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## Embracing the Past: Conflict, Conservation, and Organization in Ecuador's Upper Amazon

JOHN S. LUQUE

### Abstract

*This study explores the contested nature of relationships between indigenous communities and their representative organizations, government agencies, and international conservation organizations in conservation projects, and how the move from the Yellowstone model of parks conservation to the community participation model may lead to conflicts between competing groups. In Napo-Galeras—a transition zone between the foothills of the Andes and the Ecuadorian Oriente rainforest—land tenure arrangements led to encroachments on protected areas by in-migrating Napo Runa and mestizo colonists. The study methodology employed participant observation, semi-structured ethnographic interviews with key stakeholders, and archival research in non-governmental organizations. This study concludes that conservation management plans should include environmental and social factors, which bear on resource use, and that indigenous participation alone in park planning does not necessarily lead to rainforest protection.*

### Introduction

Ecuador's national parks are based on the Yellowstone model, which excludes humans from inhabiting parks and using park resources for more than leisure and education. This park's model of forest management is designed for effective institutional planning; with one consequence being that costs/benefits to local people are not overt goals (Nugent 2003). However, there has been a paradigm shift by funding agencies to emphasize community participation, indigenous knowledge and a partnership approach between environmental agencies and local grassroots organizations in the name of "putting people in parks" (West et al. 2006). With this shift comes inherent problems. First, there is the mistaken assumption on the part of environmental groups that indigenous peoples are inherently and fundamentally conservationists (Nygren 2003). Second, the concept of the extractive reserve can lead to ecologically harmful practices, such as excessive timber harvesting or hunting (Dove 2006). Third, there is the

sovereignty issue of whether indigenous peoples have to abide by national laws within the park boundaries. Fourth, as this case demonstrates, political conflicts may arise between international non-governmental conservation organizations and indigenous organizations, thereby complicating relationships with local indigenous communities (Chapin 2004; Doornbos et al. 2000; Zerner 2000).

This article discusses a rivalry between two Napo Runa<sup>1</sup> (Kichwa Indian) organizations over a piece of rainforest in the Napo-Galeras protected forest area of eastern Ecuador, known as Napo-Galeras, in the larger context of a national park project which was principally concerned with tropical forest use and community boundary demarcation activities. The larger organization, San Pedro of Rucullacta Cooperative (referred to hereafter as Rucullacta), an indigenous cattle and agricultural cooperative founded in the early 1970s, operated with a collectivist orientation towards land titling and land

use. However, families with *de facto* claims to large tracts of land within the cooperative entered into conflict with cooperative leaders and formed their own splinter organizations to legitimate these claims (Erazo 2007; Rogers 1996). One such splinter Runa foundation, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu<sup>2</sup>—composed principally of members of the Mamallacta nuclear family—employed the rhetoric of claiming ancestral usufruct rights to a land area in Napo-Galeras that it held as members of the cooperative, based on an historical pattern of social organization and residence.

The foundation's *raison d'être* was to work under the direction of an international non-governmental conservation organization that had been contracted by the National Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife. The conservation organization was to undertake land demarcation activities in order to raise Napo-Galeras' protected forest status to the level of national park, a process which occasionally impinged on previously established legal cooperative and community boundaries. Izhu Mangallpa Urcu invoked discourses of ancestral heritage in the legal documents used to establish their foundation, tracing a patrilineage of shamans spanning eight generations to justify ancestral claims to an area in Galeras called Tutacano. Access to this territory would allow them to continue their revenue-generating ecotourism enterprise and family-based horticultural, hunting and fishing activities. Izhu Mangallpa Urcu's resource management strategy was a microcosm of larger movements during this period of indigenous organizations who were moving away from defining specific community borders towards land claims based on "ethnic territories," thereby shifting the focus from complex land management to securing permanent access to resources (Macdonald 1999:115).

Mark Rogers (1995, 1996) has discussed this case in great detail, to make an argument about the politics of anthropological representation, based on research conducted between 1991 and 1993. The research described here focuses largely on events that occurred between 1994 and 1996. Rogers argues that evolving indigenous identities were shaped in response to conservation and ecotourism agendas and assumed a discourse of

authenticity. However, the underlying issue of this case, argued by Friedman (1996:133), is the "internal competition for external resources and local control."

The two organizations in question invoked different strategies to validate their land claims. First, the Izhu Mangallpa Urcu splinter group with access to considerable land employed the rhetoric of indigenous conservation validated by an ancestral heritage traced through a patrilineage, and signed agreements with Ecuadorian government agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations to guarantee continued access to lands used in their ecotourism business. They also employed metaphors comparing the preservation and conservation of Galeras with symbolic revitalization of ancestral traditions, thus identifying themselves as the presumptive inheritors to protect this sacred place associated with myths of shape-shifting jaguars. Second, the leaders of the mother cooperative Rucullacta employed legal claims and alliances with indigenous federations legitimized by the state bureaucracy in order to maintain control over cooperative lands for planned ecotourism development, and to ensure that its cooperative members remained active (Hutchins 2007).

This article discusses how kinship-based conflicts, political rivalries and shamanism were intertwined in the complex maneuverings and temporary alliances which characterized the state of indigenous organizations in the Napo Province in the mid-1990s. An overextended state apparatus for administering protected areas led to an opening for international non-governmental conservation organizations to partner with indigenous foundations on conservation projects. The nascent Izhu Mangallpa Urcu adapted to the changing institutional environment by mobilizing its organization's members around the mission of forest conservation and management. Given the complicated land tenure situation for communities adjacent to the proposed national park boundaries, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu's role in the management plan turned out to be integral to conveying the message to the buffer zone communities surrounding the park that the project was a community participatory process.

### Indigenous Peoples and National Parks

Several scholars have studied the formation of parks and reserves around traditional indigenous territories in Ecuador and the parallel rise of native federations and leaders associated with this development (Chernela 1990, 1995; Ehrenreich 1989; Keese 1998; Salazar 1981; Vickers 1988, 1989; Yost 1981). Some of these studies focus on small ethnic minorities of indigenous peoples such as the Huaorani numbering roughly a thousand people, as compared to the more numerous and transculturated Runa (intermarrying with other groups) who number more than 30,000 in the northern Oriente provinces of Napo and Sucumbios alone (Uzendoski 2004).

There have been some major successes by indigenous peoples seeking land titles in Ecuador. Most notably in 1990, the Huaorani received additional lands, adding to their existing reserve, for a total land area of around 880,000 ha, with the status of a Biosphere Reserve, following the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization model, which acknowledges the importance of including indigenous peoples in environmental conservation (Perreault 1996; Uquillas and Davis 1992). Similarly, the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Pastaza, representing the Puyo Runa, was granted 1.1 million ha in 1992 by the departing Borja government (Whitten and Whitten 2008:240). Despite these gains, according to Ecuadorian law, the state continues to retain subsurface oil and mining rights. Given these precedents and the historic uprising of indigenous peoples of 1990, Napo Runa organizations were poised to make territorial claims of their own, based on the prevailing discourse of conservation and defense of indigenous territories (Macdonald 1999:115).

Conklin and Graham (1995) refer to “the eco-politics of Amazonian indigenous peoples” as a strategy employing identity markers such as traditional adornments in order to win the attention of non-governmental conservation organizations. Even though the contemporary Napo Runa assume Western styles of dress in everyday contexts, they will wear their native dress during parades or performances for foreign tourists. The Mamallactas exhibit native dress for a traditional ‘war dance’ for tourists, and will paint

their faces with achiote (*Bixa orellana*) for shamanic ayahuasca healing ceremonies both in Ecuador and abroad. Although the Mamallactas have grappled with the practice of exhibiting their culture in these ways, they initially received the attention of international non-governmental conservation organizations through their collaboration with a biological research station by demonstrating their extensive knowledge of botanical remedies.

### Methodology

In 1990, I participated in an ethnobotany field school run by the Missouri Botanical Garden at the biological station *Jatun Sacha* on the Napo River. There, I met the Mamallactas, and returned to volunteer with them for four months in 1994 with the conservation organization named the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations (CIBT). During this time, I participated in park boundary demarcation activities with Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and government authorities, who had organized visits to inform communities surrounding Napo-Galeras of the plan to elevate the Napo-Galeras forest patrimony to national park status.

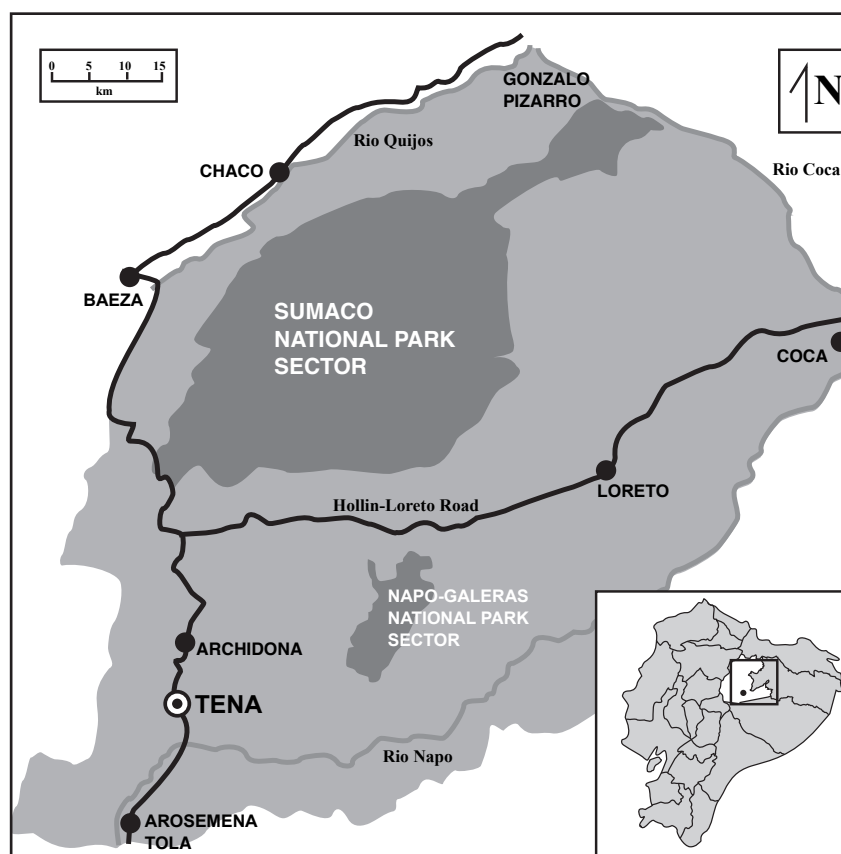
Already familiar with Izhu Mangallpa Urcu's activities as a participant observer, I returned to Archidona for four months in 1996 to conduct ethnographic research. The goal of the research was to identify elders near Archidona to parse out conflicting claims of ancestral usufruct rights to the cordillera Galeras. I conducted semi-structured interviews with six male elders, most of whom self-identified as **yachac**. First, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the three primary elders of the Mamallacta family. These interviews covered land issues and shamanic rivalries. Next, in Rucullacta and Tambayacu, I conducted similar interviews with three elders of other families to compare their accounts with the Mamallacta's recollections regarding the contested territory. I also carried out unstructured interviews with community leaders from six villages along the boundaries of the Napo-Galeras protected area. The Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and Center for Tropical Forest Investigations office libraries, the *Archivo de la Gobernación de Napo* in Tena, and the independent evaluation report by FIPAD (1997)

provided further documentation. Three subsequent shorter visits occurred in 2002 and 2004.

### Study Site

Napo-Galeras is located at the headwaters of the Napo River northeast of Tena (Figure 1). The cordillera Galeras is a massif ranging from 400 m to 1,730 m above sea level and runs along the eastern border of the Rucullacta cooperative territory. As a watershed, Galeras is the source of at least seven tributaries of the Napo River and is composed of a mosaic of micro-climates. The confluence of ecological zones between the Andean pre-montane life zones and Amazonian tropical moist forests is characterized by high ecological diversity in the lowland tropical wet forest region on the eastern side of Napo-Galeras. Because of this biodiversity, there is unusually high floristic endemism and a plethora of endangered species (FIPAD 1997).

Between 1992 and 1993, because of a state institutional vacuum and arguing that the region represented a high level of biodiversity, the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu, and multiple governmental agencies including the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife and the National Institute of Cultural Patrimony signed inter-institutional agreements to develop a management plan to protect Napo-Galeras through boundary demarcation on the basis of surveys carried out by collaborative scientific teams. In addition to the management plan, the agreements called for socio-economic and population studies of the communities surrounding the protected area, as well as protection and investigation of the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the peoples in these communities (FIPAD 1997:10). Such components of the management plan reflected principles of community participation.



**Figure 1.** Sumaco Napo-Galeras National Park (darkest shaded areas, established March, 1994; Sumaco sector: 190,562 ha; Napo-Galeras sector: 14,687 ha) straddling Napo and Orellana Provinces. Napo province is shaded white in the inset of the nation of Ecuador.



Napo-Galeras had been under the pressure of colonist penetration threats from the towns of Archidona and Tena, as well as excessive commercial logging after the construction of a new road in 1987 (Macdonald 1999:110). Deforestation around Napo-Galeras by the agricultural activities of colonists, both Runa and mestizo, and logging companies, was made possible by the road which linked the towns of Tena, Loreto and Coca, and resulted in the division of the Sumaco region from the Galeras watershed to the south. Based on the last census, Archidona is a town of 4,205 inhabitants (canton population – 18,551) just north of Tena, the provincial capital of Ecuador's Napo Province located in the northern Oriente with a population of 16,669 (canton population – 46,007) lying 208 kilometers southeast of Quito (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos 2001).

### Land Pressures

Ecologists, geographers and development planners have examined the deforestation of Ecuador's rainforests and the indigenous response through partnerships with non-governmental organizations (Bebbington et al. 1992; Hicks et al. 1990; Meyer 1993; Peck 1990; Pichón 1996a, 1996b; Rudel 1993, 1995). Anthropologists working in the eastern lowlands of Ecuador have studied the interrelationships between the processes of deforestation, insecure land tenure, spontaneous colonization (as contrasted with government-planned, directed colonization), culture change and the growth of indigenous communal organizations, regional and national federations, and non-governmental organizations (Macdonald 1981, 1999; Salazar 1981; Vickers 1988). These studies taken together conclude that indigenous strategies for rainforest conservation are usually at odds with government-directed development policies and, consequently, non-governmental organizations often play the role of intermediaries.

In Napo-Galeras, deforestation proceeded unevenly depending on proximity to roads and navigable rivers and to varying opinions about where future roads would be built. The expanding road network was a direct result of nationalist political and economic policies that attempted to integrate the Oriente region with the coast and the highlands

(Macdonald 1999). Historically, agrarian reform legislation led to land tenure arrangements with negative consequences for small-scale producers because of the stipulation that uncultivated lands could not be secured with land titles, creating conditions favorable for land speculation and forest degradation (Southgate and Whitaker 1992). The work involved with obtaining land titles in Ecuador through individual and communal property claims is a complex legal process (Macdonald et al. 1993:16; Southgate and Whitaker 1992).

Understanding the need for reform, Runa throughout the Amazon formed communal organizations in response to land tenure insecurity, and participated in regional and national federations in defense of traditional territories.<sup>3</sup> A common practice for such organizations was to receive blocks of land, which would in turn be subdivided into individual family allotments of approximately 50 ha each (Hiraoka and Yamamoto 1980). This political and economic organizational development among the Runa significantly increased their bargaining position as the largest ethnic minority in Amazonian Ecuador and contributed to the development of national indigenous federations such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) (Benavides 2004:147).

The government apparatus in charge of administering the over four million combined hectares of forest patrimony, parks and reserves in Ecuador was understaffed and underfunded, and therefore incapable of controlling access to these lands (Rogers 1996). In the government's place, national and international non-governmental conservation organizations, sometimes in partnership with indigenous organizations, assumed the role of supervising and protecting these areas. In theory, the initial management strategy employed with the Napo-Galeras park boundary demarcation assumed the Yellowstone model (e.g., providing indemnification to displaced colonists for resettlement, restricting access to natural resources inside the park). However, in practice, there were controversies over the boundaries established in the demarcation process and the extent of economic activities permitted inside the park and the adjacent communities. For example,

the park boundary demarcation incorporated 1,000 ha of Rucullacta and 700 ha of land of Tamia Urcu (one of the small park border communities) into the park that had been previously adjudicated to the communities through the Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization (now known as the National Institute of Agrarian Development). The boundary demarcation process facilitated the community participation model, wherein the communities themselves were tasked with protecting and managing the integrity of the park and with raising any disputes over the newly proposed park boundaries with the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife (FIPAD 1997:52).

### Ancestral Claims

Formed on the basis of consanguineal kinship bonds, the foundation Izhu Mangallpa Urcu was legally established by members of Don Casimiro's nuclear family in April of 1992 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. At the time, there were around fifty adult members of the Mamallacta **muntun** 'kinship groups of Runa'.<sup>4</sup> The Mamallacta family, led by Don Casimiro, claimed ancestral patrilineal rights to Rucullacta cooperative-held lands in Tutacano (945 ha) in the cordillera Galeras, west of the protected forest border, based on hunting, horticulture, and camping rights, but Ecuadorian law did not recognize their claims as legitimate since they did not actually live there (FIPAD 1997). The Mamallacta's land claim fell within the official boundaries of Rucullacta. Therefore, the Mamallactas fought for the incorporation of this land area into the national park, with incumbent rights of stewardship and access rather than ownership under the auspices of Izhu Mangallpa Urcu. This meant that they would work as park guardians and resource managers, thus reporting incidents of illegal colonization, based on the earlier precedent that had been reached with the Huaorani to act in this capacity for the Yasuní National Park.<sup>5</sup>

The Mamallactas produced a written narrative to legitimate their land claim, emphasizing their traditional itinerant residence pattern (Rogers 1996).<sup>6</sup> The narrative details the genealogy of the Mamallactas—beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup>

century—who lived, practiced shamanism, and protected Napo-Galeras from outsiders. According to the narrative, Don Casimiro's father, Don Antonio, consolidated the Mamallacta's ancestral territory, establishing eight small huts from west to east for small-scale horticulture, hunting, and fishing, leading to the cordillera Galeras. Don Casimiro, now 78 years old, is the surviving patriarch to maintain ties to the territory. He accomplishes this by conversing with the forest spirits and indicating the location of 32 chonta palms (*Bactris gasipaes*), which serve as territorial markers planted by his grandfathers.

Most Napo Runa are familiar with the myth about the World Puma trapped inside Galeras (Muratorio 1991:27; Rogers 1995:245). The Mamallactas have all had to memorize the myth as part of their cultural identification as Mamallactas. Don Casimiro tells the story about the star twins, Cuilluru and Duceru, who deceive the World Puma and talk him into sitting in a cave-like house which they had built for him on Galeras, where the Grandfather could live. The twins are trickster figures who save humankind from the terrible World Puma and trap him in a cave. The significance of the myth for the Mamallactas is that it serves to substantiate their claim to having a spiritual connection to Galeras, as the keepers of Runa culture and traditions.

### Modern Napo Runa Organizations

While some native communities have benefited from the recent empowerment of their local organizations, the move towards self-governance among the Runa has in some cases led to the entrenchment of long-standing rivalries between kinship groups and communities, intensified by political and religious differences. With the entrance of non-governmental organizations in the early 1970s, indigenous organizations found powerful allies, repeating a pattern established earlier in the century. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Runa turned to Catholic and Protestant missions to free themselves from indebtedness to the **patrón** 'large hacienda owner.' Remnants of patron-client ties persisted into the late 1960s until indigenous federations entered the political arena (Muratorio 1991:164-65).

The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians based in Tena was established in 1969 and was modeled after the Shuar Confederation created a few years earlier—the latter now with about 170 community-level organization members (Perreault 2003). The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians received modest support from the area's Catholic Josephine missions, so even though the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians's members were mostly Catholics, it eventually had to rely on aid from international non-governmental organizations because of its autonomous stance in relation to the Catholic Church (Macdonald et al. 1993:16; Perreault 2003).

The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians had a vested interest in maintaining its community membership base, such as Rucullacta, of which the Mamallactas were members. The Mamallactas suspected that fellow cooperative members were planning to expropriate their cooperative lands in the cordillera Galeras, so they sought legal advice and decided to form Izhu Mangallpa Urcu. The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians formally opposed the legal formation of Izhu Mangallpa Urcu in August of 1992, based on the assertion that Izhu Mangallpa Urcu had interfered with four community associations affiliated with the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians around Galeras, as well as Rucullacta in its park demarcation activities (FIPAD 1997:53). Izhu Mangallpa Urcu had signed contractual agreements with government agencies to negotiate with the communities around Galeras. By forming their own legally-sanctioned foundation, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu angered Rucullacta leaders, who, according to ethnographic interviews in the Rucullacta community of Tambayacu, feared that other small muntun within the cooperative might take the same independent initiatives. According to the President of Rucullacta, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu intended to form a small population center within the cooperative's Galeras territories, and was instigating the Narváez family to also form their own separate group apart from the cooperative (FIPAD 1997:40). This situation is mirrored by Jackson's (1995:6) statement that "cultural forms that have evolved in highly politicized circumstances can be, and often are, contested."

Rucullacta is a cooperative north of Tena and was founded in 1970 in response to colonist encroachment and government incentives to form agricultural and livestock cooperatives. It has a membership of 17 communities and legally established its land area of 41,888 ha in 1978 (FIPAD 1997:10). When the failure of the cattle enterprise became evident due partly to dwindling government loans, Rucullacta, along with other member communities of the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians, moved towards household agricultural activities, and later, natural forest management through timber sales with the aid of international conservation groups in the 1990s (Jahnige 1990; Macdonald et al. 1993, 1999; Shiguango et al. 1993). At the time of the study, there were a total of 3,450 inhabitants and 668 **socios**, or men who paid membership fees to the Rucullacta cooperative (Ramiro Chimbo 1996, personal communication). Some cooperative leaders were schooled in the Catholic missions, and they adopted rhetoric advocating land rights and bilingual education (Brown 1993).

### Political/Shamanic Rivalries

The cordillera Galeras, because of its status as a mythical place as well as a source of spiritual power acquisition for yachac like Don Casimiro, stands as a symbol of ancestral heritage, indigenous self-determination, and environmental conservation. Power involves holding onto traditional ways, or at least what are perceived by potential outsider allies as traditional forms, in support of indigenous struggles for autonomy and self-determination (Jackson 1995).

While historically shamanic control over lands would prevent colonists' intrusions, itinerant colonists in more recent times are less aware of these informal social controls, necessitating clear boundary markers. Interviews with yachac in Rucullacta also reported shamanic connections to Galeras. Don Bartolo, a yachac from Rucullacta, claimed his father, also a yachac, had "telephone lines" reaching to Galeras, although he himself did not. He commented, "like spirits, my father would take his spirit to Pucuno and Galeras." Many stories of legendary duels between rival yachac were narrated in the ethnographic interviews.



Izhu Mangallpa Urcu positioned itself against its rivals to further its claims over Galeras, while leaders from the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians – whom the Mamallactas considered to be their representative federation – questioned the Mamallacta's ancestral connection to Galeras and accused them of nefarious dealings with foreigners at the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations, involving both gold prospecting and ecotourism (Rogers 1996). In defense, Don Casimiro maintained that he received his education from the plant and animal spirits of Galeras, becoming what Whitten (1985:117) refers to as a “paradigm manipulator,” traveling across boundaries of different cultures and languages. Under pressure to conform to the norms of the national society, the mission-educated, young Rucullacta leaders publicly rejected the shamanic traditions as **brujería** ‘witchcraft’ and sought to discredit Don Casimiro's shamanic connection to Galeras (Rogers 1996). Therefore, generational differences and an increasingly urban-centered residence pattern, combined with cultural change, further contributed to internal conflicts between rival groups (Uzendoski 2005:14-15).

For the younger Napo Runa who have not spent long periods in the forest, the cultural significance of Galeras may be changing from an ancestral wilderness where yachac talk to spirits and receive their healing powers to an area that presents economic opportunities for ecotourism. While mysterious caves and spectacular waterfalls may inspire feelings of natural wonder in Western tourists, for the elder Napo Runa, they have a different meaning, and represent the secret domain of **supai** ‘spirits that may heal or cause sickness.’ Yachac like Don Casimiro tread a narrow line between the cultural and economic meaning of Galeras, and must decide whether the sharing of private information about the location of supai with outsiders may weaken shamanic power or spiritual communication lines.

### Community Formation around Napo-Galeras

The catalyst for colonist penetration into the north side of Galeras was the construction of the Hollín-Loreto road in late 1987. In March of the same year, a powerful earthquake shook Ecuador's

Amazon region. The northeast Amazon was effectively cut off from road transport to the west, and some important oil pipelines were ruptured. The United States Agency for International Development responded to the emergency and provided funds for the construction of bridges, assisting the Ecuadorian government in the completion of this road following the course of the Napo River to the northeast.

One consequence of the road was the division of the Galeras range from the unique bioregion around the Sumaco volcano to the north. Some colonists who were earthquake victims were resettled in the protected area of Sumaco by the Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization unbeknownst to the United States Agency for International Development, and this led to institutional conflicts (Long 1992). In 1988, both Sumaco and Napo-Galeras were declared National Forests, which was the lowest protection status and, even though a project was in place to create infrastructure with the help of international funding for Sumaco, there was no management plan for the protection of Napo-Galeras (Ferguson 1993).<sup>7</sup> In many of these areas, established farmers chose to expand their small farms rather than risk losing their lands by leaving for oil regions to seek temporary wage work.

Due to the arrival of new colonists and the farm expansion plans of current residents, the management plan called for legal measures to halt the advancing agricultural frontier. Indigenous forest management in the Napo employs the traditional slash-mulch strategy of forest clearing and rotating fields. The system requires large areas of forest since a small garden plot only remains productive for about three years, after which time it must lie fallow for about ten years.

According to Macdonald et al. (1993:19), only nine of the more than 30 Runa communities near the new road possessed community titles to their lands. The economic response of the indigenous communities to their new market access was to engage in more timber extraction without any clear management strategy.<sup>8</sup> Timber companies were responsible for reforestation, but they never fulfilled this role. As timber companies often decided to

deal with individuals instead of communities, factionalism resulted and communities witnessed the disappearance of their forest reserves. The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians embarked on a campaign to affiliate these disjointed and recently formed communities (Diez de Agosto, Santa Rosa de Arapino, and Asociación Galeras) as organization members and continue a sustainable timber project with funding from Cultural Survival and the World Wildlife Fund.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1987 and 1993, Runa and mestizo settlers from Tena and Archidona established five communities around Napo-Galeras, in some cases displacing indigenous inhabitants who had settled earlier from the Loreto and Avila area. The Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians was working with the communities along the new road to make a claim based on one global title. Members of some communities opposed this measure because they wanted to have individual titles to their lands. These colonists wanted to have the same stipulation against the selling of their lands while retaining individual titles. Moreover, from interviews in the field, I learned that some communities opposed the form of leadership that would be imposed by the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians, effectively creating small elites within relatively egalitarian communities. Some communities expressed the belief that the leaders of the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians were more concerned with national politics than local concerns (Perreault 2003).

The situation south and east of Galeras was significantly more problematic in terms of community land titles. Transportation to this region was via the Napo River, so market accessibility was more limited compared to the northern communities closer to the road. Colonists settled this region north of the Napo River, south of Galeras and each cleared their own fifty-hectare parcels in order to procure individual land titles. The communities organized together to form blocks of these allotments, choosing not to become Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians member communities. One community not affiliated with the federation, San Vicente, did not hold titles to their lands, and the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations proposed that it

be incorporated into the national park boundaries (FIPAD 1997:43). Two other communities in this southeast region, Asociación Galeras and Buen Pastor, established communal forest reserves for horticulture, hunting and fishing and set aside allotments for their children. Because of the distinctive nature of the colonists in southeastern Galeras – Runa and mestizo colonists originating from different places, each seeking their own fifty-hectare parcels – community organization did not proceed smoothly as it did in the north in Santa Rosa de Arapino, where stronger informal social controls, such as respecting neighbors' land claims, limited the extent of deforestation.

### **Napo-Galeras National Park**

Izhu Mangallpa Urcu negotiated with the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife to develop joint agreements for the management of protected areas with the cooperation of surrounding communities, acting as a buffer against illegal colonization. This strategy was employed because the government possessed title to the lands in question, and only through concerted grassroots action could the land's protection status be upgraded. The Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife's understanding of land adjudication procedures facilitated the conservation planning efforts.

Napo-Galeras National Park was officially established by the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife in March, 1994, as part of Sumaco Napo-Galeras National Park.<sup>10</sup> The National Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife and the Ecuadorian Air Force received the official credit for the park formation. The initial proposed size of the legally declared Napo-Galeras National Park section was approximately 21,600 ha, but this was reduced to 14,687 ha as a result of the contested land claims of surrounding communities, indicating the lack of agreement between previously adjudicated community boundaries and the park boundaries delineated by Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations. Through the combined efforts of Izhu Mangallpa Urcu, the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations, and government agencies including the Institute of

Water Resources, the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife, and the Institute of Cultural Patrimony, the surrounding communities signed agreements to respect the boundaries of the national park, yet enforcement was minimal. Izhu Mangallpa Urcu's role was critical to the demarcation by coordinating the food provisioning and contracting the survey team. The Center for Tropical Forest Investigations assisted with the physical demarcation of the first 20 km of the park's boundary, and enlisted one of the communities, Santa Rosa de Arapino, to take an active role. Around ten marketable varieties of fruit, nut and palm trees were planted along the boundary, providing a self-sustaining resource for the native inhabitants and serving as a visible warning to illegal frontier pioneers.

However, the problems of illegal hunting and logging continued, raising the question of whether there were sufficient faunal resources in the communities to prevent the inhabitants from engaging in illegal activities inside the park. There were no studies to examine the abundance or scarcity of fauna in the communities around Napo-Galeras, representing a significant oversight in the planning effort. Comprehensive management plans should include the environmental and social factors which bear on resource use (Chicchón 1995). The challenges which the communities faced in the southeastern portion of Galeras were greatest since they had the least market access, lived close to the subsistence level, and encountered the greatest pressures to engage in resource extraction inside the park.

In November, 2000, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization declared the Sumaco Napo-Galeras Park a World Biosphere Reserve, incorporating additional areas to form the reserve (931,215 ha). The proposal was presented by the Ministry of the Environment (which replaced the Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife) from an initiative in cooperation with the German Technical Co-operation through its ongoing Gran Sumaco Project (Lucas 2000). As a biosphere reserve, it was expected that most of the income for people living in the region would be earned through ecotourism activities, a strategy not without significant challenges.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates potential conflicts which may arise when indigenous actors play a pivotal role in management plans involving park demarcation activities. In the case of Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and Napo-Galeras National Park, the initial management plan was more akin to the Yellowstone model but with the idea of indigenous rather than government management and enforcement. As negotiations with communities continued, the management strategy shifted to more of a community participation model using extractive reserves. Since Izhu Mangallpa Urcu was the organization administering boundary demarcation activities, they were under suspicion by outside evaluators for making park boundaries to benefit their own interests (FIPAD 1997:53). In the end, the park boundaries that Izhu Mangallpa Urcu had initially surveyed were significantly altered through separate land claims from individual communities.

Because of the government contacts of the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations, Izhu Mangallpa Urcu was able to successfully lobby for a role in the joint-management plan for Napo-Galeras. This was achieved despite direct opposition by the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians. The Institute for Forestry, Natural Resources and Wildlife recognized that Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations had the capacity to organize the communities to help with the demarcation effort and to procure the resources to cover the expenses of the project. The lack of experts and shortage of funding for such projects in public sector agencies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization created an opening for Izhu Mangallpa Urcu and the Center for Tropical Forest Investigations to direct the joint-management plan for the park. Rudel (1995) argues that an informal social order which respects existing land claims effectively limits the extent of deforestation; however, in the case of Napo-Galeras, especially in the southeastern area, a physical legal boundary, in addition to the physical boundaries imposed by the rugged terrain, was established to encourage the development of informal social controls. In this area, community organizations

were the least advanced, and the only economic option for the colonists was farm expansion.

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### Endnotes

- 1 Runa is a Kichwa word for people, just as many other tribes throughout the Americas use the name of the tribe and the word for people synonymously and refer to themselves by this name. The Napo Runa are descended from the Omgua, Quijos, and other past indigenous groups (Rival 2002:31).
- 2 Izhu Mangallpa Urcu are Kichwa words that translate as “the Puma in the mountain at the end of the world.” Mountain refers to the cordillera Galeras, which is recognized by the Mamallactas as their sacred ancestral territory and serves as a source of myth for the Napo Runa as well as the Huaorani.
- 3 The major regional organizations of the Napo Runa in the Napo Province at the time of the study were: the Federation of Union Communes of Ecuadorian Amazon Natives; the Federation of Organizations of Napo Indians; the Federation of Indian and Campesino Organizations of the Napo; and the Association of Evangelical Indians of the Napo (Uquillas and Davis 1992). Many of these organizations are currently known under different names. The larger federation on the regional level is the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, and on the national level, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.
- 4 The term muntun is still used in the anthropological literature to describe Runa kinship groups (Uzendoski 2005:63). The term does not have the same significance that it had in the past, but it is still useful to understand how family groups are organized in the study area.
- 5 Six park guardians received training and were to receive monthly stipends of 250,000 sucres (≈\$63 US) from IMU/CIBT, including Don Casimiro and one of his sons (FIPAD 1997). However, payments were never made and the report suggests that CIBT mishandled project funds, eventually leading to the dissolution of the collaborative relationship between CIBT and IMU.
- 6 The Mamallacta family’s claims to Galeras should not be misunderstood as a factual, historical account, but should be seen as fitting into the rhetoric of indigenous identity and rainforest conservation prevalent in the 1990s. See Rogers (1996:91-93) for a more detailed discussion.
- 7 Ley Forestal y de Conservación de Areas Naturales y Vida Silvestre. Patrimonio Forestal del Estado. Art. 1. Between 1985 and 1987, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle declared an area covering 1,604,586 ha in the Napo and Sucumbios provinces as Patrimonio Forestal (‘National Forest’), published in the Official Registry No. 962, June 22, 1988.
- 8 The ban on logging concessions imposed in 1982 caused the forest products industry to become wholly dependent on agricultural colonists (Southgate and Whitaker 1992:797). It is estimated that as much as 25% of standing commercial timber is rendered unusable as a consequence of the poor transport and handling techniques of colonists (Southgate and Whitaker 1994:92).
- 9 According to Ferguson (1993), much of the enmity toward IMU was in reality directed at the CIBT, and originated from leaders of Cultural Survival, who instructed FOIN and Rucullacta to attack IMU’s legitimacy, without investigating the value of the foundation’s work on the demarcation.
- 10 Resolution No. 0009, published in the Official Registry No. 471, June 28, 1994.



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