

The "Fourth World" of Indigenous Peoples: A Review of the Concept and the Literature

Alan B. Anderson

During the past several years the literature on the common experience of Aboriginal peoples constituting a "Fourth World" has grown incessantly. Particularly noteworthy are the following six volumes:

- The Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues (ICHI) has published, in a series, a volume titled *Indigenous Peoples: A Global Quest for Justice* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 181 pp. As we shall see, this is a comprehensive, well-organized book, though now becoming somewhat dated.
- An interesting thematic collection of eight papers, albeit more limited geographically to just three countries, is Noel Dyck (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: Fourth World Politics in Canada, Australia, and Norway*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Social and Economic Papers no. 14, second edition (St. John's Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1989), 264 pp.
- A most attractive and informative volume is Julian Burger (et al.), *The GAIA Atlas of First Peoples: A Future for the Indigenous World* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1990), 191 pp. This lavishly illustrated book effectively combines maps, photographs, quotations and insights (from Aboriginal people) with introductory academic analysis and a wide variety of brief case studies of Indigenous cultures.
- Among the most recent books is Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, *The "Nations Within": Aboriginal-State Relations in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), 267 pp. In actuality, most (eight out of twelve) chapters focus on Canada; the United States and New Zealand receive scant attention in only a single chapter each. Nonetheless, this book, if highly selective, is a useful contribution to comparative literature on the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and political states.

- Brian Goehring, *Indigenous Peoples of the World: An Introduction to Their Past, Present and Future* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1993), 67 pp., is a slim volume intended as an introductory overview of the common struggle for survival of Indigenous peoples around the world.
- Finally, most recently published is Marc S. Miler (ed., with the staff of Cultural Survival), *State of the Peoples: A Global Human Rights Report on Societies in Danger* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 262 pp. This is an ambitious and quite successful attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of a vast array of Indigenous peoples worldwide from up-to-date field data. Clearly this, like the GAIA Atlas, is an advocacy volume, an attempt by Cultural Survival (an activist research organization and journal concerned with the human rights of Indigenous minorities), together with a major American publisher, to draw attention to the fate of Indigenous peoples. Among the appealing features of this book are its contemporary timeliness and thorough documentation.

It is still problematic how a "Fourth World" is to be defined. Presumably the concept has been derived from the work of George Manuel and M. Posluns (*The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1974) and Nelson Graburn ("1,2,3,4: Anthropology and the Fourth World," *Culture* 1, no. 1: 66-70), among others. As George Manuel put it, when he headed the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, "The Fourth World is the name given to Indigenous peoples descended from a country's Aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territory and its riches. . . . The peoples of the Fourth World have only limited influence or none at all in the national state to which they belong" (cited in the GAIA Atlas, p. 19). Noel Dyck has more elaborately explained that it is "politically weak, economically marginal and culturally stigmatized" Aboriginal populations, "struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states," who collectively comprise what has come to be known as the Fourth World. Thus, "Fourth World peoples are not immigrants but the original inhabitants of lands that today form the territories of nation-states" (Dyck, p. 1).

Herein lie several problems. Nation-states, strictly defined as at least purporting to be relatively homogeneous in ethnic composition, rarely exist today, although admittedly many countries do tend to base policies on this pretence. But where, exactly, should the line be drawn on a global scale in defining "Aboriginal," "Indigenous" or "Native" peoples; "First Nations"

or "First Peoples"; etc.? It hardly needs to be pointed out again that there are myriad thousands (GAIA grandly suggests 250 million!) of Indigenous, in the sense of non-immigrant, peoples worldwide. But this would include, for example, Basques, Bretons, Catalans, Frisians, Ladins, Sorbs, Serbs and hundreds of other ethnic groups in Europe who have resided in their own territories for centuries.

Nonetheless, one does find some interesting attempts to define such terms in this most recent literature. The ICIHI volume begins with an informative chapter titled simply "The People." Dyck expounds, as we have indicated, on the notion of the Fourth World but uses "aboriginal," "Native" and "indigenous" peoples interchangeably (chapter 1). The GAIA Atlas has sections answering the questions "Who Are the First Peoples?" and "Where are the First Peoples?" and also provides a useful "Index of Peoples." Similarly, although very briefly, Goehring's first chapter ("Background") discusses definitions and global distributions.

In the GAIA Atlas, the introductory definitions are included within a larger context, the Indigenous way of life, comprising the first of three general parts of the book. In fact, the Atlas is the only one of these sources to attempt a comprehensive overview of Aboriginal character, taking into consideration the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture, attitudes and spirituality. Yet the Indigenous cultures portrayed are rooted in territoriality, in the common belief that "the people belong to the land." In focusing, then, on Indigenous people still "living on the land," the Atlas thereby tends to neglect the far-ranging urbanization of these peoples throughout the world. Nonetheless, this volume does initially recognize the diversity of their culture, religion and socio-economic organization.

Of course, much has been written on the historical victimization of Native peoples. However, relatively little history is found in these most recent books. The GAIA Atlas merely touches briefly on "first contact" (p. 76), while Goehring has devoted a short chapter (chapter 2) to the "Past," concisely discussing—on a global scale—common threats, impacts, disease, warfare, loss of land and marginalization. Both the ICIHI volume (chapter 2, "Victims") and Goehring (chapter 3, "Present") have brief chapters devoted to a summation of contemporary victimization.

More specifically, quite a lot of attention has been devoted to present-day colonization and resettlement. In a chapter titled "Struggle for Survival" (chapter 6), the ICIHI first describes various relocations of Indigenous peoples, particularly in Brazil, Nicaragua, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Similarly, the GAIA Atlas features sections on "Modern Colonialism" and "Invasions," as well as focuses on transmigration in Indonesia.

While the effect of urbanization on Native cultures tends to be largely

ignored, the toll of assimilation and genocide is not. Chapter 6 also includes an account of genocide directed against Indigenous peoples in several countries, notably Guatemala, Brazil, Paraguay, Bangladesh and Indonesia. And the first part of the Cultural Survival volume, "Societies in Danger," provides case studies that include Burma, Malaysia, Namibia, Honduras and the Anishinabe (Chippewa or Ojibwa) people in Canada and the United States. The GAIA Atlas has a pertinent section on "Cultural Collapse," ranging over such diverse topics as the drug trade in Thailand, deaths of Australian Aborigines held in police custody, "dead-end jobs" (tourism in Hawaii) and missionary zeal (evangelism in Paraguay).

The struggles of Aboriginal peoples for survival have, more often than not, been closely linked to environmental issues. There is much interesting information on this intimate relationship in these books. The ICIHI devotes a chapter (chapter 5, "Mother Earth") to the effect of mining, hydroelectric projects and deforestation on Indigenous peoples. In the Dyck collection, Harvey Feit describes "Legitimation and Autonomy in James Bay Cree Responses to Hydro-Electric Development" (chapter 2). The GAIA Atlas pays ample attention to environmental issues, such as the traditional Aboriginal relationship to the land (with sketches of the Venezuelan Sanema, the Inuit, South Pacific Islanders) and knowledge of nature (e.g., the Brazilian Tukano and Kayapo, and tribal peoples of India); resource management (among Indians of the Pacific Northwest, the Karen of Thailand, the Mbuti Pygmies, the Tuareg); hydroelectric dams (in India and Quebec); mining (e.g., in Australia and Brazil); and the environmental threat. While far briefer, Goehring does discuss the problem of resource extraction (pp. 40-42). And the Cultural Survival volume relates environmental issues to the question of human rights for a wide variety of Aboriginal peoples; for example, one such selection is Wade Davis's description of "Death of a People: Logging in the Penan Homeland" in Sarawak (Eastern Malaysia).

How governments treat Aboriginal peoples is another dominant theme in these sources. The ICIHI volume features separate chapters on "National Action" (chapter 7, describing governments and corporations) and "International Action" (chapter 8, describing international financial institutions and organizations). In the volume edited by Noel Dyck, Jeremy Beckett describes the politics of representation among Torres Strait Islanders in Australia (chapter 4); Sally Weaver discusses political representativity among Indigenous minorities in Australia and Canada (chapter 5); and Dyck himself writes more generally about representation in the "Fourth World." The GAIA Atlas includes sections on "Government Reactions" and "The International Arena." Again, the Cultural Survival volume relates politics to human rights issues in a broad variety of case studies. Finally, Fleras and

Elliott make the governing of Native peoples the dominant theme of their book, with Canadian chapters on "Unfinished Business: Reconstructing Aboriginal-State Relations" (chapter 2); "The Social Context" (chapter 3); "Aboriginal Policy" (chapter 4); "The Department of Indian Affairs: From Bureaucracy Towards Empowerment" (chapter 6); a chapter on the United States (chapter 10); and one on "Devolving Maori-State Relations" in New Zealand (chapter 11).

The militarization of Aboriginal peoples is another recurrent theme in several of these books. The ICIHI volume, in a section of chapter 6 on the "Struggle for Survival," probes into Indigenous involvement in militarism in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Burma and West Papua, among other areas. In a section on militarization, the GAIA Atlas focuses on five case studies: the Chinese seizure of Tibet as an example of "imperial materialism"; the Innu dispute with NATO in Labrador; the South Pacific; refugees from Bangladesh; and overlapping territorial claims in Ethiopia. Goehring also devotes two or three pages of chapter 3 to a discussion of military activity.

But perhaps one of the most important contributions that most of these books make is toward an understanding of the politicization of Aboriginal peoples; toward an analysis of or guide to Indigenous political movements. Thus, the fourth chapter of the ICIHI volume describes "Indigenous Movements and Aspirations." In Dyck's collection, two case studies (interesting yet now rather dated) are D.E. Sanders' account of "The Indian Lobby and the Canadian Constitution, 1978-1982" and Robert Paine's of "Ethnodrama and the 'Fourth World': The Saami Action Group in Norway, 1979-81." All of the third part of the GAIA Atlas, "Alternative Visions," is concerned with various aspects of Indigenous politicization: resistance (for example, the Mapuche in Chile and the Chipko in India); Indigenous movements (e.g., Australian Aborigines); aims, hopes and demands (e.g., self-determination struggles); local action (e.g., Mohawks, the Ecuadorian Shuar, the Bodong in the Philippines, fishing rights of Pacific Northwest Indians, Aborigines' self-determination); government reactions; and international support for Indigenous movements (e.g., the Kayapo of Brazil, the peace movement in the Pacific, the Matsigenka of Peru, Inuit survival strategy and the changing status of Indigenous women). Similarly, the Cultural Survival volume, in examining myriad case studies, covers many aspects of Indigenous politicization, albeit within a human rights theme. The Canadian part (Part 1) of Fleras and Elliott contributes to an understanding of political movements of Canadian Native peoples. This is particularly true of chapters five ("The Politics of Self-Government"), seven ("Aboriginal Protest, Symbolic Politics, and Political Reform"), eight ("Metis and Inuit

Nationalism") and nine ("Conclusion: from Periphery to Centre"). Closely related to Aboriginal politicization and "Native rights" is the question of land claims. While mentioned *in passim* in virtually all of these books, only the ICIHI book specifically focuses on this issue, in chapter 3 ("Invasion"), although the GAIA Atlas does stress, as we have already noted, the land-rootedness of Indigenous cultures.

The central theme of the comprehensive Cultural Survival volume is human rights. While all the other books obviously share a concern for Indigenous rights, this particular volume is essentially a collection of case studies on human rights issues. The second part of this book, "Resources for Action," provides notes, charts and tables on Indigenous rights and reality; ethnocide; nuclear waste and uranium mining on Indigenous lands; exploitation of natural resources; displacement of population; as well as an interesting and up-to-date collection of selected documents (notably including the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). The third part of the book, a "Global Rights Summary," provides a succinct analysis of human (particularly Indigenous) rights in all world regions.

A unique aspect of the Dyck book is a commentary, from an Indigenous viewpoint, on what it is like to be studied (i.e., by outside academics such as anthropologists). In chapter 3, Basil Sansom (himself an Australian anthropologist) writes perceptively on "Aborigines, Anthropologists and Leviathan." This rather begs the question: how much of this collective analysis and description, amounting to more than 1200 pages in all six books, is written by Aboriginal people themselves? The answer must be none to very little; but, to be fair, a consistent attempt has been made throughout these books to honestly represent Indigenous viewpoints and interests. Moreover, the GAIA Atlas, the ICIHI volume and the Cultural Survival book have drawn liberally on Indigenous documentation.

A final consideration is this: What will be, as the subtitle to the GAIA Atlas puts it, "A Future for the Indigenous World," or for what Cultural Survival calls "Societies in Danger"? Fleras and Elliott, in their conclusion (chapter 12), suggest that for Aboriginal peoples in North America and New Zealand—for "nations within"—what is needed is a thorough restructuring of Aboriginal-state relations. And in the fourth and final chapter of his short book, Goehring discusses prospects for the future, and perceptively relates this discussion to a comparison of Indigenous and industrial dichotomies.

But let us give the final word to GAIA (p. 176):

The experiences and values of indigenous peoples may well take on a special significance. Their struggle for self-determination is part of a larger struggle for freedom; their beliefs about nature offer insights into how the whole environment should be protected;

their social organizations may throw into question our own fragmented communities. . . . Indigenous peoples ask no more than the right to determine their own development and future. We all wish no less for ourselves. As a violent century draws to a close, it is time to listen to those saner voices which stretch back to the birth of human society.