

PERU

Yanesha: Another Indian Struggle For Land In Amazon Basin

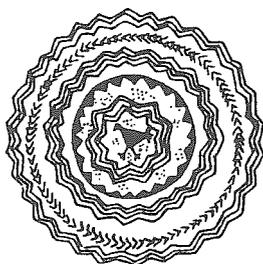
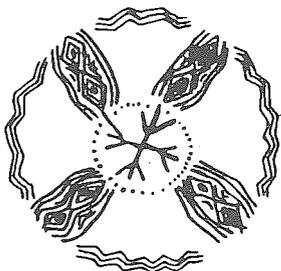
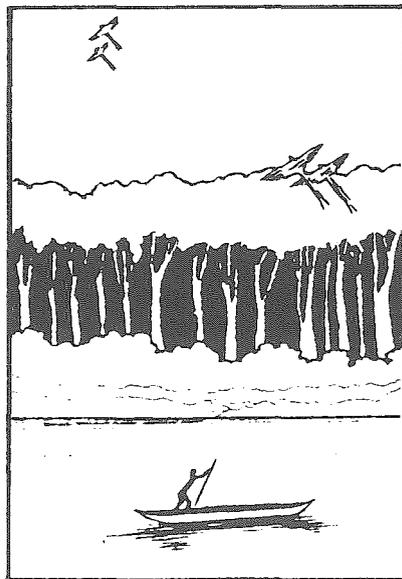
Through the insistence of Indian people and others sympathetic to their concerns, Peru maintains a process of granting communal titles to ancestral lands occupied and used by Indian people. Communities with titles are then officially recognized as *comunidades campesinas* in the Andean highlands and along the Pacific coast or as *comunidades nativas* in the jungle areas east of the Andes. There are currently more than 4,000 such communities in Peru.

There are also many Indian communities which have continual and habitual long-term use of their ancestral lands but which for a variety of reasons do not hold legal titles. Some communities are not recognized by the Peruvian government, others choose not to give the national government the authority to determine what always has been and always will be theirs, and others are too isolated geographically to actively participate within the national government's political or judicial spheres.

Ideally, communal land titles provide guarantees that protect the community from external threats to their land and that officially recognize on-going rights to function as an Indian community. However, in reality many communities face severe pressure from interests who wish to displace them, such as large landowners, mining companies, and lumber companies. Authorities from the national government often collaborate with those seeking to usurp Indian land. Energies of many communities are tied up for years with bureaucratic processes for establishing and maintaining title to their land.

The region of Oxapampa, east of Lima, has been a major corridor of access for development in the Peruvian jungle. Indian communities in the area experience extreme stress in maintaining their land. A major road which cuts into the area is bringing increasing numbers of *colonos* or homesteaders who are lured by the prospects of what mistakenly seems or may even officially be termed "unoccupied land." Ironically, many of the homesteaders are also Indian people, Quechua speakers who have been forced off their land in the mountains. For the highlanders, the major options are to migrate to the urban centers along the coast or try to continue farming by moving to the frontier towns of the jungle.

A study completed in July, 1986, by the Center for Amazon Research and Development (CIPA, Centro de Investigación y Promoción Amazonica, Av. Ricardo Palma 666-D, Miraflores, Lima 18, Peru) documents the long and vigorous struggle of the Yanesha Indians of the Comunidad Nativa Tsachopen near the town of Oxapampa to maintain rights to their land. In 1884 the Peruvian government granted the Catholic



church rights to establish a mission in the area and to function in a hazily defined role as “protector” of the Indians. The Yanasha have also been threatened by homesteaders and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an evangelical organization. After intense effort by the Yanasha, they received title to their land in 1976. But the title was annulled in 1981 as a result of strong pressure from the Catholic church, according to the CIPA documentation. Since then tensions have increased in the area as homesteaders have attempted to invade Yanasha land. In 1982, the Comunidad Nativa Tsachopen filed a court document called an *acción de amparo* which should provide immediate judicial protection against violation of constitutional rights. But for four years technically illegal judicial tactics have blocked consideration of the petition and violations of Yanasha land rights continue.

CIPA states that it “has protested this grave situation to the Peruvian government, demanding effective intervention of judicial, administrative, and church authorities to reinstate territorial rights to these Indian people of the Amazon who have now been displaced.”

Comunidad Native Tsachopen also makes an urgent call to national and international public opinion to lend support. They request that letters be sent to the following officials and that copies of the letters and any responses to the letters be sent to CIPA:

Dr. Alan García Perez, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Gobierno, Lima, Peru.

Señor Ministro de Justicia, Ministerio de Justicia, Lima, Peru.

Monseñor Luis Barbarén, Conferencia Episcopal de Acción Social, Rio de Janeiro 488, Jesús María, Lima 11, Peru.

MEXICO

Zapotec Weavers Discuss Origins of Designs

Zacariás Ruiz Hernandez and Emilia Gonzales de Ruiz, Zapotec weavers from the town of Teotitlan de Valle, near Oaxaca, were in the San Francisco Bay Area for the month of July. They sold their weavings and gave demonstrations of weaving techniques. During a conversation with SAIIC, Zacariás made the following comments.

I started to weave in 1958. My parents taught me. It is one of the jobs of parents to teach the children to weave. Already one of our sons and our daughter weave. The tradition comes to us through our ancestors.

Some designs, such as “flor de Oaxaca” have been used for many, many years. Designs like this are from the area. Also people are now interested in using the designs from the ruins at Mitla and Monti Alban. People who buy weavings are interested in these designs. Other designs I use are my own.

Now there is a rebirth of weaving using natural colors and dyes. People are asking their grandparents about the natural dyes that hadn't been used for a generation. Each family has its secrets on weaving and also

Emilia carding wool.



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