



State borders, rather than cultural borders, are one of the largest obstacles blocking Indigenous peoples from communicating, working together, and reinvigorating our cultures. For this reason, we have dedicated this edition to publicizing Indigenous thinking and discussion on nation-state border issues. The 1995 war between Peru and Ecuador has rekindled interest in this on-going debate. Reminiscent of the formative nineteenth-century nation-state independence wars in Latin America, this recent war is a bloody conflict between nation-states fought with Indigenous lives.

Twentieth-century examples of similar situations include the 1932-1935 Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia which took 40,000 Indigenous lives, the so-called Soccer War in 1968 between El Salvador and Honduras, the never-ending strife on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, and the hardships which the Miskitu people in Nicaragua and Honduras and the Kuna Nation in Panama and Colombia have endured.

European colonizers first, and then American States, delineated borders. Outsiders divided the continents' geographical space and states, provinces, departments, municipalities, and counties replaced cultural territories of Indigenous origin. The Spanish Crown, after decimating and exploiting Indigenous peoples, decided to give some territorial rights through the systems of "Mercedes Indivisas," "Cédulas Reales," and other communal rights. Indigenous peoples exercised autonomous rights to those territories.

However, after the *Criollo* (descendants of Spaniards) elites expelled the Spanish monarchy in the so-called War of Independence, they took away those territorial rights, and imposed on Indigenous peoples a new ideology of "citizenship." Indigenous peoples were forced to enroll in the *Criollo* Independence Army. Needless to say, they were used as cannon fodder. The new governing elites decided that it was their turn to rule the vast territory which is today America. The *Criollo* elites reshaped, according to their individual interests, what today are considered the Latin American states.

Indigenous peoples were not consulted to evaluate that process. With our populations decimated, borders were imposed on us, subdividing our Indigenous nations. Although the decline of the Spanish empire and the emergence of the *Criollo* elite ushered in the recognition of some of our own traditional territory, Indigenous "uprisings" throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were constant reminders of the denial of our immemorial rights to our own territories which we have occupied for thousands of years.

New legal systems based on individualistic Roman judiciary tenets contradicted the collective cultures of Indigenous peoples. Today, the Latin American states continue to deny and ignore Indigenous peoples' conception of justice and government.

Today, the Indigenous movements demand to be heard. It is important that throughout this Decade of Indigenous Peoples our different conceptions of political rights to self-determination and autonomy be re-examined. Our cultural practices and our reproduction as collectives requires having control over our territories. We are more conscious about the need to be heard as "collective entities." Indigenous peoples' demands need to be heard and met by new rules that cannot be defined by western laws and cultures. It is imperative that governments and societies recognize our rights as distinct and original peoples of the world.

Borders are but one of several obstacles we face as Indigenous peoples. Each demarcated border line has been created by the process of colonization and violence against Indigenous nations. Whether domestic or international, borders bear the same colonial logic. Ultimately, they mean our demise. In light of this fact, the articles in this issue will update the tremendous pressures we must face due to anachronistic colonial legal structures, by now obsolete, that deny us our rights as original Indigenous peoples.

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