

# Comparison of colonisation in brazil and ireland



## **INTRODUCTION**

Purpose of this paper is to compare the colonisation of Ireland with that of Brazil. In order to do this, the paper has been structured into three parts. The first part looks at the pre-colonial period of Ireland and Brazil. This is followed by the comparison of colonisation processes that each one was faced with. Finally, the post-colonial Ireland and Brazil are discussed.

## **PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD**

### **COUNTRY AND POPULATION**

According to Smith (1999), authority within the Irish island was decentralised, with important regional variations between communities of independent or semi-independent Gaelic chieftaincies, turbulent Anglo-Irish marcher lordships, and an east coast area regularly influenced by the operations of English common law and the officials of the royal administration at Dublin. Its population has been estimated at around 2 million (Encarta 2000).

Most of the hundreds of indigenous peoples who inhabited eastern South America prior to the arrival of the Europeans were members of the Tupí-Guaraní cultures. In Brazil, the native Toupi-family groups we found in areas along the eastern coast of the continent south of Amazon River and inland south of the Amazon to the Andean foothills (Encarta 2000). According to Economist (2000), population of pre-colonial Brazil was about 2.5 million when the Portuguese arrived. According to Encarta (2000), this number is difficult to estimate since there are no written records, with recent calculations suggesting between 1 and 6 million Native Americans in 1500.

## **CULTURE AND LANGUAGE**

Said (1990) described Ireland as a third world country, both England's poor "other" and belonging to the cultural domain of the developed world.

However, Encarta (2000) indicates that its Celtic culture was famous for its artworks, music and cultural institutions. People spoke Celtic, Gaelic language.

Indian societies belonged, for the most part, to the great Tupi cultural root, which had been lasting for at least 500 years when contact with the Europeans was established (Metcalf 2005). In comparison to Irish, Tupi society was much more primitive. The village was the basis of the Tupi social organisation. The society was often referred to as the 'land without evil' and it had no slavery among its groups. According to Encarta (2000), these people had no metal tools, no written language, no beasts of burden and no knowledge of the wheel. They worshiped spirits and relied on religious figures known as shamans for healing, divination of future events, and connection to the world of spirits. They spoke variations of the Tupian language.

## **COLONIAL PROCESS**

### **SYSTEMATIC VS ACCIDENTAL**

In the history of the Irish colonisation by England there are two distinct colonisations (Nelligan 2000). The first was in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. This was a colonisation that had some form of dialogue, an interaction between the coloniser and the colonised, where eventually it is deemed that the colonisers became "more Irish than the Irish themselves". However, the second type of colonisation in Irish history

occurred in the 1560s, with the advent of Cromwell's campaign, which entailed the attempted total destruction of Irish culture, language, history, lifestyle, and rights of the Irish people. This entailed no dialogue except for the threat of death if compliance with the coloniser was not forthcoming.

While the colonisation of Ireland was systematic from the beginning, discovery of Brazil by the Portuguese came in 1500 by accident, when a fleet commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral and bound for India was blown off course (Economist 2000). Furthermore, it has been claimed that the conquest and appropriation of the Brazilian territory, and the questions that they provoked, did not always put Europeans and Indians one against the other (Abreu 2004). Colonisation often demanded that the Europeans allied themselves to the natives against other Europeans, and that the natives allied themselves to Europeans against other natives.

### **SETTLEMENT AND OPPRESSION VS ECONOMY BY SLAVERY**

Irish colonisation was an attempt at annihilation of the Irish in order to make room for English settlers (Nelligan 2000). It was an outright attempt at domination, usurpation and control of the Irish people. According to Lilley (2000), the process of colonisation in medieval Ireland needs to be viewed in the context of Norman and English depictions of the Irish as non-urbanised and therefore uncivilised, because towns were operated without urban laws. This lack of written urban law has sometimes led historians to accept that the Normans and the English introduced urbanism into Ireland and that they therefore also 'civilised' the country. This was done in order to show that there was just cause to settle and urbanise the 'barbarous people' of Ireland. The legal and economic privileges contained in these urban laws

initially excluded indigenous peoples, and the landscapes of newly developing towns were organised so that Irish were spatially marginalised. In this context, the idea that the Irish were socially and culturally inferior to the Normans and the English was reinforced. This confirms Meining's (1982) assumptions that the exercise of ultimate political authority by the invaders over the invaded involves the locating of agents representing the imperial state in the subordinate area; as well as his argument that imperial expansion is basically predatory, and that agents of the imperial power will seek to extract wealth from the conquered territory, creating new economic relationships. This also goes inline with Meining's (1969) argument that only by appreciating the nature of the geopolitical environment of the early seventeenth century can the ideological significance of the Self/Other theme be truly recognised.

Colonisation of Brazil served different purpose. According to Marchant (1942), it involved two stages. The first one, prior to colonisation, was dominated by barter and was profitable for both sides. This is why the natives were compelled to search for contact with the Europeans. In fact, bartering became so important to some native communities that they continued to practice it even when the terms of trade were modified, that is, after the Europeans started to require the ownership of the Indian labor force. The second phase started in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, when the first sugar mills were established. To be profitable, sugar production demanded a multiplicity of hands and hard work journeys, which the majority of the Portuguese settlers had no condition or will to provide. Furthermore, Portugal did not possess a demographic surplus that would be

able to sustain, at the same time, the voracity for men of the Brazilian sugar plantations and the labor force needs of metropolitan agriculture. As the option for wage-earning labor was not considered, because it made impossible the commercial production of sugar, the enslavement of the native of the country started.

According to Metcalf (2005), an ever increasing West African slave trade did not only carry powerful economic interests, but the well developed justification for slavery, as well as legal principles certified by the pope. The trade in Africa encouraged an immediate adoption of slave trading in Brazil by Portuguese merchants. Argeu (2004) claims that, with the establishment of a general-government in Brazil, in 1549, the first official determinations against slavery appeared but only to the 'allied' natives, required to be settled near the European cities and towns. The policy of Indian settlements was introduced at the end of the 1550s. The work of the natives was compulsory in the settlements. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, as the natives were becoming rare in the coast, it became necessary to attract the native populations from the interior, thus starting the cycle of 'transfers' that would last until the eighteenth century. It involved convincing the natives in the interior that it was their interest to settle near the Portuguese, for their own protection and well being. Reality, however, ended up by being different, as it became very common to bring the natives by force to the coast, where they were distributed among the sugar cane plantations and European settlers. In 1570 the crown adopted the medieval concept of 'just war' to Brazil, and slavery was seen as the fair price paid by those who opposed themselves to the civilising and catechising role of the

Europeans. Although only the king or the governor general had the power to declare just wars, the requirements were not always obeyed, resulting in the breaking out of just wars everywhere. This resulted in the massive enslavement of all kinds of natives, including the allies. Thus, according to Metcalf (2005), Indian slavery expanded dramatically after 1570, becoming an integral part of the colonial Brazilian economy and society. Following the discovery of gold in the late 1600s, Brazil expanded its borders into the interior of the continent (Encarta 2000). Gold made Brazil the most economically important region of the Portuguese. In the late 17th century, gold was also discovered north of Rio de Janeiro. By 1700 the western world's first great gold rush had begun as thousands of colonists and slaves poured into the region. It received new stimulus in the 1720s with the discovery of diamonds in the region north of the gold fields (Encarta 2000). The slave system began to disintegrate in the 1880s with the rise of a vocal abolitionist movement, largely in the cities, and the growing tendency for slaves to flee from their masters. By 1888 unrest on plantations, and the refusal of the army to step in and halt the flight of slaves from their masters, brought the system to the brink of chaos (Encarta 2000). The colonial process in Brazil was inline with Meining's (1982) and (1969) arguments discussed above.

## **POST-COLONIAL PERIOD**

### **INDEPENDENCE**

For Said (1990), Irish people were central to the emergence of Irish nationalism. Independence was finally achieved in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to McDonnell (2001), there were two stages of decolonisation. The

first stage of decolonisation was the founding of the Free State. The second stage was the decision of the Irish Free State to remain out of WWII, whereas the northern state became more and more identified and incorporated into the UK as a colonised state. One of the major results of decolonisation was that the state of Northern Ireland was formed which would remain under British control. Ireland is usually referred to as post-colonial despite continuing conflict over Northern Ireland. This led to the isolation of Northern Irish Catholics within that territory and their further colonisation. Northern Ireland will never be apart of the republic, and at bet will be its own independent state. Many argued that Ireland had not fully decolonised and expressed the struggle that was the begging of the process (McDonnell 2001). According to McDonnell (2001), Irish became own critics when they no longer had critics. The colonial thinking led to the selective teaching of history in Ireland, as the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was not taught in schools until the 1950s. Today teachers still have an agenda to give a republican perspective on what happened (McDonnell 2001).

In contrast to Irish, Brazilian independence was achieved without violence. When Napoleon invaded Portugal and Spain in early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese were forced to transfer the center of the empire to Rio de Janeiro (Encarta 2000). In 1815 John VI elevated Brazil to the status of a kingdom, placing it on an equal footing with Portugal. The presence of the monarchy and court in Rio brought Brazilian and Portuguese elites together and paved the way for a gradual transition to independence. Once Napoleon was defeated, John VI reluctantly left for Portugal in 1821. His son Pedro remained in the colony as prince regent of Brazil. Pedro and his advisers



realised that revolutions in other Latin American countries were encouraging a movement for national independence in Brazil and decided to take control of this movement. In 1822, after receiving orders from the Portuguese Cortes curtailing his authority in Brazil, Pedro declared Brazil's independence.

### **COUNTRY SIZE AND POPULATION**

Ireland republic today comprises about five-sixths of the island of Ireland, and excludes North Ireland (Encarta 2000). The country consists of the provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connacht (Connacht) and part of the province of Ulster. The rest of Ulster, which occupies the northeastern part of the island, constitutes Northern Ireland, a constituent part of the United Kingdom. The population of Ireland is predominantly of Celtic origin and no significant ethnic minorities exist. In 1998 it was estimated at 3, 619, 480, which is a decrease from the 1840s, when about 6. 5 million people lived in the area included in the republic. This was largely because of a high emigration rate (Encarta 2000).

Colonisation of Brazil, on the other hand, has resulted in an enormous country, occupying area along the eastern coast of South America and including much of the continent's interior region (Encarta 2000). The population increased during the 18th century as a result of natural increase and immigration to Brazil's gold fields, which were discovered in the late 17th century. Population further increased when the Portuguese brought more than 2 million slaves from Africa to Brazil to provide labor for the sugar plantations and gold mines. During the early part of the 19th century over 1 million more slaves were imported. After the slave trade was abolished in 1850, the country's population continued to grow by natural increase and

immigration from Italy, Portugal, Germany, and Spain. By 1900 the population was just over 17 million. Immigration continued to be substantial until the 1930s, with many Japanese arriving after 1908. Since then, population growth has been primarily due to natural increase. In 1950 Brazil had 51, 944, 000 inhabitants, and in 1998 estimated 169, 806, 557 (Encarta 2000). However, colonisation has reduced the number of natives from perhaps 2. 5m when the Portuguese arrived, to just 100, 000 in the 1970s, although the Amerindian population has now risen to 325, 000 (Economist 2000). Native population decreased rapidly as a consequence of war, enslavement, and the introduction of European diseases. In the 1990s Native Americans made up less than 1 percent of the population, living in isolated groups in remote regions of the rain forest. However, it has been suspected that their birth rate is now 10% above the Brazilian average. As a consequence of colonisation, Brazil's population is a mixture of Native American, European, and African peoples. These groups have intermingled over the years to create a society with considerable ethnic complexity.

## **CULTURE**

Evidence suggests that both Irish and Brazilian cultures suffered from colonisation. It has been claimed that the exposure to Portuguese society was shocking. It resulted in introversion and shame, created by slavery, which lasted longer and involved larger numbers in Brazil than anywhere else (Economist 2000). It also resulted in isolation of Brazil from its Spanish-speaking neighbours. Negative effects of colonisation in Ireland varied from loss of culture to the emotional and material losses (McDonnell 2001).

Colonisation of Ireland had caused feelings of withdrawal and inferiority. Kenny (1985) described the post-colonial Irish personality as one in which the inner world is elaborated, bringing a focus on fantasy, magical thinking, superstition, and creativity. Furthermore, the reaction to the outer world is one of helplessness and passivity, as people came to believe in their own inferiority and powerlessness to change things.

According to Economist (2000b), five centuries of miscegenation in Brazil have blurred the racial boundaries between Europeans, Africans and Amerindians. Today 38% of Brazilians call themselves "brown", blacks are only 6% and Amerindians a mere 0.2%. Such racial mixing encouraged Brazil's largely white elite to nourish a myth that their country had overcome the legacy of slavery and become a "racial democracy", with no colour prejudice (Economist 2000b).

Different off-shot has been seen in Ireland where, according to Lipsky (1979), the group accepts very narrow definition of its membership, including being catholic, nationalist, and a member of the GAA. This effectively excludes many because they do not conform to some rigid stereotype, or they themselves do not feel a part of the group. Internalised oppression leads to mistrust about their own thinking and intelligence among members of the group, trusting more their oppressing group's thoughts and opinions, rather than that of each other.

According to Economist (2000b), Brazil's deep social inequalities run broadly along racial lines. Brazil is still largely governed, managed and owned by whites. Blacks and browns are disproportionately poor, and find it harder

than similarly qualified whites to get a job. After being elected in 1994, president Cardoso took modest steps towards solving the problem, setting up an advisory council on race issues and appointing Pele as Brazil's first black minister. Recently, the Brazilian army gained its second black general and the federal police its first black commander. Access to education is still the greatest obstacle to the advancement of black Brazilians. Amerindians are in even worse circumstances, urging the Congress to pass a law to strengthen their rights, which has been under discussion for nine years.

Although Irish people have a long historical experience of oppression, they still participate in the oppression of many other groups (McDonnell 2001). Ireland at the present has become a primary destination for immigrants from war-torn African countries and Eastern European countries. Many people reflected that it is ironic that people in Ireland are acting in a racist fashion against these incoming peoples considering how much Ireland depended on having a welcome in other countries during the hard economic times.

Violence is present in both countries. According to Economist (2000), Brazil has ugly everyday violence. In Ireland, the frustrations of repressed emotions and interpersonal suspicion have led to behaviour that evidences anger and violence, and also is abusive to other Irish people in particular (McDonnell 2001). According to McDonnell (2001), most people accepted that Irish are looking for an opportunity to find a way around the law, are being indirect about the truth, and have problems being empathetic and helpful. In addition, most people seem to think that the Irish emphasise the need to own the land but do not care for its beauty or upkeep, which is seen as a

direct result of colonisation. Furthermore, it has been argued that Irish have more problems with sexuality and alcohol than other nations.

## **LANGUAGE**

Only about one-fourth of Irish speak Irish, a Gaelic language, while almost all the people speak English (Encarta 2000). The constitution provides for both Irish and English as official languages. However, some have interpreted acquisition of the English language in positive terms, as it has helped people who emigrated from Ireland to establish themselves in English speaking countries. The second advantage of the English language is that it has helped to attract foreign business, in particular America. Finally, the success of Irish people in adapting to the English language has produced world renowned literature.

Portuguese is the official and prevailing language of Brazil, although there are some regional variations in pronunciation and slang words (Encarta 2000). Since 1938 Portuguese has been the compulsory language for teaching in schools, but German and Italian are still spoken in homes in the South by some descendants of immigrants. English and French are the main second languages of educated Brazilians. There are also over 100 indigenous languages, of which the most important are Tupí, Gê, Arawak, and Carib. The Portuguese borrowed some Indian words, particularly from Tupí. Many settlements and physical features still have Indian place-names. The settlers also borrowed some words from the vocabulary of African slaves.

## **CURRENT CHANGES**

Irish culture is, at present, undergoing a transition time and is emerging out of some of the effects of colonisation such as poor self-esteem and lack of

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self-confidence, into a new and effective role in the world (McDonnell 2001). The Celtic Tiger, the name given to the recent economic boom in Ireland, is seen to have the most change, bringing economic success and concurrent financial independence and efficacy to the culture. This is perceived to have reached many levels of the culture, bringing benefits and a general increase in confidence. Ireland is undergoing a transformation from being an economic underdog to one of first world economic success. The process of Ireland being caught in the colonial dynamic of relating only to the coloniser, Britain, was seen to be ameliorated by the coming of the EU. This was followed by the influx of American companies into Ireland, which effectively changed the economic status of the country.

According to Economist (2000), only Japan recorded faster economic growth than Brazil between 1900 and 1982. And though Brazil is not free of racism, it has been strikingly more successful than the United States and many other countries in creating a multi-racial society. Its recent democratic governments have made big efforts to tackle other social problems, ranging from education to land reform. Having overcome hyperinflation, and ridden out last year's devaluation, the economy is now set to grow again. Brazil's prospects now look brighter because over the past decade the country has moved far in opening itself up, slashing tariffs, abolishing state monopolies and selling off state-owned businesses to private investors, many of them foreigners.

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