the process of assimilating the Innu, who number 20,000 and whose homeland, known to them as Nitassinan, is a massive and remote territory of sub-arctic spruce, lakes, rivers and rocky barrens in Labrador and Quebec. Theirs is a community racked by violence, addiction to alcohol and glue-sniffing and one of the worst suicide rates in the world.

Only in the past few years has the plight of the Innu, who are unrelated to the Inuit Eskimos farther north, come to the attention of the international community. In 1999, the UN Human Rights Committee described their plight as the 'most pressing issue facing Canadians'. The same year, Survival International, published a scathing report called *Canada's Tibet – the Killing of the Innu*.

'In the tundra of the Labrador peninsula, a tragedy is being played out,' the report said. 'These indigenous people suffer the highest suicide rate

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In the tundra of the Labrador peninsula, a tragedy is being played out. The Innu suffer the highest suicide rate on earth as one of the world's most powerful nations occupies their land, takes their resources and seems hell-bent on transforming them into Euro-Canadians.





Innu holding a religious service in the country.

**'PEOPLE ARE DYING EVERY TWO WEEKS. WE ARE WONDERING WHO WILL BE NEXT ALL THE TIME.'**

on Earth as one of the world's most powerful nations occupies their land, takes their resources and seems hell-bent on transforming them into Euro-Canadians.'

Survival's report noted that between 1990 and 1998, the Innu suffered a suicide rate of 178 per 100,000, nearly 13 times the rate for the rest of Canada. Their despair was tragically dramatised when Napes Ashini, one of the Innu leaders who flew to London to help launch the report, learnt during his visit that his teenage son, Andrew, had killed himself. Today, Mr Ashini, 43, is preparing to return to London to see again if, with Survival's help, he can remind outsiders of the Innu struggle. He is doing so for one compelling reason: since the publication of the 1999 report, little has happened to improve the prospects of his people. 'I am beginning to think that we don't have any future at all,' he says. 'That we are just stuck here.'

His close friend and a partner in trying to find solutions for the tribe is an Englishman, Anthony Jenkinson, who

has lived among the Innu for more than 25 years. Mr Jenkinson, who is married to an Innu, reaches a similarly distressing conclusion. Things have not improved. Instead, he says: 'I think things are likely to get considerably worse.'

Both men offer similar diagnoses for what ails these people. True, they have been moved into new homes with roads and all the conveniences. Indeed, a community of Innu that used to live on an island at Davis Inlet, close to Goose Bay, has just been shifted to a new inland settlement called Natuashish, with new houses and a shiny new hockey stadium. But, with few jobs available, they are mostly without purpose. Once nomadic hunters, they are now a trapped people, relying on government handouts.

'They are stunned by the changes and they are caught up in a process of change that has left their heads spinning,' Mr Jenkinson says. 'And the process is helped along by alcohol and other mind-altering substances. It is all traceable to the separation of these

people from their way of living. They had a feeling of purpose in their lives that is radically absent now.'

Even on the day we talked, the Innu were learning of yet another suicide, a young woman in Natuashish. Details were sparse, but it appeared to be a story of marital infidelity and of a young husband living hundreds of miles away working in a nickel mine and living in a camp. Another suicide had happened just two weeks earlier. This was not a happy Christmas season for the Innu.

Mr Ashini, who lived with his family in the tundra for seven years until 1990, knows who to blame. 'Since the government agencies and the missionaries became involved, trying to solve our problems for us, they have just created more destruction for us.'

'I am scared for my children and my nephews and nieces. People are dying every two weeks. We are wondering who will be next all the time.'

Mr Ashini and Mr Jenkinson are not idly watching the catastrophe. Together they set up the Tshikapisk Foundation several years ago to explore ways to preserve Innu culture and the Innu way of life before it drains away. On a site more than 200 miles from Natuashish on the shores of Lake Kamistastin, in deep caribou territory, they set about building a lodge.

Visit the lake today and you will see the lodge, in pristine fresh timber, standing in the snows as if ready for use. But it is only a shell and the two men are desperately looking for funds to build its interior.

When it is done, it will hopefully serve as a base for eco-tourism, with adventure holiday companies using it

for high-spending travellers and hunters eager to experience the loneliness of the Labrador wilderness. If it works, the lodge will offer jobs to young and old Innu alike. It will also generate income.

With that money, the two men hope to begin the education programmes, which, with luck, will begin to reconnect younger generations of Innu with their cultural past. 'We are rapidly losing our own culture, because young people are alienated from who they really are,' Mr Ashini says.

It will be in the hope of raising money for the foundation, and for the completion of the lodge, that Mr Ashini will fly to London next month. Despite the suicide of his son, he still manages to retain some sense of humour. While in England, he says, he will be looking for 'contributions from all my millionaire friends'. He chuckles quietly. Just one millionaire friend interested in helping the Innu would be enough.



**'I'm very happy to tell you my own story. My name is Mary Georgette Mistenapeo. I wasn't born in a hospital. I was born in the country.'**

**We all know that the white government wants us to lose our way of life. They think we should live like white people, but that will not happen because we have our own culture, traditions and values. When I go for a walk somewhere in the country, I look at the flowers. They are very special flowers because I use them when I'm sick. I use my land in a very special way. When I go to meetings in big cities, I don't see that many trees like willows, or flowers.'**

Innu elder

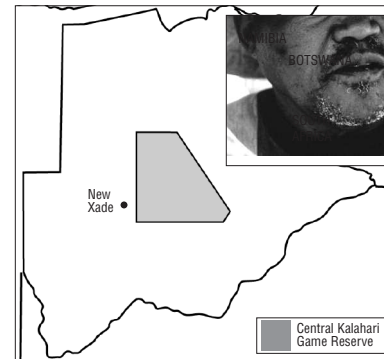
David Usborne © *The Independent*  
Originally published as, 'Move to modern life has brought death and despair to a once-proud people who used to roam the frozen wastes.'





GHANA AND GWI 'BUSHMEN'

# DESPISED PEOPLES FORCED OUT OF THEIR KALAHARI HOME



It was a day that promised heat but for the present it was still cool in the shade. Over breakfast, I had been watching some springbok 'pronking' a few hundred yards away in the dried-up bed of the Okwa river; what they call a fossil river in the Kalahari. Pronking is a display of sexual vigour by male springboks, in which they race one another across the sand and leap seven or eight feet in the air on ramrod-stiff legs, bouncing like mechanical toys. It is a wonderful sight, all done to impress the females, although they remained supremely uninterested, grazing on the succulent plants of the Kalahari, greener and lusher than I had expected.

A few yards away, four Bushmen from the nearby village of Molapo lolled in the grass, laughing and talking. One man rolled tobacco in what looked like a twist of newspaper, took an enormous pull and then passed it to his neighbour who did the same until they had all had a turn. Bushmen share everything; sharing is the key to survival in one of the harshest environments on the planet.

Naked except for their loin cloths, if you did not count the odd pouch made from the skin of a steenbok, they carried only the tools of their trade, a bow, arrows and hunting spears. They were going to show us how they hunted springbok, in the way the Bushmen had always hunted, long before the white men, and even the black men came, when the Bushmen with their rock art, click languages, tracking skills and complex spirit world inhabited most of Africa. Then, they were indeed, 'lords of the desert'.

My companions were well aware we were tourists and that the Bushmen, although they still hunted regularly, were putting on a show for us. But

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*'If I thought you were primitive would I visit you in London and destroy your home, expel your wife and children and leave them without food or a roof over their heads?'*  
Bushman

when they moved off, the bowman in front, the others close behind, in step and in single file, and began their stalk across the shallow depression which was the Okwa valley, I felt a sense of mounting excitement. Yes, the Bushmen had become part of the modern world, yet we were watching a ritual which had been re-enacted in the heart of the Kalahari for 20,000 years or more.

All our eyes were on the slim brown bodies, moving now in a half-crouch as the springbok herd, which had seemed oblivious of the hunters' approach, began to divide and drift away. We were close to *le moment critique*, when the Bushmen would either have to drop flat and crawl to within striking range, despite the almost total lack of cover, or try to rush the herd and cut off a straggler, or perhaps even split-up. It was an absorbing dilemma, unresolved as we waited under the great bowl of the African sky. Suddenly, we heard what I at first thought was an aeroplane. But it was too loud and close to be anything

in the sky and a few seconds later a large, noisy lorry broke the skyline and came roaring and clattering towards us, closely followed by a second lorry.

Immediately, the headman of the village, Mathambo Sesana, who was acting as our guide, ran towards the track which lay between the hunters and the springbok herd, waving at the driver to stop. Mathambo, gesticulating urgently, was clearly trying to persuade the first driver to stop until the hunt was over. But he paid scant attention, revving his engine noisily. Finally, he let in his clutch with a crash and went roaring off down the road.

The spell broke. The springbok stampeded and the hunters were left choking in the dust. Before the lorries disappeared, I noticed two things. First, that they belonged to the Ghanzi district council, which controls that part of the Kalahari; they even bore a logo which showed a Bushman hunter with drawn bow, flanked by an eland and an oryx. The second, that both lorries were piled high with the long poles and

## **'IF YOU MOVE THE BUSHMEN FROM THEIR ORIGINAL PLACE AND MAKE THEM DEPENDENT ON THE GOVERNMENT, YOU ARE KILLING THEIR MINDS.'**

*Bushman*

*'How can anyone argue that it's better to live in the wilderness with animals than be here [the relocation site]?'*

*James Kilo, government representative*

thatching grass of Bushman huts and in each a group of bemused-looking Bushmen peered at us disconsolately.

Although I did not know the full story yet, they were being evicted from their homes in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), created for the Bushmen and the game they lived on by the liberal British administration of what was then Bechuanaland, in 1961.

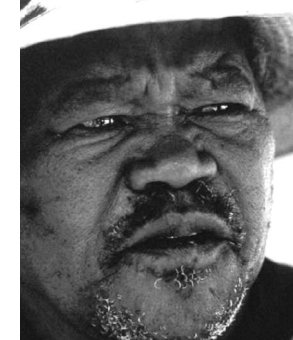
It was the latest move in the long, drawn-out campaign to force the Bushmen out of their ancestral territories and into resettlement locations, where they can neither hunt nor gather bush foods and which they call, significantly, 'places of death'. The Botswana government had trumpeted long and loud that it was only 'persuading' the Bushmen to leave the reserve for their own good, not forcing them. This bare-faced lie took in successive British and other governments over the years but it never fooled the Bushmen, as I discovered next day when I talked to Ganema, the wife of the Molapo medicine man. She explained how the government's 'persuasion' worked.

'They say we come to pour money over you,' she began. 'We will take down your houses and help you to move towards the sunset, but I don't want to move towards the sunset, because that is where you die.' That is a familiar Bushman belief. 'They say to us you must discourage any visitors from staying and camping here. No one can camp here. You just want visitor's tea (meaning money or handouts). This is not your land, you stole this land. You are finishing the game, you have stolen the land and killed the game.' None of this was true. I asked

her about a newspaper report saying people who refused to leave the CKGR were threatened with the army. 'For a long time they have said if you don't move then the army will come in to move you. But we haven't seen the army. They also say they will drop a bomb on us if we don't move.'

Ganema, a handsome woman, ended on a passionate note. 'I was born here, my mother suckled me here, so I will not move. Men, women and children, nobody wants to move. I want to die here.' That was nearly six years ago, in early 1998. The most brutal physical attempt to drive the Bushmen out of the CKGR came in 2000 when a posse of Botswana wildlife officials and police drove into Molapo and arrested 13 Bushmen for alleged illegal hunting. They were held in a bush camp where, an official Survival investigation found, they were beaten and tortured for three days. Mathambo, the Molapo headman, was also arrested and later died of a heart attack.

The final expulsion came in 2002, when the Botswana government, which had already shut down the CKGR's mobile clinic and other amenities, cut off the water supply to the six Bushman villages and ordered the last remaining inhabitants out. Despite protests from a few British parliamentarians and one or two voices in the European Parliament, the deportation of the Bushmen and the almost inevitable destruction of their culture, among the oldest and most fascinating in the world, were met with almost deafening silence. The British Government, the European Union, above all, the United Nations, made not a murmur. The forced removal of the Bushmen, in violation of Botswana's own constitution, and the



**Mogetse Kaboikanyo was a charismatic leader for the Bushmen and Kgaligadi peoples and a powerful voice in their fight for their land. His unshakeable convictions, however, could not save him. In 2002, the police destroyed his community, poured away their precious water, and threatened to burn them all if they did not get out. Mogetse was trucked to the resettlement site at New Xade; a few weeks later his heart just stopped. His community, where his ancestors had been buried for countless generations, now lies empty.**





genocidal treatment of the country's indigenous population, has been almost completely ignored. What happened to New Labour's much-vaunted 'ethical' foreign policy?

Only one major international has taken up the Bushman cause. It has done so with a courage and conviction that puts everyone else to shame, except, that is, the Bushmen's own organisation, First People of the Kalahari, led by Mathambo's brother, Roy Sesana.

Survival has launched a postcard campaign criticising the diamond giant, De Beers, for supporting the Botswana government's policy of 'kicking Bushmen out of their ancestral lands'. De Beers, which has a major stake in Botswana's diamond production, the biggest in the world, is using the model, Iman\*, to help them sell more diamonds, the postcard adds. 'Should people who support indigenous peoples boycott Iman and De Beers? We think they should, until the Bushmen are back on their territory and their rights to it are recognised by both the Botswana government and De Beers.'

Stephen Corry, Survival's director, who recalls that it took 20 years to persuade Brazil to respect the Amazonian Indians' rights, says: 'Mounting international outrage is making them [the Botswana government] realise that the world will not stand by as 20,000 years of Bushman culture is casually destroyed'. Today you too can do something to help the Bushmen's stand.

*\* Since this article was written, Iman has ended her contract with DeBeers.*

Sandy Gall © *The Independent*  
Originally published as, 'The long walk to obscurity.'

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'Gugama, the creator, made us a long, long time ago – so long ago, I don't know when. Our children's future is rooted in us teaching them our culture, hunting the animals and gathering the fruits and roots... When we hunt, we dance. And when the rain comes, we are filled with joy. God made the Bushman and this is our place, where everything follows nature and gives life.'  
Mogetse Kaboikanyo

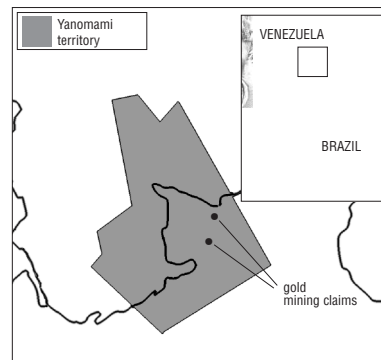






YANOMAMI

# FOREST SHAMAN'S GLOBAL ODYSSEY FOR HIS PEOPLE



## Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

When Davi Yanomami jets in and out of international conferences, he wears his traditional feathers rather than a suit, although few hotels can offer him his preferred hammock. Yet this is a minor discomfort. For, through his engagement with the modern world, the charismatic spokesman for the Yanomami, one of South America's most numerous forest-dwelling tribal people, has helped secure their rights over ancestral land and preserve a lifestyle that has nature at its core.

Davi represents an estimated 27,000 Yanomami, the continent's last substantial group of isolated indigenous

people. Their home is the northern Amazon, deep in the hills that lie between Brazil and Venezuela. After their land is secured from the interests of gold-prospectors and cattle-ranchers, the Yanomami are able to thrive as their ancestors did for thousands of years.

Life for the Yanomami is communal; tribal groups of up to 400 can share the same house, although there are hearths for individual families around a central area cleared for rituals and dancing. The communities live by hunting and gathering, cultivating crops and growing medicines in large gardens. Hunting is reciprocal, with meat being shared with family and friends. 'There is always enough food in the forest,' Davi says.

The Yanomami are also deeply spiritual people, who summon shamanic spirits using an hallucinogenic snuff called *yakoana*. These spirits are said to live in the mountains, wind, thunder and darkness and help cure forest illnesses, control the weather and generally keep an eye on the world, which can be a perilous place for the Yanomami.

One of the Yanomami's staples is manioc. This is just one of the 500 species of plant they use for food, medicine, making objects and building houses.





The future of the Yanomami rests with the young, whom they hope will maintain their ancestors' traditions.

**BUT THE YANOMAMI'S REAL BATTLE, HE KNOWS, IS A DIFFERENT ONE. IT IS AGAINST THE CORROSIVE HOMOGENISATION OF WESTERN CULTURE.**

During the 1970s and 1980s, they suffered hugely from Brazilian gold-miners invading their land. Villages were destroyed, the Yanomami were shot at, and ravaged by diseases to which they had no immunity. Twenty per cent of the population were wiped out in seven years. Finally, after a 20-year international campaign led by Survival International, the miners were expelled and the land was demarcated as the Yanomami Park by the Brazilian government in 1992.

But the Yanomami do not have ownership rights over their land. Cattle-ranchers and miners continue to threaten them, and the Indians (to use the term they prefer) wish to own the land, rather than simply feel they are renting it from the government. 'By law it is forbidden to invade Yanomami land, but nobody is making

sure that the law is being implemented,' Davi says.

'The miners are still coming in, and bringing disease with them. The farmers are chopping down the trees and destroying the forest. The land gives us life, and if we keep the land, we give life back to it, because no one can destroy it when it remains in our hands.'

The vulnerability of the Yanomami was brutally exposed in 1993, when 16 of them were killed by gold-miners in what became known as the Haximu massacre. And there are threats of a more insidious kind. The increased militarisation of the area has brought barracks full of soldiers who bring sexually transmitted diseases with them, infecting Indian women who sell sex for food and coffee.

But not all experience with the non-indigenous 'white man', or the *nape*, as Yanomami call them, is negative. In recent years, the Yanomami have accepted funding from international organisations, including Survival, to set up their own school, with the aim of writing down their language and history for the first time.

'It is important for us to become educated, to be able to write about our culture to pass onto future generations,' Davi says. He learnt Portuguese to translate the advice of white doctors after an epidemic of malaria in his community. 'I also want white people to be able to read our language, just as it is important for us to speak theirs.'

The Yanomami are also learning to read a microscope slide to study the impact of malaria. 'The meeting of white and Yanomami healing gives us the strength to get rid of disease,' he says. 'Our shamanic spirits can cure only the diseases they know, the diseases of the forest. The white doctor cures tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia and worms.' These diseases were brought in by the white man.

The Yanomami are reluctant to encourage further integration, preferring to fight for the right to be different. 'We don't know about commerce,' Davi says. 'We use our forest without paying. The whites come and take our earth to make things to put in shops, where they wait for the price to go up so they can gain more at our expense. We indigenous people use the earth to plant and then we divide food up between our relatives and our friends.'

Misconceptions about Indians and non-indigenous abound. It is hard to tell if Davi is joking when he speaks solemnly

on the worst type of white man, the *yoasi*, 'men with white skin, who are bald with glasses and go around in cars and swim in swimming pools. What I really mean is men who look to the forest, and all they see is money.'

Davi's stereotypes are much less damaging than those of a leading American anthropologist, Napoleon Chagnon, who once pronounced the Yanomami as 'sly, aggressive and intimidating' people who lived in a state of 'chronic warfare'. The anthropologist's views, which have been denounced as racist and sensationalist, are still current in some universities. But Davi is dismissive. 'We get violent only when the white man messes with us,' he says. 'It is the rest of the world which is violent. You see it in the big cities, in Iraq, in the United States. We don't have bombs or guns. When we have conflict, we just fight among ourselves. That's normal.'

But the Yanomami's real battle, he knows, is a different one. It is against the corrosive homogenisation of Western culture.

'We will keep on fighting,' he says. 'We Indian people from different tribes are getting together and getting stronger. We have learnt a lot; we are learning to speak Portuguese so that we can complain and demand. Don't you worry, we will keep on fighting. Fighting for our rights.'



Speaking in Italy to a TV studio audience, Davi Yanomami said, 'I am returning today to Brazil, and after I will go back to my community and I will tell them that you interviewed me and are doing something to preserve our Earth. You treated me well and I'm happy and I want to say this to everyone, all the children and women and men. I want to leave the words of a Yanomami in all your hearts. Thank you.'

© Louise Rimmer, *The Independent*  
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**WE ARE PEOPLE.**

**WE ARE REAL.**

**WE LIVE.**

**WE SHARE THE  
WORLD WITH YOU.**

**WE WANT A FUTURE.**

**WE NEED YOUR HELP.**

