

Report of the 10 th working session

Demarcation and Protection of Huaorani Territory

Centro de Investigación de los Bosques Tropicales - CIBT
(Rainforest Information centre - RIC)

Quito - Ecuador

April 23, 1993

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The 10 th working session can be divided into two sessions, extending into one long "jornada" beginning on February 20th to April 20th, making one of the longest work sessions yet undertaken.

Personnel :

ONHAE

Organizacion de la Nacionalidad Huaorani de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana

Ehuengimo Enkeri	President
Cesar Ahua	Vicepresident
Kahui Jonas Wepe	Treasurer

As well as over 60 Huaorani representing 10 communities

Quehueiriono
Toñampare
Quihuaro
Tehueno
Cacataro
Bataboro - Tiguino
Damontaro
Dicaron - Garza Cocha of Yasuni
Bameno - Cononaco
Noneno

IERAC Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonization

Pancho Mendoza - Topographer

CIBT Centro de Investigacion de los Bosques Tropicales
(Rainforest Information Centre - RIC)

Randall Smith
Jonathon Miller
Eric Taylor
Dean Jeffereys

OPIP - Organizacion de los Pueblos Indigenas de Pastaza
Flavio Enrique Santi

This tenth working session was the longest and most ambitious session ever undertaken by CIBT and the Huaorani people. It spanned almost two months, and can be divided into two separate phases, or "jornadas", the first from February 24 to March 10, and the second from March 24 to April 20. The primary focus of these jornadas was the continuation of the physical delineation of Huaorani territory; during this working session, over 27 kilometers of line were cut.

The creation of "La Linderacion" is vitally important for the Huaorani people, first because it serves as physical, highly visible boundary line, making their legal land title relevant at ground level - instead of just a line on a map. There shall be no "accidental" colonization where there is linderated territory; it is quite apparent to outsiders where Huaorani territory begins, and those that cross the line shall face legal reprisal. As an indigenous people only recently contacted, the Huaorani's future is a tenuous and dangerous one. Linderacion is their primary legally mandated defense against an encroaching outside world; one need only look at the sad histories of other indigenous groups who have lost their ancestral lands, to realize the overriding importance of linderacion. The Huaorani's very existence is at stake: already they have lost over two thirds of their ancestral land, have witnessed their land penetrated and contaminated by petroleum interests, and now face advancing colonization by mestizos, Shuars, and land grabs sanctioned by Quichua Indian federations.

Secondly, the Linderacion is critically important as a unifying agent for the Huaorani nation, bringing people together from many different communities to work together to protect their ancestral territories. Such a level of cooperation, if not unprecedented, is at least very unusual in Huaorani history. Traditionally, the Huaorani are a highly individualistic clan based society, living "in small settlements of fifty or fewer people", where "...each band was usually hostile to most of the other bands..." (Robarchek). Over sixty men and over twenty women representing ten communities from all the subgroups of the Huaorani, (except of course, the two uncontacted clans of the Tagaeri and the Taromenane) participated in this tenth working session. As intercommunal events these working sessions are an important force in fostering feelings of common purpose and promoting unity among the Huaorani people. It is only through unity that the Huaorani will be able to deal effectively with the outside world.

The Huaorani people and ONHAE have recognized the creation of the line as an integral part of their struggle for empowerment and self-determination. Some of the

participants from the more distant communities walked for five days to reach the Shiripuno Centre, others from the Yasuni traveled two full days by motor canoe, one day by bus, and one day walking. The participant from Conanaco travelled four days by motor canoe to reach the Centre. All of these people, travelling many days to protect their ancestral lands, give testimony to the Huaorani peoples' desire to unify and protect their land against colonization. At the meeting for the second jornada, an elder stood and declared, "I shall stay for the entire linderation, no matter how long it takes, I shall stay and protect our ancestral lands for my children, and my children's children, and the Huaorani people." He stayed for the whole demarcation, planting palms for 27 days.

The First Jornada

In this first phase of the work session we were involved in general maintenance of the Shiripuno Centre and giving the Huaorani communities of Quehueiriono and Cacataro information on the upcoming linderation. A meeting with ONHAE president Ehuengimo Enkeri was held, where it was agreed that he would notify as many communities as possible about the dates for the upcoming line. We also sanded and varnished the community centre, and built a large traditional "Huaorani uncu" house overlooking the river. A massive 3x4 meter metal sign reading "Territorio Huaorani" was brought by canoe up to the boundary line a short distance from the Centre and implanted in cement where it could be seen both from the river and the trail. More banana circles were planted, and a short talk was given on composting and sustainable agriculture. Over 100 fruit trees were planted, around the centre, and many more seeds were planted in the small nursery. In addition, many seeds of native forest fruits, timber species, and medicinal plants were collected for CIBT's two model medicinal plant and permaculture gardens at Jatun Sacha on the Rio Napo, and the Imu Cultural Centre in Archidona. Also, we recorded hours of stories and ancient legends told by Huaorani elders for the future publication of bilingual spanish-huaorani educational booklets.

From the Shiripuno centre, we journeyed upriver to the community of Quehueiriono, where we held a small meeting discussing the dates for the next demarcation work session. We also recorded many chants and legends here. After several days, we pole-canoeed and walked further upriver to the community of Cacataro located at the headwaters of the Rio Shiripuno. here, once again, a small meeting discussing linderation was held with the leaders of the community. We left the next morning at sunrise and walked for seven hours through beautiful pristine rainforest

towards the Rio Napo. The last hour of walking was through deforested wasteland, jungle turned to cow pasture, a cancer growing from the Rio Napo inward, towards Huaorani territory. Thusly ended the first Jornada.

The Second Jornada

Randy Smith began the second part of this work session, securing the necessary military permits, and purchasing supplies for thirty days in the jungle cutting boundary lines. He also coordinated with the Ecuadorian Military, who generously helped transport the men and supplies to the Rio Shiripuno. We extend our most cordial thanks to the Military Brigada de Selva 19 of Napo, for their continued support and assistance on the demarcation of Huaorani territory. In the coming decades, it shall be only the military who will have the capability to control colonization in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

The second jornada consisted of the actual physical demarcation work. After loading the canoes with supplies to be taken upriver where we'd divide them up, we walked a quick two hours up to the Shiripuno center. At the center we found that the leadership of ONHAE, Ehuengimo Enkeri, had indeed been true to his word; he and Vice-President Cesar Awa had communicated with virtually all Huaorani communities, and over seventy Huaorani, men, women and children were ready to begin linderation. We held a meeting, and it was decided that we would divide the group in half. Half would stay at the center, half would immediately start linderation. Then, in the middle of the Jornada, Randy Smith would come in with the second group and more supplies, and relieve the first group.

The line itself varies in size, although usually remaining between five and six meters wide. The terrain encountered on this line was among the most difficult ever experienced on the Huaorani linderation. We crossed huge swamps, deep canyons with crystal clear streams flowing through them, and giant earthen archways spanning over massive crevasses. Several times while cutting the line, we had to cross the same meandering river four or five times in the same day. The swamps were usually at about waist level, although at times it went up to our chest and we had to carry our packs on our heads or shoulders. Several people, had to actually be pulled out of the muck when they mistepped and sank past their waists while carrying heavy loads. The only flat areas were the ridges, which often had beautiful palm galleries resting atop them; the

biodiversity of microclimates was amazing. Most of the terrain was composed of steep ascents and descents. We passed over many deep ravines, balancing precariously on fallen trees. If one was to lose his balance it would be a very long drop.

Often times, the jungle grew so dense, so dark, that it was necessary for the macheteros to burrow tunnels into the vegetation, and then let the axemen in, who would cut down the trees, coordinating it so that all the trees would fall in one thunderous crash, and everyone would leap back as the entire thick canopy fell in, raining insects. Then, the macheteros in the rear would slash through the fallen canopy, and the axemen would move forward again, entering a new tunnel, as the macheteros in the front burrowed on, and the cycle began anew.

In total, over 27 kilometers of line were cut, and then planted with thousands of long lived palm species taken from the base of mother palms in the nearby forest. The main three palms planted were *Jesseria bataua* ("hungurahua" in spanish, "petohue" in huaorani), *Astrocaryum chambira* ("chambira" in spanish, "opogenka" in huaorani) and *Irartea deltoidea* ("palmbil" in spanish, "tepahue" in huaorani). Through the swamp areas we planted *Euterpe precatoria* ("gimahue" in huaorani) and *Mauritia flexuosa* ("nontohue" huaorani, or "morete" in spanish). A fine oil is extracted from the fruits of *Jesseria bataua*, which currently costs 15,000 sucres (aprox. U.S. \$8) per liter. In 25 years, this boundary will be worth millions of sucres. From the young palm frond of *Astrocaryum chambira* fibres are obtained for making shigras (woven string bags) and hammocks, as well as providing an edible fruit. The palm *Mauritia flexuosa* is the source of a highly nutritious fruit; *Euterpe precatoria* is the source of an important medicine, and *Irartea deltoidea* provides thatch for housing, and is among the strongest woods for construction and crafts (the Huaoranis use it to make spears). Also, hundreds of *Phytelephas* sp. ("omakabo" in Huaorani, "tagua" in spanish) were planted. These are the source of a valuable vegetable ivory, as well as a nutritious edible fruit. *Socratea* sp., a source of a foam-like substance used for shampoo was also planted in large numbers. In this manner, we created a highly visible, long term sustainable and economically viable boundary line, a precedent setting model for other boundary lines in tropical regions throughout the world.

We encountered much wildlife during these sessions, indicating a still intact Amazonian ecosystem. Cesar Awa, vice-president of ONHAE, had a standoff with a jaguar while out hunting, and as we neared Cacataro, rumours abounded about

sightings of a white jaguar near where we made camp. We also saw sloths (with their young, clinging to their mothers belly), many varieties of monkey: woolly, spider, squirrel, and tamarins, cecus, and howlers. A large group of coati, kinkajous, giant river otters, caimans, water turtles, a land tortoise, deer, peccaries, agouti and paca were seen too. Many birds were seen, including large flocks of parrots, parakeets, scarlet and blue macaws, trogons, curassow and quans. Several harpy eagles and other eagles were seen, and some king vultures too. We walked by several lagoons filled with piranhas, and also saw huge land snails, meter long earthworms, dozens of tarantulas, and some large black scorpions. Often we were lulled to sleep by the sweet songs of these scorpions. Many highly poisonous snakes were seen, and out on the line it was not uncommon for two to be killed in one day; in all, over fifteen snakes were killed during the two jornadas. One, a Bushmaster (*Bothrops*), was killed only after biting a young girl in the community of Cacataro.

We had a tremendously varied diet on the line, ranging from fat grubs the size of a grown man's finger, to venison. Also eaten were a lemon ants, and a certain species of large black beetle, memorable for its rich buttery taste. We ate several varieties of primates, mainly woolly and howler monkeys, although some smaller monkeys were eaten too. Some land snails about the size of a fist were also eaten. Traditionally the Huacarani had very strict rules about what animals they ate, despite the fact that meat was their staple food, but since contact with the outside world, they have grown quite indiscriminate in their diet, whether it be caimans, turtles, armadillos, or snails, they will eat it. This may offend the sensibilities of the progressive westerner, but never-the-less, it occurs, with much lip smacking and murmurs of satisfaction. We also ate white collared peckary, many piranhas and some curassaws too. Most of the forest we went through was very far from the hunting grounds of any community, so the wildlife was very abundant and the impact of our predating minimal. We also ate many hungurahua palm nuts, palm hearts, and many delicious varieties of wild fruits. The palm hearts were harvested exclusively from trees felled on the line, while the palm nuts and fruits were gathered mainly through sustainable extraction methods (climbing trees). April is the season for fruits, so we were able to harvest and collect the seeds of many Amazonian varieties.

There was only one serious injury on this line. One of our best axemen was stung, through his boot, by a river stingray. He was unable to walk for three days, and when we moved camp we had to give him painkillers in order for him to continue. He

was incapacitated for the remaining week of the jornada. There were also four cases of malarial fevers, all of which, were probably reoccurrences. Medicine was distributed, and within a day the fevers had subsided. There was many cases of fungus, and Randy Smith acquired a large parasitic worm on his stomach. Several people were bitten by Conga ants, and our topographer Pancho Mendoza, suffered a wasp bite that caused his elbow to swell up to the size of a medium sized gourd (*Crescentia coujete*, *Bignoneaceae*). Several people were hit by falling trees, but happily, noone was seriously hurt. Once, a river rose two and one half meters overnight, and our camp became submerged. This occurred at about sunrise, and immediately after breakfast, we were caught in the deluge. In the pouring rain we broke camp and hiked towards Cacataro. It took all day: the forest seemed to have transformed itself into a giant river; what before had been a mere dip in the forest floor had turned into a raging river many meters wide, and impassable without some sort of crude bridge. We felled huge trees to cross these torrential flows, which carried massive quantities of debris. We witnessed whole trees being carried away, and to fall in while crossing surely would have resulted in severe injury or death. After our long hike through flooded roaring forests we forded Rio Cacataro and arrived in the community, very exhilarated, and without casualties.

This demarcation session cut through the heart of the Huaorani's ancestral territory. We found several old house sites, a stone axehead, and many pottery shards. The Huaorani elders pointed out ancient burial sites, and expressed much distress that the line was putting these sites outside of the territory. The young huaorani were also uneasy about this portion of the line, as it put the community of Cacataro outside the legal territory. At one point, the work stopped, and it was demanded that we move the line out to include the burial sites and Cacataro. Tempers grew quite heated and an angry Huaorani proceeded to scratch out the IERAC marks painted on the trees. Many of the elders began to grow aggressive, threatening to leave, shouting began, and some veiled threats were made.

It was decided, after consultation with our government topographer, and with full knowledge of the Huaorani's violent past, that the line would have to be moved out; we yielded to their demands and the situation was defused. Only the last seven kilometers, out of over 125 kilometers linderated, were moved, thereby including Cacataro and the burial sites in the demarcated territory (although this last 7 kilometers does not coincide with the legal limits). It is apparent that this will have to be resolved at a governmental level. As it stands, there is a strong possibility of violent confrontation in the near future, as more Quichua and mestizo colonists begin to occupy this area.

In closing, we would once again like to thank the Brigada Militar de Selva No. 19 for their invaluable assistance during this work session. We also thank Sophia Eynon for lending her artistic abilities to paint the sign now on the boundary line. And, thank you Tony Janson, and Ariana and Tatiana Rand for your assistance during this tenth working session. We thank Flavio Santi, of OPIP, for his good company and beautiful flute music, and we thank Don Pancho for his spirited and inspired intellectual discourse. We also thank both Douglas Ferguson and Randy Smith for their technical and logistical assistance.

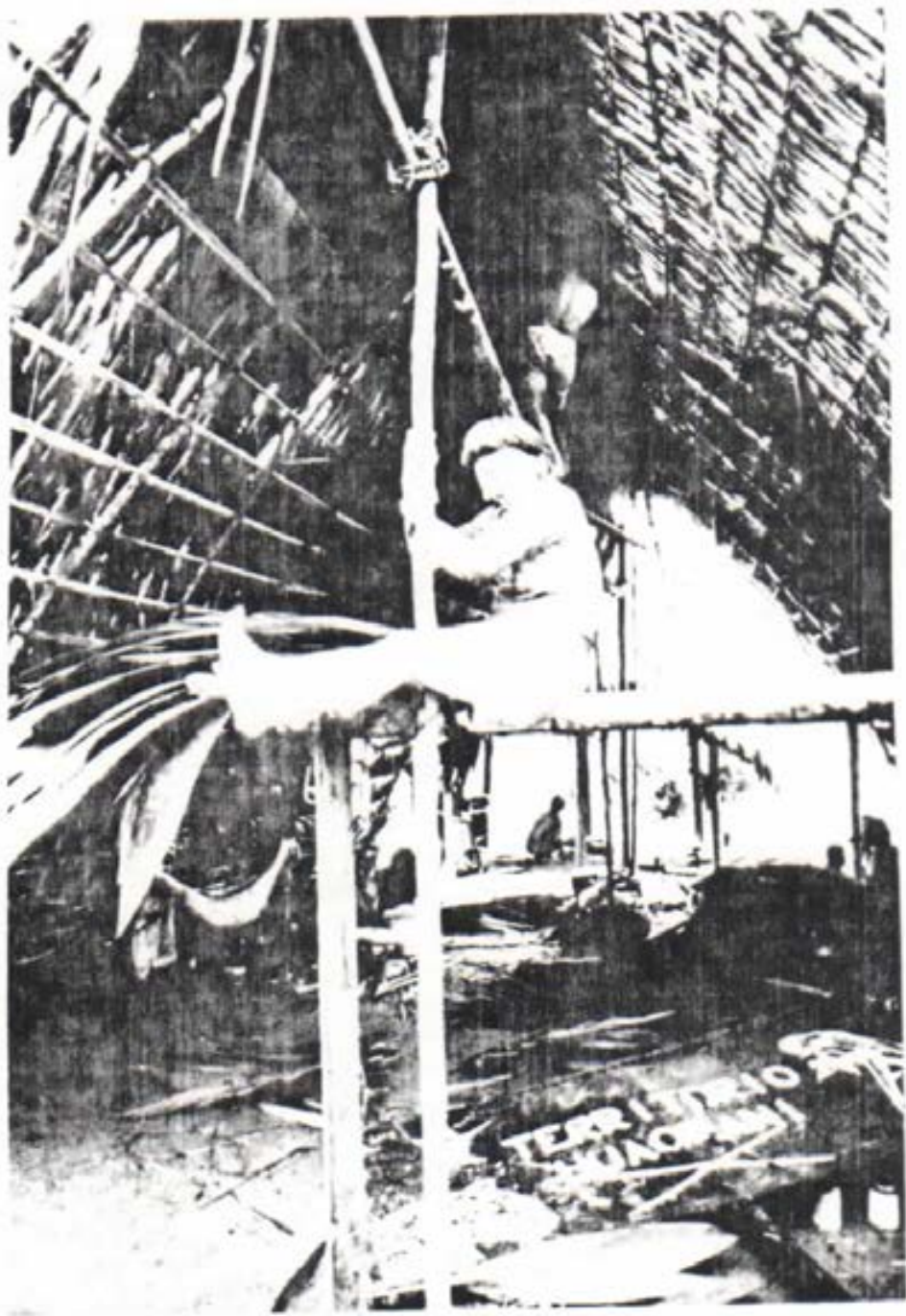
And of course, our most sincere thanks to the Huaorani people. Over the years we have had many adventures and unforgettable experiences, and some difficulties too. Thank you for all of these, we have learned much.

In particular we thank Cesar Awa and Kahui Jonas Wepe for their excellent organizational skills and Pirahua our faithful cook, who only burned the monkey sometimes.

We thank all of our financial donors, for assisting in this incredible and important process, a vital step in protecting the Huaorani people and their beautiful rainforest home.

Viva Amazonia!

" May it still exist for our childrens' children. . . . "



Pirahua, our faithful and talented chef, during the building of the traditional Huaorani "uncu" house at the Shiripuno Centre.



Huaorani and Don Pancho Mendoza, IERAC topographer who has assisted in the creation of over 125 kilometers of demarcation.



The intrepid crew of the Second Jornada.



The headwaters of the Rio Shiripuno, among the most pristine tropical regions in the world. This is the rainforest that this most recent linderation protects.



Nenkere and Bodichahue with the newly painted sign.