

Editorial Notes:

“Hagar/Hajjar” was established as a platform for critical scholarship on issues such as inequality, marginality, identities and the exploitation of power and wealth. Drawing on the ancient stories of Hagar/Hajjar, it seeks to probe the omnipresence of such issues in human society, and explore the cracks and crevices through which change and resistance are generated.

The case of indigenous peoples is a true embodiment of the spirit of Hagar/Hajjar. The colonization of these peoples, mainly by Europeans, and their subsequent oppression, have given rise in recent times to new mobilizations, remolding of resistant identities and organized collective action. The volume you hold provides a cutting edge overview and analysis of the plight of indigenous (native, aboriginal) peoples within recent global transformations. Our guest editors – Ismael Abu-Saad and Duane Champagne – have gathered an impressive and timely collection of scholarly statements on the topic which is likely to feature highly in global and local affairs during the turbulent times ahead. The special issue has been produced in cooperation with The Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, which forms the main focus for research about indigenous issues at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Oren Yiftachel
Beer Sheva, October 2001

Special Issue on Indigenous Peoples

On May 24-26, 2000, the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development at Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev and the Center for Comparative Education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) sponsored a conference entitled “The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development,” in the framework of the UCLA-BGU Program of Academic Cooperation. The conference was held at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Beer-Sheva, Israel) and guest speakers were invited from all over the world including the United States, South Africa, Canada, Australia, Brazil and Israel.

The conference introduced a series of panels that entertained the issues of defining indigenous peoples, presenting information on their present conditions, and discussing future trends and possibilities for social, economic and political survival and development, as well as the future of nation-state relations with indigenous peoples. Geographically, the papers covered a range

spanning from North America to South and Latin America, the Middle East and Australia where Native peoples share a common struggle on many levels. Although papers came from across the globe and utilized a variety of methods and perspectives to present their views, there was substantial general agreement regarding the relations of indigenous peoples with dominant communities and nation-states. Generally, Native peoples are communities or nations that have occupied a specific territory from time immemorial, have governed themselves according to their own rules, and often have religious or creation stories that provide specific forms of community, government, culture and territories. Indigenous peoples' claims to self-government, territory and cultural autonomy predate the creation of the nation-states that now rule over them. Often, the Native peoples were not party to the formation of the state and/or are not regarded as citizens within the constitution or nation-state. Most prefer to retain their traditional cultural and political forms and rights to territory or economic livelihood.

Native struggles within nation-state systems are often not struggles for inclusion or access to citizenship, as was the Civil Rights Movement or as are current multicultural movements in the United States. Native peoples wish to preserve land, economic subsistence and means, political and cultural autonomy. In many cases, nation-states often find the demands of Native communities threatening, at odds with national policies of integration and assimilation. In nation-states, where issues of national unity and political integration are tenuous, the demands of local cultural and political autonomy are often perceived as threats to the national political stability. Thus, the United Nations (UN) and most nation-states have not looked favorably on the demands of indigenous peoples for recognition of their rights to land, cultural autonomy and self-government. In most situations, Native communities do not wish to overthrow the nation-state, but seek to retain control over land, economic assets and self-government so they may live under culturally comprehensible social and political rules, and feel free to interpret and extend their own cultures within a rapidly globalizing and changing world. Nation-states have demanded too much conformity and have not respected the cultures, economic and political forms and organization of Indigenous peoples. While states have much to offer Native people in the way of education, technology and market opportunities, many Native peoples wish to accept change and political inclusion and participation in their local states in ways that are compatible with their own histories and rights to territory and self-government. Usually, the demands for recognition of Indigenous rights are not designed to threaten a nation-state (for often long relations have developed between them), rather they are intended to reassert rights and world views that the indigenous peoples cherish and will not surrender easily. It is the persistence and continuity of Native cultural and political autonomy that make them insist on their beliefs and rights and which will make indigenous peoples part of the international and national framework in many regions of the world for the foreseeable future.

Native peoples seek a democratization of relations with nation-states that truly wish to respect cultural, ethnic and political differences. While Native political, cultural and land rights are not often congruent with the history and beliefs surrounding the formation of most contemporary nation-states, the differences in world interpretation, claims to land and traditions of self-government directly clash with non-pluralistic interpretations of the origins and futures of nation-states. Native world views and claims are often of wholly different orders than contemporary secular world views or those held by most members of nations with bureaucratic state political orders. Yet, Native peoples demand they have the right to live in their chosen way, to access economic opportunities, and to govern themselves according to their own political forms and understandings of justice and political rights.

The conference papers explored many issues about the history and contemporary conditions of indigenous peoples. Many obvious and interesting comparisons were made based on the scholarship and presentations of indigenous situations in different countries. There is considerable cultural variation among indigenous groups discussed at the conference, thus their cultures, histories and colonial or nation-state relations varied considerably. The differences in cultural and historical orientation added to the richness of the discussion from a scholarly, as well as a political, point of view. Cultural or institutional similarities were not the defining characteristics for indigenous peoples, but rather their relationship to nation-state structures that preempted their rights to land, self-government and pursuit of cultural practice and innovation. Nation-state and colonial relations have become major forces within the environments of indigenous peoples, and these relations now require considerable attention by scholars and by the indigenous peoples themselves.

The conference papers and discussions contributed to greater understanding of indigenous peoples around the world and explored many common situations. The scholars at the conference shared many beliefs and understandings about the situation of indigenous peoples. There may be as many as 400 million indigenous people in the world, and their histories, cultures, economies and forms of government will most likely persist into future centuries. Indigenous peoples will make accommodations for the globalized world along patterns that are deeply tied to their previous patterns of cultural change and social order, and they will produce many creative and innovative patterns of change that will include utilizing some of the better possibilities of the new, globalized world. Indigenous peoples will deal with issues and experience patterns of change that will not be present in other communities, nations or nation-states. We believe they form a distinct social order and are worthy of systematic study as a discipline. Indigenous studies, or international indigenous studies, should represent the cultural, political and economic views and interests of indigenous peoples as part of an analysis of their patterns of change and community in historical, present-day and future relations within world history. Indigenous studies will form an academic discipline that we hope will educate and enlighten

the academic world and general public regarding issues confronting Native peoples. Such a discipline will explore culture, policy, history, law and economics. We believe that this Special Issue of HAGAR on Indigenous Peoples is one step in the direction of a greater understanding of Native issues and the emergent formation of an indigenous studies discipline.

Only selected papers from the conference appear in this Special Issue. A complete monograph of papers from the conference will be available from the UCLA American Indian Studies Center by early 2002.

The first paper in this Special Issue, by Duane Champagne, is entitled "The Crisis in Native Governments in the 21st Century" and presents an argument about the future of tribal governments in the United States and, to a certain extent, Canada. In recent decades, Native tribal governments have been searching for more effective ways to assert tribal and cultural autonomy, but find themselves saddled with traditional governments, colonial governments or governments modeled after the US Constitution. Champagne's paper argues that none of the current forms of government available to Native peoples will serve them in the globalized competition of this century. He presents the problem Native communities are confronted with when attempting to develop effective governments based on the historical and present models available. It is suggested that new Native governments may have to adapt aspects of traditional, colonial and nation-state governments.

Rebecca Tsosie's paper "Land, Culture and Community: Envisioning Native American Sovereignty and National Identity in the 21st Century" explores and elaborates on Native conceptions of land, identity, community and political sovereignty. She argues that US law and government have changed the meaning of land and tribal sovereignty into a more legalistic understanding. Natives have adopted the US legal tradition because it continues to provide at least limited protection for their land and communities. Tsosie goes on to discuss the possibilities of reasserting Native views of community and identity grounded in their own traditions, which provide greater possibilities for cultural and political autonomy in the national and international arenas.

In his paper, "Territorial Roots of Latin American Indigenous People's Movement for Sovereignty", Stefano Varese presents the views of Native peoples in Latin and South America where their communities and identities are fundamentally linked to land or ancestral territories. Natives in Latin and South America, while sharing some general orientations of their position in the cosmos and the world, have different histories of legal and political colonizations with their colonial and nation-states than the Natives in North America. Yet, indigenous peoples in Latin and South America have identities that are strongly tied to their ancestral lands, traditional forms of government and social-cultural orders. Varese argues that indigenous peoples have not gained recognition of their issues from the nation-states or international organizations. Instead, indigenous peoples have increasingly constructed alliances and relations with other indigenous communities crossing over nation-state boundaries and

providing an alternative form of international organization for stateless peoples, through which they can advance their views and rights.

Carlos Alberto Torres in "Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Theoretical Discussion of Citizenship, Democracy and Multiculturalism" discusses theories of citizenship, democracy and multiculturalism in Latin America. He argues that most theories of citizenship are too exclusive or define the national community as more culturally and socially homogenous than is actually the case, and thereby leave out various groups such as Gypsies, women, racial groups and indigenous peoples. He explores the role of education as a tool of political inclusion and of creating citizens molded to reflect and uphold the goals and values of the nation-state. Torres says the contradictions among education, citizenship and democracy must be taken seriously. These arguments are particularly important when considering indigenous issues since Native peoples often have their own views of education, democracy and community membership and, in many cases, do not want to take on citizenship, even within the most democratic of nation-states, without gaining the respect for and recognition of Native cultural world views and rights to land and self-government.

The next paper, presented by Ismael Abu-Saad, is entitled "Education as a Tool for Control vs. Development Among Indigenous Peoples: The Case of the Bedouin Arabs in Israel." Generally, education is used as a tool to assimilate Native peoples into the culture and into accepting the goals and values of the controlling nation-state. There is a long history of such actions all over the world including the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and other places. Israel's state-controlled educational system is subdivided into Jewish and Arab subsystems, which gives it the appearance of educational pluralism, while, in fact, this subdivision serves to maintain the rigid socio-economic and political gaps between the country's majority and its indigenous minority, as well as serving as a tool for control of the Arab minority. As such, the inequitable funding and lack of emphasis on Arab or Bedouin history and culture prevents many young Bedouin from obtaining the skills required to compete in the modern, hi-tech Israeli and global markets. Abu-Saad argues that education can and must be transformed by indigenous communities into a tool for aiding their development, and he recommends several strategies for beginning this process in the Bedouin Arab context in Israel.

The final two papers* are from Australian contributors and they discuss the issues surrounding recent developments between the Australian government and the Australian Aborigines. The history of relations between the indigenous peoples in Australia and the colonial and nation-state has been a harsh one. Strong measures of assimilation, even genocide, and non-recognition of territory or political rights through the legal apparatus of *Terra Nullius* (an empty land),

* These two papers were not presented at the conference, rather they were contributions solicited for this Special Issue.

has placed Native Australians in difficult social, economic and political positions. Richard Howitt in "A Nation in Dialogue: Recognition, Reconciliation and Indigenous Rights in Australia" presents a summary and analysis of events during the 1990s. He recounts numerous initiatives toward recognition of the long-ignored issues of rights to land, self-government and cultural autonomy for Australian Natives. While considerable progress was made early in the decade, more recent Australian governments have returned to ignoring Native concerns. Undoubtedly, some gains for Australian Natives were achieved in the last part of the 20th century. The Australian courts have discouraged the legal fiction of *Terra Nullius*, but changing political parties have inhibited Australian Natives from making continuous progress on recognition of their rights.

Aram Yengoyan presents the paper, "Aboriginals in Confrontation: History, Racism and the Australian State," which describes the racial overtones and understandings that mainstream Australian society maintains toward the racial assimilation of Australian Aborigines. Defining Australian Aborigines as a racial group has changed the issue of their relationship to Australian society into one of racial or ethnic inclusion or integration. This view does not acknowledge Australian Native rights to territory, to their own world views and culture, or to self-government. Racialization of Native issues deflects the discussion away from indigenous issues, which focus on land, self-government and cultural autonomy, rather than on individual racial or political incorporation into full citizenship as racial and political equals. Yengoyan explores the relations and representations of blood, culture and land as they relate to Aboriginal history and contemporary issues.

The paper in *Open Space - Perspectives*, contributed by Gord Bruyere, "The Lessons in Our Blood: Reflections on Protecting Aboriginal Children", draws on the experiences of Native families and children in Canada. He recounts experiences of Canadian children who over the past centuries have been shipped to boarding schools and placed for adoption with non-Native families, as well as noting a recent rise in the number of Native children under the control of state welfare agencies. Bruyere presents the past and continuing policies toward Native children as assimilation policies. Although well-intended in some ways, Canadian policies toward Native children are developed and implemented without Native participation or an understanding of Native culture and views. Similar policies toward Native children exist presently in many nation-states around the world. Bruyere dreams of a time when Native views toward children and their education will be better understood and respected by nation-state officials. He dreams of a time when Native people will have greater control over the socialization and education of their children and future generations, so the children can help build a stronger Native Nation and develop more democratic and culturally respectful relations with the citizens of Canada.

We believe this collection presents an initial installment of papers that begin to define and interpret the experiences and aspirations of indigenous peoples throughout the world. The issues confronting indigenous peoples will become

clearer in the present century, requiring scholars, policy makers and citizens to become more aware of these issues. In the United States, the great interpreter of American law for Native Americans, Felix Cohen, wrote that Native rights were the “miner’s canary of democracy.” (Miners always carried a caged canary down into the mine as a test for oxygen levels or poisonous gases. If the canary died or experienced significant difficulty breathing, the miners were warned that the air was bad). Likewise, as various nation-states and international bodies seek to construct democratic, multicultural and just societies, in many ways, the state of indigenous rights in these societies will serve as a test case of their success. Indigenous peoples will struggle long and hard to preserve their cultures and their rights to self-government and land, against which nation-states will be tested for their tolerance, universality, consensual and multicultural character. We hope that the coming century will witness great progress in the recognition and respect for Native political, cultural and land rights. Indigenous peoples are ready to negotiate with nation-states to create more multicultural and democratic nations that include and recognize the identities, communities and self-determination of Native peoples within their social, cultural, political and territorial limits. We hope that the present volume provides a basis for better understanding of Native rights and issues, which will, in turn, contribute to more successful negotiations between Native communities and nation-states and result in more stable, productive, consensual and democratic relationships between nation-states and indigenous peoples.

Ismael Abu-Saad and Duane Champagne, Guest editors