The astonishing resilience:
ethnic and legal invisibility of indigenes from a brazilian perspective

Cristhian Teófilo da Silva[1]

Introduction

I start this paper by reviewing Bruce Miller's book: "Invisible Indigenes: The Politics of Nonrecognition" (2003). What motivated me to write this essay was the opportunity to talk with Bruce Miller about his work while conducting a three weeks research experience in the city of Vancouver (Canada).[2] The non-recognition of indigenous peoples in Canada, United States and other parts of the World appear in Miller's book as state mechanisms and policies carried on by state officials to avoid indigenous demands and ultimately to erase ethnic diversity within national boundaries. It became evident throughout our conversations that the Brazilian case is no exception to the rule despite the indigenous Constitutional rights established in 1988 which indirectly portrait Brazil as a multicultural society. I will also present some complementary data regarding the issue of invisible indigenes in Brazil in order to extend Miller's ideas, arguments and insights.

First of all, I sustain that "resilience" is the core concept for the proper understanding of "Invisible Indigenes" and of several cases of "ethnogenesis" in the Americas.[3] "Resilience" is a concept developed by Physics to describe

the characteristic of particular objects to reshape itself to its original form af-
ter being stretched by an elastic force. In "Invisible Indigenes" the concept
did not cover particular objects but human cultural and political practices
and for that reason it is important to have in mind that it is to collective ideas
of "original form" that one has to be concerned about when applying the con-
cept of "resilience" to ethnogenesis. It happens to be so because concepts
such as "ethnogenesis" and "resilience" derive from interdisciplinary exer-
cise and for that reason they bare the potential to mistake social processes for
natural processes. On the other hand, theoretical analogies constructed after
"natural" sciences can become particularly clarifying of particular properties
of social processes.[4]

The idea of "resilience" associated with "invisibility" as used in "Invisible
Indigenes" to grasp the political efficacy of collective narratives to (re)assure
an indigenous identity despite or after the state failure to acknowledge it
within the national society is an example of such successful interdisciplinary
analogy. Actually, what is astonishing about this ethnic resilience is the abil-
ity of individual Indians and First Nations (by such expression native peo-
ples and individuals in Canada claim recognition of their cultural and politi-
cal precedence over national societies) to face multiple strategies elaborated
within states to simply ignore their collective rights and demands turning
them invisible.

In 1997, Brazilian anthropologist Oliveira Junior compared in a very sim-
ilar perspective used by Miller the imposition of invisibility on Indians and
Afro-Brazilians with their own strategies of self-invisibilization. In order to
expose Oliveira's argument for comparison I translate a passage from his text:

> To consider ethnic identity as a resistance phenomenon of Black social groups
> towards the "classificatory pressure" imposed by the encompassing society im-
> plies recognizing also its organic relation with this same society; the social
> group structures itself in opposition to it, but also, in a certain way, in com-
> plementarity to it what determines the emergence of a field of possibilities of

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lection of essays, a number of cultural anthropologists are concerned to demonstrate that ethnogenesis
can also serve as an analytical tool for developing critical historical approaches to culture as an ongo-
ing process of conflict and struggle over a people's existence and their positioning within and against a
general history of domination". (Hill 1996: 01)

4   For example, see how "fractal theory" can be ethnographically applied to elucidate territorial dis-
putes in the Amazonian region (Little 1996).

alternance of differentiated social roles by the group members. The indigenous case, where this field of opportunities has been long recognized as a constituent ingredient of their ethnic identity, particularly among the Northeast Indians of Brazil, inserted as they are for over two centuries within an intersocietary system, may help revealing dimensions of the ethnic identity phenomena among Black social groups ... (1997: 05)

As presented by Miller, the "astonishing resilience" (2003: 06) of unrecognized indigenes in the U.S., Canada and other parts of the World originates from recurrent past responses to assimilation policies that attempted to "stretch" indigenous peoples to assume European like cultural forms. The ethnic resilience of indigenous peoples (as well of Afro-Brazilian groups as seen by Oliveira Junior) therefore resumes to an expression of their historical refusal to be culturally, politically and economically assimilated by local, national or global asymmetric social structures even (and specially) when they have decided to live as a part in it (: 09). Under such interpretation indigenous peoples are turned "invisible" simply because others (or the state as an other) refuse to see them, to use Ralph Ellison's well known phrasing.

Before raising other assumptions, I would like to briefly summarize Miller's arguments and examples that might help the unfamiliar reader of ethnic recognition issues to understand these introductory lines.

Ethnocidal Tendencies

Miller's points of departure on the topic of (non)recognition are some questions about ethnic invisibility. He derives from his own experience as an anthropologist committed to indigenous peoples' political claims of recognition (the Snohomish and the Samish of Western Washington State in the U.S.).

Actually, his attention to native peoples dates back to his childhood in Massachusetts where he encountered elders of the Wampanoag tribe concerned to be identified as Indians by outsiders. Such interethnic encounters posed a simple question: who are the Indians? Or in Miller's terms: "I wondered why some tribes were recognized and some were not, and on what grounds such distinctions were or could be drawn" (Miller 2003: 02).[5]

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5   Miller's question sounds closely familiar to what Jordan and Weedon consider the realm of "cultural politics" in the postmodern world (1995).

In other words, Indian identities or identity definitions of what an Indian person and community should be were under some sort of public negotiation. And that is crucial for us to grasp the meaning underlying "policies" of nonrecognition.

Working as an anthropologist with the Snohomish and the Samish in the 1980s, Miller learned that the issue of nonrecognition was not simply a matter of defining the Indian but of deciding who would be entitled to lucrative salmon and shellfish harvests, health and social services, and educational programs. To be or not to be an Indian was not the question but how much did it cost for an Indian to be supported by the state.

In order to avoid new expenditures with Indian assistance or losing the economic gains from the exploitation of indigenous resources by big companies, states' officials simply avoided the "x" of the equation: the Indians themselves. This example of population management through ethnic nonrecognition by bureaucratic means and their impact over Indian identities and social organization are in urgent need of ethnographic, comparative and theoretical development. Several anthropologists have dealt with the subject but most of them are unaware of their contributions on a global scale under a comparative perspective.[6] This is the exact anthropological gap that Miller aims to cross with: "Invisible Indigenes".

Miller analyzed current works on ethnicity and concluded that circumstationalist or instrumentalist approaches to ethnic identity tends to under valuate the emotional (I prefer "moral", see Cardoso de Oliveira 2006) content of native claims of recognition and overemphasize the influence of materialism on human affairs (2003: 06). His argument

> ... is that states manage their relations with indigenous peoples, generally fast-growing indigenous communities, simply by failing to acknowledge them or by revoking official recognition and thereby reducing their numbers in various ways and promoting state economic and political control. (2003: 07)

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6   Jaimes 1989; Slagle 1989; Roosens 1989 and Perry 1996 are a few, among others, mentioned by Miller. In Brazil we could add to the list of indigenous/state relations and the issue of ethnic nonrecognition: Lima 1995; Silva 1998; Oliveira Filho & Santos 2003; Silva 2005, among others. Oliveira Filho and Santos analyze a controversial case of anthropological norecognition of the Caxixó people as an indigenous people. The case resembles in many ways the Mashpee court conflict analyzed by James Clifford (1988) where anthropological, historical, Indian and legal perspectives were confronted.

Such state practice is not exclusive toward indigenous peoples neither exclusive to particular Western industrialized nations. Bureaucratic ethnocide appears as a common tendency of nation-states throughout the World, specially during critical times past and present of nation-building and state formation. Miller's major contribuition to the matter is to claim: "a connection between state practice of population management and indigenous experience" (2003: 09). In other words: "For nation-states, then, the problem arises of what to do within the legal bureaucratic regimes" (2003: 13).

Individual Indians and indigenous peoples on the other hand face the fact that states' intervention within their communities work miracles in terms of fracturing and disordering their worlds in order to exercise control over their resources and over them as "different" or "less equal" peoples.

I sustain that "Invisible Indigenes" major theoretical contribution is to realize that the historic interaction between state and indigenous practices, contradictory and opposed as they were and are, shaped new social identities and cultural forms of life. That is to say that when state officials planned to erase one ethnic group it ended up with new ones. Ethnocide it seems does not work without its counterpart which is ethnogenesis.[7]

What this perspective helps unmasking is that parallel to and sometimes underneath state practices to erase ethnic diversity within the nation - by military, missionary or economic forces or by cynically reducing numbers on paper to facilitate budget control - indigenous peoples are culturally creating new interpretations of themselves, their historical experience and of their collective rights in the contemporary world. In Miller's terms:

> The examination of the circumstances of contemporary nonrecognized indigenous peoples, then, is (and has to be) informed by considering long-term, historical processes of ethnogenesis and ethnocide and, more generally, dramatic shifts in indigenous social organization in response to colonization and subsequent administration (2003: 21, parenthesis added).

Indigenous peoples are not the passive victims of history and conquest

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7   In Brazil, both sides of the process has been seen by Brazilian anthropologists under the notions of "interethnic friction" (Cardoso de Oliveira 1996 [1964]), "historical situation" (see Oliveira Filho 1988), "indigeneity" (see Lima 1995) and more recently as a "voyage of return" (Oliveira Filho 1999). The notion of interethnic friction as a constitutive category of Brazilian anthropology was carefully analyzed in Peirano 1981.

as common knowledge likes to put it. They are political agents who make and take decisions evaluating their present conditions of existence under the light of past interethnic relations and experience. Indigenous peoples' political responses to colonialism (either european colonialism, welfare colonialism, bureaucratic colonialism, big companies colonialism etc.) are not locally or regionally circumscribed. They are globally influenced phenomena that has to be analyzed comparatively under a wide perspective if we want to apprehend their profound connections with different economic processes of social integration that motivates "ethnic resilience".

An even greater problem is the relative invisibility of indigenous political practices toward national states and its "indigenist"[8] institutions and policies (the Indian National Foundation - Funai in Brazil, the Bureau of Indian Affairs - BIA in the U.S., or the Indian and Northern Affairs in Canada - INAC, for example). Another contribution of "Invisible Indigenes" is precisely Miller's effort to describe everyday forms of avoidance of indigenous claims as part of an encompassing ethnocidal ideology working within state machinery.

Legal invisibility and ethnic invisibility (or How to hide an Indian in the national closet)

After the presentation of the preceding questions and issues for discussion Miller structured his book in order to clarify the particular debate about "indigenousness" or the "special rights" granted to indigenous peoples on the international level. Miller aimed at the emergence of concepts of indigeneity at the United Nations and other national and international organizations considering the assumption that "definitions determine rights" (2003: 37). His conclusion on that international stance is that: "In international legal practice the term *indigenous peoples* has two different functions: to delimit the precise scope of international instruments (especially those connected to rights) and to indicate in broad terms the groups for whom these instruments are of concern (Kingbury 1995: 13)". (2003: 38) But how far these regulations influence state/indigenous peoples' relations?

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8 "Indigenism" constitutes a major state tradition in Latin American nations. It consists in national ideologies converted to ideals, practices and actions toward native peoples in order to amalgamate them basically as labor force for the national communities. For more information on indigenism as ethnic politics in Brazil see Ramos 1998.

As became widely known and applied the "self-ascription" criteria to determine whether an ethnic group was indigenous or not became predominant in international organizations and among academics. The ILO Convention 169 (1989) reassured this criteria and it was ratified by many national governments. Nevertheless, Miller questions the analytical efficiency of the "self-ascription" criteria to render a social group "indigenous" for descriptive purposes. Or to say it differently, there are multiple contexts when someone or some group may identify themselves as "Indian" but this is not sufficient to explain their indigeneity or way of being "indigenous".

Most of his ethnographic data and personal opinions to sustain such questioning come from his expertise on U.S. and Canada experiences toward native peoples. Departing from these examples he presented some very explanatory data regarding a variety of face-to-face encounters with states officials of both countries who tend to impose alien concepts and standards to indigenous communities and leaders who sometimes respond to such encounters by denying or avoiding the public exposure of their indigenous selves.

After contrasting such cases with that of the Sinixt and the Scottish, Miller realized that: "Group affiliation and *identity are not generally perceived as a choice* by individuals, although they may be so, nor are they seen as instrumental, although they have this dimension (see Connor 1994: 75)" (2003: 43). As a matter of fact: "Groups may simply lie dormant and latent, with no apparent social organizational features. Ethnicity and indigeneity are best perceived as both a set of relations and a mode of consciousness (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), with wide variation in the expression of each" (2003: 43). Therefore, the work of anthropologists should be based on a variety of materials and understandings in order to access the variety of contemporary manifestations of indigeneity (2003: 44) and not simply rely on "self-ascription" *per se*.

If, as Miller notices, indigenous peoples are historically subjected to state actions and officials' interventions and the more or less recognition they might receive depend on interactions with the state than the centrality of the state in indigenous social life and projects has to be rendered ethnographically important. The second chapter is therefore dedicated to the state, to the indigenous perceptions of the state and to their responses to it in order to accommodate to its "disapproving eye" (2003: 48). In Miller's terms:

Since the problem for nonrecognized peoples is that they cannot get to the threshold whereby they might seek out protections or support under international conventions, and since international conventions only offer the potential for help and are not paired with direct action, their problems remain primarily with the state. (...) For these reasons the international debate is largely irrelevant at present as direct tool for the amelioration of the issues facing indigenes (2003: 65)

Miller focus on unrecognized tribes and peoples of the United States and Canada in the following chapters and finishes his book expanding this comparative approach and insights throughout the World exposing the disadvantages brought by the nonrecognition of indigenous peoples in Asia, Africa, Eurasia, Europe and South America. Unfortunately, his panoramic data and information regarding these World scale regions does not seem to match his deep inside perception of Canada and the United States in terms of interethnic relations and it may mislead the inattentive reader about important differences concerning resilience and invisibility of indigenous peoples outside these countries.

In order to illustrate the critical commentary made above it is worth comparing some statements presented by Miller concerning the U.S. and Canada to "the rest". On page 74 it is said accurately about the U.S. that: "After interviewing Indian people and visiting communities, government representatives added twenty-one communities to the list of recognized tribes (Miller 1991: 22)". In Canada it is said emphatically that: "The real issue for Canadian official is cost, rather than the ability to demonstrate continuity, authority over members, or the other tests of authenticity as in the U.S. case" (2003: 138) But when it comes to the "Indigenous Peoples of Asia, Africa, Meso - and South America, Eurasia and Europe" a considerable diminishing of information results as a consequence of comparative oversimplification. After all, how could it be possible to turn two countries (U.S. and Canada) ethnographically comparable to three continents and two geographical regions?

When it comes to such continents, regions and its countries Miller focus on ethnic distribution and demographic percentages. Colonial categories to define the "native" colonized people in general and indigenous peoples in particular are also taken into consideration. As a result, a collection of overall information is delineated and the conclusion is a truism: "States use a variety of tactics to dislodge indigenes" (2003: 206).

For that reason one may come to the impression that while ethnic invisibility in the U.S. and Canada means that these states does not aim to *see* *some* indigenous peoples as "indigenes" in other parts of the World nation-states does not want to see *any* indigenous peoples within their nations at all. This is often true but what has to be rectified is that the issue of non-recognition of the indigeneity of certain indigenous peoples is a particular problem that affects only a few indigenous peoples in several and very different national contexts.

For example, there is no way (politically speaking) that the "nonrecognition" or "invisibility" affecting the Guarani people in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguai can be paralleled to the "nonrecognition" of the Wampanoag in the U.S. This is so because the Guarani's problem is to have their rights as Indians granted differently by different national states ensured by the corresponding nation-state while the Wampanoag's problem is to have their right to be an "Indian" refused by the state reassured by local authorities (see Clifford 1988). This example help us to separate different types of nation-states' nonrecognition politics: the "nonrecognition" of indigenous peoples' existing collective rights – what we can define as *legal invisibility* and the "nonrecognition" of indigenous peoples' non-existent rights to be collective – what can be defined as *ethnic invisibility*. The Guarani can be an illustration of the first definition while the Wampanoag of the second.

To insist that both kinds of invisibility (legal and ethnic) mean just one type of "politics of nonrecognition" may lead to the wrong conclusion that every indigenous people is similarly affected by the same problem under different states and that is not the case. What one can empirically attest is that while some nation-states tend to avoid the collective rights of already recognized indigenous peoples other nation-states neglect that they have indigenous peoples to begin with. And to turn things even more complicated, what happens is that both kinds of nonrecognition (legal and ethnic invisibility) are happening to different indigenous peoples everywhere, simultaneously or not, and even among indigenous peoples disputing the same territory, state resources or economic profits attained by different territorial economic practices (gaming and mining, for example).

"Invisible Indigenes" presents the notion that these are different sides of the same medal, namely: one widespread politics of nonrecognition. By blocking indigenous peoples to have collective rights or by avoiding ethnic

groups their "indigeneity" are only different ways to render indigenous individuals and peoples invisible not because one cannot see them but simply because state officials refuse to see the Indian in them. I disagree. I think that nonrecognition can mean different things to different people (as Miller pointed out when discussing the "self-ascription" criteria) and it can be differently applied by different nation-states who seeks to exibit some native peoples as living relics while hiding other native peoples in the national closet.

In order to make that point clear I will present next one case of ethnic recognition in Brazil in order to highlight Miller's strongest contribution in "Invisible Indigenes" namely: the impact of nonrecognition on *specific* indigenous identities, particularly those of Indians who refuse to be assimilated while living as part of the nation. The point I would like to make is that Miller's arguments on nonrecognition are more explanatory of local interethnic situations where Indians are not easily differentiated from the surrounding non-Indian communities (as it happens with the Tapuio as we will see below) while it looses its strength as a comparative approach of indigenous invisibility across nations.

The nonrecognition of indigenous peoples in Brazil: a paradigmatic case study

Brazil, like Canada and the United States, is a country of huge territorial extension constituted over the conquest and colonization of indigenous peoples and occupation of their lands. Its process of nation-building and state formation was influenced by European forms of government and colonial rule. In 1988, Brazil signed its constitutional charter of rights recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to remain indigenous and to have exclusive access over what was left of their territories. It was a consequence of national and international civil mobilizations to set up guidelines in order to defend indigenous peoples' cultures in terms of human rights (Miller 2003: 35). Brazil, like Canada and the U.S., claims itself to be a Western-liberal-democracy.

The impact of the Brazilian charter of rights to safeguard indigenous peoples and their land rights was not only immediate but internationally visible. Prior to that, anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1970) argued that the genocide of several ethnic indigenous groups in Brazil was a direct result of the successive stages and fronts of economic development of the country. He estimated

143 indigenous groups living in Brazil in 1957. From the early years of the XXth century until that date, 87 peoples were exterminated. It means that genocide practices were carried on (not exclusively by the state but certainly with the acquaintace of the state) during the first 50 years of the establishment of the republican government (Ribeiro 1970: 236-238).[9]

The next 30 years after 1957 was alternated by democratic and military governments after what a series of social movements were carried on by Brazilian civil society not only against the military regime but in favor of urban workers, peasants and ethnic groups (with a strong participation of social scientists and among them, social anthropologists also). The political activity of indigenous leaderships along these social movements and the transition to the democratic regime openned an opportunity for indigenous peoples to guarantee a non-assimiliationist set of collective rights in the charter of rights of 1988.

After 1988 the figure of indigenous peoples living in Brazil reached 206 different societies (CEDI/Instituto Socioambiental 1994). It raises an immediate question: Where did the 63 new indigenous peoples not counted (or seen) by Ribeiro come from? At least 20 ethnic groups could be located among the autonomous peoples (some say "isolated") ever scaping contact in the Amazonian forest and the outskirts of the country on the borders of Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, French Guiana and Suriname. But most of them came to be the descendants of indigenous peoples reached by colonization in the first four centuries of European occupation of the Eastern Atlantic coast and Central Brazil. These are the invisible indigenes of Brazil if we try to notice them with Miller's arguments and comparisons in mind.

Just to offer a paradigmatic example, I describe the situation of the Tapuio in the Brazilian central state of Goiás. I have done fieldwork with the Tapuio in 1997 after their recognition as "indigenes" by the Brazilian federal agency for Indian affairs (Funai) (Silva 1998). What follows is a brief description of their struggle.

The Tapuio are the descendants of the Akwen, Jê-speaking tribes, Karajá and Javaé, Macro-Jê-speaking tribes, of Central Brazil. From the XVIIIth to the XIXth century the Tapuio's ancestors were forced to live in "aldeamen-

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9   See Julio Cezar Melatti: "População indígena" ("Indigenous Population") In: Série Antropologia nº 345 (http://www.unb.br/ics/dan) for current data on Brazilian indigenous population.

tos" (settlements of forced labor and christianization which is civilization under Catholic religious rule, see Almeida 1997) where they were taught and forced to live under Portuguese religion, habits, language and institutions. The purpose of these "aldeamentos" was to free indigenous lands and rivers for Portuguese occupation and gold, precious stones etc., exploitation at the same time that indigenous peoples would be transformed into labor force for the colonizers - despite the colonial legislation that recognized Indians as free subjects to the Portuguese crown.

The "aldeamento" as civilizational apparatus was created in the XVIIIth century by the Portuguese colonial ruler Marquês de Pombal, who designed the *Diretório dos Índios* (Indian Directory) in order to establish a more "docile" way to integrate native peoples to colonial society. In practice it was a way to replace genocidal tactics for preying indigenous persons and transforming them into slaves by ethnocidal practices for taming indigenous peoples (seen as "wild") in order to bring them to civilization' by seduction (see Ramos 1998).

Indians like the Akwen, Karajás e Javaés of the Aldeamento Pedro IIIrd (the aldeamento was named after the Queen's groom) were submitted to such assimilation practices and the contemporary Tapuio are the survivors of that attempt to turn indigenous peoples into "civilized" labor force (namely they were transfigured into peasants). With the decline of gold exploitation and profit during the XIXth century - not to mention Brazilian changing political regimes (in 1822 Brazil abandoned its colonized condition and turned into an independent monarchy and in 1889 it became a republic. Slavery was not abolished until 1888) – Indians settled in the "aldeamentos" were abandoned and virtually forgotten by the encompassing national society. During that period of abandonment they created their own marginal ways of social organization and economic maintainance around an economically depressed regional society that kept identifying them as "tapuios" or "Indians".[10]

The democratization process of Brazil in the second half of the XXth century, along with new development opportunities, reached these secularized

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10 The Tupi-speaking peoples referred to other Indians of Central Brazil as "tapuia" meaning "those who do not speak a Tupi language". It became a widespread jargon to refer to hostile Indians during the colonial period and as local term to define "contacted" or "tamed" Indians in more recent times. The Tapuio's ancestors were precisely those hostile tribes forced to live in the "aldeamentos" and it would be a mistake to expect their culture to resemble those of their ancestors. The Tapuio are culturally the descendants of a colonial state policy as presented here.

ethnic groups (much of them officially termed "traditional societies" nowadays) and reenacted assimilation practices that aimed to take them out of their collectively possessed homelands in order to divide the land in separate individual properties owned by non-indian peasants and landwowners. Considering that the Tapuio had no paper documents in their possession to prove their collective ownership of the land they looked for state authorities claiming themselves to be Indians[11], meaning: "natural owners of the land" in order to keep their land rights.[12]

It did not stop the occupation process that became even more violent. Thirty years later a Tapuio woman (Olímpia) married to a non-indian man and living on a small urban village was informed by one of her adult sons about a government agency that protected Indians (Funai). She decided to ask Funai for help in order to protect their parents' land. Once she took their people's demands to Funai the issue was not simply a matter of protecting land rights but of proving that they were real Indians. She simply asked for official protection of their parents acquired rights. But state official's on the other hand simply doubted they were dealing with real Indians which means in Brazilian legal terms "non-integrated Indians".

The Tapuio people were placed under the "integrated" legal category in order to be render unreachable by state indigenist land policies. The bureaucratic questioning for technical proof that they were once real Indians (since they did not "look like real Indians now") was taken as an essential condition to be fulfilled before anything could be done officially. The land issue was left aside. A matter of land dispute was turned into an issue of ethnic invisibility. For the Tapuio what was at stake not a matter of having their indigenous rights respected anymore but of having to prove that they once have been Indians as a clear case of "ethnic invisibility". That is where Miller's ideas about the politics of nonrecognition are most valid.

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11   Actually, one native leader, José Simão, followed by three related women and a nephew, started a voyage on foot in 1947 to Rio de Janeiro – 1000 miles away. Their mission was to speak about their problems with the President. The voyage was interrupted weeks later after they managed to speak with the Governor of the state of Goiás who protected their land by law in 1948. This history is fully narrated and registered ethnographically in Silva 2002.

12   As a matter of fact such expulsion of Indians from their lands began after 1850 when the "Lei de Terras" (Land Law) was issued and turned traditional indigenous lands into state or public lands that could be acquired once proved by the interested (non-Indian) person that there were no more Indians living on it. It turned out to be a strategic maneuver to expand the limits of a few landowners.

Miller shows that there are two kinds of politics going on when it comes to the policies applied towards indigenous peoples in most Western and liberal democracies. Whenever a indigenous people like the Tapuio shows up they challenge common sense stereotypes about the Indian at the same time that they challenge official versions of national history which claim that the Indians vanished in the past or were totally assimilated by non-Indian ethnically-mixed society in the present.

National governments simply refuse to deal with indigenous people who insists to maintain their ethnic identities within the non-Indian society or to put in Miller's terms:

> There are no compelling reasons for states to focus on the circumstances of nonrecognized people who are considered assimilated, extinct, unimportant, or of concern only to local officials. While indigenous peoples generally might be regarded as threats to the state, unrecognized people are frequently viewed through other lenses and are thought of as urban dwellers who suffer problems in common with other urbanites, as peasants with problems addressed in their own terms. They are often not thought of as peoples whose identity is eroded by state action. (2003: 25)

What I would like to underline here is the recurrence of the fact that people like the Tapuio: "Are often not thought of as *peoples*". That constitutes a matter of ethnic invisibility instead of legal invisibility. Ethnic resilience is so far the best known response of nonrecognized peoples to such moral insult.

Public ethnicity and misrecknoning

The Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira wrote on a very recent book (Cardoso de Oliveira 2006: 9) that culture and identity correspond to two different but mutually implicated dimensions of indigenous reality. It means that an ethnic group may keep and sustain its ethnic identity despite its level of identification with the culture(s) of national society or to their own ancestral culture. The Brazilian Tapuio or the North-American Wampanoag present objective examples of cultural transformation accompanied by ethnic adherence to an historical identity as singular indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, this is not a common lesson shared by

national and local governments. After all, the administration of the "Indian Problem" (Dyck 1996) was never a problem of defining what are the lasting problems that affect "Indians" facing national societies but of defining the "Indian as a national problem".

The Brazilian Law nº 6001 (1973), for example, establishes who "Indians" ought to be: "Every individual of pre-Colombian ancestry who identifies himself and is identified as a member of an ethnic group that distinguishes itself from the national society through its cultural characteristics". But the Brazilian Law also creates, under that definition, a series of actions of classification of indigenous societies in terms of "levels of integration" within the national society, namely: "isolated"; "on the way to integration" and "integrated".[13] Therefore, "Indians" are not seen as enduring peoples with political autonomy but as bearers of a transitory condition which culminates in assimilation to the national society. It is for no other reason that "Indians" were officially considered and treated by Brazilian justice, until 1988, as minors which make them subjects of tutelage by non-Indians.

Therefore interethnic relations become increasingly asymmetric in terms of understanding and social reciprocity because non-Indians simply fail to recognize the legitimate and autonomous claim to an ethnic identity made by others who does not seem very different from themselves, culturally and socially speaking, but who is determined ethnically and politically to retain their integrity as Indians (Dyck 1996: 4). The determination to retain such integrity stands out as an astonishing resilience.

More often non-Indians see "invisible" indigenes' claims of legal visibility as a discursive manipulation to gain access to government policies and resources designated for indigenous peoples (as pointed out by Miller in the U.S. scenario). Non-Indians tend to forget the amount of racial discrimination associated with indigenous ancestry and consequently refuse, for one thing, to comprehend how hard it is to be an Indian in a White-dominant society. This is not a matter of nonrecognition anymore but of misreckoning.

Under these circumstances public policies oriented toward indigenous peoples instead of aiming at the reduction of ethnocentric prejudice against indigenes among interethnic communities focus on distant indigenous

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13   Such classification can be dated back to the writtings of Darcy Ribeiro initiated in 1957 and also to previous indigenist categories and practices.

groups in order to turn them into icons of indigenous ethnicity and alterity which delegitimizes the ethnic identification of nearby Indians. From time to time different ethnic groups change places as icons of indigenous alterity and as a consequence invisible or resilient indigenous peoples are often discriminated by other ethnic groups who does not recognize in them the signs of public ethnicity (Weaver 1984) attributed by state administrators and public opinion.

As it was mentioned before it is under government bureaucratic structures that we are able to see indigenous stratification practices in action. Resilient indigenous peoples, like the Tapuio, respond to such practices as ethnic insults (misreckoning) of their collective memory, historical experience and previously recognized rights.

Conclusion

I briefly tried to summarize Miller's ideas on "Invisible Indigenes" to a wider audience at same time to present a distinction between different kinds of nonrecognition (ethnic and legal invisibility). My purpose was to identify which of Miller's ideas could be more elucidative of the politics of nonrecognition affecting indigenous peoples worldwide.

The case concerning the ethnic identification of the Tapuio in Central Brazil as "real Indians" helped as complementary data to Miller's ethnographic examples of nonrecognition of "invisible indigenes" (who are often treated as indigents or become indigents in urban contexts as well). The Tapuio case demonstrated how a matter of legal invisibility could be turned into a matter of ethnic invisibility under bureaucratic intervention as a direct result of state official's suspicion. Such suspicion derives from the failure of states to recognize the history of indigenous peoples as a resilient process derived from colonizing experiences.

> Many of the communities that might be defined as indigenous remain in a state of flux, with rapidly shifting boundaries and identities. Smaller groups continue to hive off from larger groups or, alternatively, amalgamate. In some cases, as has been the case historically, these changes are forced by external pressures, but changes also reflect internal political processes. New groups present themselves to the state as the sucessors to well-established ancestors

or as groups previously unknown to the state. Often the scale of these changes is so small that the groups remain below the radar, invisible to state officials (2003: 209).

What is still left wide open to be scrutinized ethnographically is the examination of current understandings of how indigenes are defined and who benefits from those understandings (2003: 212).

"Invisible Indigenes" is a compelling book that helps the reader to pay closer attention not to indigenous peoples who managed with great effort to remain culturally different *aside* oppressive and powerful colonizing forces but to those indigenous peoples who managed with the same amount of effort to remain indigenous *amidst* the same oppressive and powerful colonizing forces. These groups represent the ultimate test to our anthropological imagination of what ethnic groups and indigenous peoples really are.

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