Abstract

Isolated Amazonian peoples such as the Urarina in Peru remain at risk of cultural and biological extinction from industrial exploitation and imported diseases. In the last seven years, many Urarina have died in epidemics of measles, cholera, pertussis, and malaria. The Peruvian government has encouraged oil exploration and logging in the Amazon without regard to Urarina rights, and the international treaty promoting indigenous rights that Peru ratified is not enforced. There are, however, two promising developments for indigenous survival. The first is the growing realization of biologists, ecologists, sociologists, and conservationists that conservation of biodiversity and global environmental protection are interconnected with indigenous rights. Secondly, the two declarations on the rights of indigenous peoples proposed by the Organization of American States and the United Nations are more specifically protective of indigenous rights than previous manifestos have been.

Les peuples isolés d'Amazonie tels que les Urarinas du Pérou encourent le risque d'extinction culturelle et biologique du fait de l'exploitation industrielle et des maladies importeés. Depuis sept ans beaucoup d'Urarinas sont morts à la suite d'épidémies de rougeole, de choléra, de coqueluche et de paludisme. Le gouvernement péruvien a encouragé l'exploration du pétrole et l'exploitation des forêts en Amazonie sans tenir compte des intérêts des Urarinas, alors que le traité international qui protège les droits des indigènes, bien que signé par le Pérou, n'est pas appliqué. Il y a pourtant deux phénomènes prometteurs pour la survie des peuples indigènes. D'une part les biologistes, les écologistes, les sociologues et les partisans de la protection de l'environnement ont réalisé que la préservation de la biodiversité et la protection globale de l'environnement sont étroitement liées aux droits des populations indigènes. D'autre part, les déclarations sur les droits des peuples indigènes proposées par l'Organisation des Etats Américains et par les Nations Unies sont, de manière plus spécifique que les manifestes précédents, plus protectives des droits des peuples indigènes.

Ciertos pueblos amazónicos aislados, tales como los Urarina del Perú, continúan sujetos al riesgo de su extinción cultural y biológica debido a la explotación industrial y a las enfermedades importadas. En los últimos siete años, muchos Urarinos han muerto debido a epidemias de sarampión, cólera, tos convulsiva y malaria. El gobierno peruano ha fomentado la búsqueda de petróleo y la explotación maderera en el Amazonas, sin preocuparse por los derechos de los Uranina, a la vez que que el tratado internacional de promoción de los derechos indígenas ratificado por Perú, no se lleva a la práctica. A pesar de ello, han surgido dos acontecimientos esperanzadores para la sobrevivencia de los indígenas. Primero, biólogos, ecologistas, sociólogos y conservacionistas se han dado cuenta que la conservación de la biodiversidad y la protección del medio ambiente del planeta están interconectadas con los derechos de los indígenas. Segundo, las dos declaraciones sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas propuestas por la Organización de Estados Americanos y las Naciones Unidas, ofrecen una protección más específica a los derechos de los indígenas que declaraciones anteriores.

The Road to Indigenous Extinction: Case Study of Resource Exportation, Disease Importation, and Human Rights Violations against the Urarina in the Peruvian Amazon

Richard Witzig and Massiel Ascencios

The Urarina are a seminomadic people who for 500 years have inhabited the Chambira and Urituyacu river basins north of the Marañon river in Peru, located 450 km from the department capital of Iquitos, a city of 340,000 located on the Amazon River (see Figure 1). The word *Urarina* originates from the Quechua root words of *ura* (below) and *runa* (people), meaning "people from below," but they call themselves *Kachá*, meaning "the people."[1] The Urarina have remained relatively isolated by choice and because of the unique geography where they live. They occupy 8,000 square kilometers of flooded blackwater river basins supplied by a giant swamp that prevents any contact from the north, east, or west. They have resisted outside religious influence from missionaries (earliest from the Jesuits and most recently from the Summer Institute of Linguistics) and cultural integration with colonists. These isolating factors likely account for the unique Urarina language and for why they have survived as a distinct people.

There is little written history of the Urarina, whose presence was first recorded by the Italian priest Pablo Maroni in 1738.[2] The German anthropologist/explorer Tessmann wrote the most complete ethnography of them in 1930.[3] Today the Urarina are a nonaggressive people of 4,000 individuals who

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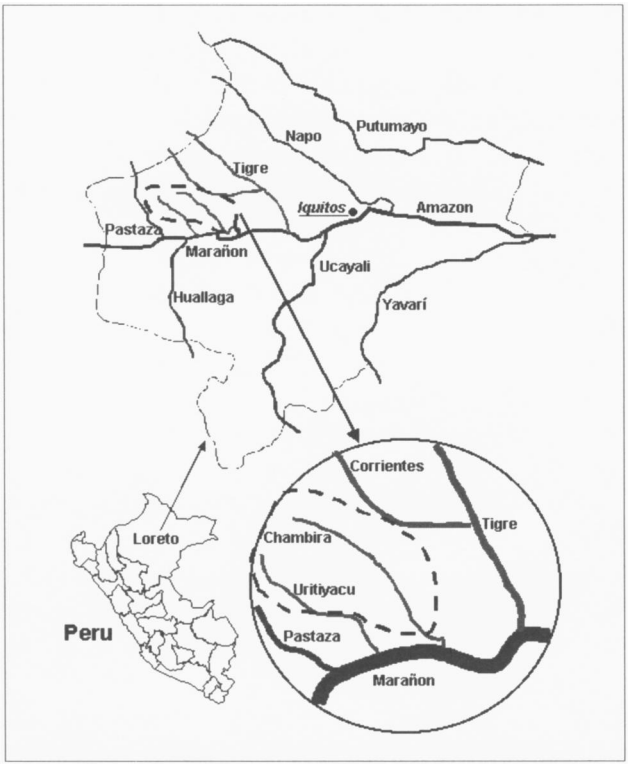

Figure 1. *Traditional lands in the Chambira, Urituyacu, and Corrientes river basins still inhabited by the Urarina in 1999. One oil concession occupies the southern half of their land, while another concession occupies the northern half (see note 6).*

still hunt by blowgun. They live a complete rainforest existence, extracting all they need from the poor soil and rich biodiversity of a blackwater Amazon ecology. Living in clans in villages of up to 100 individuals, they hunt monkey, sloth, wild pig, and deer inside the jungle and fish in the rivers. Their gardens contain cassava, papaya, bananas, other jungle fruits, and medicinal plants. They work cooperatively within their clan and the village, often working in community *mingas* to improve the village. Women perform most of the cooking, child care, and hauling of water and firewood. The men hunt and forage in the jungle, sometimes disappearing for days when food is scarce. Both sexes participate in agriculture and often fish together on day outings in their canoes. The Urarina are traditionally seminomadic; occasionally clans leave their village, either temporarily in search of

food on the rivers in the dry season, or to take up permanent residence in a new or existing village. Some of the men have learned to trade with outsiders in Spanish, but the Urarina still operate in a nonmonetary economy. The most remarkable aspects of the Urarina are their peaceful demeanor, their cultural and linguistic integrity, and their harmonious existence in the difficult rainforest ecology.

The Urarina are unique because their group, along with the Mayorunas (Matses) and the Piros, remains one of the largest isolated Amazonian indigenous groups in Peru without government recognition. Neither individuals or communities have been fully registered with the government, which means that they have neither citizen rights nor control over their lands. The relative isolation of the Urarina has been interrupted as their traditional territory has been invaded by colonists, loggers, river traders, drug-voyeur and survivalist tourists, and, most recently, multinational oil companies. These groups have economically exploited the Urarina and introduced serious diseases to them, threatening their way of life and their very survival.

This article documents medical, economic, and legal abuses of the Urarina, explores external factors affecting their future potential for continued survival as a people, and offers strategies to defend them, especially since their predicament is also representative of other existing indigenous peoples.

Resource Exportation

Surface Resources: Loggers, River Traders, and Colonists

Loggers, river traders, and colonists coming from Iquitos have recently escalated their efforts to exploit the Urarina and their land for surface resources.

Loggers (*madereros*) remove the best cedro (*Cedrela*) trees by "selective logging," a technique that has been proven to severely damage virgin rainforest.[4] Loggers supply bandsaws and employ outsiders as cutters, enticing some Urarina men to work with them as well. Because the Urarina utilize a nonmonetary/barter economy among themselves, they are often exploited and receive only trinkets in return for their work. In 1998, a *maderero* intimidated Urarina men from the Airico river into felling 800 *cumala* trees on their land by ax, and then sold the wood in Iquitos, paying them nothing. Indig-

enous groups are particularly vulnerable to slave-like practices like the one in this example.[5] The Urarina cannot expect help in this regard from the local government, since the office responsible for the Chambira river, the office of the mayor of Maypuco, is controlled by a *maderero*. The activities of this office have resulted in escalating wood extraction in the Chambira.

River traders (*regatones*) also extract resources through quantitatively unequal bartering with the Urarina. The Urarina trade wild meat, plantains, wood, and woven handicrafts (*cachihuangas* and *siyura* weavings, unique to the Urarina). In return, they have received used clothing, batteries, shotgun shells, sugar, and salt.

Colonists (*colonos* or *mestizos*, Peruvians entering the Amazon region in search of a better life) have taken up residence in the lower Chambira, but travel into the middle Chambira to expand their lands by establishing new agricultural plots (*chacras*). The colonists' main threat to the Urarina lies in their expansion into and compression of Urarina territory, thereby increasing disease risks, decreasing Urarina land access and thus affecting their food supply, and, through their increased presence, eroding their culture.

Subsurface Resources: Oil Companies

Urarina land comprises a flood zone believed to have significant oil reserves, the Chambira oil field. This field had been owned by the national oil company Petroperu, which has been largely privatized by the government of President Alberto Fujimori, despite public opinion against the move. After the restructuring of the national oil fields, the Chambira drilling rights for two blocks of land were transferred to Enterprise Oil of the United Kingdom in 1996 and 1997.[6] Enterprise was able to enter and exploit Urarina lands using a classic "divide and rule" scheme, by securing the signature of one individual whose views did not represent the group's wishes. This individual signed only on his own behalf, not as a representative of the Urarina, but he received a boat and motor from Enterprise Oil for his exclusive use. The Urarina nation were not properly represented and received nothing in return. Unfortunately, it is difficult to undo this type of fraudulent contract quickly; it has enabled the oil companies to establish them-

selves while the legal defense of the Urarina is being organized.

Enterprise subcontracted with Parker Drilling Company (Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA) and the Santa Fe Petroleum Co. (Bogota, Colombia) to drill the Chambira oil field's well at Santa Martha, an old Urarina community directly on the Chambira river, located in the heart of Urarina land but vacated temporarily by the seminomadic group. Construction of the oil field started in January 1997, with both barges and helicopters used to deliver equipment.[7] There was an ecological disaster even before Enterprise struck oil. In late April 1997, the steel bottom of a barge bringing up supply oil was punctured by a huge submerged capirona (*Calycophyllum*) tree 10 km downstream from Santa Martha, contaminating the middle and lower Chambira River with oil. The barge was then towed upstream to Santa Martha and surrounded by pylons in an attempt to control the oil slick.[8] Urarina *caciques* (leaders) reported that fish entering their grounds were contaminated by the oil, and that *bufeos* (Amazonian river dolphins, or *Inia geoffrensis*) became scarce in the main Chambira. Numerous incidents of direct river pollution plagued the Chambira until Enterprise finished with Santa Martha in December 1997 and moved on to its present inland site at Mangual, in upper Urarina territory. The rainforest pollution runoff from this site is almost certain to contaminate the Chambira as well. No longitudinal studies by the government or the oil companies on the impending ecological contamination, however, are being conducted.

A recently discovered source of Chambira river pollution is a waste pipe running from the Petroperu oil pumping station at Trompeteros on the Corrientes River into the Chambira tributary of the Pucuyacu River. River water sampling conducted from communities in the Pucuyacu and analyzed in April 1999 demonstrated toxic lead levels of 0.023 milligrams of lead per liter (average of 2 samples).[9] This level is 50% higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) "action level" of 0.015 milligrams per liter (which is intended for in-house use with lead-alloy pipes, not for natural water sources, which should have a lead level of zero).[10] When this level of lead in water is evaluated for effect on the aquatic wildlife, the danger is even more striking. The USEPA has calculated that long-term exposure to just 0.0025

milligrams of lead per liter for aquatic life will result in an "unacceptable effect"; the actual lead level stands at 9 times this danger level.[11] Even more ominous is the probability that the high lead levels are a marker for other toxins present in the waste dumped daily, and that poor health effects will not be related only to lead poisoning (which can cause anemia, physical and mental retardation in children, kidney disease, high blood pressure, and early death) but also to poisoning from other heavy metals such as mercury and cadmium, as well as organic waste chemicals.

Disease Importation

Loggers, River Traders, and Colonists = Measles, Cholera, Malaria, and Malnutrition

At two points, in 1988 and 1991, the introduction of loggers, river traders, and colonists into the region resulted in measles epidemics that killed Urarina adults as well as children.[12] Cholera, reintroduced into South America in January 1991, also spread upriver from Iquitos into the Chambira basin in September 1991 and October 1993. The cholera death rate was high in the Chambira system, typical of villages far from primary health care.[13] Community surveys by one of the authors (RW) in 1992 found that over 5% of the population died in affected villages in the initial cholera wave. The epidemic led the Urarina, who have generally reacted to danger by retreating, to abandon their community of San Pedro, where an astronomical 20% of the population had died.[14]

The presence of loggers, river traders, and colonists has also resulted in the appearance of other strains of gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases to which the Urarina have had no previous immunological exposure. Traders and colonists bring in foods of poor nutritional quality such as sugar and *aguardiente* (crude alcohol) that periodically contribute to the diet in some Urarina villages. The Urarina diet has traditionally been high in animal protein, which has protected them against malnutrition even under the stress of several infections. Now that their diet includes refined carbohydrate foods and alcohol, malnutrition and consequently disease morbidity and mortality are likely to increase.

Malaria from the *Plasmodium vivax* species has been endemic in the Chambira River system for at least 10 years,

but the most serious disease threat to the Urarina presently is the deadly *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria. Previously confined to small border areas of Peru, *P. falciparum* malaria has spread across northeastern Peru in the last 5 years and was introduced into the Chambira river system in early 1995.[15,16] The colonists on the lower Chambira river can seek treatment with drugs at government medical posts on the Marañon river, 10 to 30 km from their communities, but the Urarina had no access to treatment until recently (see below). Indigenous medical systems cannot develop efficacious ethnobotanical treatments in the face of sudden epidemic diseases, and the Urarina have no effective indigenous medicine for malaria. From a medical survey in May 1997 the author received reports of 86 Urarina deaths from febrile illness in the previous 18 months, illustrating the severe impact of the *P. falciparum* epidemic on the Urarina.

Drug-voyeur and Survivalist Tourists = Respiratory Viruses

The Urarina have recently been exposed to two groups of exploitive American "exotic" tourists. The exploitive nature of some "ecotourism" tours involving isolated indigenous groups has recently been reported.[17] In the last four years, a two-week "Wild Mushroom Traveling Road Show" run by a U.S.-based couple has exposed the Urarina to unethical ecotourism. The group travels up the Amazon, Marañon, and Chambira rivers to consume hallucinogenic plants such as *ayahuasca* and enter Urarina villages to "look at the Indians" and take unsolicited photographs.[18] Because of these actions, we are identifying this business as "drug-voyeur" tourism.

In March 1999, a group of U.S. survivalists—people who have prepared to survive in the anarchy of an anticipated breakdown of society—entered Urarina territory and intimidated the inhabitants of Santa Beatriz, threatening the community with weapons and demanding food and goods without payment. The villagers sent a boy two hours upstream by canoe to contact the authors for assistance. When confronted, the survivalists became hostile, brandishing their knives and a gun. However, because they had no permission from the Peruvian Navy to enter the Chambira, they were sufficiently disconcerted that they left within hours. The entry of these

survivalists into the Chambira is particularly alarming, as their web site suggests that they are devotees of the militaristic magazine *Soldier of Fortune.*

These U.S. tour groups have no permission from the Urarina to travel in their territory and provide no services to them.[19] Medical surveys performed by one of the authors (RW) in the spring of 1995 and in December 1998 immediately after some "drug-voyeur" tourist trips found children ill with respiratory ailments in the visited Urarina villages that were almost certainly brought by individuals on the tour, given that the epidemics followed the tours by a few days. Most children required antibiotics to recover from bacterial superinfections. Urarina *caciques* report other respiratory and gastrointestinal ailments that have started after more recent trips. The Urarina are alarmed at this invasion, especially as they know the tour operators are armed with weapons and take drugs, effectively mocking the Urarina religious ceremonies. The leaders of the affected villages signed a complaint against the tour operators in 1995 and recorded a videotaped complaint in March 1999 demanding that they be barred from Urarina lands. The complaints were received by the Peruvian Ministries of Tourism and the Interior in Iquitos and the U.S. Embassy in Lima in April 1995 and by the Peruvian Navy in April 1999, but no specific actions have yet been taken to protect the Urarina from future incursions. The Peruvian Navy in Iquitos appears to be very interested in preventing future incursions, however, and the authors are continuing to work with them on this objective. The drug-voyeur tour operators continue to advertise their tour in the magazine *Shaman's Drum*, whose stated purpose is "documenting and supporting the survival of existing shamanic cultures worldwide."[20] The survivalist group has a web site advertising its tours.[21]

Multinational Oil Exploration = Malaria, Pertussis, and Environmental Contamination

Enterprise Oil exploration and drilling offices are in Iquitos and Lima, but their subcontractor Santa Fe uses the convenient small Nanay river port community of Santa Clara, 10 km from Iquitos, to load their equipment onto barges for transport to the Chambira. In 1996–1997 Santa Clara suffered

the most intense and drug-resistant *P. falciparum* malaria epidemic of any area in Peru, as well as an outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough).[22] Over 60% of the *P. falciparum* malaria strains in Santa Clara are resistant to chloroquine (Aralen®) and pyrimethamine/sulfadoxine (Fansidar®), the two cheapest and most frequently used medications for *P. falciparum* in Peru. Resistant *P. falciparum* strains first appeared in the Urarina population in the Chambira in November 1997 and apparently had been imported into the Chambira by the oil workers loading the supply barges in Santa Clara, as they were the only outside individuals to travel to the Chambira. The importation of new drug-resistant strains of malaria is making the *P. falciparum* epidemic affecting the Urarina people much more difficult to control.[23]

Pertussis first appeared in February 1997 on the Chambira after drilling had started; it was almost certainly brought by the oil teams. Seven persons died from the two villages near Santa Martha, and the resulting pertussis epidemic in the Chambira claimed nine Urarina lives from Santa Rosa. Full mortality data from pertussis are not available from all areas of the Chambira basin. Because until recently the nearest government health post was 50 km away, the Urarina have not received the DTP vaccine to prevent pertussis, which can be among the most lethal infections in children with multiple infections.[24]

Environmental pollution from oil exploration and its health effects on Amazonian populations has been extensively documented elsewhere, and we predict that, unless preventive legal measures are taken, the Urarina will find themselves in worsened health from exposure to toxic substances such as those documented above.[25]

The long-term cultural, biological, and ecological effects on the Urarina from oil exploration is likely to be devastating. The Urarina rarely marry outside their group, and, unlike for other Amazonian peoples, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS are not yet a problem for them.[26] There is additional concern that exposure to oil workers (which may lead to sexual relations between foreign men and native women and the introduction of sexually transmitted diseases) may induce cultural breakdown and introduce a further disease burden to this population.

National and International Law Applicable to Urarina Rights

Peruvian Law

The Peruvian Constitution of 1979 recognized the legal existence and administrative and economic autonomy of both Andean (*campesino*) and Amazonian indigenous (*nativo*) communities. Their land rights were defined as "*inalienables, imprescriptibles, e inembargables*" (inalienable, permanent, and not subject to embargo). In 1984 the civil code used the same unequivocal language in establishing that campesino and native communities were entities of permanent public interest.[27]

Peru's new constitution, ratified on October 31, 1993, contains two articles (Articles 88 and 89) directly pertaining to the rights of Andean and Amazonian indigenous peoples, the language of which actually appears weaker with respect to the legal right to self-determination of these populations.[28] Article 88 guarantees the right of individual and group land ownership but leaves out the key terms "inalienable" and "without embargo," used in the above two documents, that would provide for optimal land security. In addition, this article declares that the state has the right to reclaim any land left fallow for more than two years, thus giving the government the right to seize and sell any land that is not currently being inhabited, even if it is essential hunting and gathering land. Article 88 therefore weakens the legal and land rights of the seminomadic Urarina. Article 89 states that the government respects the cultural identity of all indigenous peoples, and that indigenous communities have legal existence and are persons "*juridicas*" (having legal personality). This article also provides the right to organization and land titleship as well as the right of persons to sell their land once they have obtained title. Nevertheless, although recognizing the legal existence of the Urarina, it provides them with no protection. The Urarina still have no legal title to the land they inhabit, and the sale of land is a concept unknown to them.

Other new Peruvian statutes will also affect the future of the Urarina. The new 1995 Land Law #26505, "Private investment, ownership of lands of national territory and native and campesino communities," encourages the incorporation

of forest land by anybody who will buy and "develop" it, promoting a situation in which market forces dictate land ownership based on the estimated worth of available resources.[29] The Urarina, who operate in a nonmonetary economy in which land ownership or sale is a foreign concept, are left at a distinct disadvantage. Article 7 provides some measure of protection in that it prohibits the exploitation of natural resources on indigenous land without prior agreement and payment negotiated with the owners of that land, but it also states that the government has the right to authorize any resource exploitation if a report from the Ministry of Energy and Mines claims that the national interest will benefit from such exploitation. Article 7 further states that the landowner must be compensated by the developer if exploitation is done with or against the landowner's will, with the "just price and indemnity corresponding." The law, however, does not define who is qualified to ascertain the "just price," leaving open the possibility that it will be set by unscrupulous interested parties.

International Law

The most valuable international document promoting the rights of indigenous peoples to date is the Convention #169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, sponsored by the International Labor Organization.[30] Having ratified this convention in 1993 and incorporated it into national law, Peru is theoretically obliged to recognize its provisions.[31] This international convention recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to autonomous existence, given the unique cultures, languages, customs, and organization of each human group. Article 13 supports indigenous peoples' rights to survival, to the protection of their territory, and to integral defense of their ground, overground, subsoil, and natural resources. Article 15 specifically addresses subsurface resources and the duty of governments to consult with their citizens before any exploitation of such resources, as well as the peoples' right to receive fair compensation for any damages incurred.

The United Nations designated 1993 as "The Year of Indigenous Peoples" and 1994–2004 as the "Decade of Indigenous Peoples."[32] Still, the UN has yet to take any official

position on indigenous land rights. Articles 25–30 of the draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples call for complete protection of indigenous people's lands.[33] As of May 1999, however, this draft had not yet been submitted to the UN General Assembly for approval.

The Organization of American States (OAS) has developed an interest in indigenous rights, recently calling for a suspension of illegal oil exploration in the Uwa people's land by Shell and Occidental Petroleum.[34] The OAS proposed an American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on February 26, 1997.[35] This declaration is the most comprehensive international document to date promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. The Preamble succinctly recognizes important problems facing indigenous groups, including human rights abuses visited upon them and their unique concept of land use, citing "[t]he frequent deprivation afflicting indigenous peoples of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, within and outside their communities, as well as the dispossession of their lands, territories and resources . . . " (Paragraph 2) and adding

> that in many indigenous cultures, traditional collective systems for control and use of land, territory and resources, including bodies of water and coastal areas, are a necessary condition for their survival, social organization, development and their individual and collective well-being; and that the form of such control and ownership is varied and distinctive and does not necessarily coincide with the systems protected by the domestic laws of the states in which they live. (Paragraph 5)

The Preamble also asserts the legitimacy of international law concerning indigenous peoples,

> [r]ecognizing that indigenous peoples are a subject of international law, and mindful of the progress achieved by the states and indigenous organizations, especially in the sphere of the United Nations and the International Labor Organization. . . . (Paragraph 7)

The declaration further advocates for indigenous peoples:

- full observance of human rights (Article 2),

- the full recognition of legal personality by states (Article 4),
- special guarantees against discrimination (Article 6),
- rights to health and well-being (Article 12),
- rights to self-government and indigenous law (Articles 15 and 16), and
- intellectual property rights (Article 20).

Articles pertaining to cultural integrity, the right to environmental protection, traditional forms of ownership and cultural survival, and rights to land, territories, and resources promote indigenous land rights in more protective detail than previous declarations.

This declaration could be an effective tool for indigenous rights, but only if the OAS takes a leadership role when member states translate the terms of the declaration into law. At present, a deterrent to indigenous implementation is the unrealistic requirement for groups filing a human rights complaint with the OAS to have exhausted all of the national legal appeal possibilities before bringing their complaint to the OAS. Under the current OAS American Convention on Human Rights, this requirement can only be waived when "the domestic legislation of the state concerned does not afford due process of law for the protection of the right or rights that have allegedly been violated." Making this legal argument, however, would likely be more expensive and time-consuming than fulfilling the original requirement of exhausting all national appeals.[36] While a standard feature of international law, this requirement threatens to render the flowery language of the declaration largely useless even if codified into international law.

Outside Agencies' Interaction with the Urarina

Peruvian Agencies

The Peruvian government had almost no presence in the Chambira River basin until 1998, when they opened a small health post in Nueva Esperanza. Before these developments, the nearest health post was in Concordia, which is more than one week from Urarina territory by canoe and was thus nearly impossible for the Urarina to use.

In 1995, the Peruvian nongovernmental organization

Centro Para el Desarrollo del Indígena Amazónico (CEDIA) received permission from the Peruvian Department of Agriculture to conduct a population survey on behalf of the Urarina as the first necessary step for them to legally claim land titlement. CEDIA petitioned the government because they knew no census of the Urarina had yet been done; the Urarina themselves were not involved in the petition process.[37] The survey began in November 1995 and had not yet been completed in December 1998, when CEDIA downgraded their Chambira Urarina activities because of organizational and financial difficulties. CEDIA had been using only one field worker for the massive task of finding and counting all of the Urarina. As of December 1998, CEDIA had counted more than 3,200 Urarina in the Chambira basin alone. There are also Urarina in the Urituyacu River and in tributaries of the Corrientes River; the Amazonian Indigenous People's Health Project (see below) counted more than 500 in April 1999. The actual number of Urarina is probably more than 4,000 individuals, a large number for an isolated Amazonian group.

The Defensoria del Pueblo is a government agency located in Lima that is responsible for monitoring abuses of communities relating to land usage and human rights. This agency was initially informed of the Enterprise Oil situation affecting the Urarina by the authors in July 1997, and full briefings were provided for them in November 1997 and April 1999. As of May 1999, the agency had not begun any investigation.

Foreign Agencies

Of the four foreign organizations that have entered Urarina territory, two have demonstrated commitment to Urarina physical and cultural survival, while two have had a negative or zero impact.

The Amazonian Indigenous People's Health Project (AIPHP), founded by one of the the authors (RW) in 1992, has performed medical surveys and disease treatment, supplied medicines, and trained Urarina village health workers (VHW) in basic medical care and public health on twelve separate trips to the Chambira basin from 1992 to 1999, with a total of 19 months in the field. Through this project, the epidem-

ics of measles, acute respiratory illnesses, cholera, and malaria affecting the Urarina were documented and a primary health care scheme started.[38] This continuing project has collaborated with Fundacion Alemana Ayuda a los Nativos (FAAN) since 1997 and became affiliated with Doctors for Global Health (DGH) in January 1999.[39] DGH/AIPHP is a medical support entity for FAAN, helping with surveying, documentation, materials, and volunteer personnel. DGH/AIPHP is also coordinating the legal effort to unite all the Urarina lands, believing that land control is essential to future Urarina health. It completed an independent Urarina population survey in the Urituyacu and Corrientes rivers in April 1999 that documented over 500 previously uncounted Urarina. DGH/AIPHP and FAAN also coordinated the water sampling that documented lead poisoning in the Chambira River in April 1999. They are currently performing further toxicological tests.

FAAN is a Germany-based medical NGO that started a comprehensive health project in the Chambira basin in March 1998.[40] FAAN and DGH/AIPHP are working together with regional political and medical structures to provide medical education and supplies locally in a continuing primary health care project for all 34 villages in the Chambira River basin. FAAN is commited to a sustainable project with goals similar to those they accomplished in a continuing 25-year health and empowerment project with another indigenous group, the Asháninkas, in the Pachitea River area. Public health measures (vaccines, oral rehydration, antibiotics) are being used to curtail threatening disease incursions, using villages at the mouth of the river as sentinel disease sites to prevent epidemics from advancing northward. After negotiation with the public health authorities, the first vaccination campaign in the river area took place in April 1999 with vaccines supplied by the government. After FAAN presented their mortality and morbidity data concerning the Urarina, the Loreto Public Health Department became more interested in participating in health interventions in the Chambira. Working with government health and education departments, FAAN and DGH/AIPHP are helping to create educational opportunities (including the first secondary school in the Chambira) and are planning interventions intended to improve the health

and prospects of the Urarina people.

From July 1995 to June 1997, Cultural Survival, Inc. sponsored a project called the Amazonian People's Resource Initiative (APRI). Ostensibly a project to aid Urarina health and development, it received $50,000 over two years from the Echoing Green Foundation, yet to our knowledge APRI personnel have spent only one month in Urarina territory since grant monies became available in July 1995.[41] Thus, to date the positive impact on the health of the Urarina has been nonexistent.

For the 30 years prior to 1997, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL or ILV, for Instituto Linguistico de Verano) had an American representative living intermittently in the Urarina community of Nueva Esperanza. The SIL is an evangelical organization of linguists who attempt to influence the societies in which they work by translating the Bible into native languages. Colby and Dennett's recent book has documented the history of the SIL in dividing indigenous peoples and even helping oil companies enter indigenous areas.[42] Indeed, SIL helped Enterprise Oil gain entrance into Urarina land by arranging for a Urarina individual under their influence to sign the paper deal described earlier "allowing" Enterprise Oil access to Santa Martha.

Conclusion

Ninety percent of the indigenous people in the Americas perished in the colonial period, mostly from imported infectious diseases. Isolated Amazonian peoples such as the Urarina, who have managed to keep their culture and language intact, still remain at risk of cultural and biological extinction from multinational technological threats like oil drilling and logging.

There may still be time for legal reform and political interest to help the Urarina. Since Peru has ratified the ILO Convention #169, which advocates for the defense of indigenous cultures, and has implemented some national-level legislation, it could legally recognize Urarina territory. This would lead to Urarina self-determination and legal control of their own destiny. Yet this scenario is unlikely because (1) there is no international mechanism to ensure accordance with the international agreements Peru has signed, nor are

nongovernmental organizations very active on this topic, and (2) the main Peruvian political factions have shown little interest in the human rights of their indigenous peoples, even those exposed to slave-like practices. Peruvian politicians must examine the evidence that the government of Peru has ceded some control of Urarina territory to the multinational oil and logging interests, and that they are essentially functioning as silent spectators to human rights and environmental abuses of their own Amazon region and people. Potential good news is that the new declaration of the Organization of American States could encourage compliance with international human rights standards and construction of laws providing real protection for indigenous peoples. It would be optimal for the Urarina if the OAS were to undertake a mission investigating their situation firsthand with the goal of filing a report detailing the irregularities found and thus to ensure the development of the Urarina and to reduce their suffering from resource exploitation, pollution, and imported diseases leading to physical and cultural dissolution—factors that have led to the death of countless indigenous groups in the Americas.

Cultural integrity remains a concern for the Urarina. Modern Latin American nations have different strategies for dealing with Amazonian indigenous groups. The Brazilian response has been to grant indigenous peoples land reserves without providing them with protection from intruders such as mining, oil, farming, and colonial interests.[43] The Peruvian scheme has been the opposite: not to grant reserves, but rather to "deculturate" and "Peruvianize" their indigenous peoples.[44] For example, Iquitos, the provincial capital, has been largely populated by indigenous groups with no urban skills, thus entering Peruvian society at the very bottom rung of the social ladder. The Urarina appear to be approaching a point at which they will be forced involuntarily to assimilate into the dominant culture or else die off. They will have to "Peruvianize" or perish.

International conservation organizations potentially have a positive role to play in indigenous peoples' rights. The ecology of the blackwater river systems where the Urarina live is particularly fragile; once it is damaged, repair takes a longer time and is more difficult than in whitewater systems. Al-

though blackwater systems are low-nutritional ecosystems and are therefore less hospitable to humans, their biodiversity is equal to or greater than that of other rainforest systems.[45] Evidence is accumulating demonstrating that indigenous peoples can remain self-sufficient in their own territory guarding the integrity of their fragile ecology. This is the best way to conserve the rainforest environment and biodiversity, which will benefit the entire world.[46] Clearly, global environmental protection is connected to the rights of indigenous peoples.

The two fundamental human rights to life and to health provided by both the Constitution of Peru and international law are currently being violated by many of the actors described above.[47] While one must acknowledge Peru's need to exploit natural resources for economic development, this need cannot justify violations of human rights. The Urarina will likely need political and technical assistance from outside Peru if they are to avoid joining the long line of extinct cultures and peoples left behind by the ongoing colonization of the Western hemisphere.

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Contrary to APRI claims of a health care, educational, empowerment, and resource program on their website, the authors' personal experience in the Chambira with the Urarina indicates that the APRI presence in the Chambira from the 45 months from July 1995 to April 1999 spanned one month, hardly the amount of time needed to perform a project as comprehensive as advertised.

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