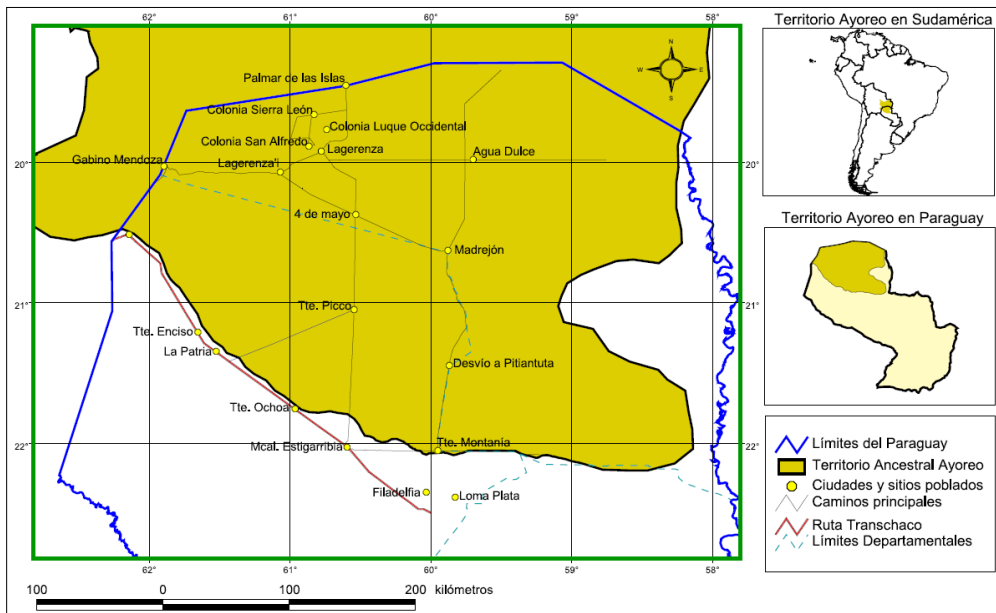


Introduction

The Ayoreo People are the last people south from the Amazon Basin who still have members living in voluntary isolation. They live in the remaining dense semiarid bush and forests of the Chaco. The traditional Ayoreo Territory covers some 300,000 Km² between Paraguay and Bolivia. They conform a brave warrior people who remained free from colonial exploitation for many centuries.



The vast territory of the Ayoreo encompasses more than 30 million hectares (300,000 km²), almost the entire northern portion of the Gran Chaco region of South America, bordered by the Paraguay, Pilcomayo, Parapetí and Río Grande Rivers.

The Ayoreo People used to live unperturbed in this bushes and forests until the 1930s, although, efforts to forcefully settle them started already in the seventeenth century. Through massive efforts by missionaries from Mennonite and Evangelists religious sects and the Paraguayan Government, they were forced out of their territory since the 1930's and forced to live in confined settlements.



At present, this territory, especially in the Paraguayan part, is being deforested rampantly to give space to extensive cattle ranching, other forms of agriculture and oil prospection. Especially cattle ranching poses a great threat to the livelihoods of the Ayoreo, as most of the deforestation is being undertaken to expand the existing ranches and habilitate new ones.

Photo caption: Deforestation in the Ayoreo territory. Photo: Miguel Lovera

This photo story shows what the Ayoreo people, organized in the UNAP (Union of Native Ayoreo People of Paraguay), are doing to recover their land and dignity, which are, as they say, the essential elements of their territory.

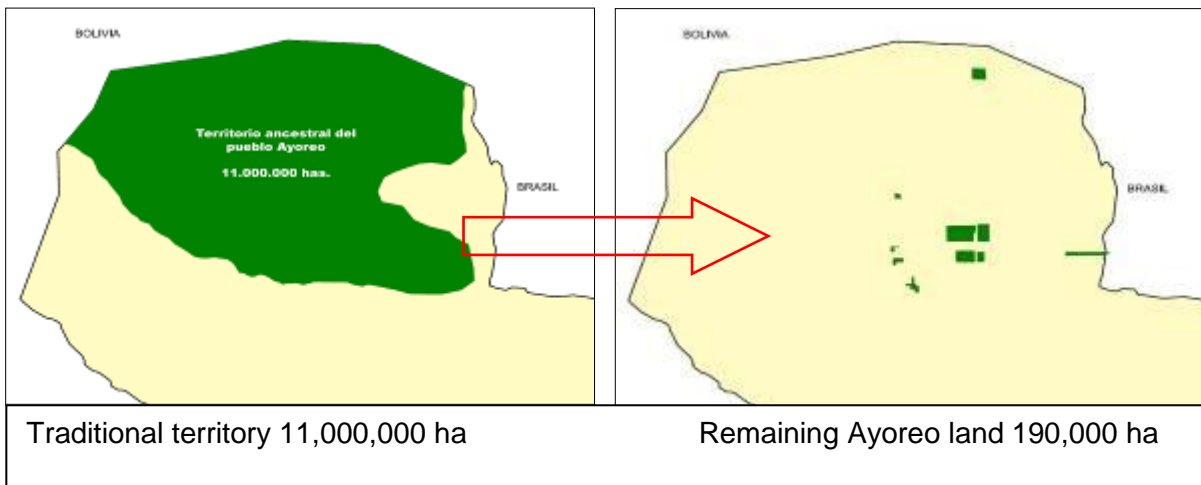
The efforts of the Ayoreo People to maintain the environmental and natural attributes of their Indigenous territory are similar to the efforts by numerous other Indigenous Peoples around the world who are aiming to conserve their indigenous territory as an ICCA.

If you want to add text and/or photos:

Most of the Ayoreo people were taken out of the bush and forests of their ancestral territory and 'reduced' to the 19 settlements shown below. The way of living they practice now is completely estrange to them, as they are culturally nomadic hunter-gatherers and not sedentary. They master the resources offered by nature for their wellbeing, but, nowadays, the access to those resources is drastically impaired by the privatization of virtually all of their land.



Ayoreo settlements - February 2010

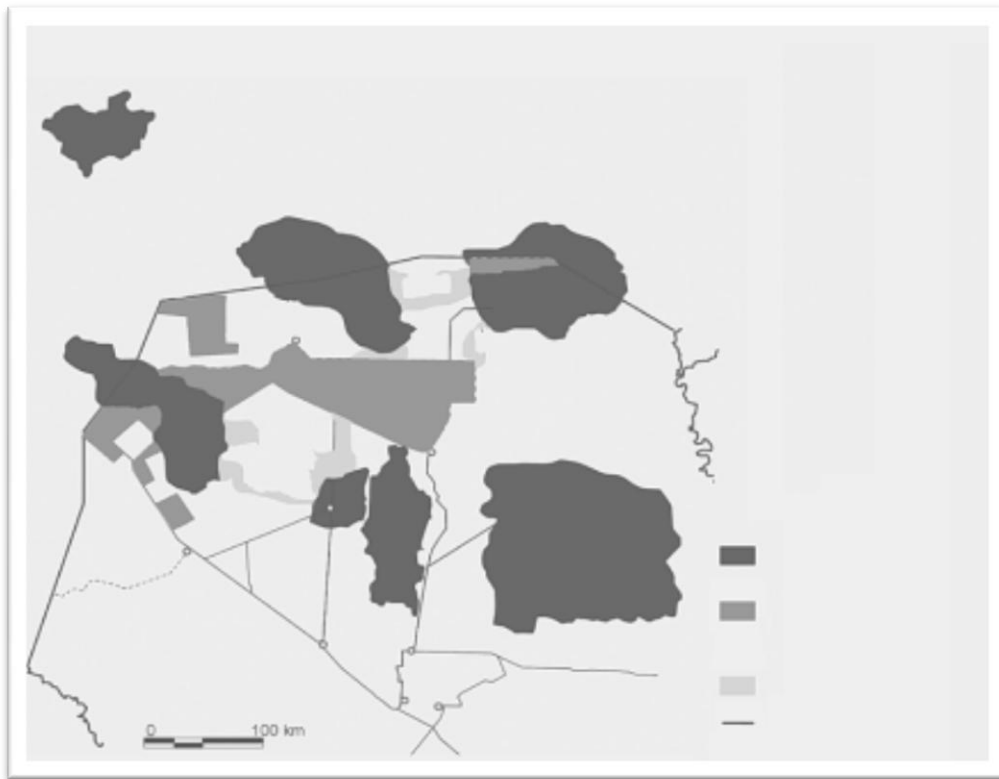


Traditional territory 11,000,000 ha

Remaining Ayoreo land 190,000 ha

From the analysis of the signs of presence throughout the territory, it can be inferred that the groups of Ayoreo people living in voluntary isolation move on basically the same migratory routes they have historically used. These paths are now interrupted and fragmented by the fences, roads, buildings and deforestation imprinted in their territory to give way to the productive and extractive activities located within it.

The Union of Ayoreo People is actively defending the rights of their relatives who live in voluntary isolation. This work has four main aspects, namely, rescue of Ayoreo traditional knowledge, environmental monitoring, assessment of the presence of isolated people, and administrative and political interaction with the national society. The following photo story has been prepared by the Ayoreo Union itself, to explain how their ICCA is threatened by massive deforestation, the impacts this might have on their people, especially their relatives living in voluntary isolation, and what steps are needed to protect these unique peoples and their ICCA.



Areas of presence of Isolated Ayoreo groups



Traditional hut



Field interpretation by elders



Story telling by elders



Private properties fences fragmenting territory



Sorghum field for cattle fodder



Paddocks in cattle farms



Clearings in Ayoreo forest



Surface fragmentation for oil and gas exploration