

Othering National Identity  
Alterity and Indigenous Activism in Otavalo, Ecuador

by

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To Blanca Chancoso

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### Blanca Chancoso's Courage

In January 2001, only one year after the *levantamiento* (uprising)<sup>1</sup> of January 2000 had brought down the presidency of Jamil Mahuad, the Ecuadorian highlands and eastern lowlands were again paralyzed by massive indigenous protest. Thousands of indigenous demonstrators blocked main highways, halted the delivery of their agricultural production to local markets, and went to Quito—the national capital—and other cities to join the marches protesting against the government of Gustavo Noboa. Once again, *indígenas* (indigenous persons) were putting the Ecuadorian government in check.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since colonial times, non-indigenous persons have used the term *levantamiento* to refer to uprisings of indigenous peoples. Indigenous leaders choose this term to define the first contemporary, pan-regional, indigenous uprising in June 1990, calling it *Levantamiento Nacional Indígena* (National Indigenous Uprising). The idea was to distinguish it from national strikes, done by class-based organizations, and to establish continuity with *levantamientos* during the colonial and republican periods (Zamosc 1994a:37; L. Macas 12/2/2004).

<sup>2</sup> For the *levantamiento* of January 2001, see Acosta et al. (2001); and the Journal *Iconos* No. 10). For both *levantamientos* of January 2000 and January 2001, see Lucero (Lucero 2001). For the *levantamiento* of January 2000, see Dieterich (2001); Hernández et al. (2000); Gerlach (2003); Ponce (2000); and CONAIE (2000).

The *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador: CONAIE) had set the levantamiento in motion to protest against the neoliberal economic measures dictated by President Gustavo Noboa. In contrast to previous contemporary levantamientos, the Ecuadorian state tried to repress the mobilization applying unusual levels of violence. The government declared the country in a state of emergency and arrested hundreds of indigenous demonstrators. In Quito, police set siege upon thousands of indígenas who had concentrated in the campus of the *Universidad Politécnica Salesiana* (Salesian Polytechnic University). In the provinces, troops shot several demonstrators dead.

Trying to mediate the dialogue between the indigenous leadership, which threatened to continue the protests, and the executive branch, which refused any negotiations until the protests stop, the National Congress in Quito called the indígenas to present their demands. On January 31, at the height of the levantamiento, three designated indigenous leaders from the highlands, one woman and two men wearing traditional costume, went to the Congress. At the entrance, which was swarming with people, the following exchange took place:

Spokesman: “We are coordinating to know who is going to come in.”

Indigenous woman: “Yes, we are the leaders.”

Police officer, aggressively loud: “Let’s see. Your name!”

Unknown voice in the background: “Leaders? From where, how, when?”

Police officer, again loud: “Your name!”

Indigenous woman: “What did you say?”

Police officer: “What is your name? [We need] Your name to...”

Indigenous woman, angry: “Don’t you know how to treat persons well?”

Other unknown voices: “...to announce it [to congress].” “...to bring you inside.”

Indigenous woman: “You need to say *señora* (madam)! You are not going to call me *mi hijita* (my little daughter)! I am not your little daughter!

Police officer, changing radically his tone from aggressive to cordial: “Please, your name?”

Indigenous woman: “Good. You need to learn how to treat [us] as persons! Respect me!”

Police officer: “Let’s see, please, your name?”

Indigenous woman: “Say to me, ‘*Señora*, [what is] your name?’”

Police officer: “*Señora*, [what is] your name?”

Indigenous woman: “Good. Blanca Chancoso.”

Police officer: “*Señora* Blanca Chancoso.”

Indigenous woman: “That’s it.”

I watched this incident in a video recording, a day after it had occurred. At the time of the uprising, while pursuing an M.A. degree in Latin American Studies in Ecuador, I occasionally worked and volunteered as a video producer and instructor for the CONAIE. The video was shot by a foreign activist who, like I, was a member of CONAIE’s Department of Communication. There, we were busy documenting the uprising and counteracting the government’s media campaign against the mobilization. Using Power Point presentations sent to electronic mailing lists, we reported on government repression. A few days into the uprising, the government realized that its strategy had backfired. The repression had incited more mobilization rather than dissipating it. Eventually, the government backed down, and the uprising was seen as a triumph for the indigenous movement.

The indígena embroiled with the police officer was Blanca Chancoso, a renowned leader of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement. In the altercation, she was not only demanding respect from a brusque police officer but also bringing forward an indigenous moral critique on the history of interethnic relations in Ecuador. The presence of the video camera might have compelled the officer to yield to Blanca Chancoso’s demands, but the significance of the incident lays in what she did: she preempted him from treating her paternalistically. She cut off in advance the possibility for the officer to led the

interaction into a paternalistic framework, even though perhaps he was not going to do so.

Blanca Chancoso's acute awareness of the way in which power permeates interethnic interactions is an outcome of indigenous subaltern experience. Not long ago, it was common for non-indígenas<sup>3</sup> to address indigenous adults as "mi hijito" or "mi hijita" with the intention of restricting their power to act at their own discretion, implying that the indígenas, just as children, were unable to know what was good for them and needed protection.

Non-indígenas reserved the terms "*señor*" (Mister) and "*señora*" (Madam), as well as "*don*" and "*doña*" (honorific title used before the first name), to address socially respectable non-indígenas, at the top of local hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> They also avoided the use of the word "*usted*" (formal you), the polite form of address in Spanish, when addressing an indígena. Instead, they used the informal "*tú*" or "*vos*" (informal you), a term reserved for friends and family members who are not your seniors. In brief, indígenas, even unknown persons, were never addressed as señor/señora, don/doña, or usted.

<sup>3</sup> I use the term non-indígena as an analytical category to refer to non-black, non-indigenous Ecuadorians. To refer to them, scholars have used the terms *blanco* (white), *mestizo*, and since the 1980s *blanco-mestizo* (white-mestizo). These terms muddle local usage and meaning, which varies across time and space, with analytical categorization. In addition, persons may choose a category but have another foisted on them. Furthermore, I consider that the term blanco-mestizo implies a false homogeneity and hides discrimination within this category (See Roitman 2009). Using non-indígena allows thinking about social categorization in relational and processual terms. When referring to local usage, I use the term blanco in Spanish, without translating it to English. I consider that its translation, "white," does not render appropriately all the complexities of meaning deployed in local usage.

<sup>4</sup> Locally, these were members of the respectable class, who—like the *gente decente*, decent folks or people of worth, in Cuzco, Peru, studied by Marisol de la Cadena (de la Cadena 1998, 2000)—did not self-identify as mestizos and articulated their social superiority in terms of a racialized morality.



Treating indígenas paternalistically, non-indígenas imposed an oppressive fictional intimacy in which indígenas could not demand respect as adult persons (Casagrande 1981: 260; de la Torre 1999: 101; Meisch 2002: 206; Pallares 2000: 274). This treatment was naturalized inasmuch as indigenous subordination and non-indigenous dominance were taken for granted. As indigenous professional Segundo Ramos claims, “For them (non-indígenas), there was no racism. To say ‘mi hijito’ to the indio (Indian) was the standard behavior. It was not seen as racism because they considered that by saying ‘mi hijito,’ they were treating you well” (9/20/2006).

In addition, indígenas could neither display aggressive behavior against nor give orders to non-indígenas. These were challenges to the social hierarchy, and would have provoked disciplinary action, often with the complicity of local authorities and police (Butler 1981: 282; Korovkin 2001: 47; Villavicencio 1973: 119-120). Under this social framing, the scene at the entrance of Congress constitutes a reversal of roles: the subaltern india tells the dominant non-indio, none other than a policeman, what is the proper way to behave, and the latter submits, conducting himself accordingly. If we were to ask, “What is it that’s going on here?” in Erving Goffman’s sense (1974), we would find out that the principles of organization that govern events of interethnic interaction had changed dramatically in a few decades.

After watching the video, I was utterly impressed by Blanca Chancoso’s courage and determination. I could not avoid comparing her behavior with the image, stereotypical but no less factual, of the subservient and passive indígena—a behavior that I have witnessed in my homeland Peru and in Ecuador. In Otavalo, according to Lynn Meisch, some indígenas still knelt in front and kissed the hand of non-indígenas up until the 1990s

(2002: 214). If a few decades ago, most indígenas and non-indígenas were predisposed to play their respective roles of submission and dominance—as several researchers have attested (Casagrande 1981: 261; Rosero 1982: 108)—today indigenous activists are prompt to denounce the pervasive workings of racism and its paternalistic masquerades—as Blanca Chancoso demonstrates. Thinking that not long ago the conditions of possibility for an indigenous woman to treat a policeman in a domineering manner were nonexistent, I could not help but ask myself: Where does Blanca Chancoso’s courage come from? What is exactly at stake in her hyperconsciousness about interethnic relations?

On July 12, 2008, in the early afternoon, a dancing party of around fifty people came out of a school in the city of Otavalo. Most of them were indígenas and the rest, around a dozen, including myself, were mestizos. Performing the heavy stamping steps that characterized indigenous dancing in the province of Imbabura, the party moved to the lively rhythms of five musicians leading the way. The musicians played a guitar, two *bandolines*—a mandolin-like instrument with fifteen strings—a violin, a harmonica, and a flute. The dancers moved forward, but following the spontaneous call of any of the participants, they formed a big circle, changing the direction of rotation when the music moved into the next harmonic sequence. After some turns, they moved forward again. All of this dancing and merriment blocked the traffic several times, especially at street intersections. Car drivers, instead of complaining, cheered the dancers with joyful shouts.

The festivity was the *Gallo Pasai* (offering of roosters) in the community of San Luis de Agualongo, the place to which we were going. The two *priostes* (sponsors) of the

festivity were two male indígenas who danced behind the leading musicians. Both held a living white rooster with one hand, maneuvering the bird from their legs to keep it in upright position. The birds had colored ribbons tied to their bodies and dollar bills attached to their feathers. A mestiza, carrying a bottle and a glass, was serving *trago* (sugar-cane liquor) to the participants. The street dancing went on for many blocks, until it reached a traffic circle, close to the Pan-American Highway. From there, two rented buses took the high-spirited partygoers a few kilometers north, up to the entrance to the community of San Luis de Agualongo. We got off and, following orders from the priostes, waited next to the highway.

A few minutes later, a youth wearing a *Coraza* costume joined the party. The *Coraza*, which means armor in Spanish, is the leading character in the *Fiesta del Coraza*, a festivity honoring the patron saint of Otavalo, San Luis Obispo. Representing majestic and beneficent authority, the *coraza's* costume is an outlandish medley. According to Meisch,

The *Coraza* ... wears a spectacular costume: shiny white pants and a shirt decorated with sequins, appliqués, buttons, gilt trim, fake pearl necklaces, and a plumed cocked hat hung with costume jewelry chains, beads, and pendants that hide the *Coraza's* face and head. He rides a horse, wears shoes, and carries an umbrella, all status symbols associated with whites in an earlier era (2002: 260).<sup>5</sup>

After someone brought two horses, the party proceeded to go down a curved road leading to a soccer field, three hundred meters away. The priostes rode on horseback, one of them still holding the rooster. Lacking an extra horse, the *Coraza* was in the front row of people walking down. Many other people, some of them also bringing roosters, joined the group. Two men carried a pole by the ends with a dozen roosters hanging down by their

feet. On the way down, the sound of banging firecrackers welcomed the party. In the field, at a central position at the perimeter, there was a raised stage with a canopy, flanked by big loudspeakers mounted on tripods. At other sides of the perimeter, there were many booths with food and games.

While an announcer animated the event, the priestes reached the stage, dismounted, and were welcomed by the authorities of the *cabildo*, the elected community council. Meanwhile, the Coraza, rather than staying standing on the floor, got up on a horse. The authorities gave a bucket of chicha (corn beer) to the priestes for distribution among their party. The priestes offered the roosters to the president of the *cabildo*, who, in turn, gave a speech in Spanish expressing gratitude, congratulating the participants, and calling for indigenous solidarity. After this, all the other persons carrying roosters gave them to the treasurer, who counted them and put them away.

After receiving the roosters, the authorities gave plenty of food and drink to the sponsors and their party. Then, in the middle of drinking and merriment, the sponsors cajoled half jokingly two persons into accepting the responsibility of sponsoring the festivity next year. In the meantime, many other parties from other communities, bringing their own bands, had arrived and were dancing in the esplanade. The announcer had welcomed them greeting the communities. Needless to say, dancing, drinking, and merriment continued throughout the night.

As in other indigenous festivities in Ecuador that I have attended, the announcers constantly and explicitly spoke of valuing and maintaining indigenous culture. They spoke mostly in Spanish, but once in a while they shouted, “Que viva runa causai!”

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<sup>5</sup> For the Fiesta del Coraza, see Ares Queija (1988), Butler (2006), Meisch (2002), Rohr (1997),

(Long live indigenous culture!) mixing Spanish and Kichwa.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the organizers had set up a booth, as a micro-museum, to display indigenous attire of earlier usage and varied indigenous crops.

The festivity demonstrated the creative cultural transformations that make tangible a sense of historical continuity. As Butler argues,

“Traditions” can be found to have shallow roots, even if they seem to link to the distant past. If not strictly speaking “invented” in the sense of inauthentic (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), they can be shown to be a half-conscious attempt to connect to the past as imagined. In some respects, Otavaleños may be more “andean” than they were a century ago (2006: 374).

In San Luis de Agualongo, indígenas took from two traditional festivities to celebrate a contemporary one. In addition, this was not a folkloric event geared to tourists; it was a celebration by and for indígenas. This is what Butler calls “self-conscious indigenous revival” (2006: 393).

A few years ago, the Gallo Pasai and the Fiesta del Coraza had very different purposes and meanings. The Gallo Pasai, also called *Gallo Capitán* (Rooster Captain), was part of the ritualized reproduction of social hierarchies and distribution of prestige in the hacienda regime. This consisted of rights and obligations for both sides of the land tenure structure—wealthy non-indígena hacendados on one side, and poor indigenous laborers on the other—in frequently ritualized “contests of material and symbolic reciprocity among unequals” (Turner 1993: 42). This was a system of what Guerrero calls “unequal reciprocity,” in which indigenous peasants provided unfree labor and the hacendado, access to hacienda resources (Guerrero 1991: 162). The sponsorship of festivities by the indígenas was integral to this regime. Indigenous sponsors achieved

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Walter (1981).

adulthood and status among their peers, and hacendados were accepted as legitimate tutelary authorities by means of their participation (Kyle 1999: 136).<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally, the Gallo Pasai was celebrated the last days of June, at the end of the *Fiestas de San Juan* (Festivities of Saint John)—which today, following the indigenous revival, are often called *Inti Raymi* (Kichwa: Festivity of the Sun). The hacendado or priest selected the sponsor of the fiesta, the capitán, giving him a live chicken.<sup>8</sup> With the help of relatives and supporters, the capitán organized and financed the festivity, paying for food, drink, and live music. The day of the festivity, the peasants first celebrated in the house of the capitán. Then, they went to the yard of the hacienda house to give a dozen roosters hanging from a pole to the hacendado. He reciprocated distributing food and drink for all. Afterwards, the peasants returned to their communities and celebrated for a week (Guerrero 1991: 166; Korovkin 1998: 136). Participating in cultural reproduction, the priest gained respect, the peasants bound themselves to the hacienda, and the hacendado made himself into a good *patrón* (master), strengthening and legitimizing his paternalistic dominance (Guerrero 1991: 189; Thurner 1993: 65).

The Fiesta del Coraza was a much more costly ritual sponsorship (Butler 2006: 132). Traditionally, the festivity included the presentation of one or two Corazas to the community in the *Fiesta Chica* (small festivity), during Easter, and the proper celebration

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<sup>6</sup> See also Butler (2006: 372).

<sup>7</sup> See also Guerrero (1991), and Lyons (2006).

<sup>8</sup> In Ecuador, religious institutions, such as archdioceses and orders, owned many haciendas until the land reform of the 1970s. During colonial times, religious institutions owned more land than private individuals. They increasingly gained land through donations, which were common at that time. Some haciendas were autonomous theocratic regimes (Crespi 1971: 227), run by priests, until the liberal revolution of Eloy Alfaro at the end of the nineteenth century expropriated some but not all of them. During the twentieth century, for the most part, religious institutions rented

on August 19, the day of San Luis Obispo. According to Ares, colonial *cofradías*, religious confraternities, established the Fiesta del Coraza during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Catholic lore asserts that the Fiesta del Coraza started with the “mysterious discovery” by an indígena of a statue of San Luis Obispo in San Rafael, an indigenous community south of the city of Otavalo, next to Lake San Pablo. More critical accounts argue that it was actually the parish priest who entrusted an artisan with sculpting the statue. The priest then buried the statue close to the wall of the church (Rohr 1997: 63; Buitrón and Collier 1949: 105). With the discovery of the statue, according to Rohr,

the parish not only possessed their own patron saint, so the parishioners did not have to peregrinate to the neighboring town, but more than anything, the parish could keep the offerings that before had flowed to Otavalo. In this way, the annual fiesta of the Coraza honoring San Luis Obispo turned the formerly insolvent parish into a really wealthy one (1997: 63).

Traditionally, the Coraza was the person sponsoring the festivity. He was responsible for paying the expenses, which included fees for the mass, rental of costumes and horses, hiring of a brass band, buying fireworks, and providing food and liquor for hundreds of participants. These costs, of several thousand dollars, represented a tremendous financial burden for the sponsor. With the exception of part of the food, everything was obtained from non-indígenas, funneling indigenous economic surplus into non-indígena hands, including those of the priest. Many sponsors borrowed money from non-indígena lenders who charged extremely high interest rates (Butler 1981: 192, 225; Walter 1981). In addition, as an economic *coups de grâce*, the non-indígena families renting Coraza costumes charged exorbitant fees if any of the cheap, attached adornments were lost during the celebration.

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their haciendas. See Albornoz (1977), Borchart the Moreno (1980), Cushner (1982), and Lyons

Both festivities, prime examples of indigenous culture, naturalized and reproduced indigenous subordination rather than resisted non-indígena domination.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that indígenas were utterly passive, as the dominant stereotyping had historically portrayed them. Scholarship has demonstrated that Andean indigenous peasants were not the “prepolitical” victims of omnipotent hacendados.<sup>10</sup> In the realm of hacienda relations, they did politics, or rather “infrapolitics” (Scott 1990), involving hidden resistance—acts such as grabbing of crops, grazing on hacienda pastures, and performing tactical revolts (Korovkin 1999; Thurner 1993). Notwithstanding the ubiquity of hidden resistance, it is clear that cultural reproduction in the forms of the Gallo Pasai and the Fiesta del Coraza reproduced indigenous economic and political subordination.<sup>11</sup>

This case of subaltern culture reproducing its members’ subordination is comparable to the counter-school culture of working class “lads” in West Midlands, England, studied by Paul Willis during the 1970s. Focusing on gaining in-group, short-term status, and associating manual labor with “the social inferiority of femininity,” the lads condemned themselves to a life of manual labor and subordination (1981: 148). Analogously, sponsoring festivities to gain in-group status, Andean indígenas reproduced their subordination to non-indígenas. Whereas the lads’ culture reproduced class

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(2006).

<sup>9</sup> Following a perspective that considered indigenous culture as bounded and remnant of the past, studies of indigenous festivities emphasized the economic redistribution of the sponsorships among community members. Those studies regarded indigenous festivities as cultural mechanisms to hold back social differentiation.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Hobsbawm (1959) had argued that peasants were bearers of *prepolitical consciousness* that must turn into industrial workers to acquire political consciousness and emerge as the citizen-subject of modern democracies. During the 1970s, Ecuadorian leftist intellectuals would argue that ethnic demands were frustrating, archaic, and pre-capitalist. In addition, indígenas were inept for political mobilization because they have not developed neither ethnic nor class consciousness (Espinoza 1977; Velasco 1979). For criticism of this view, see Santana (1988).



determination, indigenous culture reproduced ethnic determination. This was not simply because they had no choice—what Willis wrote is applicable to indigenous experience.

In the sense, therefore, that I argue that it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power we may say that there is an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism. However, the damnation is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance (1981: 3).

In both cases, culture directed individuals ‘voluntarily’ into subordinate roles, making sure, paraphrasing Willis, that the really important battles were never fought (1981: 70, 178).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Gallo Pasai and the Fiesta del Coraza entered in crisis in Otavalo. Indígenas stopped celebrating these festivities. The Gallo Pasai faded away first. The land reforms of 1964 and 1973 accelerated the demise of the old hacienda regime, prohibiting unfree labor. By then, modernizing hacendados had already started to switch to wage labor and no longer were willing to comply with the customary obligations to resident laborers (Barsky 1988: 62-87; Crain 1989: 197). In addition, organized indígenas won several trials for the expropriation of important haciendas in the valley, taking possession of them. Without paternalistic masters demanding servile indigenous labor, indígenas halted the celebration of Gallo Pasai.

The Fiesta del Coraza had a similar fate. The “last” celebration was in 1984. Non-indigenous intellectuals lamented that a festivity that was “associated with the cultural heritage of the indígena of Otavalo” had been buried (Valdospino Rubio 1990: 11; see also Coba Andrade 1989; and Naranjo 1988). In its fourth issue, the Ecuadorian journal of musicology “Opus” denounced that the celebration had come to an end because of the

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<sup>11</sup> See also Guerrero (1991) and Crain (1989)

intransigence of the parish priest of San Rafael, who insisted on celebrating the festivity without music and alcohol (Valdospino Rubio 1990: 11), but the main cause of its demise was the lack of indigenous individuals willing to bear the costs of sponsorship.

With the increasing access to school education, more indígenas were becoming literate, proficient in Spanish language, and aware of civil rights. Young adults were exposed to prevalent ideas in mainstream culture, as well as to the proselytism of leftist activists, development agents, and evangelical missionaries. Labor migration, development projects, and literacy campaigns were increasingly opening up new job opportunities for young indigenous adults. Evangelical churches made successful inroads in some communities, especially in those next to Lake San Pablo. Denouncing that drinking and dancing were against God's will, they converted significant numbers of indígenas.<sup>12</sup> Because of their literacy skills, young adult indígenas became the new local leadership, and yet to undertake the sponsorship of festivities, they criticized the lifestyle of their parents and grandparents as burdened by excessive drinking and economic exploitation. All of these were broader generational transformations. Not only in Otavalo but also across the Ecuadorian highlands, indígenas halted the celebration of catholic festivities and rituals of unequal reciprocity. Among the Chibuleo indígenas, who were small producers of onion in the Province of Tungurahua, the system of prestige sponsoring religious festivities started an increasing decay after an agricultural crisis,

<sup>12</sup> In Latin America, the term *Evangélico* does not directly correspond to its translation, Evangelical, since their meanings differ. "In Latin America, *evangélico* usually describes any non-Catholic Christian, including Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as those more "liberal" Protestants with a less fervent view of proselytizing (Stoll 1990: 4)... I also have observed that most people prefer to use a general term, such as *creyente* (believer) or *evangélico*, rather than specific denominational labels" (Uzendoski 2003: 130). For the growth of Evangelical

during the late 1960s. After the crisis subsided, any money was used to sustain agricultural production (Guerrero Cazar 1990: 154). In other areas, such as the Province of Chimborazo, many indígenas turned to evangelicalism, breaking the monopoly of the Catholic Church on questions of faith. In the countryside, the old patron-client relations between indígenas and non-indígenas were becoming a thing of the past (Crespi 1981; Ferraro 2000; Huarcaya 2003; Muratorio 1982; Santana 1988).

In Otavalo, in addition, the commercial success of some indigenous families producing and/or trading textiles motivated many young indígenas to try their fortune in those businesses. Members of those pioneering families, mostly from the communities of Peguche, Quinchuquí, and Agato—some of them living in the city of Otavalo—spoke of themselves as being “racional” (rational) and promoted an “entrepreneurial ethic.” This meant having a lifestyle conducive to commercial activity. Adopting dominant discourse that qualified indios as irrational and *blancos* (whites) as rational, the emerging indigenous bourgeoisie considered that the indígenas in the agricultural communities were irrational because of their excessive drinking and waste of money in sponsorships (Chavez 1982: 89, 98). Seeing that economic success was possible for indígenas, some young adults from many communities adopted the disinclination of the indigenous entrepreneurs to sponsor the festivities (Rohr 1997: 82; Walter 1981: 183). Money had to be invested in products to trade or materials to produce rather than spent on partying and drinking.

During hacienda times, according to Thurner, politics “were encoded in a shifting cultural practice of subordination and domination” (Thurner 1993: 42). In the Gallo Pasai

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Protestantism in Ecuador, see Andrade (1998), Huarcaya (2003), Muratorio (1982), Rohr (1997),

and the Fiesta del Coraza, indígenas engaged in symbolic and material contests with non-indígenas, but they did so submitting to the hierarchical framework that placed non-indígenas on top and indígenas at the bottom. After all, indígenas had historically been made dependent on non-indígenas, by means of land dispossession, denial of civil rights, and restrictions on their acquisition of cultural capital—the accumulable cultural hegemony, knowledge, practices, and competencies unequally distributed in a society (Bourdieu 1986, 1991, 1992). Non-indígenas had a monopoly on cultural capital and were paternalistic inasmuch as the indígenas were illiterate and dependent (See also Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 117, 166). Indigenous culture, in part, naturalized indigenous subordination, as it severed the connection between ethnic and economic and political inequalities (See O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 71).

Contemporary renditions of the Gallo Pasai and the Fiesta del Coraza demonstrate that indigenous cultural practice has changed dramatically. After hiatuses lasting from a few years to a few decades, indigenous communities have strongly resurrected both festivities. In contrast to the past, today there are no exploitative patrones, priests, or costume renters. In the Gallo Pasai, the roosters are offered to members of the cabildos. Many priostes, rather than acting individually, are associated with organizations or other cabildos. The sponsorship is voluntary, and the number of priostes has increased up to eight or so.

The Fiesta del Coraza has been resurrected not only in the communities around Lake San Pablo, in which this tradition was stronger, but also in the communities north of the city of Otavalo, which rarely celebrated it (See also Meisch 2002: 261). This revival

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and (2003). For growth in Latin America, see Stoler (1990), and Pollak-Eltz and Salas (1998).

refuted non-indígena intellectuals who, a few years earlier, had lamented the demise of the festivity. The sponsorship no longer depletes the economic resources of the priestes and their families. They may enlist help from other members of the community, the cabildos, and other organizations. In addition, priestes are generally associated with efforts to improve the communities. More than a ritual to gain personal status by means of depleting one's own personal resources, nowadays the Fiesta del Coraza is a ritual to honor people that have helped or could help the community (Butler 2006: 364; Meisch 2002: xx, 261).

Cultural revival has not only given indígenas a sense of pride but also strengthening their solidarity. A case in point is the community of Huaycopungo, in which the Fiesta del Coraza was staged anew, after a sixteen-years hiatus, in 2000. The celebration was organized by a major leader of the evangelist church, who three years before "had singled out the traditional Corazas fiesta as a reason for the local Protestant revolt from the Catholic Church" (Butler 2006: 342).

The festivity in San Luis de Agualongo was a Gallo Pasai with a Coraza present. A proper Fiesta del Coraza follows conventional procedures, including the recitation of a poem praising the participants by a boy, the *Loa*, and the horseback persecution of the Coraza by the *Yumbos*, named after the natives of the Amazon basin and dressed in blue costumes. The presence of the Coraza in San Luis de Agualongo was part of a new trend in which a Coraza accompanies indigenous authorities in public events. For instance, the first indigenous mayor of the city of Otavalo, Mario Conejo, brought a Coraza to his inauguration in August 2000. In addition, in a ceremony that I attended in August 2006, at the entrance of the waterfall next to the community of Peguche, Ariruma Kowii, the

mayor's brother, also brought a Coraza to his inauguration as Undersecretary of Education of Indigenous Peoples, a new post at the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is not a fallacy to say that in Otavalo the Coraza has accompanied indígenas in their newfound political power.

This self-conscious indigenous revival and the courage demonstrated by Blanca Chancoso are distinctive features of a new way of being indigenous. Today, many indígenas assert themselves, culturally and politically, as contenders for social ascendancy. Needless to say, this reaffirmation is part and parcel of contemporary indigenous political mobilization and organization.

In Ecuador, indígenas entered the national political arena with the Levantamiento of June 1990. The "sheer magnitude" of the protest (Zamosc 1994: 38) not only took everybody by surprise but also shattered the old notion that indigenous peoples were objects, not subjects, of history. Indígenas not only paralyzed the highlands blocking highways and shutting down markets but also presented a sixteen-point ultimatum to the government. This included demands for the declaration of Ecuador as a plurinational state, the granting of lands and legalization of territories for the indigenous nationalities, the legal recognition of indigenous medicine, the permanent funding of bilingual education, the granting of budgeted funds for the indigenous nationalities, and the fixing of consumer prices (Hoy 1990).

Constituting one of the strongest indigenous movements in Latin America, Ecuadorian indígenas achieved demonstrable victories during the 1990s, including the constitutional identification of Ecuador as a pluricultural and multiethnic state, the promulgation of judicial and administrative reforms regarding cultural rights, the creation

of state institutions serving and administrated by indígenas, and the legalization of indigenous territories in the Amazonian basin. This surge of victories led Roberto Santana to remark that in terms of indigenous rights “no other Latin American country has seen so many advances” (2004). For the 1990s, according to Guerrero and Ospina, “It is not an exaggeration to say that Ecuadorian indigenous organizations, their demands, their capacity to mobilize, and the power of their arguments dominated the decade” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 9). Writing before the ascension to power of Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2005, Victor Bretón wrote, “no other indigenous movement has shaken the foundations of the postcolonial nation-state as much as the Ecuadorian” (Bretón 2003: 220). And according to Deborah Yashar, “Ecuador claims Latin America’s strongest, oldest, and most consequential indigenous movement” (Yashar 2005: 85).

At the time of this writing, 2010, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has gone from very successful gains during the 1990s to an unsettled decline marked by government co-option, political fragmentation, and lack of clear goals from 2003 onward. If during the 1990s the incorporation of indígenas *qua* indígenas into the national political arena was a clear and invigorating goal, during most of the 2000s the movement seems to have lost its momentum and orientation.<sup>13</sup> What lies ahead is unknown, but it is unquestionable that the indigenous movement has deeply transformed Ecuadorian society. In contrast to the invisibility, ventriloquism, and marginalization of the past, today indígenas are visible and outspoken participants in the public sphere.

The Ecuadorian indigenous movement emerged during a period that some authors have characterized as an irregular and incomplete capitalist modernization (Bustamante

1998; Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003). Following general trends across Latin America, this process, according to Guerrero and Ospina, had two phases. The first, from 1964 to 1982, was “characterized by the prominent role of the state as engine of change and of the national economy.” The second, from 1982 to 2002, was “characterized by the progressive dismantling of the driving role of the state” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 21).

Capitalist modernization did away with the “oligarchic-landowner state” and its foundation, the old hacienda as a regime of social control and labor exploitation (Quintero and Silva 1991). Under this regime, indigenous labor was not paid in wages but in different modalities of rent. In 1964, a military junta lasting from 1963 to 1966, promulgated the first land reform, which prohibited the *huasipungo*, (Kichwa: peon’s house) a relation of production in which labor was exchanged for the usufruct of a small plot of land. The law stipulated the granting of some land to the *huasipungueros*, the laborers under the *huasipungo* arrangement.

In 1972, military reformers took power again, proclaiming the establishment of a “nationalist and revolutionary” government. Taking advantage of the oil boom—its production had just started in the Amazonian basin—the military regime led a period of economic growth by means of public investment in infrastructure and incentives for industrial production. In 1973, the military government promulgated the second land reform, introducing the concept of “demographic pressure” as a legal causative to expropriate hacienda land. The 1973 land reform also prohibited all forms of unfree labor. At that time, some haciendas still used the *yanapa* (Kichwa: help) to procure labor.

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<sup>13</sup> For a sharp criticism of the indigenous leadership, see Santana (2004).



Under this arrangement, indígenas of the neighboring communities worked two to three days a week in exchange for access to hacienda resources and pathways (Waters 2007: 123).

In 1978, a new constitution was promulgated, enfranchising the illiterate population for the first time. For most of republican times, indígenas have not had access to schooling, and the majority of them were illiterate until the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> In August 1979, Ecuador returned to democratic rule. A few months earlier, in March 1979, the military dictatorship had issued the *Ley de Fomento y Desarrollo Agropecuario* (Law of Agricultural Promotion and Development), which started to set an end to the redistributive aims of the 1973 land reform, emphasizing “the need to create a stable political climate in rural areas as a precondition for increasing agricultural production” (Korovkin 1997: 35). Land expropriation procedures continued until 1985, when they decreased significantly (Chiriboga 1988).

By 1981, mismanagement and corruption had evaporated the income of the oil boom, and the country went into an economic crisis. The change of model, from state-led development to neoliberalism, was initiated in 1982 and accelerated in 1992. First, President Osvaldo Hurtado embarked in a project of state modernization, and a decade later, President Sixto Durán Ballén brought neoliberal reforms to center stage (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 21; Zamosc 2004: 133). From 1990, the indigenous movement has been at the vanguard against those reforms.

<sup>14</sup> The illiteracy rates in Ecuador were 44.2% in 1950, 32.5% in 1962, 25.8% in 1974, and 16.5% in 1982 (Ponce, Loaiza, and Nuñez 2003: 1). In 1974, in rural areas of Province of Imbabura the illiteracy rate was 47.7% of the population over ten years old (Preston 1985: 95). In 2001, the illiteracy rate among indígenas in Imbabura was 36% (Ponce, Loaiza, and Nuñez 2003: 6).

The return of Ecuador to democracy at the end of the 1970s did not provide political stability. Old forms of political patronage continued, and chronic political instability persisted. From 1996 to 2007, Ecuador had six presidents, three ousted by popular revolts. In 2001, the government gave away monetary sovereignty to stop galloping devaluation and hyperinflation. It got rid of the *Sucre*, the national currency named after Antonio José de Sucre, a hero of independence, and adopted the US dollar.

In the study of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, ethnic identity has been a predominant analytical perspective (See also Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009). On the one hand, this perspective has reflected developments on the ground. In contrast to the past, in which indigenous identity was defined and stigmatized by non-indígenas, indigenous leaders have articulated a politically infused indigenous identity. In one of the first books analyzing the indigenous movement, León Trujillo wrote that in the past,

being *indio* and peasant were one and the same reality. . . there was no [indigenous] discourse about their ethnic dimension. Today, this discourse allows for the simultaneous construction of an identity and a consciousness linked to their ethnic condition and their different social circumstances. The predominance of ethnicity in their conceptualizations legitimates, reinforces, and allows for their self-constitution as ethnically differentiable political subjects (León Trujillo 1994: 81).

On the other hand, the emphasis on ethnic identity to challenge exclusionary political practice has entailed the enactment of cultural politics, the contesting of previously naturalized relations of power (Escobar and Dagnino 1998). Ethnic identity becomes a political resource, as much as culture becomes explicitly political (Albó 2004; Selverston-Scher 2001). Participating in indigenous mobilization becomes “a new way of being indigenous, while self-conscious, overt displays of indigenous culture become a

new way of being political” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 88).<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, indigenous movements were included in the theoretical cluster of “new social movements,” along with women’s, gay, ethnic, human rights, and ecological movements, during the academic debates of the 1980s and 1990s. These movements were new, the theory claims, because they hinged on issues of identity rather than on class struggle. They stressed the “plurality of identity over the unity of ideology” (Fischer 2009: 3; See also Laclau and Mouffe 1988; and Escobar and Dagnino 1998).

Many scholars agree that the indigenous movement in the highlands was preceded by a prior transformation of orientation among the peasantry/indigenous leadership, a displacement from class demands as *campesinos* (peasants) to ethnic demands as *indígenas* during the early eighties. Calling this transformation “The Great Turn,” Simón Pachano argues that a group of leaders, who previously had denied an ethnic perspective,

gave a radical turn to their perspectives and proposals. They not only took ethnic reaffirmation up but also set it at the forefront of their platform for social struggle, turning it into the cornerstone of their definition as a social movement, until reaching the point of identifying themselves as indigenous nationalities (Pachano 2004: 66).<sup>16</sup>

During the 1970s, a time when Marxists across Latin America advocated socialist revolutions, Ecuadorian indigenous activists debated extensively about whether they were *campesinos* or *indios* (Pallares 146). The main arena of this debate was the organization ECUARUNARI, Ecuador Runacunapak Rikcharimui (Kichwa: the awakening of *indígenas* of Ecuador). Founded in 1972 by priests, nuns, and religious activists

<sup>15</sup> An example of this is the following: In July 2006, I attended an academic conference in Quito. One of the speakers was the indigenous leader Lourdes Tibán. In the audience, there were around a hundred Spanish-speaking non-*indígenas* and two or three *indígenas*. Tibán started her speech in Kichwa, switching to Spanish after five minutes or so. Considering the historical discrimination against Kichwa speakers, her political statement privileging Kichwa over Spanish was very powerful.

associated with Liberation Theology, ECUARUNARI brought together indigenous as well as non-indigenous, religious and secular, activists.

At the grass root level, peasants were increasingly participating in political organizing, and the number of communal and inter-communal, second tier organizations grew significantly.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have traced the origins of this organizing to the work of church, leftist, and development agents. Notwithstanding the deep regional variance, “the struggle for land was the agglutinating factor of the organizations, to the extent that it condensed social discontent into a common demand on a common interlocutor (the State)” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 27). Reflecting their class origins, some second-tier organizations were founded as campesino, rather than indigenous, organizations.

At ECUARUNARI, many indigenous activists considered that putting an end to ethnic discrimination was central to the struggle. Privileging cultural belonging, organization among indígenas, and political autonomy, this perspective predominated during the mid 1970s. However, Marxist activists considered that an exclusive focus on indigenous issues was racist, folkloric, and politically immature. They “felt that Indians were limited by a racial discourse and their goal should be the promotion of class consciousness” (Pallares 2002: 163). These activists encouraged the use of the term campesino, since it defined a racially neutral socioeconomic category, and considered the usage of the term indio as racist, since it was often used as an insult. This was in line with

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<sup>16</sup> A first version of Pachano’s article was published in 1993 (Pachano 1993).

<sup>17</sup> In the organizational structure of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, second-tier organizations (organizaciones de segundo grado) “refer to provincial and regional organizations that link the hundreds of first-tier, or base level organizations (cooperatives, community centers) to the national organizations (Van Cott 2005: 110).

official policy. The nationalist dictatorship of General Guillermo Rodríguez, from 1972 to 1976, which emphasized the assimilation of indígenas into a national and mestizo culture, also replaced the term indio with campesino. Nationalist governments in Bolivia in 1959 and Peru in 1968 had done the same thing.<sup>18</sup>

Framing politics as class struggle, and despite that the great majority of peasants in the Ecuadorian highlands were indígenas, the leftist activists leading the labor front were oblivious to the problems of ethnicity. On the one hand, they followed the prevalent idea among Marxists that culture was merely an epiphenomenon of the structural base. “The usage of the terms indígena and mestizo as merely ethnic categories,” wrote Marxist anthropologist Diego Iturralde, “is an ideological mechanism used to hide a social reality of bigger significance” (Iturralde 1980: 184). On the other hand, indigenous subordination was naturalized. Non-indígena activists, having more cultural capital, confined indígenas to subordinate roles (Pallares 2002: 174). In addition, Marxists considered that the emergence of ethnic consciousness was adverse to the formation of class consciousness. As a platform for social demands, ethnicity disunited the peasantry because of differentiated access to state concessions (Ibarra Illanez 1987: 183). In other words, ethnic politics were convenient to the project of the bourgeois state because it weakened “the unified struggle of all the popular classes against capital” (Ibarra Illanez 1987: 244).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For Bolivia, see Albó (2008: 29). For Peru, see de la Cadena (2000: 193).

<sup>19</sup> In Peru during the 1970s, Marxists shared the same ideas. According to de la Cadena, “Marxists considered Indianness a form of ‘false consciousness’ and inferior to ‘peasant’ class identity” (2000: 73).

Some indigenous activists and organizations shared the idea that ethnicity was a limited horizon for political work. Indigenous leader Pedro de la Cruz, who has privileged class organizing throughout his career, has argued that with only Indians in the struggle,

we are creating a bit of racism, the Indians only here, the mestizos over there, the blacks the same. For a cultural struggle that is convenient. But for general things, for example, land for who works it, if we are all separated the government or congressman will not listen to us. *There is not much that is specifically indigenous*, there are many things that are general and apply to all, because most peasants are poor (Pallares 2002: 95 Italics in the original).

In addition, as Pallares argues, because of the stigma associated to Indian-ness, some activists were hesitant to view themselves as indios. According to Blanca Chancoso, who was an ECUARUNARI leader:

We were certain that we were indigenous.... Only that there was confusion about maintaining that identity, that sometimes we were campesinos.... We thought that campesinos was that Indians were called.... We thought the term 'campesino' would mean being treated with some respect (Pallares 2002: 161).

Participating in national politics as campesinos, according to Pallares, "lifted them from the status of Indians, empowered them in the public sphere, and offered them a public identity" (Pallares 2002: 161). They considered that they had risen above indio status.

By 1977, supporters of the class perspective, Christian and secular Marxists, non-indígena and indígena, had taken control of ECUARUNARI (Santana 1995: 143). They adopted a narrow conception of culture limiting it to the preservation of folklore and educational rights, and relegated the importance of the indigenous concern for civil rights (Pallares 2002: 163). According to Santana, the adoption of class politics affected ECUARUNARI's capacity for mobilization, which was stronger after the enactment of the second land reform in 1973. After 1977, ECUARUNARI lost important grass roots support in several provinces (Santana 1995: 143).

The great turn came during the first half of the 1980s, when the political horizon of indigenousness was broadened. In the mid-1970s, the ethnic perspective had a local scope. Its supporters were concerned with stopping racial/ethnic discrimination by means of displacing the non-indígena monopoly on local, state-sanctioned governing. Certainly, local authorities and the police were agents and accomplices of indigenous exploitation and discrimination. Considering that non-indígenas could not be trusted, those indigenous activists advised against interethnic alliances. They put value on the reproduction of their ways of life but did not make culture politically explicit, nor questioned non-indígena cultural hegemony. Notwithstanding their focus on indigenous issues, they framed their demands for land under a class rationale: “*la tierra es para quien la trabaja*” (land is for the person who works it), and following leftist discourse, they blamed capitalism and its colluding state for social injustice (Santana 1995: 143). Their enemies were the exploiters, from hacienda owners and overseers to authorities and police.

In contrast, the new ethnic perspective that developed during the 1980s had a broader socio-historical scope. Indigenous activists based their critique and demands on a narrative of historic dispossession and resistance: indígenas have been dispossessed of their lands since the conquest, but in their communities they have maintained their values and ways of life. They associated community with ancestral territory, and, for the first time, self-identified as indigenous nationalities. In 1983, Blanca Chancoso, who was the general secretary of the ECUARUNARI, claimed,

Until now, not only as an organization but also as indígenas, we have been dragged. We have not been taken into account, nor our own specificity... Our movement comes from the struggle for land, but as we have said, our standpoint is that the struggle for land is not only about the economic aspect. For us, the land has its more important aspect within culture, because we view land as linked to community, and

[beyond that] to nationality, not as mere economic vindication (Ediciones Nueva 1983: 41).

Rather than a mere economic resource, territory was the space of cultural development and reproduction. Leaders spoke of land recuperation rather than land redistribution.

Defining for the first time the diverse ethnic populations in Ecuador as indigenous nationalities, these indigenous activists questioned the pretended universality of nationalist ideology and its assimilationist assumptions. This meant the rejection of the ideology of mestizaje, which claimed that the mixing of indigenous and European races and cultures was impartial and productive. Pointing out that mestizaje was discriminatory because it valued whiteness over indigenusness, they questioned the legitimacy of mestizo personhood as the dominant paradigm of national belonging. They emphasized self-representation, but this did not deter them from building alliances with non-indígena sympathizers and international supporters. For them, the enemy was dominant, non-indígena society that had marginalized the indígenas during colonial and republican times. Criticizing policies of cultural assimilation, Blanca Chancoso claimed,

The government speaks about integration, about equal treatment towards the indigenous sectors. ECUARUNARI has rejected this position. We ask, into what they want us to integrate? When the Spaniards came, we were told, “it is necessary to civilize the indígenas.” I don’t know to what are we going to civilize. We, indígenas, have our culture. We possess our own language, our customs, our organizational forms. We have an education, a science. For ECUARUNARI, the program of integration has been as a bridge to simply exterminate indigenous culture little by little (Ediciones Nueva 1983: 42).

In this statement, Chancoso not only sets indigenous culture on equal footing to non-indígena dominant culture but also equates the assimilationist policies of the state with the deliberate and systematic destruction of indigenous culture.

This political standing was articulated in a broad debate leading to the “recomposition” of ECUARUNARI along the ethnic perspective (Santana 1995: 145).



Some second-tier organizations changed their name to emphasize an indigenous, not merely campesino, constituency.<sup>20</sup> For instance, the Peasant Coordinator of Imbabura, founded in 1974, turned into the Organization of Peasant Communities of Imbabura in 1978, then into the Indigenous and Peasant Federation of Imbabura (FICI) in 1982, and in 1984 added an acronym in Kichwa to form Inrujta-FICI (Imbabura Runacunapac Jatun Tantanacui: Indigenous Federation of Indígenas of Imbabura).

Taking place from 1982 to 1986, the debate engaged indigenous activists of the highlands with those from the *oriente*, the eastern lowlands in the Amazonian basin. Andean and Amazonian indígenas have divergent socio-historic trajectories. The former has been full time agriculturalists since time immemorial, whereas the latter has been semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists. It is only from mid 20<sup>th</sup> century that colonization and the labor of missionaries led most of Amazonian indígenas to move into permanent settlements.<sup>21</sup> Because of geographic inaccessibility, in the Amazon “religious missions were a more visible and important local governing force than the state” (Erazo 2007: 179). In addition, the interactions of Amazonian indigenous populations with

<sup>20</sup> The *Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas de Cotacachi* (Union of Peasant Organizations of Cotacachi: UNORCAC), founded in 1977, turned into the *Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas de Cotacachi* (Union of Peasant Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi) in 1994. The *Federación de Organizaciones Campesinas del Napo* (Federation of Peasant Organizations of [the Province of] Napo: FECOPAN), founded in 1969, became the *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo* (Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo: FOIN) in 1979.

<sup>21</sup> In the first edited volume about indigenous movements in Latin America, Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer have indicated that highlander populations have been much larger and have acquired western social and cultural forms since the conquest, whereas the scatter and small populations of lowlanders have remained more isolated and closer to pre-conquest conditions for much longer (Urban and Sherzer 1991: 12-13). Kay Warren and Jean Jackson have argued that contemporary indigenous self-consciousness and organizing among both, highlanders and lowlanders, have undermined the neo-evolutionist contrast that some anthropologists made between them, considering lowlanders as vestiges of the past, “existing outside historical time and agency” (Warren and Jackson 2002: 7).

outsiders and the state were directly linked to boom and bust periods of extraction of natural resources, from gold to rubber to oil (Erazo 2007: 179). During the rubber boom, at the beginning of the twentieth century, some Amazonian populations in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia were brutally exploited (Albó 1999; Muratorio 1991; Taussig 1992). Nonetheless, some Amazonian populations, such as the Huaorani, were able to evade non-indígena governing, while others, such as the Shuar and related Jivaroan groups, were able to maintain significant autonomy (Erazo 2007: 180; Taylor 1999: 232-235).

Both, Andeans and Amazonians, were excluded from the imagined Ecuadorian national community but on different terms. Whereas Amazonians were seen as unconquered, headhunter savages beyond the frontiers of the nation,<sup>22</sup> Andeans were seen as docile beast of burden, the backbone of national agricultural production, who because of their incapacity to think for themselves and to live decently were an obstacle for the development of the nation.

The constitution of identity/alterity also played out differently. According to Pallares, “unlike the broader highland indigenous identity, lowland identifications were much more clearly informed by ethnic affiliations, as Quichuas, Huaoranis, and Shuaras had historically maintained their originary identity and sustained interethnic rivalries” (Pallares 2002: 170). Amazonians were not free from abuse, but in general, living in relative isolation, they were not subject to the quotidian harassment and humiliation on the hands of non-indígenas, as were their Andean counterparts. Many Andean indígenas

<sup>22</sup> Social researchers also contributed to the negative image of the Amazonians. Time Magazine, in its edition of January 23, 1956, in an article about US missionaries, quotes a researcher who

presented themselves submissively to non-indígenas, leading to the prevalent notion that Andean indígenas suffered from an inferiority complex. Segundo Maiguashca, an indígena from the central highlands who became a lawyer without denying his ethnic origins, wrote in 1949 a dissertation entitled *El indio, cerebro y corazón de América: Incorporación del indio a la cultura nacional* (The indio, mind and heart of the Americas: Incorporation of the indio to national culture). Having met several “indios jíbaros,” who today call themselves Shuar, he wrote:

Concerning the Jíbaro indios, I have this fundamental idea: They do not suffer from the inferiority complex as much as those indios from the inter-Andean region... I deduce that the state of conceptual sanity of these indios responds to the fact that they have never suffered the effects of servitude that have weighted as a mountain over the shoulders of their congeners in the inter-Andean corridor. Would be adventurous to think that the liberating movement of the indios will come from the Oriente? (Maiguashca 1949: 61).

Maiguashca foresight is admirable, since the Shuar were the first indígenas who organized on ethnic grounds, but his ideas reflect the notion of the “*psicología de los pueblos*” (psychology of the peoples), which were prevalent at that time (See Tinajero 1986: 54).<sup>23</sup>

In the lowlands, because of the relative isolation and autonomy of the indigenous populations, there was less pressure and opportunities to assimilate into non-indígena

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argued that the Auca people, who today call themselves Huaorani, were “the worst people on earth” (TIME 1956).

<sup>23</sup> The psychology of the peoples proposed that differences in ways of thinking and acting were inherent according to ethnic, racial, or national belonging. These ideas were written down in pseudo-scientific treatise such as Gustave Le Bon’s *Psychology of the Peoples* (1912) and Carlos Bunge’s *Nuestra América: Ensayo de Psicología Social* (1918). See Roig (1981). According to Julio Enrique Moreno, writing in 1940, trends may have had historical origins, but they constituted a “dominant integral core” determining “a congenital way of thinking and feeling of the components of society, giving its peculiar stamp to a whole people (pueblo)” (Tinajero 1986: 54). Notwithstanding the literature, it was not necessary to read those treatises. The ideas of the psychology of the peoples were widespread in Ecuador for most of the twentieth century.

dominant culture. In the highlands, many indígenas have assimilated in order to increase their upward social mobility and avoid the stigma and violence of ethnic degradation. They have done so since colonial times, especially when leaving their communities for urban centers, sometimes in processes lasting two or three generations (Butler 1981; Knapp 1991; Powers Vieira 1994).

In the Ecuadorian Amazon, indigenous organizing responded first to the urgency of protecting customary indigenous territories from the encroachment of settlers and oil companies (Davis 1996; Smith 1985, 1996). The Shuar Federation, the first indigenous federation in Latin America, was organized in 1964 in response to the efforts of the Ecuadorian state to bring settlers to Shuar territories (Salazar 1977). Oblivious to the indigenous populations in the eastern lowlands, the Ecuadorian land reforms promoted the colonization of those territories, as a way to weaken demands for land expropriation in the highlands. Therefore, “the struggle for agrarian reform in the highlands created new rural conflicts in the lowlands” (Lucero 2008: 105; See also León Trujillo 1994; and Zamosc 1989). In contrast to the highlands, organizing in the lowlands did not engage in ideological debates over class or ethnicity. “In the lowlands,” as Lucero argues, “even the earliest efforts at organizing in the 1960s seemed to have little trouble in privileging ethnicity over class” (Lucero 2008: 100; see also Selverston-Scher 2001). Indígenas in the lowlands constituted their political identity on ethnic grounds. Because of their historical trajectory as hunter-gatherers, it seems rather unlikely that they could identify as class-based campesinos.

In August 1980, Amazonian activists from four provincial organizations created the CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon)

and engaged with talks with ECUARUNARI. In October 1980, at the “First Encounter of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador,” activists from CONFENIAE and ECUARUNARI formed the CONACNIE (National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), which would lay the foundation for the creation of CONAIE, the first countrywide organization, in November 1986.

In the formation of the indigenous movement, there was a convergence of a multiplicity of indigenous actors and social processes leading to a broad ethnic dynamism. At the grass root level, indigenous activists emerged from a variety of experiences that differed regionally, from church indoctrination to land struggles to fights against racism. The ideological labor in the highlands, however, more than by any other group, was led by an emergent indigenous intelligentsia from Otavalo. Conceiving the social struggle as a cultural struggle, this group of university-educated otavaleños, as Korovkin argues, provided the “ideologies that shaped the nature of the national indigenous movement” (Korovkin 1998: 126; see also Field 1991: 41; and Hoy 2001). Certainly, there were other important contributions, such as that of Luis Macas, an indigenous leader from the Saraguro people, from the southern province of Loja, but collectively the Otavaleños by far predominated. Reflecting this, Mario Cabrera, the director of ECUARUNARI in the southern province of Azuay, described the Otavalans in 1999 “as one of the pillars of the indigenous movement” (Storaker Kilander 2001: 50).

According to Miguel Angel Carlosama, an indigenous intellectual who participated in these debates and who is not an otavaleño,

From the contradiction in which the left and the Church—the Church of Liberation Theology—wanted to co-opt the indigenous movement—the rural organizations—for their own interests, from this multifarious problematic, emerged [a group of] young intellectuals who understood that this had to stop, that it was very important to

recuperate the millenarian history of the [indigenous] peoples of this country. It is then when the topic of cultural struggle emerged as a fundamental axis of the political initiative of the indigenous movement. The idea is from 1980s. It came from indigenous intellectuals. Fundamentally, it came from the Kichwas of Pastaza (a lowland province) and the Kichwas of Otavalo. It is then when the culturalist intellectuals were born, when they emerged. In my view, this was a very important development because the protectors of the indígenas [the non-indígena activists] were set aside. In addition, as I see it, the cultural struggle enabled the strengthening of the direct actors, who put forth their own projections, who had their own strategies. So, the indigenous actors themselves started to debate their own proposals, ideas, philosophies, worldviews. The protectors no more speak for us. Before, we were able to walk through them. The Church helped us, the leftist parties helped us, but at that moment, a consciousness in itself came into being (3/4/2007).

Otavaleño indigenous intellectual José Quimbo called this an “awakening of the spirit of being indio,” the emergence of a vital “political and cultural indigenous renaissance” (9/9/2006).

The otavaleño indigenous intelligentsia debated intensively about the indio condition and reworked conceptual ideas from varied sources, from leftist ideologues to Amazonian organizations to history and anthropology.<sup>24</sup> In addition, during the second half of the 1980, they became involved with the emerging internationalization of indigenous rights, which would had its most definitive impact in 1989 with the promulgation of Convention 169 by the International Labor Organization. This convention moved away from the previous assimilationist orientation of international labor standards and recognized indigenous peoples’ right to maintain their cultural and political integrity. The influence of the otavaleños was not limited to ideological leadership. They also demonstrated new possibilities for being indígena.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Becker argues that the conceptualization of indigenous peoples as nationalities came from leftist activists. “Unlike the assumption of many academics, Indigenous leaders did not reclaim this identity on their own but rather it was a contribution from marxist intellectuals” (Becker 2008: 171-172). In addition, the demands of Amazonian activists for a “right to territory” influenced the ideas of Andean activists (Chirif, García, and Smith 1991).

Indigenusness was strengthened for several reasons: the labor on the topics of cultural identity and the experience of economic development, fundamentally by the otavaleños. In addition, I believe that it was very important that they were able to go into higher education and still return to their people.

I think that this increased the self-esteem of the indígenas. So, the experience of the otavaleños has been fundamental. Without support from the state, or NGO's, or anybody, they went to Bogotá, Medellín, all over the world. They began to stand out in sports, as well as in music and dance. We could not have imagined this a few decades ago (M.A. Carlosama 3/4/2007).

Until the 1970s, “no indígena reached public or professional notability in Ecuador maintaining his or her indigenous identity. There was no doctors, lawyers, engineers, authors, or elected public officials that were indios” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 160; See also Casagrande 1974: 7; and Smith Belote and Belote 2000: 93). Schooling meant abandoning Indian-ness. One the first indigenous teachers claimed that in the past, “An indio who knew how to read and write was already a blanco” (León Trujillo 1994: 80). From the 1970-80s, for the first time in republican history, indígenas in significant numbers were becoming professionals without assimilating into dominant culture, without cutting ties with their indigenous relatives.<sup>25</sup> Doing this, they dislodged a “basic tenet of national culture,” the equating of education with assimilation (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 92). Even educated individuals that already self-identified as non-indígenas, as demonstrated by Guerrero y Ospina, turned around not only to reclaim an indigenous identity but also to reestablish links with their communities of origin (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 154-166).

In the last decades, indios—a term of dominant categorization rather than subaltern self-identification—instead of becoming campesinos, have become self-identified

<sup>25</sup> Butler found out that in the communities of Saraloma and Moraspampa, in the valley of Otavalo, people spoke about *perdido* (Spanish) or *chingarishka* (Kichwa) community members.

indígenas. This has happened when they, by means of enfranchisement, public education, migration, and mass media, have been more integrated into national society than ever before, when the demise of the hacienda regime brought, according to Guerrero and Ospina, a “historic acceleration of the process of mestizaje” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 25). Thus, Andrés Guerrero asks, “how do we explain” that they “continue to be indígenas when precisely we can verify a process of transformation towards the national condition” (Guerrero 1998: 118). Indígenas are becoming integrated into national society but not assimilated into mestizaje, as Ecuadorian elites had predicted. Only a decade before, in 1972, the General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara had said, “There is no more Indian problem. We all become white when we accept the goals of national culture” (Quoted in Whitten 1976: 7).

Although indigenous peoples have politically mobilized in several countries in Latin America, the emergence of ethnic consciousness is not predetermined. In the Peruvian Andes, with an even larger indigenous population than the Ecuadorian Andes, there is no indigenous movement. Indigenous individuals do not identify themselves as indígenas but as campesinos. According to Ramón Pajuelo, this does not mean that Peruvian highlanders lack sociocultural identity. What happens in the Peruvian highlands is that their identity is “not explicitly formulated in ethnic terms, sustaining the political redress of cultural difference, as has occurred in Ecuador and Bolivia” (Pajuelo 2006: 30).<sup>26</sup>

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These were ‘lost’ members “because they were assumed to be ‘permanent’ migrants and likely cases for ethnic identity change” (Butler 1981: 318).

<sup>26</sup> It is important to consider that during the 1980s and 1990s, when the Ecuadorian indigenous movement consolidated, Peru was involved in internal armed conflict. The insurgence activities of Shining Path and anti-insurgence actions of the Peruvian armed forces literally decapitated most of the leadership in indigenous communities. “The difficulties in organizing indigenous movements in the 1980s were clearly related to the political violence that wracked the



According to Pieter de Vries and Monique Nuijten, discourses of indigenous fundamentalism in Peru, put forth by urban mestizos and positing an essential difference between Andean and Westerner persons, “seem quite contrived to the common villager. Their artificiality is compounded by their impracticability, and the fact that they contradict the social experience of people who for ages have been involved in various kinds of migration processes, and who have adopted Spanish as their native language” (de Vries and Nuijten 2003: 73).<sup>27</sup> As it was in Ecuador a few decades ago, in the Peruvian highlands indigenusness is still equated with socio-economic conditions, expressed through the experience of exclusion, poverty, illiteracy, and material lack (de la Cadena 2000; Lentz 2000; Orlove 1998). Peruvians of indigenous origins speak of *superar*, to improve oneself, and *salir adelante*, to get ahead, not only to refer to acquiring an education but also to overcome a devaluated ethnicity (Leinaweaver 2005: 380).

To explain the emergence of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, scholars have proposed a multiplicity of converging factors, including: a) the structural changes creating the conditions of possibility for indigenous political activism, b) the role of external agents—leftist, church, and NGO activists—in laying the groundwork for indigenous organizing, c) the specificity of communal organizing channeling indigenous politics and careers, d) the increasing institutionalization of indigenous organizing, and d)

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countryside during the 1980s and early 1990s,” however, as Albó asks, “But with the end of conflict, there still had not developed a significant indigenous movement in this areas, as has occurred from Chiapas, Mexico, to southern Chile. What can explain this situation? (Albó 2004: 32).

<sup>27</sup> Albó (1991; 2004), Degregori (1993; 1998), de la Cadena (2000), García and Lucero (2004; 2007), Montoya (1998), and Pajuelo (2006) have written about the absence of an indigenous movement in the Peruvian highlands.

the emergence of international advocacy networks influencing national laws and empowering indigenous activists (Almeida et al. 1993; Becker 2008; Bretón 2003; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009; Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003; León Trujillo 1994; Macas et al. 1991; Pallares 2002; Santana 1995; Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2004).

Four decades ago, Fredrik Barth (1969) set forth the idea of ethnic groups being made by the boundaries recognized by both group members and outsiders, rather than by cultural content. I consider that work on the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has yet to bring Barth's idea to full fruition. On the one hand, analyses have reproduced the reification constructed by identity politics as political practice. This trend has led some scholars to imply a notion of indigenous culture as autonomous from relations of power. As Colloredo-Mansfeld argues, many authors have explained contemporary indigenous organizing "as an independent realm built of long-standing indigenous values and practices" (2009: 92). Not without essentialist underpinnings, this perspective sees indigenous communities as the natural organizational framework for contemporary ethnic politics and attributes to indigenous culture a teleological impulse, implying, as Colloredo-Mansfeld critically points out, "that an "indigenous destiny is at work" (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 83; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 92).

On the other hand, the poststructuralist emphasis on the discursive construction of ethnic identities has left the basis of ethnic exploitation unexplained (See, for instance, Lucero 2008: 21-23; Selverston-Scher 2001: 57). Conceptualizing identities as "soft," i.e., as constructed, fluid, and multiple, this perspective restricts the proper examination of the "hard" dynamics of ethnic identification and classification. If identity is

constructed, “How can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications?” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 1). If identity is fluid and multiple, “How do we understand the humiliation and exploitation inflicted on the indios qua indios in Ecuador?”

Analyses have mostly treated ethnic categories as “substantial things-in-the-world” (Brubaker 2002: 166). They have considered indígenas and non-indígenas as bounded populations, each living in contrasting cultural realms. In other words, they have conceptualized ethnicity in terms of supposedly discrete, substantial, and enduring groups—an analytical perspective that Roger Brubaker calls “groupist social ontology” (2003; 2009)—rather than thinking in relational, processual, and dynamic terms. Groupism is the “tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed.” This tendency reifies ethnic or racial groups “as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes” (Brubaker 2002: 164).

In the study of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, groupism has led to considerable analytical muddle. First, analyses have tended to reify—have made something abstract more concrete and real—ethnic categories. Following dominant discourse, analyses have taken for granted a dichotomous division of Ecuadorian society in two ethnic groups: blanco-mestizo and indígena, each with autonomous cultural worlds. Even when emphasizing that ethnicity is not a thing but a relation, analyses have failed to recognize that ethnic categories are contingent abstractions whose meanings and norms of belonging/exclusion not only are always political but also change dialectically over time. In social practice, ethnic terms—such as indio, indígena, mestizo, cholo,

blanco—cannot be thought of independently from their constructed meanings, which always assign historical value to persons to construct social hierarchies. Rather than parameters that do not change, all those ethnic categories have today very different meaning and usage than forty years ago.

Second, analyses have tended to ignore the mutually constitutive relationship between indígenas and non-indígenas. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams (1973) has argued that an ideological concealment has structured the representation of these spaces.

As explained by Fernando Coronil,

Williams argues that the representation of the divisions between country and city should be seen as the result of a unified process by which social practices and forms of consciousness are at once mutually constituted and become separated and opposed. The cultural construction of urban and rural sectors tends to abstract their features and to give them a metaphysical status, presenting domains that are social and interrelated as if they were natural and autonomous (Coronil 1996: 67)

In Ecuador, the ideological concealment mapped ethnicity into space, relegating indígenas to the rural areas and conceiving cities as the exclusive space of blanco-mestizo culture. Taking for granted this separation, some analyses have tended to consider indigenous culture as an autonomous realm, as if indigenous cultural features could be explained outside relations of power. Contemporary analyses espouse the idea that ethnicity is a processual form of categorization in relation to historic socioeconomic domination and state control, but many analyses reflect a “latent primordialism” (Sawyer 2004: 220) that assumes that contemporary indigenous politicization is the product of cultural attachment and ancestral values and practices.

Third, assuming a dichotomous perspective in which one group oppresses the other, analyses have tended to fail to recognize that mobility across the ethnic boundary and discrimination among non-indígenas are fundamental to institutionalized ethnic

discriminatory practice. Considering blanco-mestizo a group hides not only the complex heterogeneity of non-indígenas but also the multiplicity of their interactions with the ethnic boundary.

Fourth, notwithstanding their theoretical constructivist approach, which argue that social identities are not essential but socially constructed, many analyses have tended to leave this construction unexamined. On the other hand, other analyses have explained this construction in terms of the politics of representation. But, as Bourdieu has argued, the premise behind explanations focused on representation is a sort of Cartesian philosophy in which there are, on the one hand, some individuals consciously aiming at something and, on the other hand, other individuals mistakenly guided by false consciousness. However, “The social world doesn’t work in terms of consciousness; it works in terms of practices” (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1992: 113). An exclusive focus on representation is oblivious to the institutionalized material practices that made persons into indios. In addition, focusing on the analysis of the public discourse of indigenous organizations, these studies fail to distinguish between the different motivations for political mobilization between the leadership and the bases of the indigenous movement.

Rather than taking ethnicity for granted, the task, as Brubaker et al argues, is to find out when does ethnicity matter. Rather than assuming its salience, the focus is on specifying when, where, and how it becomes salient or significant.

Ethnicity is not a thing, not a substance; it is an interpretive prism, a way of making sense of the social world. And it is always only one among many such interpretive frames. Everyday ethnicity cannot therefore be studied as a self-subsistent domain. Ethnicized ways of experiencing and interpreting the social world can only be studied alongside a range of alternative, non-ethnicized ways of seeing and being. To study ethnicity alone is to impose ethnicity as an analytical frame of reference where it might not be warranted; it is to risk adopting an overethnicized view of social experience (Brubaker et al. 2006: 15).

In Ecuador, before the emergence of the indigenous movement, ethnicity was made salient by non-indígenas rather than by indígenas. Even though many non-indígenas in areas with significant indigenous populations spoke Kichwa, they constructed ethnic difference as absolute (Villavicencio 1973: 128). Their economic exploitation of the indígenas depended on strengthening the ethnic boundary, and their social status depended on demonstrating no relationship with Indian-ness.

Before their contemporary organizing efforts, indígenas did not see themselves as a group. After doing fieldwork in two communities in Otavalo during the late 1970s, Butler wrote:

The category of indígena in Ecuador can in no fashion be termed a group. One basic requirement for a group is a recognition of a shared identity or purpose; the recognition of pan-indígena identity among indígenas is both rare and recent in Ecuador (Casagrande, 1974). Indígena are spatially scattered throughout the Sierra and display considerable cultural diversity. As an ethnic category indígena has far more salience for non-indígena (Butler 1981: 245-246).

A few decades ago, not only were indígenas predisposed to present themselves as submissive but also non-indígenas were predisposed to expect nothing other than dominance over the indígenas. Being categorized as an indio meant yielding to the embodied social superiority of the non-indígena doing the categorization. This is precisely what Blanca Chancoso is hyperconscious about. She preempted the police officer from responding, even unpremeditatedly, in an ethnically domineering manner. She forced him to treat her as an equal deserving full respect. She denied him the power to categorize her, in and through practice, as an india-other.

Rearticulating the question of identity as that of identification, Stuart Hall has argued that discourses and practices “attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses” (1996: 1, 5).<sup>28</sup> On the one hand,

identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always ‘knowing’ (the language of consciousness here betray us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them (1996: 6).

But this is not a one-sided process, the successful articulation of the subject to a subject-position requires “not only that the subject is ‘hailed’, but that the subject invests in the position” (Hall 1996: 6). Following these ideas, Rosaleen Howard has proposed a concept of identity as cultural practice, emphasizing that the signifiers of ethnic, race, and class labels—“the lexicon of difference”—lack a referential fixity. On the one hand, when the relationship between signifier and signified is apparently fixed, “we find strategic essentialism in operation.” On the other hand, this relationship is frequently contested in speakers’ performances (Howard 2009: 42).

In the case of the colonized subject positions we encounter in postcolonial Andean societies, Hall’s view of ‘identification’ as a two-way articulation between interpellation on the one hand and active ‘production of subjectivities’ on the other opens the way to discursive resistance on the part of subjects so constituted (Howard 2009: 18).

Blanca Chancoso knows that non-indígenas could try to hail her into the slot of the humiliated and submissive indio, as they have done for centuries.<sup>29</sup> However, in contrast to indígenas in the past, who ordinarily could not avoid shame and helplessness, she

<sup>28</sup> Interpellation and hailing are concepts of Louis Althusser (1984) referring to the way in which ideological apparatuses “call people forth” as subjects, providing the conditions by which, and the contexts in which, they obtain subjectivity (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2003: 221).

invests in a new position: the identity of an indigenous activist who fights for her rights and denounces the discourses and practices that naturalize indigenous subordination.

In a recent article, Rudy Colloredo-Mansfeld has argued that the linking between indigenous movements and identity politics “is flawed” (2009: 88). First, “a shared cultural identity is a thin political resource, offering few transcendent values that can be used to mobilize people.” Second, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has “roots in something *besides* identity” (89, italics in the original). This something else is the unique historical relationship of indigenous communities with the state—liable for different taxes, having latitude to enact customary law, and owing communal land. Their institutions of local governance occupy a unique space in national civil society. They are state-authorized but lack a “systematic order that would enable manipulation from above” (103).<sup>30</sup> In Ecuador, after the land reforms, the indigenous communities canalized development projects, propelled indigenous careers, escalated institutional networking, and served as vehicles of opposition to the state.

It is undeniably that the indigenous communities are the bedrock of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, to the extent that Tanya Korovkin (2001) defines it as a

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<sup>29</sup> This brings to mind Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s critique of anthropology, arguing that it has constructed “savage slots,” pre-established compartments, for its others to occupy. This field of operation helped “to constitute the West as we know it” (Trouillot 1991: 18).

<sup>30</sup> Unmentioned by Colloredo-Mansfeld is that before the land reforms the local governance of the indigenous communities was anything but autonomous. Their “elected” officers, called *alcaldes*, were forced to act as intermediaries of ethnic oppression. The *alcaldes*, usually elected by the *tenientes políticos*, had to mobilize their communities to work without compensation for the non-indígenas. They were also in charged of policing the community, arresting individuals, and denouncing scandals and fights to the *tenientes políticos*. Urban non-indígenas also obliged the *alcaldes* to bring chickens, eggs, and grains paying for them ridiculously low prices. The *alcaldes* had to get those things forcedly from other indígenas of his community. As Gonzalo Rubio Orbe argues, for the indígenas their *alcaldes* were “unwelcome, feared, and even frowned upon” (Rubio Orbe 1956: 342; see also Guerrero 1997: 588).



community-based movement (Korovkin 2001: 41). According to Fernando Guerrero and Pablo Ospina, the indigenous community has served not only as an ideal but also as source of identity and social cohesion, as the crucial core of an alternative model for the organization of society (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 147). According to Roberto Santana, indígenas started to revitalize their communities to gain political representation. The community became “the only institution of political representation by which the Indians could prevail in the country” (Santana 1995: 114). Attesting to Partha Chatterjee’s (2004) claim that most of politics in the developing world is constructed locally, it is at the level of the indigenous community where levantamientos are set in motion. The communities have a built-in system to get people out to participate in the levantamientos. Upon agreeing on joining in, the community council mandates participation according to the indigenous norms of the minga, or communal work. As in mingas, non-participation in levantamientos is liable to a fee. Coordinating the protest at the local level, the community council sends members in relays to block highways, join marches, and demonstrate political strength.

However, neither the practice of indigenous culture nor the legalization and strengthening of communal government necessarily leads to formulate identity in ethnic terms, make culture politically explicit, and challenge mestizo national identity. As the Peruvian case demonstrates, there is no natural, nor cause-effect relation between community practice and the upholding of cultural difference to redress political and other inequalities. In addition, cultural identity may be a thin political resource, but indígenas shared the experience, and an awareness of the possibility, of being discriminated as indios. As Blanca Chancoso, they do not want to be interpellated as humiliated and

submissive indios-others. If identity does not offer “transcendent values that can be used to mobilize people” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 89), I argue that alterity—the concept and treatment of the alien objectified other (Rapport and Overing 2000: 9)—does.

The levantamiento of June 1990 started as a demand to the government to resolve seventy stalled land expropriations, which were initiated during the land reform, but as the protest snowballed and radicalized, indígenas across the highlands confronted non-indígenas with accusations of ethnic discrimination. Indigenous demonstrators compelled governors, *intendentes* (provincial police authorities), regional or provincial directors of state institutions, presidents of municipal councils, *jefes políticos* (state regional representative), *teniente políticos*, and chiefs of civil registries to assist public hearings in which the indígenas voiced their demands. In addition to land, infrastructure, price controls, and access to political participation, these included calls to stop ethnic discrimination. Authorities signed binding agreements in which they listed the indigenous demands, proposed courses of action, and promise to correct their treatment of the indígenas (León Trujillo 1994: 43).

In parishes and cantonal centers, indígenas rounded up not only public authorities. The demonstrators searched for non-indígenas who were known for their abusive and predatory practices, including merchants and bus owner/drivers, and “took them to improvised public hearings in assembly points, main plazas, markets, schools” (León Trujillo 1994: 43). At increasing local levels, the demands of the indigenous demonstrators increasingly paid no heed to the exalted ideals of the national leadership. According to Jorge León Trujillo, the local demands include the following:

the destitution of municipal authorities and «bad officials» of the IERAC (Ecuadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform and Colonization), the condemnation of mistreatment

and demand for «better service (mejor atención)» and «respect to indigenous dignity» in public offices, the demand for respect of the indígenas in the market by policemen and municipal commissaires, and the unrestricted sale of their products in the market. The more one gets closer and evaluates local demands, one finds that the indígenas gave prominent importance to these aspects of the rejection of discrimination, something which is not emphasized in the sixteen points presented by the CONAIE (León Trujillo 1994: 62-63).

Scholars have demonstrated that, in addition to land, “a generalized and additional motivation for grassroots organization was the struggle for respect, against discrimination at the local level” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 27; Pallares 2002: 76). Nevertheless, they have failed to recognize the historical and cultural significance of those events in which indígenas demanded respect for indigenous dignity. In those public hearings, the unmarked individuals, from whom indigenous subordination was part of common sense, had to explain themselves, instead of the other way around.

Groupist analytical perspectives, which consider ethnic categories as “substantial things-in-the-world,” explain that indígenas, based on their newly found political power, have been able to successfully demand respect from non-indígenas. Implicitly or explicitly, they explain past indigenous oppression in terms of ideological control and false consciousness, as if indigenous subjects had then misled ideas about social reality. This reproduces the currently widespread idea, among indígenas and non-indígenas, that with their political mobilization, indígenas have awakened from their past political dormancy. Rather than explaining contemporary indigenous political activism in terms of in terms of taken-for-granted antagonistic groups, I focus on practices of identification and categorization. These practices relate to material and symbolic struggles, have normative effects in behavior and notions of agency, structure belonging and exclusion in terms of governmentality and sentiment, and define and are defined by notions of nationality. In the analysis, I follow the ideas of Baumann and Gingrich, who argue that

identity and alterity “describe two faces of the same process” (Baumann 2006: 19). Identity “designates social subjectivities as persons and groups of persons. These subjectivities are multidimensional and fluid; they include power-related ascriptions by selves as well as by others; and they simultaneously combine sameness, or belonging, with alterity, or otherness” (Baumann and Gingrich 2006: x).

Melina Selverston-Scher argues that an outcome of the indigenous organizational process is the construction of a new collective identity. “The fact that it is in their best interest to identify themselves as indigenous results from the gains by mobilization based on collective identity and from the political space that is being won” (Selverston-Scher 2001: 67). This is a circular argument, as it contains an assumption of why did the indígenas mobilized on ethnic grounds in the first place. In contrast to class consciousness, ethnic consciousness lacked a theory to be realized. Therefore, what made visible for indigenous individuals the political possibilities of ethnic consciousness? Subsequent questions that I aim to answer included the following: a) if the contemporary indigenous movement is only a continuation of past indigenous resistance, why indígenas did not challenge national identity before? b) if identities are fluid, how to account for the hard facts of ethnicity? and c) why did indígenas started to invest in the subject position of the politically-conscious indígena?

Taking ethnic categories for granted, most lines of work have not paid attention to the transformation of ethnic identification and categorization. For instance, as late as the 1970s, most non-indígenas in Ecuador, in spite of skin color, identified themselves as blancos, not as mestizos. Self-identification as mestizo was hard to come by because the term was considered a derogative. It indicated social proximity to the indios. Today, in

contrast, mestizo is an ethnically unmarked term, associated with mainstream culture and Ecuadorian nation building. As Stoler argues, social labels, subject to changing sets of power relations, are constantly imbued with new political and cultural meaning (Stoler 1997: 105).

In Otavalo, during the 1970s, indígenas challenged dominant identification and categorization. These practices constructed the indio as essentially lacking “what is of quality in self” (Rapport and Overing 2000: 17), constituting the ideology of exclusion upon which non-indígenas based their institutionalized exploitation of the indígenas. In response to the harassment encountered in the city of Otavalo, recently urbanized well-to-do indígenas were able to challenge blanco self-ascription. Making that ascription impossible to sustain, indígenas subverted indigenous alterity and relegated non-indígenas to the lower status of mestizos. The indigenous challenge to non-indígena harassment implied that the mestizos who identified as blancos had an inferiority complex because of their desire to be blanco and their shame towards their indigenous descent. In order to dispute the hierarchical normativity of social identification, educated indígenas articulated a new indigenusness, emphasizing a positive evaluation of past and present indigenous ways of life. Thus, culture becoming explicitly political and the questioning of dominant self-identification were two sides of the same coin. I argue that this challenge was fundamental for the development of the indigenous intelligentsia that later provided the ideology for the indigenous movement. The challenge of dominant identification preceded their later critique of the exclusionary nature of the Ecuadorian “nation-state” and its imagined national subject, the “whitened” mestizo. As Guerrero

and Ospina argue, indigenous reaffirmation was framed as a “deep questioning of the ‘way of being’ of the national state” (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 256).

The indigenous intelligentsia in Otavalo developed in a context in which many rural indígenas were involved in struggles for land. In Ecuador, the land reform of the 1970s was a procedural nightmare beleaguered by ubiquitous corruption and influence peddling, which provoked direct, violent, and decade-long confrontations between the indigenous peasants and the hacienda power bases. The indígenas had to organize not only to demand expropriation of land but also to protect themselves from repression. Enrolling members in the ad hoc organizations that legally made the land claims was difficult because many indígenas were hampered by fatalism—the notion that indígenas could not win against non-indígenas—and feared repression.

Organizing to demand land entailed the articulation of a political identity. Receiving support from the class-based organization FENOC, the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (National Federation of Peasant Organizations), and from ECUARUNARI, the land struggles were the local arenas in which the articulations of the class and ethnic perspectives played out. Participating in these long conflicts, indigenous peasants learned to negotiate with state agencies and landed elites, to interact with other Ecuadorian indígenas fighting for land, and to work jointly with non-indígena supporters (See also Waters 2007). In addition, not knowing about the origins of the haciendas, they learned about the colonial dispossession of indigenous lands, and developed a new historical consciousness.

On the one hand, the indigenous intelligentsia projected a broadened ethnic platform and a new, modern way of being indigenous. On the other hand, the land struggles

brought indígenas together as they became aware of their shared historical experience and present purpose. The interplay of these processes led to the development of an imagined community of Ecuadorian indígenas that would coalesce in practice during the Levantamiento of 1990.

### *Identity/Alterity and Indigeneity*

To explain the ways in which the constitution of identity and alterity has changed, as mentioned before, I follow the ideas of grammars of identity/alterity by Baumann and Gingrich. In these paragraphs, in addition to explain these grammars, I develop new analytical ideas about indigeneity, the condition of being indigenous, which, I hope, will stimulate new ways of studying indigenous political movements.

Seeking to overcome “unproductive, and essentially moralist, truism that every selfing involves an othering (Baumann and Gingrich 2006: xi), Baumann and Gingrich have proposed three classificatory schemata, or grammars, for all processes constituting self and other. The grammars are freely adapted from the following classics: Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), Louis Dumont’s *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970 [1966]), and Evans-Pritchard’s *The Nuer* (1940).

The first grammar is orientalization. At the basic level, orientalization works by negative mirror imaging: “what is good in us is lacking in them.” Non-indígenas have simultaneously constructed non-indigenous identity and indigenous alterity arguing that they are clean and civilized whereas the indios are dirty and uncivilized. However, rather than being an uncomplicated dichotomy, orientalization adds a subordinate reversal: “what is lacking in us is (still) present in them” (Baumann and Gingrich 2006: x). This entails a possibility of desire or interest for the other, and a potential for self-critical

relativism. For instance, as Baumann argues, westerners have denigrated “orientals” as superstitious and backward but also have been captivated by their mysticism (2006: 20). In Otavalo, non-indígenas not only viewed the indígenas as degenerate individuals but also as possessors of qualities that they had lost.

The second grammar is encompassment. It works by sub-including others who at a higher level of abstraction are subsumed under that which is universal. Encompassment is always hierarchical, “the putatively subordinate category is adopted, subsumed or co-opted into the identity defined and, as it were, owned by those who do the encompassing.” For example, according to Baumann, “seen from below, woman is the opposite of man. Seen from above, that is, the level of man as defining the generic term, woman is but part of mankind” (2006: 26). Encompassment is the grammar at work in processes of mestizaje. Indígenas become nationals assimilating into national culture and shaking off markers of indigenousness. However, they may be discriminated by those non-indígenas who consider themselves more blanco.

The third grammar is segmentation. It constitutes self and other contextually, by means of sliding scales according to the “structural level of the conflict or contest, coalition or cooperation that is at stake at any one given moment” (Baumann 2006: 23). This grammar is subject to disputes about the right placing of the apex, the principle organizing belonging and otherness. Accordingly, it makes possible claims for equality. For example, the Nuer of East Africa fought against each other classifying friends and enemies according to six genealogical levels, from minimal lineages to maximal clans. Yet, they joined forces to resist the British (Baumann 2006: 21). In the grammar of segmentation, belonging and exclusion are not absolute but contextual. In Ecuador,



indígenas have allied with non-indigenous Ecuadorians and foreigners to fight against ethnic discrimination. This process has revalued indigenous culture, shaking constructions of otherness that naturalized non-indígena cultural and political supremacy.

Providing a “repertoire of structures through which to put forward arguments about self and other,” all grammars are at the disposal of social actors, depending on their agency. In addition, “the different selves and others need by no means agree on one or another of the grammars.” On the contrary, it is the “asymmetries in the use of the grammars which make these grammars into argumentative tools” (Baumann 2006: 31). Dominant individuals could enforce orientalizacion while their subalterns draw on encompassment.

Considering that systems of otherness are “structures of identity and difference that have more to do with the establishment of *self*-identity than with the empirical reality of the other” (Rapport and Overing 2000: 12), I argue, first, that before the emergence of the indigenous movement, the non-indígena self and the indio other were constructed by the grammar of orientalizacion, as polar opposites. Second, under the ideology of mestizaje, non-indígenas discriminate among themselves following the schema of encompassment. With whiteness at the apex of this schema, those who are marked as more indio are co-opted into the identity defined by those who can consider themselves more blanco. Finally, challenging dominant identification and demonstrating political strength, indígenas have displaced orientalizacion with the segmentary grammar. They have dislodged blanco-ness from the apex of the constitution of identity/alterity, at least in some spheres of life, and this allows them to revalorize indigenousness to demand equality without assimilating into mestizo culture.

Emphasizing the workings of the grammars of identity/alterity, the ways in which indigenous and non-indigenous persons have been othered and their subjectivities normalized, this research proposes a model of indigeneity that overcomes the problematics of groupism—the treatment of ethnic categories as substantial groups that have common interests and purposes. Reifying ethnic categories and reproducing identity politics, many lines of work on indigenous movements assume that indigeneity is about epistemic difference, about alternative ways of knowing. Thus, Walter Mignolo argues “indigenous social movements in the ex-Spanish colonies in the Americas claim epistemic rights (that is, rights to the principles of the politics of knowledge)” (2005: 117).

At the ethnographic level, epistemological difference does exist but it is not a clear-cut dichotomy between western and indigenous worldviews or cultures. First, any notion of western culture in opposition to indigenous culture falls into primordialism and essentialism. Second, epistemological difference does not correspond neatly to the ethnic boundary. A non-indígena who oppresses an indígena is not necessarily his/her cultural opposite. Third, ethnic discrimination works not only across the ethnic boundary but also within social categories. Finally, ethnic labels, as lexicon of difference, not only change across time and space and according to context, but also they are invariably destabilized in actual performance. Accordingly, as Rosaleen Howard argues, identity is “a performative self-positioning of the subject in an ever-evolving discursive field” (Howard 2009: 21).

Conceptualizing identity/alterity as performative and social categorization as performative practice, questions of definition—“Who are the Indians?” (Field 1994);

“How should we define the parameters of ‘indigenous;’ in short, how do we (should we?) mark this category off as a distinct field for pressing claims, so that we have analytical coherence? (Smith 2007)—have no practical significance. Claims that “the other is (more) indio and the self is not” are relational and contextual.

Not all populations that could have articulated political claims around indigeneity have done so. “For example, by contrast to vigorous activism in neighboring Bolivia and Ecuador, Peruvian Aymaras and Quechuas have been relatively unresponsive to social movements organized under the banner of indigenous rights” (Starn and de la Cadena 2007: 13). Becoming indigenous, as de la Cadena and Starn claim, “is always only a *possibility* negotiated within political fields of culture and history” (2007: 13). However, considering indigeneity as only a possibility for indigenous political action is applicable only to bottom-up indigeneity—the explicitly political formulation/practice of indigenous identity and culture. Top-down indigeneity was not only a possibility for those populations who have been exterminated, marginalized, exploited, and stigmatized as indigenes.

Key to the construction of top-down oppressing indigeneity was the performative naturalization of indigenous marginalization and subordination and non-indigenous commonsensical sense of superiority. This naturalization, which legitimized the seizure of indigenous land and labor, blamed indigenous biology and/or culture not only for the indigenous defeat during the conquest but also for the contemporary wretched living conditions and marginality of indigenous peoples. During republican times, the foundations for this naturalization were the non-indigenous monopolies on imagining the nation, on cultural capital, and on the coercive power of the state. Key to the construction

of bottom-up indigeneity has been the indigenous challenge to that naturalization, to the constitution of identity and alterity in terms of non-indigenous modernity/rationality and indigenous archaism/irrationality. This challenge is not about representation; it is about power-infused and negotiated-in-practice ways of being.

Poststructuralist approaches, which emphasize the discursive construction of identities, are unable to link top-down and bottom-up indigeneities. Conceptualizing identities as fluid, how can we understand the stigmatizing and coercive power of top-down indigeneity? These approaches have been unable to go beyond the stale debate about strategic essentialism. Demanding indigenous rights as colonized first peoples, indigenous peoples articulate primordial and essential difference with non-indigenous peoples occupying the same national territory. This not only hide the hybridity and complexity of social reality but also ignores that identification as indigenous and non-indigenous is not a simple equation that can be universally applied. This is particularly acute in contexts of historic cultural and biological intermingling, such as the Andes, in which is not easy to differentiate between the descendents of colonized and colonizers. However, “there is increasing recognition among anthropologists that such ‘strategic essentialism’, while it might seem artificial to the outside observer, is empowering and historically contingent for the populations involved” (Howard 18). Stuart Hall has precisely identified the problematics of this gap between theoretical analysis and politics. According to him, “It is only too tempting to fall into the trap of assuming that, because essentialism has been deconstructed *theoretically*, therefore, it has been displaced *politically*” (1996: 246).

In turn, approaches that emphasize epistemic difference still pose essentialized, ethnicized, and racialized views of culture (See Trouillot 2002). Conceiving indigenous culture as autonomous from relations of power and as unaffected by the non-indigenous monopoly on cultural capital, these perspectives not only give culture a pervasive explanatory force but also reproduce, as mentioned before, the reification constructed by identity politics as political practice.

So, what is indigeneity? In the closing chapter of the book *Indigenous Experience Today*, Mary Louise Pratt argues that remoteness, territoriality, and subsistence lifeways are generators of indigeneity (2007: 402-403). The first and the third have played no role in the development of bottom-up indigeneity among otavaleño intellectuals. All the opposite, indigenous cosmopolitanism and upward mobility have been very important in this development. The second, territoriality, is not an issue among indigenous otavaleños. Even though Pratt emphasizes the processual nature of indigeneity, she follows a primordial definition in which supposedly bounded indigenous populations cling to their traditional land and culture and avoid contact with outsiders. Needless to say, these populations have alternative ways of knowing. All in all, this perspective sees indigeneity as inherent in those remote and traditional populations.

Rather than defining indigeneity as epistemic difference, I argue that it has been one of the most prominent markers in the modern constitution of identity/alterity, normalizing who, and to what extent, was stigmatized and exploited and who was unmarked and privileged. With their political mobilization, indigenous peoples are challenging this constitution of self and other and transforming its normativity. The fact that this has not

happened everywhere that indigenous people live emphasizes the historical contingency of these processes.

Critics of strategic essentialism forget that indigeneity is about the future, not the past. Indigenous leaders articulate an indigeneity that resonates with indigenous cultural practice and historical memory, but many leaders, as Yoshinobu Ota argues for the Guatemalan Mayans, “seem to realize that the culture they mobilize is not something they can dig up from the ground, as it were; they repeatedly emphasize that culture is to be constructed for the future” (2002: 78). With their political mobilization, indígenas have pushed their way into imagining the national community and this have allowed them to imagining an alternative national future.

The focus on the constitution of identity/alterity, the social realm in which ways of being are produced, allows me to explain what other perspectives have left unanswered: why indigenous people have mobilized around indigeneity during the last decades of the twentieth century and only in certain places? why indigenous people are self-identifying as politically-conscious indígenas when they are more integrated into national society than ever before? and how the possibility of mobilizing around indigeneity becomes a reality.

## Chapter II

### Imagining Ecuadorians

*Han pasado muchos años desde que se abolieron la mita, el tributo y el repartimiento; ¿no viven hoy más seguros los indios a la sombra de una hacienda que en los anexos a merced del teniente político, el alcalde o cualquiera que pretenda ser tenido por blanco?*

Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño (1960: 122).<sup>31</sup>

*[The nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.*

Benedict Anderson (1991: 7).

“Between wrath and hope: Bolívar and Rumiñahui,” wrote a columnist in the daily *La Verdad* commenting on an indigenous demonstration on Sunday August 30, 1998, against the moving of a statue in the city of Otavalo (Guzmán 1998). After congregating at the cemetery, a few blocks south, hundreds of indígenas marched toward the Plaza Bolívar,

<sup>31</sup> “Many years has passed since the abolition of the *mita*, the tribute and the *repartimiento*; the indios do not live today more secure under the shadow (shelter) of an hacienda than in the towns at the mercy of the *tenientes políticos*, the mayor o anybody who pretends to be taken as blanco?” The *mita*, the Indian tribute, and the *repartimiento* were colonial institutions of indigenous economic exploitation. The *mita* was a form of draft labor. The Indian tribute was a head tax. The *repartimiento* or *reparto de mercancías* was the forced distribution of goods and credit to

the city center, and took it up. In protest, they were chanting, “Down with Villareal! Rumiñahui is not moving!” (Mora 1998). The mayor, Fabián Villareal, wanted to replace the statue of Rumiñahui, a hero of the Incaic resistance against the Spanish conquest in the early 1530s, with one of Simón Bolívar, a hero of the wars of independence in the 1820s. Mayor Villareal planned to move the statue of Rumiñahui to a new site, the Plaza Rumiñahui, yet to be built at the outskirts of the city.

The heated arguments about the moving of Rumiñahui were not merely about finding the proper places for statues historicizing national identity. The Mayor’s initiative did not only follow a desire for thematic coherence—having the statue of Bolívar in the Plaza Bolívar. According to Rudy Colloredo-Mansfeld, Mayor Villareal was “embarked in a rationalization plan of the civic space between the ethnic groups in Otavalo.” Sending Rumiñahui to the margins and locating Bolívar at the center was an effort to restore the ethnic civic order in Otavalo (2007: 360). The Mayor was trying to reestablish what Charles Hale, in his study of ladino responses to Mayan political activism in Guatemala, has called the “separate and unequal” mode of governance (Hale 2006: 79). In practice since colonial times, this mode of governance assigned supposed proper public places to indigenous individuals and groups, either restricting indigenous access to blanco spaces or silencing existing indigenous presence in those spaces. It did so by portraying a “stark almost unbridgeable chasm” between indios and blancos, assigning relatively fixed characteristics to each group by means of binary oppositions, such as rural/urban, nature/culture, primitive/civilized, and physical labor/intellectual labor (cf. Hale 2006: 79).

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indígenas by colonial authorities/merchants. The *teniente político* is the state authority at the level



The conflict about the proper locations for indigenous and non-indigenous national heroes in terms of center and periphery reflected the long-standing debate about the proper place of the indio in the Ecuadorian imagined community. Examining the way in which the erecting of the statue of Rumiñahui is a product of the debates about Ecuadorian nationality, in this chapter I study the imagining of the Ecuadorian nation from 1920s to 1960s—before nationalist military dictatorships officially adopted mestizaje as a state policy—and the role played by non-indígena otavaleño intellectuals in it. As Duara argues, commemorative efforts to historicize national identity bring the question of who imagines what and when (1996). As we will see, commemorating Rumiñahui as a national hero was not an indigenous initiative. It was non-indígena intellectuals who initiated this commemoration in the context of a long debate about the origins of Ecuadorian nationality—Was the Ecuadorian nation solely the heir of Spain, or did it have its roots in pre-conquest times? These imaginings were not inconsequential as they sanctioned “who belongs and who does not, who is privileged and who is not” (1996: 169).

On the one hand, indígenas did not participate in this debate. For non-indígenas, it was inconceivable that indígenas could contribute to it. This was the natural order of things or what Bourdieu calls *doxa*—the process through which socially and culturally constituted ways of perceiving, evaluating and behaving become accepted as unquestioned, self-evident and taken for granted (Bourdieu 1977: 164). On the other hand, imagining the Ecuadorian nation, more than anything else, meant imagining the indio. Left with nothing to imagine, Ecuadorian indigenous populations were considered

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of the civil parish.

not as a historical collectivities but as a primordial subject emptied out of historical agency: the indio. National filiation, national origin, and other fundamental questions about the ideological mainstay of the imagined political community were inherently intertwined with the Indian problem, the debate in which non-indigena intellectuals formulated the following questions: Where does the indio fit in the common origins, the troublesome present, and the historical destiny of the Ecuadorian nation? (See also Larson 2004: 49) Is the indio redeemable? He does not share national/modern values and culture, but can he? If so, how do we incorporate him into national life? At stake was nothing less than the viability of Ecuador as a nation and state.<sup>32</sup>

The intertwinement of the imagined community with the Indian problem becomes evident when considering that debates about national origin and indigenous past, as several authors have argued, were in fact about the indigenous present (Lomnitz 2001; Prieto 2004; Thurner 2003). Ultimately, as we will see, these debates were about constructing and governing indios. From 1990, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has challenged not only the proposed solutions for the Indian problem but also its epistemological underpinnings, the relations of power allowing non-indígenas to consider the existence of indígenas as a problem.

I claim that Ecuadorian nation-ness was grounded in an imagined opposition to an internal ethnic/racial other as much as in an imagined fraternity of equivalent members living in the modern system of ontologically equivalent nations, as Benedict Anderson has argued.

<sup>32</sup> During the first half of the twentieth century, the notion of redemption—the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil—was common among non-indígenas speaking about the

### *Imagining National Communities*

It is paradoxical that in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Anderson claims that Latin American countries were pioneers in the creation of nationalism while throughout republican times Latin American intellectuals have been “hyperconscious” (Lomnitz 2001: xvii) of the backwardness and inchoateness of their own nations (See for instance Quintero and Silva 1991; and Sánchez 1963).

Trying to answer why nationality commands such profound emotional legitimacy, Anderson has argued that the development of print-capitalism in the eighteenth-century transformed the apprehension of time allowing for the imagining of the nation—an awareness of anonymous fellow citizens living in simultaneous time. From the discontinuous time of the sacred, which does not distinguish between cosmology and history, to homogeneous, empty time, which radically separates past and present in an endless succession of cause and effect, this cognitive transformation enabled the engendering of the modern nation. This was nothing but revolutionary. In opposition to the organic unity of hierarchical societies, which are based on differential status, the unity of the nation is predicated on the equivalency of its members (cf. Laclau 2003: 25). As such, according to Anderson, nations are “communities of the type ‘horizontal-secular, transverse time’” (Anderson 1991: 37). They belong to the domain of disinterested love and solidarity.

If historians, diplomats, politicians, and social scientists are quite at ease with the idea of ‘national interest,’ for most ordinary people of whatever class the whole point of the nation is that it is interestless. Just for that reason, it can ask for sacrifices (Anderson 1991: 144).

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Indian problem. Many non-indígenas considered that indios had fallen from the grace of civilization, before the conquest, to a state of present degradation.

Anderson claims that the “nations-of-citizens model” was brought into the world by the Creoles, referring to all the descendent of European conquerors and/or settlers, during the wars of independence in the Americas (1991: 95, 135). At the time that print-capitalism was making possible the imagining of the nation, the inevitability of Creole subordination to European administrators led the Creoles to think of themselves as Americans, in the British colonies, and *Americanos*, in the Spanish domains.

Regarding Latin American independence movements, Anderson recognizes in them a “certain ‘social thinness’;” they were not popular or popularly led movements. “Yet,” he emphasizes, “they *were* national independence movements.” They were national because Creole leaders “consciously redefined” the large, oppressed, and non-Spanish speaking populations (i.e., indigenous) as fellow-nationals. His evidence amounts to the 1821 declaration of the liberator José de San Martín, who said that “in the future the aborigines shall not be called Indians or natives; they are children *and citizens* of Peru and they shall be known as Peruvians.” Anderson adds, “in spite of the fact that as yet print-capitalism had not reached these illiterates” (1991: 49-50).

As the first blueprint for copying, according to Anderson, Creole nationalism was modularly transferred to the whole world, imposing “certain ‘standards’ from which too-marked deviations were impermissible” (Anderson 1991: 81). Referring to central European nationalisms, Anderson writes,

Even backward and reactionary Hungarian and Polish gentries were hard put to it not to make a show of ‘inviting in (if only to the pantry) their oppressed compatriots. If you like, the logic of San Martín’s Peruvianization was at work. If ‘Hungarians’ deserved a national state, then that *meant* Hungarians, all of them, it meant a state in which the ultimate locus of sovereignty had to be the collectivity of Hungarian-speakers and readers; and, in due course, the liquidation of serfdom, the promotion of popular education, the expansion of suffrage, and so on (Anderson 1991: 81).

Anderson indicates that the populist character of European nationalism was deeper than creole nationalism, but it was the creole model—the logic of San Martín’s Peruvianization—what dictated inclusiveness and egalitarianism. Never mind that San Martín had favored a monarchical regime, bringing a prince from Europe to govern Southern Latin America, that indios were called Peruvians in opposition to the Creoles during the colony, and that Latin American countries sank into political chaos for decades because they were unable to confer a national hegemonic legitimacy to their governments.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson mentions San Martín’s declaration at least four times in order to emphasize his argument that inclusiveness was integral to the American origins of nation-ness. According to him, San Martín’s dictum “abolished the old time-dishonoured naming and inaugurated a completely new epoch.” The naming of the indios as ‘Peruvians’, he claims, “marked rhetorically a profound rupture with the existing world” (Anderson 1991: 193).

Anderson does not take into account that San Martín’s words were, by and large, inconsequential. For the indios in South America, there was no profound rupture. Independence did not transform their subjugation. Some scholars even argue that independence worsened their conditions. Other scholars consider that the independence wars were rather Creole civil wars rather than national independence movements (Larson 2004; Bonilla et al. 1981). In addition, the new republican governments kept collecting the colonial Indian tribute for several decades, until they replaced it with forced labor schemes. In Peru, Ecuador, and other parts of Latin America, indios have continued to be

discriminated as indios. They were not enfranchised as citizens until the last decades of the twentieth century, a century and a half after independence.

These objections, nevertheless, do not invalidate Anderson's main argument. He recognizes that reality was chaotic and contradictory. American states were weak for many decades, and those depending on black slavery and/or indigenous servitude "were internally riven to a degree quite unmatched in Europe" (Anderson 1991: 202). But what became modular about creole nationalism were the concepts. As soon as the histories of independence were printed, the contradictions were washed away, appearing as inconsequential anomalies. Thus,

Out of the [North and South] American welter came these imagined realities: nation-states, republican institutions, common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems, etc., and the liquidation of their conceptual opposites: dynastic empires, monarchical institutions, absolutisms, subjecthoods, inherited nobilities, serfdoms, ghettos, and so forth (Anderson 1991: 81).

For Anderson, the nationally imagined deep, horizontal comradeship, capable "of equally motivating masses and elites to fight on its behalf" (Skurski 1996: 374), works as a *deus ex machina* overcoming past and current inequalities, exclusions, and exploitations. Following the logic of San Martín's Peruvianization, everybody is invited, and, on the long run, not even existing subaltern languages are an impediment to imagining the nation as a hegemonic and unified fraternity sharing a national subjectivity (Anderson 1991: 135). That is a lot to take out from one phrase by San Martín.

In his later book, *The Spectre of Comparison*, Anderson (1998) cautions against the ventriloquism of national elites speaking for—i.e., silencing—tribal groups but without renouncing to his celebration of the egalitarian nature of Creole nationalism. This idealization leads him to distinguish between primal and derivative nationalisms, between true nationalisms of or for the people, capable of producing good things, and

contaminated, Machiavellian nationalisms seized by the state and/or “ethnicisms,” leading to chauvinisms, ethnic hatreds, and civil wars. On the one hand, he refers to the politics of ethnicity as “a bastard Smerdyakov to classical nationalism’s Dmitri Karamazov,” (1998: 71) implying an analogy between the morally unrestrained Smerdyakov, in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamov*, and ethnic movements. On the other hand, listing the ideals and affective moments of nationalism, he concludes: “There is something of value in all of this... no matter what crimes a nation’s government commits and its passing citizenry endorses, My Country is ultimately Good. In these straitened millennial times, can such Goodness be profitably discarded?” (1998: 368).

Muddling the hegemonic discourse of classical nationalism with the social experience of nationality, Anderson refuses to acknowledge the inherent interrelatedness of all nationalisms with ethnicity, race, and the state. As Partha Chatterjee claims, Anderson “continues to believe that the politics of nationalism and that of ethnicity arise on different sites, grow on different nutriments, travel through different networks, mobilize on different sentiments, and fight for different causes” (Chatterjee 2003: 164).

### *Imagining Ecuadorian Heroes*

The statue of Rumiñahui was erected in 1955 by the Association October 31,<sup>33</sup> a civic organization of non-indígena *otavaleños* living in Quito, and an ad hoc military committee. The man behind the effort was a prominent member of the association, the journalist and writer Enrique Garcés (Garcés 1955). As for the bust of Bolívar, the Government of Venezuela had donated it to the municipality (Concejo Municipal de

Otavalo 1959). Successive administrations had kept it in the assembly hall of the municipality until Mayor Villareal decided to move it outdoors in 1998 (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2007: 360).

The columnist of *La Verdad* criticized both the indigenous mobilization, because it was “an escape valve for the mediocrity of its leadership,” and the Municipality, because it had “rekindled ethnic differences in order to set a smoke screen for its [poor] administration.” He supported the Mayor’s decision, which included the construction of a new full body sculpture of Rumiñahui, arguing that the new plaza would commemorate Rumiñahui better. Stating that the indigenous leadership should not encourage the fragmentation of Ecuadorianess, he proposed that all Ecuadorians should be united in those times of political and economic crisis (Guzmán 1998).

In the mobilization, indigenous leaders were vocal and assertive. They criticized the mayor and threatened to increase the mobilization. Indigenous intellectual José Quimbo said, “we are not going to permit the moving of the effigy out from this plaza.” He claimed that the mayor did not have a proper idea of the significance of Rumiñahui for Ecuadorian nationality, in contrast to a group of intellectuals from Otavalo, including Enrique Garcés and Gonzalo Rubio Orbe—a leading *indigenista* intellectual—who have exalted and defended his name (Mora 1998).

On September 5, the Indigenous and Peasant Federation of Imbabura (FICI) published in the daily *Diario del Norte* a statement claiming that the last Ecuadorian Constitution, promulgated in June of the same year, has granted indigenous peoples the

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<sup>33</sup> The association was named after the date in which Simón Bolívar upgraded the status of Otavalo from village to city in 1829.



right to self-definition and the right to use the symbols of their identity. “Unfortunately,” according to the FICI,

these social, political, and cultural achievements have not been fully understood by some sectors of the population, in particular, by the Mayor of the canton of Otavalo, who pretends, unilaterally and without consultation, to relocate the monument of Rumiñahui from the central plaza of the city.

The statement ends in defiance, “We consider the Mayor of this city as responsible for the consequences that his decision may provoke” (INRUJTA-FICI 1998). On September 6, the newspaper *La Verdad* reported, “the FICI will not assume any responsibility for the reactions of the indigenous communities if the Mayor of Otavalo, Fabián Villarreal, persists with his attitude.” In addition, the president of the FICI, Carmen Yamberla, proposed a solution:

We, indígenas, do not stop at mere protest. Today, we propose for serious consideration our initiative of turning the central plaza into a ‘Plaza of Unity,’ a place that would reflect the intercultural and plurinational essence of Otavalo, a place in which indigenous and mestizo heroes would be represented” (Coronel Campos 1998).

In another newspaper article, Yamberla criticized the columnist of *La Verdad* for being unaware of the later achievements of indigenous peoples in terms of justice and rights. She added that the columnist’s opinion was unauthorized and mediocre (Diario del Norte 1998).

Absent in the debate was the fact that a few decades earlier, indígenas could not freely enter the Plaza Bolívar. Until the early 1970s, the plaza was considered a blanco space. The plaza did not have physical barriers blocking public access, but indígenas crossing it or sitting on a bench were at risk of being grabbed by municipal police and forced to sweep the plaza. For the most part, indígenas only entered the plaza to clean it, as part of the *faena*, the unpaid indigenous labor whose organization was forced upon the

indigenous *alcalde*,<sup>34</sup> the leader of the community council, by the *teniente politico*, the government-appointed civil parish authority (Korovkin 2001: 44).

The erection of the effigy of Rumiñahui, in 1955, did not change the blanco status of the plaza nor the discriminatory practices against the indígenas. The apparent contradiction between the representation of national identity and social practice—glorifying an indigenous historical figure while discriminating against indígenas—was an example of what Cecilia Méndez, in her study of Peruvian Creole nationalism, has called “Incas, yes; Indios, no,” the simultaneous exaltation of a glorified indigenous past and repudiation of the indigenous present in the constitution of dominant conceptions of nationality (Méndez 1996).

Since the 1970’s, a significant number of prosperous indigenous merchants have bought houses in the core urban space of Otavalo, challenging its blanco status. As Donald Moore has argued, politics of identity are also politics of space. Localities, rather than merely inert backdrops for identity struggles, are the products of those contestations (Moore 1998: 347). Increasingly using the Plaza Bolívar, indígenas have contested and redefined its control, and in 1998, they were not going to relinquish it to the mestizo mayor.

This was not the first confrontation between Mayor Villareal and the indígenas. In August 1996, when an indigenous woman, Verónica Barahona, tried to register in the *Reyna del Yamor* (Queen of Yamor), a beauty pageant during the *Fiesta del Yamor*, the Mayor and the City Council refused to accept her candidacy arguing that each ethnic group had its own beauty contest. The yamor is a fermented drink made from seven

<sup>34</sup> In Spanish, the term “alcalde” means mayor.

varieties of corn, which apparently was invented by a non-indígena woman in the 1940s. The drink was made only during the celebration of the Virgin of Monserrat, whose chapel is at the outskirts of the city. In the early 1950s, Enrique Garcés and a group of students created the Fiesta del Yamor, which was an exclusive affair with private dances and a beauty pageant in clubs of restricted access. During the 1960s, the fiesta turned into a popular celebration, and in 1968, the municipality officially assumed the organization of the festivities (Jácome 1976; León 1953; Posern-Zielinski 1999; Rogers 1999). The festive activities include music performances, bullfights, a parade of carnival floats, a swimming race across the Lake San Pablo, a downhill race of wooden carts, and the beauty pageant *Reyna del Yamor*. Until 1996, it also included a separate beauty pageant for indigenous women, the *Sara Ñusta* (Princess of Corn).

Mayor Villareal refused to change the ethnic grounding of the pageant, which was written in a week-old municipal ordinance, claiming that “the ordinance intended to maintain the prestige of the Fiesta del Yamor” and that “the participation of an indigenous youth could make the parents of the other contestants withdraw them.” “Accepting Barahona,” he said, “would end a tradition and custom that the pueblo otavaleño has kept for years” (FVS 1996). The Mayor and the City Council held on to their decision but paid dearly. A committee of indigenous leaders supported Barahona. Her candidacy, according to Mark Rogers, “represented a new kind of challenge to the perceived inequities and exploitative tendencies of the *Yamor* festival” (Rogers 1999: 61). When their refusal reached the news, it provoked widespread support for Barahona and sharp criticism for the Mayor and the City Council, who were denounced as racists. Even an ex-*Reyna del Yamor* expressed her support for the indigenous contestant. In

addition, the President of Ecuador, Abdalá Bucaram, not only met and supported Barahona but also presented a demand to the *Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales* (Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees) to declare unconstitutional the ordinance (Diario del Norte 1996; FVS 1996). At the end, the ordinance was declared unconstitutional, but Barahona withdrew from participating.

It is highly unlikely that indígenas would have protested against the moving of the statue of Rumiñahui or challenged the ethnic grounding of the Reyna del Yamor in the early 1970s, when the separate and unequal mode of governance was still in place, when indígenas were yet to have a voice in local politics. Mayor Villareal may not have realized that by 1998 this mode of governance had become, in Raymond Williams's terms, residual (1977: 121-127).<sup>35</sup>

The debates about the proper place of the indio in the Ecuadorian imagined community were not only about governing indios. By participating in these debates—relating race and/or culture to nation-ness—dominant Ecuadorians not only constructed indigenous alterity and exclusion but also constructed their own identity and belonging. Similarly to European elites in colonial regimes, their use of metaphors of race and culture to describe class relations was not only a rhetorical political strategy but also a formative mechanism of their identity as inherently superior. These metaphors, according to Ann Stoler, “captured in one sustained image internal threats to the health and well-being of the social body where those deemed a threat lacked an ethics of ‘how to live’ and thus the ability to govern themselves” (1995: 127). Articulating national belonging

<sup>35</sup> See Hale for an application of Williams' ideas to the analysis of ethnic relations in Guatemala (2006: 82).

and alterity, the debate about the Indian problem was also a formative mechanism of dominant identity, a way in which non-indígenas imagined themselves.

*Searching for National Origins - Hispanicism versus Indigenismo*

In articulating a perspective of Ecuadorian nationality that excluded the indígenas, one of the most prominent thinkers was the aristocratic archeologist, historian, hacendado, and industrialist Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño. In 1946, in a discourse commemorating the fourth centennial of the Episcopate of Quito, he claimed, “Ecuadorian nationality was engendered from August 15 to December 6 of 1534” (1960: 312). He was referring to the time between the decision of three conquistadors to establish permanent settlements in the northern part of the Inca Empire and the actual establishment of a cabildo, the Spanish local government council, in the indigenous urban center of Quito, since then renamed as San Francisco de Quito. The conquistadors, each leading its own army, had been outrunning each other trying to get their hands on Inca gold in the northern part of the Empire. “Ecuadorian nationality,” Jijón y Caamaño asserted, “is produced the day in which Sebastián de Benalcázar, Diego de Almagro, and Pedro de Alvarado, after joining armies and under the leadership of the first one, decided to establish Castilian populations definitively in the northern extensions of the Inca Empire” (1960: 316).

According to Jijón y Caamaño, the engendering of Ecuadorian nationality was the outcome of Benalcázar’s resolution to establish his own governorship, instead of staying under the orders of Francisco Pizarro, the conquistador who already had established a governorship in the center and southern part of the Inca Empire. Differentiating his jurisdiction from Pizarro’s, which three centuries later would become the Republic of

Peru, Benalcázar gave birth to Ecuadorian nationality. For Jijón y Caamaño, the making of Latin American nations was a purely conquistadors' affair.

Hispano-American nations are engendered when, by the work of the conquering drive, a new collective being is established in American soil, in the center of the indigenous population, around a *cabildo* (town council) that considers itself and acts as the nucleus of a new kingdom (1960: 317).

Jijón y Caamaño was one of the most prominent members of what Ernesto Capello (2003) has called “domestic Hispanicism” (*Hispanismo casero*) an ideological movement by Ecuadorian conservative elites that explicitly eulogized identification with Spain, articulating the idea that tradition and religion had a transformative potential to redeem the Ecuadorian nation. Setting forth a conservative political project towards the “genuine development of the nation,” domestic Hispanicism denied any indigenous contribution to the constitution of Ecuadorian nationality (Capello 2003: 64).

In the 1920s, Hispanicist intellectuals invented the notion that Quito was the “most Castilian city of the Americas,” implying not only that the city was an epitome of Spanish civilization but also that the Spanish condition was well and alive among Ecuadorians. The art historian José Gabriel Navarro would argue that Quito was comparable to the most beautiful cities in the Old World because of its colonial architecture and sculpture. He claimed that Quito's aesthetics reflected the superiority of the Spanish race, whose colonial practice, in comparison to those of the English and French, had emphasized cultural over economic development. Denying the now-proven indigenous contribution to Quito's colonial art, Navarro asserted that all of civilization had come from Spain (Capello 2003: 65).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For indigenous contribution to colonial art, see Susan V. Webster (2002).

In turning domestic Hispanicism into commemorative practice, Jijón y Caamaño was a key figure. During the early 1930s, he was a member of the city council of the Municipality of Quito, and becoming its president in 1934, he led the efforts to commemorate the fourth centennial of the Spanish foundation of Quito. To begin with, the Municipality commissioned him to resolve the existing doubts about which day of the year 1534 should be commemorated, either August 28, when Almagro ordered the settlement of Spaniards in Quito, or December 6, when Benalcázar entered the city and installed the cabildo (Bustos 2007). Jijón y Caamaño prepared a historical report arguing that since Quito was already a city, the conquistadors had not founded it. Nevertheless, he “defended the importance of celebrating the anniversary as the initiation of Spanish culture and civilization for the city as much as for the nation” and proposed to celebrate it on August 28 (Capello 2003: 68). At the end, the Municipality celebrated both dates.

In the initial ceremony of the commemorations, Jijón read the original record of the establishment of the cabildo and his own historical study on the life of Benalcázar. According to the Municipal Gazette, Jijón’s reading was celebrated in the press as an erudite reflection “about the beginning of our nationality” (Bustos 2007: 112). As part of the 1934 commemorations, the municipality made six plaques with the names and coat of arms of the 240 Spanish conquistadors who settled in Quito. The plaques were set on the façade of the cathedral, reflecting the ideological identification of Hispanicism with the Catholic Church. In addition, the municipal gazette adopted a new design. From the commemorations of the fourth centennial until the end of its publication, twenty years later, the gazette featured the municipal seal at the center top, portraits of Almagro and Benalcázar at the left and right top, and Pizarro at the bottom (Capello 2003: 69-70).

In 1936, the Municipality published the first volume of a biography of Benalcázar written by Jijón. In 1938, it published the second volume. At the end of the 1930s, the Ecuadorian state declared December 6 Quito's official anniversary. In 1942, the municipality established the "Honorably Order of Knights of Quito, Sebastián de Benalcázar," a special award to those citizens that had contributed significantly to the progress of the city. In 1949, the city erected a statue of Benalcázar, which is still standing at the intersection of the streets Benalcázar and Olmedo in downtown Quito. The monument was inaugurated by Gonzalo Zaldumbide, a writer and diplomat who was a prominent Hispanicist. From 1929 to 1936, Zaldumbide was the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Relations. In 1933, he published an essay entitled *El significado de España en América* (The significance of Spain in the Americas). In this essay, Zaldumbide argues that "our America" is a "natural extension of Europe" in the New World (Zaldumbide 1933: 29). In addition, he argues, "All the civilizable human aspect of the arduous Andean region, and of all the Americas, is the work of Spain or derives from its drive. How much do we owe to Spain!" (Zaldumbide 1933: 27).

Hispanicism was not only an Ecuadorian phenomenon; it was wider ideological trend across Latin America. In the decades after the Spanish-American War in 1898, when Spain lost the colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines, a group of Spanish intellectuals tried to reestablish international influence for Spain promoting the existence of a community of nations, which Spain would lead, distinguished by a Spanish spiritual presence. This pan-Hispanicism received particularly strong support during the fascist dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), when numerous institutions that promote Hispanicism by means of historical and cultural projects were created.



According to Guillermo Bustos, Hispanicism had four pillars: Catholic religion, Spanish language, corporative or hierarchical organization of society, and an accentuated cultural ethnocentrism (Bustos 2007: 117). Facing the emergent Anglo-Saxon, North-American continental hegemony, many conservative Latin American intellectuals and leaders strongly embraced Hispanicism. In their rhetoric, they turned Spain from being the cruel colonial oppressor to being the righteous *madre patria* (motherland), vindicating the conquest and denying the black legend—the historical depiction of the Spaniards as excessively cruel and fanatical during the conquest of the Americas. An exception was Mexico, which after the revolution (1910-20) decisively rooted its history on pre-conquest civilizations, exalted imagery of the indio, and promoted mestizaje as the fundamental character of the Mexican nation (Alonso 2007; Bonfil Batalla 1996: 53).

As a constitutive part of domestic Hispanicism, Jijón's vision of Ecuadorian nationality was a response of the landed oligarchy of the highlands to a series of political challenges and intertwined national debates. First, it responded to the liberal drive to modernize the country. In 1885, the Liberal Revolution of Eloy Alfaro gave political prominence to the coastal city of Guayaquil, at the expense of Quito. With the emergence of coastal Ecuador as a world exporter of cacao, during the first decades of the twentieth century, the landed elite of the coast demanded a free national labor market, promoting labor mobilization. This was in opposition to the relations of production based on unfree labor prevalent in highland haciendas, such as debt servitude, which were based on local subjection.

Most of early twentieth century governments, according to Capello, “were from the coast and their programs were marked by the disdain towards the traditional Andean

society, towards the landowning oligarchy of Quito” (Capello 2003: 59). In 1924, Jijón bought arms in the USA, trained a militia, and tried to ignite a conservative revolution in the northern highlands. After his army lost the first and only battle against the Ecuadorian army, he was captured and sent into exile for a year, during which he developed his visions on politics and nationality. In 1929, he published *Política Conservadora*, a programmatic text trying to revitalize the Ecuadorian Conservative Party, arguing that tradition and religion were the genuine forces that would lead Ecuador towards national progress. In this book, he explains the gestation of Ecuadorian nationality and proposes the formation of Catholic centers for workers. Jijón owned a modern textile factory and tried to spread conservative ideology using the modern methods of political organizing. For several decades, he promoted an alliance between tradition, religion, and labor.

Second, Jijón’s vision of Ecuadorian nationality also responded to the polemic about the historical authenticity of *La Historia del Reyno de Quito en la América Meridional*, (*The History of the Kingdom of Quito in Meridional America*) a historical narrative written by Juan de Velasco, a Jesuit priest, by 1780. De Velasco wrote the narrative in exile in Italy, after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish colonies in 1768. *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* is an account of the development, over five centuries, of a big pre-conquest state ruled by the royal dynasty of the Scyris.

Velasco’s manuscript was discovered in Europe in 1835, only five years after the creation of the Republic of Ecuador in 1830. After its publication in the decade of 1840, the Ecuadorian state adopted the *History of the Kingdom of Quito* as the master narrative of the pre-conquest history of the nation, transmitting it faithfully to generations of Ecuadorians through the school system (Stutzman 1981: 60), which for most of

republican times served only non-indígena urban centers. Most indigenous communities in Ecuador did not have schools until the 1960s-1980s, when nationalist governments determinedly embarked in literacy campaigns and in the expansion of state education with funds from the oil boom.

Juan de Velasco wrote the *History of the Kingdom of Quito* 250 years after the conquest, and since none of the early Spanish chroniclers wrote about the Scyris, the historical authenticity of the narrative has been questioned since the 1860s. Debate notwithstanding, the narrative have been taught as historical truth for more than a century and a half. Only very recently, no earlier than 2000, Ecuadorian historians have reached a tangible consensus about the fictional nature of Fr. de Velasco's writings (Huarcaya 2005).

As a self-trained archeologist, Jijón wanted to settle the issue of the historical authenticity of the Kingdom of Quito for good. In the first decades of the twentieth century, he excavated in the localities mentioned by Velasco. Rather than evaluating pre-conquest cultures in themselves, he was looking for archeological traces indicating the origins of Ecuadorian nationality. Finding no archeological evidence of a centralized kingdom before the Inca conquest and no mention of the Scyris in the chronicles of the Spanish conquest, Jijón claimed that Velasco's narrative was a falsification. Calling it "puerile," "ridicule," and a "farce," he embarked in a campaign to eliminate the History of the Kingdom of Quito from the school curriculum, but he encountered strong resistance among patriotic intellectuals (Jijón y Caamaño 1918: 37; Prieto 2004: 96-100).

According to Mark Thurner, creole elites in Latin America were able to naturalize their versions of national histories and identities by means of creating a "colonial schism

in native historicity that in effect severed the ‘glorious’ native past from the ‘miserable’ native present” (2003: 141).

in the early seventeen century distinctions between Inca or Aztec nobles and Indian commoners corresponded to the rigid hierarchies of the Spanish social imagination; the “miserable” condition of Indians, also common to the rhetoric of colonial authorities, referred to the childlike, slothful, ignorant, idolatrous, and otherwise uncivilized condition of impoverished commoners. But with the rise of the modern historical imagination these baroque social hierarchies underwent a mutation: temporal distances and mortal understandings supplanted the static imaginary of social caste (Thurner 2003: 141-142).

On the one hand, an imagined non-indígena national subject was naturalized making him, in Fabian’s terms (1983), coeval with a national space. On the other hand, the same imagining denied coevalness to the living indio, who was considered as trapped in the past by the weight of his supposed archaic culture. In other words, the constitution of a modern national “us” by national history—history *of* and *for* the nation—excluded living indios (cf. Thurner 2003: 142).

In 1945, Jijón wrote *Antropología Prehispánica del Ecuador*, a compilation of his previous monographs that was published in 1952, two years after his death. Following the paradigms of evolutionism and cultural diffusion, he presents a comprehensive cultural sequence for the indigenous populations of present-day Ecuador. Against prevalent ideas arguing that colonial exploitation had degenerated the indios, he argued that there was no civilized higher ground from which they might have fallen down. For him, Ecuadorian indios had never had a glorious—meaning civilized—past; they always have been primitive—meaning that they never had historical agency. Rather than splitting native historicity, Jijón argued for a continuity of indigenous peoples of Ecuador as dominated subjects (1997). Accordingly, Jijón’s mostly Hispanic conception of Ecuadorian

nationality was also shaped by his view that indigenous cultures in Ecuador had little or no worth.

Third, Jijón's vision of nationality also responded to the emergence of *indigenismo* in Ecuador. Indigenismo was an ideological movement among non-indígena intellectuals that developed in several Latin America countries with significant indigenous populations.<sup>37</sup> Indigenistas promoted the study of indigenous cultures, took the indio as a subject matter in literary and artistic works, advocated the material improvement of indigenous populations, and made recommendations for government policies towards them. Without renouncing the paternalism of dominant elites, indigenistas self-assumed the role of rightful intermediators between the state and the indios. Even though they promoted the inclusion of indigenous heritages and histories in definitions of nationality, their solutions to the reputed Indian problem were assimilationist. During the first half of the twentieth century, indigenistas gained significant political weight in Mexico and to a lesser but still considerable extent in Peru. They also influenced the development of revolutionary governments in Guatemala and Bolivia during the 1950s. In Ecuador, however, they were unable to rally the government into comprehensive indigenista projects (Becker 1995).<sup>38</sup> By the mid 1970s, indigenismo was moribund, as a new

<sup>37</sup> Indigenismo not to be confused with *indianismo*, the revitalization of indigenous culture and politics based on the quality of being indigenous. Whereas the former was a labor of non-indígena intellectuals and artists, the latter is the labor of indigenous intellectuals and activists. In Bolivia, in particular, the Movimiento Indio Túpak Katari adopted an explicitly ideology of indianismo (Barragan 2008).

<sup>38</sup> In October 1966, Ecuador sponsored the Fifth Inter-American Indigenista Conference, which took place in Quito. In October 1966, Ecuador sponsored the Fifth Inter-American Indigenista Conference, which took place in Quito. Analyzing the delegate list for the conference, Becker (1995) has found that no Latin American country sent indigenous representatives. Most of the attendees were ambassadors or other diplomatic officials. Others delegates included governmental officials, religious authorities, and academics. The list also included representatives

generation of anthropologists and social critics condemned its foundational premises (Bonfil Batalla 1970; Colomdres 1977).

One of the main critics of Jijón y Caamaño was Pio Jaramillo, the founding father of Ecuadorian indigenismo. In a series of articles published in the newspapers *El Comercio* and *El Día*, he responded to Jijón y Caamaño's criticism of Juan de Velasco's narrative. Jaramillo affirmed that archeology in Ecuador was still in its infancy, that more time was needed for further research to reconstruct the primordial times of the nation. He claimed that references to kings in the chronicles of the conquest pertained to the Scyri rulers. Worried about the possibility of erasing the history of the Kingdom of Quito from textbooks, Jaramillo claimed that legend and history of primordial times were similar. He argued that legends were a more powerful idiom to speak about origins because they were rooted in the sensibility and imagery of the people. According to Prieto, this position convinced several thinkers that the history of the Kingdom of Quito should not be discarded, that it should be taught as the legend of the primordial times of the nation. It did not matter that there was no ethnographic evidence for considering it a legend. In any case, Jaramillo's argumentation weakened the critical efforts to remove Velasco's narrative from the history curriculum (Prieto 2004: 105).

In 1922, in an period in which there were a series of indigenous uprisings, Pío Jaramillo Alvarado published *El Indio Ecuatoriano: Contribución al estudio de la Sociología Indo-Americana*, (*The Ecuadorian Indian: Contribution to the Study of Indian-American Sociology*). Jaramillo kept editing the text in subsequent editions, expanding the book until its definitive version in the fourth edition in 1954. The book had

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from the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The only indigenous persons were delegates from tribal

a tremendous impact not only on politics, art, and society but also on the imagining of the nation. In this book, Jaramillo claimed that the Scyri s could not be erased from the memory of Ecuadorians. What is more, he argued that the narrative was the very symbol of Ecuadorian nationality. It might be a legend or fable, but it was the genesis of Ecuadorian nationality (Jaramillo Alvarado 1954: 70). Jaramillo's staunch defense of the *History of the Kingdom of Quito* was linked to his efforts to incorporate the indio into Ecuadorian nationality. The indio, he argued, was the basic element of Ecuadorian nationality (224).

Applying historical materialism to his analysis, Jaramillo located the land concentration of the hacienda regime at the core of the Indian problem. According to Jaramillo, the exploitation of the indio did not allow him to realize his economic potential. His solution was to give land to the indios and incorporate them into mainstream society.

Grant him some piece of land, cultivate his spirit and intelligence in military quarters, guarantee him a fair salary, and, ultimately, respect his human character, and the indio, who today is a dead weight... will turn into an active and important contributor to agricultural development, which is the foundation of national wealth (189-190).

Jaramillo was influenced by the Mexican revolution, which he considered as a process of vindication of Mexican indigenous populations. He also viewed the violence of the Mexican process as what could happen to Ecuador if the Indian problem was not resolved. Proposing land reform, he argued that the worldview supporting latifundia was on its way to extinction.

the most serious mistake of the *latifundista* (landowner) is that he is not becoming aware that the world has entered a new rhythm of live, that a profound social and juridical transformation is taking place... that men have changed in their psyches...

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governments in the United States.

The elements of today's progress, the radio, cinema, newspaper, the popularization of scientific knowledge, are disseminating in the world... a new concept of life [is emerging] making increasingly impossible the slavery of man by man (29).

According to Jaramillo, the indios could be incorporated into Ecuadorian mainstream society changing their ways, but they were incapable of that transformation on their own. He argued that it was the responsibility of a strong, interventionist state, led by an emergent middle class, to make those changes.

Finally, Jijón's claims about Ecuadorian nationality were evaluations of the nature of the indio in debates about its governance. The polemics about the origins of the Ecuadorian nation and the authenticity of the *History of the Kingdom of Quito* took place at the same time that Ecuadorian elites debated about the ethics of *concertaje*, or debt peonage, which was prevalent in highland haciendas. The *concertaje* was a verbal contract involving a salary as well as a parcel to plough and live, but since it also involved a series of social and economic responsibilities, indigenous peasants were always increasing their debts with the hacendado. Unable to pay the debt back, indígenas could not end their contract, which continued across generations. In addition, the hacendado could use imprisonment for debts to force the indígena and his family to work for him.

Arguing that the mentality of the indios was not suitable for republican ideals, the hacendados defended *concertaje*. They claimed that what was at stake was the stability of the countryside and that coercion was the only way to make indios work. On the other hand, liberal critics equated *concertaje* with slavery. They claimed that the coerciveness embedded in *concertaje* contradicted the principles of equality and liberty stated in the constitution. In addition, stating that *concertaje* was archaic and inefficient because it did



not produce consumers to support a national industry, they argued that its abolition would produce free workers having their own initiative (Prieto 2004).

In 1918, imprisonment for debts was abolished, condemning *concertaje* to a slow death. However, the lives of indigenous laborers change little as unfree labor arrangements continued. What changed was the formal definition of the relationship between the hacendado and the indigenous laborers. Under *concertaje*, according to Barry Lyons,

laborers' usufruct plots were, in legal terms, only an incidental benefit in lieu of higher pay. These plots now became central to the definition. Hacienda residents were obligated to work for the hacienda because they lived on and farmed hacienda land. They were entitled to a nominal wage, but it was not always paid. The plots ceded to residents were long known as *huasipungos*; for 1918 on, legislation and scholarship refer to the labor system as *huasipungaje* instead of *concertaje*, and the laborers themselves as *huasipungueros* rather than *conciertos*. It is symptomatic of the lack of fundamental change this entailed, however, that hacienda account books and laborers in Pangor [Province of Chimborazo] continued to use the term *concierto* until the 1960s land reform (2006: 60).

Whereas Jijón y Caamaño was against the abolishment of *concertaje*, Jaramillo denounced that it was alive despite the legal reforms that had prohibited.

For Jijón y Caamaño, the modern principles of equality were impossible to implement because the indios could never be like blancos. Mentioning that the conquistadores were of a different race, Jijón y Caamaño argued that the colonial caste system, which was based on human nature, had survived. The indios were integrated to the nation only by Catholicism and by the hacienda, but not by citizenship. In addition, Jijón y Caamaño argued that the only political experience of the indios was their subjection to the Incas, and that the Creole elite had inherited this system of rule. In the chapter "The Birth of the Nation" of *Política Conservadora*, Jijón y Caamaño wrote,

Everything that has been said about *concertaje* is not enough to explain its existence without considering its correspondence with... the aboriginal spirit. The rights and

liberty of the indio disappeared under the ayllu (the Andean community) and the [Inca] Empire, who was father and tutor of its subjects, preventing their needs while the indios were pleased to be forced to labor.... This was possible because of the lack of foresight that characterizes their race.... As an infant, the indio always needed the ayllu, which was in the hands of the Inca.... Would the indio care about his liberty... if the only thing he knew was being forced to work for someone else's benefit? Thus, for the concierto the hacendado has been and is his... brand new Inca (1960: 123-4).

The hacendado supported the housing, food, clothing, and ritual expenses of the indio, and in exchange, "he needed to work all his life, without compensating the debt that he was glad to increase even if his grandchildren would have to pay for it. Was not the plebian indio destined to perpetual labor?" (1960: 124). In addition, Jijón y Caamaño portrayed the hacendado as the protector of the indios.

If he was free and did not have protection, if all his property was seized and he fell into jail, what could he do to feed and give clothing to his family but to pawn himself, as a guarantee of a loan, tying himself to the hacienda in which he and his descendents would work (1960: 122).

For Jijón y Caamaño, history verified the supposedly obvious: indios could not govern themselves. In addition, they were unable to protect themselves from the predatory practices of non-indígenas, of any who could pretend to be taken as blanco. Hacendados, as himself, were not predatory; they provided a safe haven for the indio and his family. Although not explicitly, Jijón y Caamaño implied a racial correlation between the noble guardianship of the hacendados and the predatory practices of those who for him were not really blancos. In his attempts to legitimize the provision of indigenous labor, Jijón articulated the structure of feeling of the land-owning aristocracy. Members of this elite claimed direct descent from the conquistadors and considered themselves the true heirs of the legitimacy of ruling. Furthermore, they considered that they were entitled to receive indigenous labor. According to Barry Lyons, from the beginning of the hacienda system to the implementation of the land reforms there are records of protest against hacendados

who did not feed their laborers during labor gatherings, as it was expected. “This recurrent theme reflects the constant attitudes of an elite that felt it had a right to Indian labor, not as a favor for which it owed respect and recompense, but as a tribute of a despised, conquered people” (2006: 60).

As part of the traditional elite, Jijón y Caamaño emphasized lineage breeding. His colonial ancestors held the Spanish title of Count of the House of Jijón since 1782, but the family lost the title after the wars of independence. Jijón y Caamaño tried unsuccessfully to reestablish the title while he was in Spain during 1915. In 1947, when his grandson was born and baptized with his same first name, he published a book, printing 100 copies, detailing the genealogical tree of the lineage. In 1961, his son, Manuel Jijón Caamaño y Flores, was able to reestablish the title of Count.

At that time, Manuel Jijón Caamaño y Flores was a potential conservative candidate for the presidency. In 1962, he and his family moved to London for a year. When the reestablishment of the title of Count became public, the journalist Alejandro Carrión Aguirre started a campaign to ridicule Manuel Jijón Caamaño y Flores’s noble pretensions in the magazine *La Calle*. Jijón Caamaño y Flores responded sending two representatives to demand satisfaction in a duel, but the fight for his honor never took place. In addition, a boîte called “The Count” was open in Quito with the intention, according to its owner, to drink and dance in the Count’s honor (Perez Pimentel). This ended Manuel Jijón Caamaño y Flores’s candidacy for the presidency.

Notwithstanding the farcical aspect of this affair, up to the early 1970, in several provincial cities, including Cuenca, Ambato, Riobamba, and Otavalo, lower class non-indígenas regularly refer to the elites as “the nobles.” This does not mean that there was a

still existing traditional and land-owning elite in each of those cities. Prominent traditional elites did exist in Cuenca, in the southern province of Azuay, and Quito, owning much of the agricultural land in the northern provinces of Pichincha and Imbabura. Following genealogical ideology, these elites practiced endogamy to control membership in last name, or descent, groups (Brownrigg 1972).<sup>39</sup> According to Kingman, aristocratic privilege had served as the basis of Ecuadorian society at least until the 1960s.

There was a system of aristocratic tradition whose sphere of influence persisted beyond the liberal reforms [1900-1930s] (up until the 1960 and possibly, in part, until today). It was an ensemble of codes and dispositions related to the practical sense, which, one way or another, marked the forms in which “modern” subjectivity was constituted (Kingman Garcés 2006).

In Otavalo, up until the early 1970s, the non-indígena elite emphasized noble origins while most non-indígenas claimed to have pure Spanish blood (Villavicencio 1973: 47, 34). However, across Ecuador, the validity and continuity of those claims depended of their negative meaning: being of noble lineage having *pureza de sangre* (blood purity) was the polar opposite of being an indio. Those claims, even when done by elites, were weak, inconsistent, and mostly fictitious. On the one hand, they could be invented. On the other hand, they “suppressed the memory of early colonial mixing” between male conquerors and female natives (Lyons 2006: 48).<sup>40</sup> From the 1950s, middle class intellectuals had challenged the basis of those claims. “Of course that today nobility titles

<sup>39</sup> For the relation between aristocracy and racism in Guatemala, see Casaús Arzú (1991).

<sup>40</sup> This selective memory also obviates that for most of colonial times, there were also noble indígenas. In the XVIII century, according to Alberto Flores Galindo, an Indian could be, in terms of estates of the realm, a noble, as were the Tupac Amaru, the Apoalaya, or a rich man, as in fact were the Betancourt, the Coquehuanca, the Huamanpuco. At mid-century three indigenous families controlled the extensive Mantaro Valley. A marital alliance with any of those families was not beneath Spaniards (Flores Galindo 1988: 267).

and certificates do not have validity; nevertheless,” wrote Victor Gabriel Garcés, “they still are used for the pride of their possessors and to express their irrevocable zealousness of un-contamination with the social classes that are not theirs” (Garcés 1957: 33).

Imagining the Ecuadorian nation, Jaramillo differed from Jijón on two crucial issues: first, the capability of the indios to assimilate into mainstream culture, and, second, whom or what to blame for their current, miserable condition. For Jijón, the indios could never become blancos nor transform their mentality to participate in blanco culture. For him, the challenge was “to adapt Western civilization to the mentality of the aborigines and, thus, ‘ennoble’ their rudimentary culture” (Prieto 2004: 115). In contrast, Jaramillo argued that the indios have always been an “apt human element to realize a culture, as it is proven by the Maya, Aztec, Incaic, and Quiteña cultures.” He argued that pure indios that “fulfill the cultivation of their intelligence have demonstrated exceptional aptitudes in the sciences, arts, and industries” (Jaramillo Alvarado 1983: 175). In *El Indio Ecuatoriano*, Jaramillo also criticized the ideas of the archbishop and historian Federico González Suárez (1844-1917), who had supported the existence of superior and inferior races. González Suárez was the founding father of the *Academia Nacional de Historia* (National Academy of History), a Hispanophilic institution. Jaramillo declared that González Suárez’s ideas “condemn certain peoples to an eternal tutelage” (Jaramillo Alvarado 1983: 74).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Focusing on literary production, Rafael Quintero and Erika Silva have argued that during the 1930, Ecuador had two voices, “expressions of two different cultural conceptualizations,” *metropolitanismo* and *terrigenismo* (metropolitanism and terragenism). Metropolitanism interpreted the historic processes of Latin America “under the same patterns and signs of European and ‘western’ historical processes,” devaluing “the typical formations developed in our countries because of their peculiar economic, politic, geographic, demographic, and ethnic-cultural characteristics.” Those advocating metropolitanism were militant Hispanicists, who

Combating against Hispanicism, Indigenismo “rapidly adopted the creed of the ‘black legend’. Analyzing the historical trajectory of the situation of the ‘indigenous race,’ it never doubted in finding that the responsibility fell to the Castilians and their descendents” (Bustos 2007: :122). In contrast to Jijón, who attributed the condition of the indios to their supposed natural character, Jaramillo put the blame on the concentration of land in the hands of a few hacendados. For Jaramillo, incorporation of indios into “the national active life” required first and foremost to give them land, either in private or communal ownership. He argued that without the economic base of land, they could not build a patrimony for their families. Without that economic base, he claimed, any other project for improving the lives of the indios would fail. Locating the indio at the core of the future of the Ecuadorian nation, Jaramillo claimed, “We need to redeem not only the indio but also the country. That is the question” (1954: 160).

Hispanicism has received sharp criticism. Agustín Cueva qualified it as “a reactionary and outdated cultural expression,” and Fernando Tinajeros called it an expression of a “damaged and decomposed” feudal consciousness (Bustos 2007: 118), but as a structure of feeling, Hispanicism, as it is strongly related to whitening, survives. An example of this is the current *Fiestas de Quito*, which celebrates the Spanish foundation of Quito with bullfights, raucous celebration, and people wearing Spanish hats and drinking wine from Spanish wineskin. “The overflowing load of hispanophilia of the contemporary festivity,” according to Bustos, “proceeds precisely from a cultural process of

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wanted to prolong the “ideological axis inherited from the colony,” such as “racism-elitism.” On the other hand, terragenism was “the search and construction of an identity confronting critically the outdated or colonial expressions of the culture of the period, in ethic and political alignment with the struggles of the disposed majorities” (Quintero and Silva 1991: 415-425). For the writers

assimilation of the historical matrix of Hispanicist thought that was structured between the 1920s and 1950s” (2007: :116; Quintero and Silva 1991). The public memory projected by Hispanicism turns historical causality backwards.

This construction of meaning portrayed the conquistadors as the only makers of history, as endowed with a creative and constructive capacity that obliterated their acts of violence and projected an unparalleled memorable sense to their actions. This elaboration of memory, on the other hand, extirpated from the indios any possible agency, denied them the vindication of *indigenista* inspiration, and submerged them into the realm of backwardness and submission. This allegory resorted to the scheme of using the condition of misery that surrounded the indígena in the present as a corroboration of what had happened in the past. It was a perverse inversion of historical causality (2007: 131).

Claiming that indios were unassimilable and supporting a Hispanic origin for the Ecuadorian nation, Jijón proposed a caste-like society in which persons occupy their proper places according to their race and culture. Claiming that indios were assimilable and supporting an indigenous origin for the nation, Jaramillo proposed incorporation into mestizaje as the solution to the Indian problem.

Jaramillo is liable to the contemporary criticism of all indigenismos, claiming that they are paternalist and assimilationist projects of nation building, top-down ideologies that confers no agency to the indios, and even, that they promote ethnocide (Alonso 2007; Colomdres 1977; Graham 1990). As Bonfil Batalla argues for the Mexican case, “*Indigenismo* did not contradict in any way the national plan that the triumphant Revolution had been crystallizing: to incorporate the Indian, that is, de-Indianize him, to make him lose his cultural and historical uniqueness“ (Bonfil Batalla 1996: 116). Indigenistas could not imagine their national communities but as having unified subjectivities.

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of terragenism, as well as for Quintero and Silva, the issue was to vindicate the mestizo popular

It could be argued that Jaramillo defeated Jijón on two accounts. First, even though Jijón was correct about the non-existence of the Scyris and their kingdom, the narrative of the *History of the Kingdom of Quito* continued to be taught in schools as the pre-conquest history of the Ecuadorian nation. Second, Jaramillo's ideas about the incorporation of the indio would later become not only prevalent but also the official ideology of the Ecuadorian state during the 1970s.

### *The Indian Problem in Otavalo*

The debates about nationality and the Indian problem played out differently in Otavalo. In the region, there was no *in situ* land-owning oligarchy. For the most part, hacendados were absentee landlords who owned several haciendas in the northern sierra and lived comfortably in Quito. Entrusting the day-to-day management to local administrators, oligarchic hacendados seldom visited their haciendas. In addition, they did not participate in the affairs of the city of Otavalo (H. Jaramillo 9/13/2006; See also Herrera 2002 [1909]).

During the mid twentieth century in Otavalo, most non-indígenas were craftsmen and petty traders—tailors, barbers, shoemakers, and shop-keepers (Cooper 1965: 15). The elite was mostly a middle class composed of merchants owning retail businesses and a few professionals and educators. They controlled the local government, occupying the temporary public offices that at that time were unpaid. The first secondary school, the *Colegio Nacional Otavalo*, was founded in 1943 (Cisneros Pareja 1953), and for all of the twentieth century there was no higher education. Because of this, many well-to-do non-

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classes as the foundation of a yet-to-be-forged, unified Ecuadorian nation.



indígena families sent their children to study in Ibarra or Quito. Reaching adulthood, many of them moved permanently to Quito because in Otavalo respectable jobs were scarce. In Quito, non-indígena otavaleños were stereotypically stigmatized as *chagras*—an Ecuadorianism that characterizes people as unsophisticated or uncultivated because of their rural and/or provincial origin, derived from the Kichwa *chacra* meaning agricultural field.

In this context, non-indígena intellectuals developed and promoted an attitude of pride for their birthplace, calling it *otavaleñidad*. In 1923, Fernando Chaves, the writer and director of the municipal school who coined the term, claimed that *otavaleñidad* was a “localist sense, a fondness for the motherland, a mythology of the place, a devotion for the land” (Quoted by H. Jaramillo, XI Seminario de Otavaleñidad, November 9, 2005). In 1993, the intellectual Plutarco Cisneros argued, tautologically, that *otavaleñidad* tried to define the “relationship of the human beings that, been born in a piece of land called Otavalo, have in them very special features, all of them derived from the intense relationship that originates between men and the region in which he lives” (Cisneros 1993: 7).

Under the rubric of *otavaleñidad*, non-indígena writers emphasized the influence of the landscape on the character of the otavaleños, underlined the historical significance of Otavalo for Ecuadorian history and nationality, celebrated their intellectual work, and valued their own autochthony. In 1952, the writer Gustavo Alfredo Jácome wrote an article entitled “Sociología de la otavaleñidad.” Citing freely Georg Simmel and Carl Jung, Jácome argues that the creative forces of *otavaleñidad* are the racial build, the landscape, and the history Otavalo. He claims that “a proper distribution of the land”

have also shaped otavaleñidad, asserting that “almost all otavaleños are, by fate, proprietors.” Blancos and indios, however, related differently to their land plots,

for the blanco, the orchard is a spiritual property related to the altruist pleasures of the soul and to the lofty values of the problem of existence, whereas for the indio the little piece of land is the umbilical cord that primarily resolve the problem of subsistence (1952: 8).

Jácome claims that all otavaleños, blancos and indios, have their origins in the first inhabitants of the area, the Imbayas. He considers them noble and argues that otavaleñidad is also *señorío*, the solemnity of nobility: “the pride in our noble lineage that has original Indian roots” (1952: 4). He underlines the mixing of the aboriginal with the Hispanic in an entity called Otavalo that is always “rebel, valiant, and gallant,” (1952: 7) but this does not produce a homogenous mestizo population. Instead, he emphasizes fundamental difference between the blanco and indigenous population: “When I watch and admire the indio sunk in the fertile soil, I find that those clayey and sedentary feet are a lot like roots, like vegetal grappling hooks” (1952: 8). Jácome reproduces the then common notion among non-indígenas that indios vegetate, living in a dull, inactive, and unchallenging way, rooted to the soil.

Although it found some value in indigenous history and culture, otavaleñidad was a solely non-indígena crusade. In 2005, when I asked the indigenous activist Segundo Ramos his thoughts about otavaleñidad, he told me that it is a sort of local, mestizo nationalism (8/11/2006). Reflecting the prevalent doxa, non-indígena intellectuals did not notice the lack of indigenous representatives in the debates about otavaleñidad.

Notwithstanding their provincial chauvinism and reflecting their middle class origins, otavaleño non-indígena intellectuals were collectively far more leftist than other regional elites, who were predominantly conservative (Brownrigg 1972; Burgos Guevara 1997).

Many of them espoused socialism and participating in the debates about the Indian problem, they strongly supported the indigenista position. As early as 1924, a group of young adults in Otavalo organized the Liga de Cultura José Vasconcelos (Cultural League José Vasconcelos). Under the guidance of Fernando Chaves, the Liga Vasconcelos promoted intellectual labor and cultural activities organizing conferences, courses, workshops, and exhibitions. Their intellectual enlightenment came from the ideas and actions of the Mexican philosopher, educator, and politician José Vasconcelos.

In Mexico, after ten years of revolution, José Vasconcelos had served as the first Secretary of Public Education. Occupying this post from 1921 to 1924, during the presidency of Alvaro Obregon, he set in motion a national crusade for bringing public education to the popular classes. This campaign included not only the creation of library networks, schools of pedagogy, and cultural missions but also the establishment of schools for Mexican indigenous peoples. In addition, Vasconcelos concocted Mexican mestizo nationalism promoting mestizaje as a state project. As part of these efforts, he promoted Mexican muralism commissioning grandiose paintings for public buildings, in a style that portrays Mexicans as the fruitful blending of Spanish and indigenous races and cultures.

In his most prominent book, *La Raza Cósmica* (1925), a manifesto for mestizaje, Vasconcelos responds to biological determinism, as articulated by Herbert Spencer and Louis Agassi, and to the increasing USA-Anglo-Saxon political preeminence in the Americas. He opposes the prevalent idea of racial degeneration by hybridism arguing for a positive racial synthesis. According to him, racial mixing in Latin America was producing a fifth race, having contributions from all the world's races. This was the

“cosmic race,” the race of future, to the extent that it would transcend the peoples of the old world.

Regarding the origins of Latin American nations, Vasconcelos viewed as valuable to root them in an indigenous past.

Civilization cannot be improvised. It emerges from a long preparation and purification of elements transmitted and combined throughout history. That is why it is stupid to begin our patriotism with Hidalgo’s cry of independence, or with the conspiracy of Quito, or the triumphs of Bolivar. If we do not root ourselves in Cuauhtemoc or Atahualpa, our patriotism will not have any foundation (1948: 19).

On the other hand, he wrote, “the Indian has no other door to the future than the door of modern culture, nor any other path than the path already cleared by the Latin [Hispanic] civilization” (1948: 25). Vasconcelos tried to find a solution to the trap of biological determination—the idea that Mexican backwardness was due to the racial inferiority of the Mexicans—elevating the mestizo but sacrificing the indio, strengthening the prevalent notion that indios were archaic, incompatible with modernity. He challenged older assumptions about biological hybridity but also reproduced other racist ideas of Western thought. According to him,

Our task is to demonstrate that the mestizo and indigenous populations are capable of assimilating and equaling, at the very least equaling, white culture. Understand here that this does not mean we should organize for a struggle against the white man. Just the opposite. The white man is our half-relative by blood and our teacher by culture (Vasconcelos 1937: 218; cited in Miller 2004: 34; Quintero and Silva 1991).

Notice here the ambivalence about who we are and who they are. Notice here the ambivalence about who we are and who they are. First, Vasconcelos implicitly refers to mestizo and indigenous populations as “they,” but then he switches to an explicit “we.” This tension in the use of personal pronouns reflects the ambivalence of the subject’s positioning, and the ideological construction of the ethnic/cultural boundary (Howard 2009). Vasconcelos claimed that he had a little bit of indigenous blood, but he was “not

quiet what Latin Americans call a mestizo” (Jaén 1979: xx). In other words, he had blanco status. This was so in Mexico but not in the USA. Going to school in Eagle Pass, Texas, when he was 12 years old, he was often discriminated as a Mexican by the Anglo-Saxon students. This experience of discrimination and his later understanding of US imperialism, according to Ana Alonso, shaped his utopist vision of the future of Mexico and its place in universal history (Alonso 2007: 177). At stake was not only the modern future of Mexico but also Vasconcelos’ own identity. “Vasconcelos himself oscillated between the desire and aversion of his own heterogeneity, between recognition and rejection, between pride and shame, reaching a point, years later, in which he repudiated his mixture and claimed to have Creole ‘pure blood’” (Alonso 2007: 177; citing Blanco 1977: 17).

For Jaramillo and Chaves, Mexico was the model to follow in order to overcome the backwardness of the Ecuadorian nation. Mexico was becoming modern, effectively dealing with the Indian problem, by means of incorporating the indigenous population. According to Chaves, writing in 1928,

the initiator of the educational reform... [that] incorporates the great masses of indios into the nascent [Mexican] culture... and provides these cultures with their own content without excluding the inherited blood, is José Vasconcelos. He symbolizes... the Spanish-American trend to synthesize a model of man and a cultural drive in which the inheritance of the past and the aspiration for a better future would converge... His name... evokes... the glorious role of the New World in human history... The current efforts in various countries to dignify the autochthonous races are rooted in the ideas of the Mexican apostle [Vasconcelos]. This task has yet to begin in Ecuador (Jaramillo Cisneros 2005: 121).

As Ana Alonso argues, the project of mestizaje was not only about considering racial and cultural mixing as the foundation for nation building but also about integrating Latin America into universal history. On the one hand, for Vasconcelos and Chaves, the masses of indios could participate in the emerging modern nations by turning into mestizos. On

the other hand, mestizaje could turn into the foundation for new formulations of the role of Latin America in universal history. Accordingly, the “cosmic race” was “a Pan-American movement that set Latin America at the center of Universal History and challenged the North American predominance in the western hemisphere” (Alonso 2007: 177).

The Liga Vasconcelos had its high point on June 30, 1930, when Vasconcelos visited Otavalo and was honored by the members of the Liga. From then on, the Liga ceased its activities. In 1953, the local magazine *Otavalo Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* (Kichwa: Our House) published an article remembering Vasconcelos’s visit. He is referred to as a Christian philosopher—his work is mystical and philosophical rather than sociological—and nothing is said about his ideas of incorporating the indios into the nation (Pareja 1953). By the late 1940s, Vasconcelos had renounced his ideas of mestizaje as productive, arguing that “the mixture of similar races is productive, while the mixture of very distant types, as in the case of Spaniards and American Indians, has questionable results” (Vasconcelos 1948: 5; see also Miller 2004). For Vasconcelos, indios and mestizos were capable of assimilation but he agreed with Hispanicist intellectuals in thinking that what was worth of Latin America’s civilization derived from European culture. Accordingly, his project differs little from others of blanqueamiento, of racial and cultural whitening. According to Rubén Ríos Ávila, “the cosmic race is another name for Hispanism, its mestizo name” (Ríos Ávila 2002: 155).

To my knowledge, Hispanicism was not explicitly articulated in Otavalo. But it appeared here and there. For instance, in 1943, the Municipality adopted a coat of arms. In the decree attesting this decision, the City Council argued that the coat of arms was

chosen because it characterized the region and was in agreement with the historical antecedents of the city. The chosen heraldic symbol features a castle at the center, a crown made out of castles on top, and seven other smaller castles around, representing the towns under the jurisdiction of the *corregimiento* of Otavalo during colonial times (Concejo Municipal de Otavalo 1943). The *corregimiento* was a colonial jurisdiction under a local judicial and administrative authority called the *corregidor*. The reference to Spain and Castile is gratuitous since in Otavalo and Ecuador castles were never built.

Debating profusely about the Indian problem, mestizo intellectuals in Otavalo were early supporters of mestizaje. This did not imply accepting the participation of the indios in the nation as political equals; it meant that indios had to become civilized by imitating blanco values and modes of behavior. Vis-à-vis the position of conservative thinkers across the country, who argued that the indios were incapable of assimilation, supporting mestizaje was considered a progressive stance. Nevertheless, even progressive thinkers as Fernando Chaves reflected the prevalent doxa. He wrote that the indigenous population had a vegetative growth, suggesting that it was an unresponsive and dull collectivity (Chaves 1946). In his novels *Plata y Bronce (Silver and Bronze)* (1927) and *La Embrujada (The Bewitched)* (1954 [1923]), he portrayed the indios in a very stereotypical manner. They have uncontrollable urges for vengeance, are consumed by irrational drives, and demonstrate deceitful natures. Chaves also supported bringing Europeans to solve the problem of demographic stagnation and economic prosperity of Otavalo. “Their

establishment will mean an immediate demographic contribution, and their development would imply a general benefit, social, cultural, and industrial” (Chaves 1946: 71).<sup>42</sup>

Chaves did not go as far as to explicitly support the idea of bringing European peasants to “improve the race” of the indigenous population by means of interbreeding. This idea was common among Latin American elites, and even the Guatemalan novelist and Nobel laureate Miguel Angel Asturias (1899 –1974) espoused it. In Ecuador, one backer of this idea was the Ecuadorian diplomat Victor Hugo Escala, who was from Guayaquil. In 1945, in an article published in the *Revista Municipal* of Otavalo, he wrote:

As long as Ecuador does not resolve the problem of its viability, the indio in our sierra has to be an indispensable “dead weight”... the indio is who makes the lands of our sierra productive.

Inasmuch as there is no improvement in the hygienic conditions... efforts to bring Czech, Polish, Provencal, or Yugoslavian peasants are useless.

[These peasants] are laborious, hard, tenacious, and productive human beings... but also they are used to sleeping in a cot, eating at a table with fork and knife, wearing shoes, and using a toilet and a water faucet for personal cleaning.

Let’s make the patriotic effort to provide proper places for their settlement, that make them decide to come to our country... to till the land and breed animals, and also to improve the racial type by means of the crossbreeding that the feminine novelty and the natural masculine impulse impose.

Based on our journeys across our America, we can affirm that only here in Quito there are indios with braids, a feature that reveals the survival of the pre-Colombian era in a country with several railroads, thousands of automobiles, and several airlines. Men with braids are not even seen in millennial China... The braid of our indios is like a barrier to the fruitful entry of European peasants, so many times martyred by the calamity of wars (Escala 1945: 14).

Escala implicitly referred to the indios as dirty and primitive, as the opposite of supposed European peasants. He also considered that bringing Europeans to make Ecuador a viable country was a patriotic position. At that time, this perspective was not uncommon. Escala explicitly followed the ideas of the Argentinean intellectual and president Domingo

<sup>42</sup> This was an idea widely shared by Latin American elites. In the early 1990s in Seattle, the Peruvian consul told me that Peru could have solved its historical problems bringing more



Sarmiento, who equated civilization with the Europeanization and North-Americanization of Argentina over the barbaric interior populated by inferior races. He crudely promotes racial interbreeding to improve the indigenous population. In addition, his racial ideology is highly gendered. Interbreeding is positive only when white males impregnate indigenous women, not the other way around (See also Casaús Arzú 1991; Smith 1997).

In contrast to Escala, non-indígena intellectuals from Otavalo portrayed the indio in comparatively better terms. Reflecting the preeminence of the Indian problem, gazettes published in Otavalo from the 1940s to the 1960s contain a great number of articles about the indio and its redemption. Titles written include “The sociability of the indio,” “The value of our indios,” “Some psychological differences between blanco, mestizo, and indigenous children,” “The indigenous race as economic factor of the country,” “Anthropometric relations of the indios of Otavalo with others of the Andean region,” and “The indígenas of Otavalo represent the most advanced groups of Ecuador.” This fetish for writing about the indio obeyed not only to explicit concerns about the quest for progress and the viability of the Ecuadorian nation but also to the writers’ construction of their own identity as supposedly modern, rational individuals in opposition to the indios.

According to the first national census of 1950, in urban and suburban Otavalo, there were 4394 literates and 8840 illiterates. In rural areas, there were 4338 literates and 16,211 illiterates, almost four illiterates for each literate (Otavalo Ñuca Huasi based on Dirección Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos 1954). The 1950 census did not categorize Ecuadorians by ethnicity or race (Clark 1998), but most of the illiterates were indígenas

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European immigrants.

since most of them did not have access to formal education. In this context, the non-indígena intelligentsia in urban Otavalo constituted what Angel Rama calls “the lettered city” (1984). Since colonial times, cities have not only functioned as centers of administrative power but also have imposed an embodied symbolic order, a cultural map establishing the racialized hierarchies still at work in Latin American societies. As a diachronic concept, the “lettered city” refers to the continuity of the collusion of governmental power, production of knowledge, and writing from colonial to republican times.

According to Rama, writing served as gatekeeper to urban power. Acting as the “owners of writing in an illiterate society,” (Rama: 37) all those who “were skillful with the pen were closely associated with the functions of power” (32). In a doubly closed circuit requiring literacy skills and fluency in Spanish, producers and consumers were the same individuals. In Otavalo, local gazettes published not only articles of social analysis but also numerous poems and even theatrical plays written by local writers to be read and praised by their literate peers. In addition, the lettered city embodied a particular way of knowing. Considering the city as the locus of civilization and considering themselves as the only ones who could speculate about the future, members of the lettered city produced a disciplinary top-down discursive reality, not emanating from social life but from an urban ideal that was immanently hostile to the surrounding rural areas and further hinterlands inhabited by illiterate indios.

After independence, the lettered city continued to have a monopolistic control of the symbolic and discursive production of reality. Its increasing membership, according to Rama, served the bureaucratic needs of the new states. In addition, the exercise of

literacy and the literary forms that it produced, which often included the indio as a topic of analysis or representation, created a national imaginary permanently negotiating the class and ethnic differences inherited from the colony. The supremacy of the lettered city withered away with the expansion of state education into indigenous areas and the spread of mass media, both during the last decades of twentieth century (Schiwy 2008).

The identification of non-indígena intellectuals in Otavalo with literacy recalls that the ability to read and write, as Peter Wogan argues, has been a central symbol of dominant western identity since the conquest of America (Clifford 1988; De Certeau 1988; Mignolo 1995; Rappaport 1990; Seed 1991; Todorov 1984). This identification reproduces a literacy-orality symbolism that “has been at the heart of modern western identity, particularly due to its association with the following areas:”

- (1) Judaeo-Christianity (‘religions of the book’, sacred texts, as opposed to tribal, ‘oral’ religions),
- (2) science (literate data collection and publications, modern education, as opposed to emotional or irrational thought),
- (3) historical consciousness (written documents, as opposed to oral myth; ‘history’ as opposed to ‘anthropology’),
- (4) the nation-state (modern record-keeping, ‘rationalized bureaucracy’, in Weber’s terms, as opposed to other government forms).
- (5) ‘civilization’ (as a moral notion, as opposed to ‘illiterate’ Others) (Wogan 2001: 412).

The non-indígena intelligentsia in Otavalo claimed exclusive identification with all of these areas except religion, which they shared, at least partially, with the indígenas. This identification, which creates a great divide between “us and them,” has had a great influence in the social sciences in the Andes. As Eduardo Kingman argues, “until recently, most of the researchers perceived the city as an expression of the ‘blanco-mestizo,’ western world, while the country as presented as the idealized space of the Andean community” (Kingman Garcés 2006: 93). In his study of anthropology in Peru,

Jürgen Golte argues that anthropologists “continue to use frames that oppose the countryside with the city, continue to assume the existence of ‘traditional communities,’ and continue to conceive [indigenous] urban reinterpretations as instances of distancing and rupture (Golte 2000: 222). Rather than living in their own essentially different worlds and after centuries of interethnic relations, indígenas and non-indígenas have been enmeshed in interpenetrating and hierarchical sociocultural spheres. In Otavalo, it was common for non-indígenas to speak Kichwa fluently, have indigenous fictional kin, and visit indigenous healers (Parsons 1945; Sánchez Parga and Pineda 1992; Villavicencio 1973).

Foucault has argued that power recreates itself through knowledge. Deeply skeptical of all knowledge claims, he has argued that knowledge is determined by historical frames of understanding that have been constituted and are constantly affected by the circulation of power structured at the personal level. According to him, “all knowledge rests on injustice (there is no right, even in the act of knowing, no truth or foundation for truth)” (Foucault 1984: 95). The knowledge claims about the indio made by lettered men in Otavalo derived from their witnessing of a few indigenous behavioral markers such as their humiliating presentation of the self towards non-indígenas, the meagerness of their way of life, and their supposed uncontrolled drunkenness and wild behavior during festivities. Based on these markers, non-indígena intellectuals developed explanatory schemes attributing the backwardness of Ecuador to a supposed incompatibility of indigenous ways of life with nationality.

The writings of non-indígena intellectuals of Otavalo make constant and explicit reference to a yet to be forged nationality.

The Ecuadorian indio is not incorporated into nationality. He lives apart, without feeling or thinking the Ecuadorian nation. Ecuador has yet to resolve the Indian problem, as Mexico, Colombia, Brazil have done. For this reason, Ecuador cannot yet act in terms of nationality (Barrera 1942: :25).

If incorporation of the indios had gained ground as the solution for the Indian problem, non-indígena intellectuals debated about the characteristics of the indios that would facilitate or obstruct it. One of the main obstacles was the sociability of the indio. For the sociologist Víctor Gabriel Garcés, the brother of Enrique Garcés, “sociability was scarce and elemental in the indio.”

I think that his sociability is alien to white sociability, on which we pride ourselves. The indio is rustic, this is to say, from the countryside... I consider that the way of life of the indio is of solitude rather than of sociality, at least until the establishment for everybody of a new way of human conviviality (1942: 6).

Ignoring the intense and deeply structured sociability of indígenas among themselves, Víctor Gabriel Garcés read the indigenous presentation of the self towards mestizos as a permanent feature of the indigenous way of being. He also equated sociability with urbanism, as dictated by the lettered city. It was the scattered and distant way of living of the indios that produced their “timid and shunning, poor and silent” sociality (1942: 5). Other writers interpreted the shyness and distrust of the indio as a consequence of both the hostility of blancos and mestizos and his race and idiosyncrasy. This does not deter them from demanding help from the government to incorporate the indio into nationality by means of education.

The meager living conditions of the indios indicated that they did not know how to live. Non-indígena intellectuals interpreted the differences in living conditions in terms of their supposed rationality, without considering ethnic exploitation and the lack of basic services in rural areas.

Of course, without doubt, it is the blanco who is more civilized, who lives better, and who has more comforts. We find those great cities full of mansions... with the desirable comfort of modernity, endowed with those advanced devices such as televisions, refrigerators, radios... As a result, there is more comfort, more tranquility... a home more attuned with the rational and smart support of the individual for his house and family (Ubidia 1953: 52).

If the indios did not know how to live, some writers argued that the state should intervene to “redeem the rural population,” which was in a “deplorable state of social backwardness.”

It is necessary to raise the standard of living of the peasants, inculcating in them a healthy uneasiness, a dissatisfaction with the backward conditions of their current life. It is necessary to teach them the aspirations of civilized man, but without dissociating them from the life of rural work. It is convenient, for example, to inculcate in them notions of personal hygiene and good taste for their daily life... to call their attention regarding the food that they and their families need, the clothing that is convenient from them, the need of getting, with the fruit of their labor, domestic comforts and licit pleasures (Chaves 1944: 50).

The self-attributed prerogative of non-indígenas to imagining an improved indio was based on a sense of “cultural infallibility,” the certainty that their understandings were correct and morally superior (García 1942: 27; cited in Prieto 2004: 200), and on a deeply ingrained paternalism, the assumption that they were acting in the indígenas’ best interest. Accordingly, many writers refer to the indígenas as “nuestros indios” (our Indians). Considering that indígenas could not speak for themselves, non-indígena intellectuals imagined the indio as they wanted, as a dependable agricultural laborer, overcoming his backwardness and becoming a national subject. The supposed reluctance of the indígenas to improve their lot was seen as an impediment for national development. At that time, indígenas manufactured their own clothing, and most of them walked barefoot. In a report to the Municipality about local problems, Fernando Chavez wrote, “How are we going to have developed industries... if most of the inhabitants of the

countryside do not consume anything, do not require anything, and do not demand anything?” (Chaves 1946: 75).

Non-indígenas equated indigenousness with a lack of consumption of non-basic goods, implying that non-indígena consumption was the paradigm of civilized life. The premise was that people would buy more consumer goods if they were non-indígenas (Smith Belote and Belote 2000: 99). Accordingly, the inconsistent and sporadic assimilationist projects geared to the indígenas from the 1940s to the 1970s, including literacy campaigns to land reform to enfranchisement, were explicitly framed not only as cultural but also economic incorporation as consumers into an emergent national market. Since industrialization was deemed indispensable for development, it was important to create consumer demand for manufactured products (Butler 2006: 277; Prieto 2004: 208). It is important to consider that for most of the twentieth century Ecuador did not have a significant middle class whose demand for consumer goods could drive extensive industrialization. It was only from the 1960s, in the period of capitalist modernization and the oil boom, when the middle class started to increase. By the end of the 1970s, only 20% of the Ecuadorian population had reached middle class status (Mills 1984: 18).

Indigenous drunkenness and its evident economic exploitation epitomized everything that was wrong with the way of life of the indígenas.

In Saturdays and Sundays, the indios get together in the *chicherías* (drinking joint)... and abandon themselves to Bacchus until they become brutes. They turn into the most quarrelsome and detestable beings. In Imbabura and other provinces of the interior of the country, the commercialization of the chicha has become the economic support for many [non-indígena] families, some Municipalities, and even the treasury (León 1953: 24).

Indigenous consumption did not contribute to the formation of a national market, but the indígenas were the biggest contributors to the Municipal coffers. During that time, more

than half of the budget of the Municipality of Otavalo came from taxes to the commercialization of chicha and guarapo (fermented cane liquor), which for the most part were sold to the indígenas by non-indígenas. Some writers criticized this state of affairs but also expressed no hopes about changing it. The dependency of the Municipality on indigenous alcohol consumption led a reporter from Quito to claim that “Otavalo sustains itself on the gradual barbarization of its thousands and thousands of indios” (Fernández 1944: 30).

On the other hand, many writers wrote about the indio of Otavalo in relatively positive terms:

the indio of Otavalo... is... ethnically and aesthetically, the best specimen (ejemplar) of indio existing in South America (Barrera 1942: 25).

In Otavalo, the aborigine is demonstrating what he is capable of doing, proving with indisputable evidence that he can turn into the most prominent factor of national progress. Notwithstanding the neglect, the contempt, and the exploitation geared at him, he is the index of the culture of the race (Mejía 1944: : 64).

Our indio, whose economic affluence has put him in a position that some blancos would envy, has developed in an environment of laboriousness. He is an active entity that works fully conscious of the profits that he can obtain from dedication. Because of this, he has improved in appearance. He is a beautiful and clean specimen that takes good care of what belongs to him. By tradition, he is an unsocial spirit. That is all. He is not a slave of the land. He is its master (Municipal 1945: 55).

The positive characterization of the indio becomes seriously undermined by the writers’ usage of the Spanish word “ejemplar,” which is used to refer to an individual animal or plant used as an example of its species. This usage brings to mind Foucault’s ideas about the “gaze” of professions and of institutions. Analyzing the frameworks of understanding that configure social life, Foucault has focused on the relationship between institutional logic and socio-political existence. Foucault argues that institutionalized gaze—the organized way of seeing and projecting—grant privilege to certain persons and their



inheritances, and subjugates certain others and their inheritances. Consequently, the visionary violence that Foucault finds within the discourse and praxis of professions and institutions is a form of conceptual coercion that objectifies and dehumanizes the subject (Foucault 1973, 1976).

In the gaze of non-indígena intellectuals, one of the preeminent characteristics that made the indio of Otavalo better than others was his capability for imitation—i.e., following blanco life as a model.

... what is more significant is his spirit for imitation. It is logical that all of the positive characteristics and aspects are found in the groups of indios that live close to the blancos and, for this reason, have found the stimuli and strength to improve themselves and overcome their prostration (Rubio Orbe 1942: 53).

He has uncommon capabilities of observation, imitation, patience, perseverance, ingenuity, and even of creativity... Knowing that by nature that indio shows an admirable plasticity for cultural inculcation and for becoming a true technician, that his vices can be eliminated and his customs improved, what has the state done for him? (Mejía 1944: 64-64).

In addition, the reporter from Quito wrote the following:

Humanly, the indio [of Otavalo] is capable, traditionalist, and reactionary, but apt to assimilate, understand, and incorporate himself into the economy and civilization. He demonstrates exceptional capabilities. He is not equal to the indio that we know in Pichincha (The province that includes Quito). He not even resembles him (Fernández 1944: 31).

These claims of otavaleño exceptionality were common. Otavaleños have held “a special place in the national imagination” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999: 12) because of their “cleanliness” and entrepreneurship as weavers and merchants, in opposition to the stereotypical indio, who was considered dirty, destitute, and utterly passive. Following a trend to stand them against other indigenous groups, non-indígena elites have presented

them as “typically indigenous” and “genuinely national” (Whitten 1985: 222; see also Muratorio 1994).<sup>43</sup>

Scholars have emphasized indigenous land ownership and relative autonomy from the haciendas to explain the specificity of the Otavalo case. Meier argues that the relative better fortune of the otavaleños started with the turning of the *encomienda* of Otavalo to control of the crown in 1584. The *encomienda* was a system that granted trusteeship over indigenous populations to the Spanish conquerors. Indígenas were not free from abuse and exploitation, but since they were not under control of one *encomendero*, their exploitation was less systematic (Meier 1996: 75). To pay the Indian tribute, the indígenas of Otavalo were forced to work in the two *obrajes* owned by the crown. The *obraje* in the city Otavalo was one of biggest enterprises in the colony, using the labor of more than 500 indigenous laborers. Guerrero argues that the demand for labor in the *obrajes* owned by the crown might have offset the subjugation of indígenas to the haciendas (Guerrero 1991: 155-156). In addition, the crown enacted several labor reforms to improve the lives of the laborers in the *obrajes*. Notwithstanding their sporadic impact, these reforms helped the indígenas to maintain a higher degree of independence from haciendas than in other regions.

Examining colonial tribute lists of 1804-05, Udo Oberem have noticed that the percentage of indios subjected to haciendas was considerable less in Otavalo than in other nearby areas. In Cayambe and Tabacundo, both approximately 30 kilometers south from

<sup>43</sup> Notwithstanding otavaleños’ exceptionality-as-indios, Korovkin has warned against overemphasizing the specificity of the Otavalo case. “In the 1970s and 1980s, other parts of the country also witnessed the rise of new indigenous elites, although on a smaller scale” (Korovkin 2001: 38). Other relative prosperous indígenas, who also display ethnic pride and have been

Otavalo, the percentages were, correspondingly, 85% and 73%. In Otavalo, the percentage was only 37% (Oberem 1981). During the latter decades of the colony, some of the communities not subjected to the haciendas were able to participate as independent producers of textiles in some markets of present-day Colombia. By the first decades of the twentieth-century, some of these weavers and merchants were able to buy more land to increase their economic security and social status (Meier 1996: 103). From the 1960s, with the development of tourism, the implementation of technical assistance by the government, and the growth of temporal migration, Otavaleños were able to increase significantly their production and sales (Korovkin 1998: 130).<sup>44</sup>

One of the most prominent intellectuals claiming that the indios of Otavalo were the most advanced of Ecuador was the educator and self-trained social researcher Gonzalo Rubio Orbe. A student of Pío Jaramillo, Rubio Orbe became the leading Ecuadorian indigenista. In 1943, he was a founding member of the *Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano*, and from 1971 to 1977, he directed the *Instituto Indigenista Interamericano* in Mexico. For Rubio Orbe, not all indígenas in Otavalo were advanced. Writing in the 1950s, he compares the behavior of indígenas of Punyaro, a poor indigenous community next to the city of Otavalo, with those of Peguche, Quinchuquí, and Ilumán.

Some persons of Punyaro have started to set themselves free from the inferiority complex, especially due to their contact with the blancos. But these attitudes are scarce and not the result of a complete overcoming. Even though they live very close to Otavalo, they have not advanced much in this respect. They differ significantly, for

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considered indios *limpios* (clean Indians), are the Salasacas in the province of Tungurahua, and the Saraguros in the province of Loja.

<sup>44</sup> Kyle considers crucial for otavaleño success the failure of the elites to industrialize production of cloth to compete with cheap British imports, at the end of the nineteenth century. “If local hacienda owners had successfully industrialized using local labour (the same traditional weaning communities), it is unlikely that Otavalans would have gained the degree of economic independence which they enjoyed during the following century” (428).

instance, from the groups of Peguche, Quinchuquí, and Ilumán, where people have their own [developed] personality (Rubio Orbe 1955: 7).

According to Rubio Orbe, in Peguche, Quinchuquí, and Ilumán “the inferiority complex and its behavioral forms or manifestations have disappeared, because they have acquired value and consciousness of themselves and their groups” (Rubio Orbe 1953: 44).

Rubio Orbe considered that the indígenas of Peguche, Quinchuquí, and Ilumán were the “most advanced in the country” because of “social osmosis,” a process by which these indígenas had acquired some of the values and habits of the blanco population (Rubio Orbe 1953: 44). Accordingly, these indígenas had self-esteem, initiative, and a jovial and confident disposition. They were sociable and communicative with the local blancos and with strangers, and they did not let others exploit them. In Rubio Orbe’s own words, they were indios *despiertos*, awakened Indians, the opposite of the unidimensional indio, who dominant discourse during the first half of the twentieth-century had constructed as having an inferiority complex (Rubio Orbe 1953: 44; Prieto 2004: 181).

To speak about indios *despiertos*, adjectivized indios, enabled non-indígenas to explain otavaleños’ exceptionality without debilitating the “cultural topography of race,” the “distinctive spatio-temporal modalities of racial discourse and practices, with their own history and structures of meaning.” Key assumptions “about the production of meaning, identity and social outcomes” remained in place (Rizvi 2004: 86; see also Willis 1981: :49). As Casagrande argues,

In the universal dialectic of racism Indians are endowed with the very traits disesteemed by whites.... The fact that some Indian groups in Ecuador are singled out for special comment or praise—the Otavaleños, for example, are said to be proud, clean, industrious, intelligent, and so on—is in effect to commend them for having qualities that one is surprised to find among Indians and at the same time to damn other Indian groups with the implication that these are precisely the qualities *they* don’t have. Thus most Indians are regarded by whites as being lazy, drunken, dirty, stupid, dishonest, or having other flaws of character (Casagrande 1981: 260-261).

Two key historic events deeply influenced the debates about nation-ness and the Indian problem. The first was a border war with Peru in 1941. Losing the war against Peru, Ecuador had to renounce to a long-standing claim arguing for the right to have direct access to the Amazon River. The claim involved a 200,000 km<sup>2</sup> territory in the Amazonian rain forest, and the war cut off the future possibility of Ecuador trading eastward using the Amazon River. This traumatic national loss strongly affected the debates about national-ness and national origins among elites in Ecuador. Ecuadorian intellectuals attributed the military defeat to the inchoateness of the Ecuadorian nation and debates about the historical identity of the nation gained ground.<sup>45</sup> After the war, according to Pablo Ospina, the narrative of the History of the Kingdom of Quito, which “the attacks of positivist history and... archeology had weakened considerably,” was consciously reactivated to “avoid the traumatic realization that the Ecuadorian nation may have not existed since the beginning of time” (Ospina 1996: 121).

The second event was the defeat of the Nazi Germany and its eugenicist ideologies. After World War II, the UNESCO initiated a campaign against race and racism. Arguing that science did not support the prevalent notions that mental capacities were determined by race and that racial degeneration was the consequence of hybridization, the campaign claimed that race was no a biological fact but a social myth. In July 1950, the UNESCO

<sup>45</sup> After the war with Peru, the prominent intellectual Benjamin Carrión wrote *Cartas al Ecuador* (1943), a book in which he tried to redefine his country describing it as “a small great nation.” He argued that Ecuador had a potential for national greatness because of its rich traditions and cultural vocation. His notion of culture, however, was elitist. According to Fernando Tinajero, [Carrión] did not invite his compatriots to fight against misery but to read Balzac and imitate Belgium exporting handicrafts, without even considering the different conditions of production between a country with an old, ennobled capitalism and an underdeveloped and dependent country. We have to think, therefore, that the homeland that he dreamed was doubly small, because it only included those who could read and those who could export.

circulated the statement entitled “The Race Question” suggesting, “it would be better when speaking of human races to drop the term ‘race’ altogether and speak of ethnic groups.” According to the statement, on the one hand, racial groups did not coincide with national, religious, geographic, linguistic, and cultural groups. On the other hand, there was no genetic connection between such groups and racial traits (1950). From then on, in Ecuador, references to the indio in terms of race, such as “la raza vencida” (the defeated race) or “la raza indígena” (the indigenous race) fell increasingly into disuse.

As in Peru, as studied by de la Cadena (2000; 2001), social hierarchies in Ecuador were legitimized and naturalized no more in terms of racial but cultural difference. Subordinating race to culture—arguing that it is culture that matters as marker of difference—has allowed for both the rebuttal of biologic determinism and the continuation of racial taxonomies, conceived in terms of moral standards.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, when the Ecuadorian government carried out the first national census in November 1950, it explicitly avoided the use of the term race as a category of analysis. According to Kim Clark,

The lack of information about race can be seen as related to the emerging ideology of mestizaje, which argued that through education and the modification of behaviour, Ecuadorians would all become alike. In the case of the census, this was manifested in the emphasis on the problem of ‘culture’ rather than race (Clark 1998: 199).

Since ideas of the “national population were constructed against conceptions of what Indians were,” Ecuadorian intellectuals increasingly viewed mestizaje as the viable way

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<sup>46</sup> Weismantel and Eisenman (Weismantel and Eisenman 1998) have questioned the displacement of race with culture in the analysis of discrimination in the Andes, arguing that contemporary racism is a historical composite combining colonial *pureza de sangre* (purity of blood), European “scientific” racism, and Latin American cultural racism.

to “form a ‘compact national whole’ out of the ethnically diverse Ecuadorian population” (Clark 1998: 187).

In Otavalo, the situation was contradictory. On the one hand, they had the more advanced indios in the country. On the other hand, the big population of indios dictated that they were far behind in the process of mestizaje.

Imbabura, as any other province, has the problem of incorporating the indio into national culture. Within the province, the canton of Otavalo has the biggest problem, because it has a significant amount of indigenous people. Dr. Víctor Gabriel Garcés, more than a decade ago, assigned the number of 40,000 to the indios in the canton. This quantity is large, considering that in the other cantons the percentage diminishes considerably. Perhaps this is so because the process of mestizaje is more advanced there (Zumarraga 1944: 43).

The increasing adoption among national elites of mestizaje as a way towards a unified national community did not mean, as we will see in the next chapter, that non-indígenas identified themselves as mestizos.

In Otavalo, the recognition of indigenous-ness as part of the national heritage led to a non-indígena inquiry about the indigenous past and present, a search for national origins, in a context in which Peru had claimed national descent from the Inca Empire. In addition, because of this Incage, Peru has attracted most of the anthropological interest of the North American and European researchers. Aware that anthropological studies in Ecuador were scant, in August 1966, a group of young non-indígena intellectuals created the *Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología* (IOA). None of them had studies in anthropology—the first academic program in anthropology in Ecuador, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica, got started in September 1971. Influenced by the political effervescence of the 1960s and the constant re-elaboration of political and philosophical thought, they realized that a “deep knowledge about the roots” was lacking. According to Plutarco Cisneros, one of the founding leaders, in choosing anthropology, they were

“probably influenced by the indigenista tradition of the otavaleños.” In addition, he writes,

the structure of Ecuadorian society required fundamental transformations... but, in order to do these, we had to know deeply, with empirical knowledge, the reality that we wanted to modify.... That “curiosity” for discovering reality would later lead to sound results in the field social research (Cisneros 1992: 12-13).

Throughout several decades, the IOA has supported and published very important work in cultural anthropology, ethnohistory, and archeology. In addition, it has continued to promote otavaleñidad, organizing, for instance, the XI Seminar of Otavaleñidad in November 2005.

At the end of 1980s, the IOA became involved in an action that reflects on the perseverance of Hispanicism. Since the city of Otavalo was growing considerably, the Municipality entrusted the IOA with the naming of new streets. In two new neighborhoods, the IOA decided to use the names of corregidores. According to the IOA, these men deserve commemoration because “they stand out for their honest administration, for defending the rights of the natives, or for establishing justice returning land [to the indígenas]” (Valdospino Rubio 1990: 23).

This argumentation raises basic questions about the historicizing of national identity in Ecuador: Can a colonial administrator be judged as honest? Is not contradictory to glorify both Rumiñahui and Benalcázar as national heroes, who fought against each other? On logical grounds, Hispanicism weakens Ecuadorian national identity on two evident accounts. First, exalting Spanish-ness by means of commemorating colonial agents invalidates patriotic claims about Ecuador being a fully independent nation. Second, since not all Ecuadorians can claim Spanish descent, Hispanicism is exclusionary. As Marta Carsaús Arzú has demonstrated in her study of the elites in



Guatemala, lineage, Hispanicism, and racism go together (1991). As an explicit articulation of Ecuadorian nationality, Hispanicism has lost ground, but in the negotiation of identity/alterity, feelings of superiority vis-à-vis ideological conceptualizations of the indio still are pervasive. For instance, in July 1999, the newspaper *La Verdad* of Ibarra published an article after a significant indigenous demonstration in Otavalo against the administration of the Mayor Villarreal and the economic measures of the government of Jamil Mahuad. Entitling the article “The Protagonists,” the writer, Alfredo Escudero Silva, wrote the following:

The indígenas do not have capabilities for reasoning, nor knowledge of the facts, nor motives behind their actions. They only obey the voice of their masters... They are a burden and a dead weight for the economic and social development of the country (1990).

Escudero Silva’s sentiment of superiority is in complete opposition to the unity of equivalential nature of the imagined community that Anderson has in mind (cf. Laclau 25).

#### *Honoring the indigenous warrior Rumiñahui*

Rumiñahui was turned into a national hero after the 1941 war. In contrast to Juan de Velasco, who had portrayed Rumiñahui as an usurper of the Inca throne, Ecuadorian intellectuals started to view Rumiñahui as a member of the Scyri dynasty who had defended “national” territory (Estupiñan 2003). Two prominent non-indígena intellectuals from Otavalo took part in this creation. In 1942, Gonzalo Rubio Orbe wrote a biography of Rumiñahui, arguing that the Inca warrior defended “the lands of the Kingdom of Quito” with heroism and resolution. Establishing “solid historical bases of our nationality,” he was a model to follow to overcome the debacle of 1941 and forge the

new fatherland (Rubio Orbe 1944: 212). In 1953, Enrique Garcés wrote a panegyric and novelistic biography of Rumiñahui. Criticizing the production of history based on the biased perspective of the Spanish chroniclers, Garcés vindicated Rumiñahui portraying him as an Ecuadorian patriot. He also set forth his ideas about Ecuadorian nationality.

We think that our essential duty is to vindicate the indigenous contribution to the forging of Ecuadorian nationality... Why is it so difficult for us to value the work of the indios in the formation of our nationality? Why have we not yet learned to love and dignify what we have from the indios—a bigger percentage than the Spanish contribution—in our blood and in our intelligence? (Garcés 1953: 22-23).

The invention of Rumiñahui as a national hero was so effective that the Ecuadorian military soon adopted the invented iconography of him as a symbol of courage and patriotism (Muratorio 2003: 363). Discrediting this historicization of national identity, Tamara Estupiñán has recently refuted Ecuadorian intellectuals who claimed that Rumiñahui was a Scyri, with roots in present-day Ecuador. She argues that Rumiñahui was from a *mitimaes* population from the central Andes. Mitimaes were populations that the Inca state resettled across the empire to perform political, cultural, social, and economic functions. Most of the army of Atahualpa came from those resettlements (2003).

The history of the statue of Rumiñahui in Otavalo can be traced back to 1946, when Enrique Garcés proposed to build a monument representing, in his words, the “Vanquished Race by the Iberians.” Championing the development of tourism to solve the economic stagnation of Otavalo, Garcés wanted to turn Otavalo into a “cultured city” featuring a series of ornamental works. At the beginning, he proposed to erect a monument depicting not Rumiñahui but an anonymous indigenous woman:

I think in an arrogant and sculptural bronze figure reproducing an india otavaleña with the wonderful attire that only they know how to wear... The india must be young, of impeccably attractive lines, conceived if possible with the “Sex appeal”

[sic] that all bodies of beautiful and young females must have... the india will be standing up, facing the sunrise... The attitude must be of offering, with a gesture between painful and rebellious... (Garcés 1946: 11).

Besides the obvious male chauvinism, and in a social context in which indígenas were aesthetically stigmatized, it is significant that Garcés publicly imagined an india as attractive.<sup>47</sup> In addition, he imagined her as holding pagan beliefs—she is explicitly worshipping the sun—and as a woman who, as her people, has suffered but still has dignity.

In 1951, in a memorandum sent to the City Council, Garcés insisted that it was necessary “to erect a bronze statue to the Indian race in the middle of the central plaza” (1954: 41). In the same document, he set forth his approach to the Indian problem.

For me, the problem of the indio of Otavalo is basic, and it consists of maintaining him as indio, but well adapted to modern culture and life. The issue is not to dress him differently or to cut his “guando” (the single braid used by males) but to assimilate him into the culture, to create for him another environment for decent existence... But we cannot consent with the losing of his autochthony, of what is his own, to substitute it with alien and foreign influences. We should defend the typical, the color, but with new orientations for hygiene and civilization (1954: 45).

Garcés argued that the indios did not need to lose their indigeness, but what he considered of worth in indigenous culture was limited to the colorful and exotic. In his ideas for the development of tourism in Otavalo, he proposed to have indigenous waitresses wearing their full attire to provide folkloric interest to potential visitors (1954: 43). It is important to consider that his appreciation of the indios did not apply to other less colorful indios whose attire reflected their wretchedness.

<sup>47</sup> The poet and writer Gustavo Alfredo Jácome also praised the beauty of the india otavaleña. In 1967, he published a poem entitled “Romance de la longa otavaleña” (Romance of the young india otavaleña) (Jácome 1967). The masculine gaze of the speaking subject, as he observes furtively a female indígena taking a bath in a lake or river, might be problematic for contemporary readers.

In opposition to Hispanicism, Garcés claimed that the Ecuadorian nation was the product of not one but two cultures, Spanish and indigenous, and that time has come to glorify not only the former but also the latter. According to him, the conquest did not supplant indigenous culture.

Here is what we have to strongly reaffirm: there is no substitution but enrichment. Those who affirm that there was a total displacement of the autochthonous betray the lineage and betray themselves because the historic denial cannot be followed by an ethnic denial. There was enrichment, yes, even though this contribution has been full of pain, depredation, and major mistakes that we need to correct, so they do not cause more harm to us. Only a biological and psychological mestizaje, well defined, will be our major Ecuadorian decision (1953: 18).

The notion that all Ecuadorians had at least some indigenous ancestry was not new. It was not widespread but emerged occasionally in the debates and legislation about the indígenas, at least since the 1930s (Prieto 2004: 158). It moved the discussion from the capacity of the indios for national incorporation to a criticism of the denial of the actual condition of the national self.

In July 1953, *Otavaló Ñuca Huasi* published an unsigned article supporting and explaining Garcés's project. The idea was to erect an indigenous allegory, a sculpture of an indigenous woman standing on an islet and pouring water from a jar. The woman would represent mother earth, the islet would stand for the canton of Otavaló, and the water would point to the importance of this element in the valley. Garcés moved the project forward consulting with artists, technicians, and bureaucrats. They reached a consensus that the project was "well conceived and convenient for Otavaló." The city council approved the construction of the sculpture of the india unanimously, and the Municipality provided funds for the construction of the ornamental base, which included a small pool of water. Even the Student Association of Otavaló stepped forward and provided a spotlight to illuminate the monument (*Otavaló Ñuca Huasi* 1953).

Notwithstanding this success, the project also raised strong objections. People criticized the intention to put an india in the plaza. The discriminatory implication was that it did not belong there because the central plaza of Otavalo was a blanco space. In response to this criticism, the article supported Garcés on the following grounds: First, the center of the plaza was deserted. Second, some had proposed to erect a statue of Bolívar there, but Otavalo had already honored him: the plaza was named after him, the frontispiece of the Municipality featured a bust of him, and the best theater of the city was also named Bolívar. Following Garcés's ideas, the article argues that the underlying basis for the project was to recognize the twofold composition of Ecuadorian nationality.

Considering these antecedents, we set forth the following for consideration to the illustrious otavaleño opinion: Ecuadorian nationality is the product of two cultures, the Spanish and the indigenous. To the first, we have done justice, and it is necessary to think that we need to exalt and glorify the second one in fairness. Now, Otavalo is an eminent indigenous region that owes its fame and a great part of its economy to this condition. So, why we do not recognize this very true? Why we do not pay homage to the autochthonous and typical, factors of great influence in our sociology? (Otavalo Ñuca Huasi 1953: 40).

Addressing the argument against putting an india in the plaza, the article claims that it “does not have a foundation allowing for rational discussion” and dismisses it (Otavalo Ñuca Huasi 1953: 41).

As Rubio Orbe, Garcés considered that the indio of Otavalo was the most advanced in the country because of his constant contact with the blanco population. For him, as well as for many of his generation, mestizaje was a work in progress, far from completion. His proposal to form a unified Ecuadorian nation implies that not just any mestizaje was valid but only an enlightened one. Here is valid the criticism that Alan Knight poses to Mexican indigenismo: “it embodied the optimistic belief that acculturation could proceed in a guided, enlightened fashion, such that the positive aspects of Indian culture could be

preserved, the negative expunged,” but cultures are more than the sums of components, “elements cannot be removed or added at will” (Knight 1990: 86-87).

In May 1954, *Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* published on its cover a color drawing of the “indigenous allegory for the Plaza Bolívar,” the sculpture of the india as imagined by Garcés. However, by October of the same year, the military had stepped in offering to donate a sculpture, but changing the content of the project. A colonel from Otavalo, Manuel Mejía, who was the vice-president of the Asociación 31 de Octubre, formed a military committee to support the construction of the monument. Instead of a full body statue of an india, they offered a bust of Rumiñahui (Garcés Moreano 1954: 57).

A year later, the monument was done. *Ñuca Wasi* published a drawing of the final monument on its cover and an article by Garcés explaining the motives behind the endeavor:

at the base of the patriotic intention that motivated the construction of the monument to Rumiñahui was the exaltation of Indian-ness (lo indio), at least to the same levels of exaltation that history has done to the Spanish conquerors... so the now exalted indigenous contribution, which was admirable, may overcome the barbarous prejudices of castes and races, both wrong in the light of science. Caste is not but an issue about nourishment and economy. Race, in anthropology, is a notion that has collapsed a while ago. Those who still use the term have fallen behind. They forget that even the racist Germans died with their horrendous doctrine of rabid dogs (1955: 10).

In addition, Garcés claimed that a biased history and social prejudice had divided the country in two peoples: blanco and indio. Stating that Mexico had “solved the problem correctly,” he argued that only the vindication of the indio could overcome the social and psychological ills caused by this division. In Ecuador, biological and psychological mestizaje was yet to be done in an integral and definitive way (1955: 10).

After Venezuela donated the statue of Bolívar to the Municipality in 1959, some critics challenged the decision to place the bust of Rumiñahui in the Plaza Bolívar. They

accused the city council of setting a hero against the other and holding wrong beliefs about “the Indian race.” The implication was that the indios had a potential for rebellion and that honoring an indigenous hero could ignite it. The city council responded in a letter published in *El Comercio*, dismissing the accusations as ill-judged and arguing that the city council will honor both heroes properly. It also emphasizes that “all [non-indígena] otavaleños are proud of the contribution of the Indian race in the formation of Ecuadorian nationality, of which indian-ness is the first antecedent” (Concejo Municipal de Otavalo 1959).

Enrique Garcés’s impetus to honor indigenous heroes went even further. In 1961, he inaugurated the Plaza Indoamérica in Quito, at the entrance of the Universidad Central, with the erecting of another bust of Rumiñahui. This plaza honors twenty-one indigenous leaders across the Americas who fought against European conquerors or colonial administrators. The plaza was Garcés’s idea. He mustered support from ambassadors, cultural organizations, and journalists from the same number of countries. The plaza was completed only in 1974, with the erecting of the bust of Hatuey, the Taino *cacique* (chief) who fought against the conquerors in present-day Cuba, and chose in 1512, before being burned at the stake, to go hell, instead of accepting Jesus and go to heaven, where the cruel Spaniards would be (Becker 1995).<sup>48</sup>

In 1976, in a posthumous homage to Enrique Garcés in the journal *Sarance*, Fernando Chavez wrote that Garcés’s generation, the group forming the Liga Vasconcelos, was at a crossroad, between the “social exclusion” of Hispanicism, which “despised what is from

<sup>48</sup> Paradoxically, Hatuey is the name of a beer brewed by Bacardi, since 1927.

here in a tenacious and shameful way,” and making sense of their lives in an authentic mestizo and Ecuadorian way by means of incorporating the indio into nationality.

They decided for the indio, after long and harsh debates, and not a few hesitations. Against the opinion of the older generation that have eluded and negated the indio, that have covered him with opprobrium, after tying and exploiting him. Among them burst the heresy of starting a polemic against the Iberianist position of Gonzalo Zaldumbide, in 1924. They rebuked him for his Hispanicism and the backwardness of his social concepts, and did not forget to indicate the source of his attitude: privilege and an incomplete apprehension of the deep Ecuadorian reality... For them, it was the dark country, foul-smelling and rough, that which had to be the foundation for the future edification of a unitary nation, resolute and conscious about its goals (Chaves 1976: 21-22).

In 1956, after the Municipality of Otavalo erected the monument to Rumiñahui, indígenas did not identify with it. A few interviewed individuals, who are now in their seventies and eighties, did not know anything about Rumiñahui. “We did not know our history. At that time, I had never heard anything about Rumiñahui” (J. Lema 7/5/2008). According to another, “We did not talk about those things. To speak about history, the fellows do not come forward. Nobody is willing to talk about that past” (J.A. Conejo 7/11/2008). They remember that Otavalo was a city with a small population. Other than going to the Saturday feria, which was at the outskirts, indígenas seldom visited urban Otavalo. According to J. Lema, his peers had told him that “mestizos of that time used to beat them” (7/5/2008). At that time, the municipality coerced the indigenous communities to send labor teams to sweep the streets and collect garbage without compensation. Some indígenas stumbled upon the statue when they went to the plaza Bolívar as forced laborers.

At the beginning, indígenas did not know who was Rumiñahui, but gradually the monument did its work. Indígenas increasingly learned about Rumiñahui when they started to go to school, or from those who could read and told them what was written in



the plaque of the monument. When they learned who Rumiñahui was, they thought that they have done a good thing erecting a statue of an indígena, someone like them, but they asked why the municipality has erected an effigy that was so different from them, not even wearing a braid—the effigy has the hair loose, down to the neck, and a headband on top. For them, Rumiñahui looked more like a *yumbo*, an inhabitant of the tropical lower lands that is stereotypically portrayed as a savage in many traditional dances in Otavalo. One of the elders claimed that indígenas have feelings of identification with Rumiñahui because “he was lucid in defending our territory,” meaning not national but indigenous territory (J.A. Conejo 7/11/2008). Garcés would be surprised by the way in which the indígenas have defended his statue but he would be dismayed to find out that it has strengthened indigenous identity not in coalescence but in opposition to mestizo, supposedly national, identity.

## *Chapter II Conclusions*

The commemoration of Rumiñahui as an Ecuadorian national hero was a product of the debates between two different ways of imagining Ecuadorians, their nation, and their future. It is not erroneous to claim that the statue to Rumiñahui, erected in 1955, was a response to the statue of Benalcázar, erected in 1949. In those debates, between a purely Hispanic nationality and a Hispanic/indigenous nationality, blanco intellectuals took for granted that blanco ways of being were innate to the nation and the state. Assuming their way of life as normative, they non-only ethnicized indígenas as indios others but also constructed their own “modern” identity in a world-system and universal history of national identities. Their definition and proposition of the indio as a problem for the

nation reflected the intimate relationship between power and knowledge and normalized the indio as an object, not subject, of knowledge.

Even when Enrique Garcés claimed that indios did not have to change their appearance, he argued that they had to change their psyche and behavior to become national citizens. They had to assimilate into “the culture,” meaning blanco and national, but also rational and universal culture. Conceiving culture in the singular, as the achievements of civilization—as I will explain in the next chapter—non-indígenas claimed that the indígenas lacked culture.

The intrinsic relationship between the Indian problem and Ecuadorian nationality, whose terms of inclusion and exclusion were always dictated by non-indígenas, weakens Anderson’s distinction between good, classic nationalism and dangerous, contemporary ethnic movements. Behind Anderson’s ideas, there is a staunch defense of classical nationalism as a universalistic project able to produce a richer modernity. According to this model, imagining the nation is “essentially a comparative process in which the nation is always haunted by something that is at one and the same time both spatially other or exterior to it [other nations] but also similar to it in the sense that it is part and inhabits the same frame of consciousness” (Cheah 2003: 10). In contrast, I argue, the Ecuadorian nation was also haunted from within. The exclusion of the indigenous population was an essential feature of imagining Ecuadorians. Indígenas were never invited to participate in imagining the nation. Later, they would rebel against this epistemology.

## Chapter III

### Indios and Blancos in Otavalo

*Desprecia. El desprecio engrandece...*

Majestad y Pobreza in *El Chulla Romero y Flores*, Jorge Icaza (1958)<sup>49</sup>

*Para incorporar al indio a la cultura, es necesario previamente que educamos a la población blanca, porque, si no procedemos así, fracasaremos en nuestro intento.*<sup>50</sup>

Segundo Maisguashca (1949)

After conducting fieldwork in the 1960s, Andrew C. Pearse claimed that in the canton of Otavalo the peasantry had few opportunities for new livelihoods.

Their possibilities for manoeuvre are sharply restricted by the persistence of an estamental cleavage which excludes them from the upper occupational openings, and which historically has made possible peculiar institutional forms of appropriation of their labor and produce by a class of 'townsfolk'... The commonly used terms for the two estaments are indio or indígena on the one hand, and blanco on the other (Pearse 1975: 190-191).

Pearse's own census in the canton counted a total of 8,853 families, 36% blanco and 64% indio.

<sup>49</sup> "Despise. Despising empowers." *Majestad y Pobreza* (Majesty and Poverty) is a character in Icaza's novel.

<sup>50</sup> "To incorporate the indio into the culture, it is necessary that we previously educate the blanco population, because, if we do not do so, we will fail in our attempts."

After fieldwork in the late 1970s, Leo R. Chavez wrote that in Otavalo “local life was organized within the boundaries of two caste-like ethnic groups: the dominant Spanish speaking whites and the subordinate, Quichua speaking Indians. Whites were predominantly urban, living mainly in the town of Otavalo and in the parroquia (civil parish) centers” (Chavez 1982: 160).

In Otavalo, this categorization of the population into blancos and indios is no longer current. In the national census of November 2001, census takers were instructed to ask: “Do you consider yourself indígena, Afro-Ecuadorian, mestizo, mulatto, or blanco?” From a total population of 90,188 in the canton, 55.4% self-ascribed as indígenas, 41.7% as mestizos, 0.5% as Afro-Ecuadorian, 0.4% as mulatto, and 1.9% as blanco (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos 2001). In a few decades, blanco self-identification has vanished from the social landscape. This transformation is reflected in the current official discourse of the Municipality of Otavalo, which speaks of the canton as composed of indígenas and mestizos.

Rather than resulting from demographic changes, the decline of blanco self-identification in Otavalo responds to transformations in the power-related constitution of social identities/alterities. Up to the late 1970s, most non-indígenas identified themselves as blancos; but today, most of them cannot do so. Demonstrating that the significance of cultural or phenotypic traits to identify differences and similarities between groups is not inherent but historically constructed (Gabbert 2006: 89; Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 16), neither blanco nor mestizo nor indio have retained the meanings they had a few decades ago.

In this chapter, I analyze the construction of social identification and categorization preceding the emergence of indigenous political activism. I do so by means of examining a supposed indigenous uprising in Otavalo, in 1959, in which five indígenas were shot dead. The extended debate about the responsibility for the killings not only prompted articulations of the proper place of the indígenas in the Ecuadorian nation but also reveals the dynamics and problematics of dominant self-identification. In addition, using ethnographies and local magazines from the 1940s and 1970s, I analyze blanco self-identification in relation to quotidian and institutionalized practices of appropriation of indigenous labor and products. As Charles Hale has argued, the scrutiny of dominant identity is problematic when it “fails to encompass analysis of the material and ideological underpinnings of racial dominance, and when identity formation is conceived in isolation from daily interactions with others, isolated from the flow of sociopolitical process” (Hale 2006: 16).

My aim here is to go beyond explanations of indigeneness and of indigenous politics that reify—make something abstract more concrete or real—ethnic categories. As Barth implied, rather than responding to the most basic of metaphysical questions: “What is there?” categorical ethnic distinctions depend on complex processes—political, economic, and historical—of social exclusion and incorporation. Despite changing participation and membership, dichotomized ethnic statuses are maintained as they often are the very foundations of embracing social systems (Barth 1969: 10).

### *Indígenas levantados (uprisen indígenas)*

On Thursday January 8, 1959, the newspaper *El Comercio* printed the following news: “Uprising of indígenas occurred at the shore of Lake San Pablo: 3 dead.” Mostly based

on a telegram sent from Otavalo, the piece reports that around 500 indígenas of the community of Pucará Bajo de Velásquez rose up against a municipal commission that went to negotiate the purchase of land from indigenous proprietors. Lake San Pablo is approximately two kilometers, southeast, from the city of Otavalo. The municipality wanted land next to the lake to build a first-class hotel, with a pier and casino. The plan was to have it ready for the XI Interamerican Conference of the Organization of American States that was going to take place in Ecuador in 1961. The news piece quotes the telegram extensively:

The indígenas, incited by undesirable individuals, attacked the citizens that went to rescue the commissioners with sticks and stones, engaging in combat that lasted one hour. Up to now, three indígenas are dead and many blancos and indios are wounded and bruised.

The Municipality of Otavalo has wanted to buy the land plots paying the owners generously, but the irrational resistance of the indígenas has made any agreement impossible.

It is advisable to proceed with the corresponding legal inquiry to determine what responsibility the instigators of such unfortunate events have in this case. These events are holding the citizens of Otavalo, blancos and indígenas, in consternation and mourning.— Senator Víctor Alejandro Jaramillo (*El Comercio* 1959).

The author of the telegram, Víctor Alejandro Jaramillo, was the president of the municipal council, the principal of the secondary school, and a national senator representing the province of Imbabura. After reporting on the bloodbath, Senator Jaramillo would become deeply embroiled in a long and acrimonious debate over who held the responsibility for it. From January to October 1959, *El Comercio* would publish around fifty pieces—including telegrams, letters, reports, legal inquiries, official statements, editorials, and editorial cartoons—informing or commenting on the incident and its aftermath.

On Friday January 9, 1959, two days after the incident, *El Comercio* published an exhaustive report, including a more detailed account by Senator Jaramillo counterbalanced with the statements of a few indígenas. The death toll had gone up: not three but five indígenas were dead. Rather than defining the incident as a levantamiento, as the senator had done, the report defines it as a battle: policemen, guards, and people of Otavalo against the indígenas of Pucará Bajo de Velásquez. Whereas the non-indígenas claimed that they were attacked while trying to rescue the commissioners, the indígenas declared that they were assaulted and provoked in their houses.

As the highest civil authority in Otavalo, Senator Jaramillo spoke on behalf of the non-indígena side, even though he was not present at the beginning of the incident. The following is a summary of his account, with additional information from other accounts, all of them reported by *El Comercio*. On Wednesday 7, 1959, around 3 pm, the municipal commission went to the lake with the intention of reactivating negotiations, which were stalled. Since previous efforts to reach a collective deal had failed, the commissioners wanted to reach individual agreements with each of the proprietors, speaking to them at their houses. When the commissioners tried to speak with one of the proprietors, many indígenas came out shouting and whistling, and refused any deal. Rapidly, hundreds of indígenas gathered and chased the commissioners with a threatening attitude, as far away as a nearby restaurant, located on an old pier at the shore of the lake. The commissioners took refuge in the restaurant, and the indígenas quickly surrounded it.

The lawyer Alfredo Rubio Orbe, the brother of leading indigenista Gonzalo Rubio Orbe, was one of the commissioners. In a meeting convoked by city council a few days later, he narrated the following account:

It seems that the indígenas were told about our presence, because as soon as we got there, they advanced threateningly towards us... We reached the pier quickly... While we were at the pier [inside the restaurant], the indios, just as in the movies,<sup>51</sup> were singing in Quechua, “we are going to kill the blancos and bury them very deep.” Meanwhile, youngsters of fifteen and sixteen years old were furiously hitting the floor with sticks and stones. They were demanding Mr. Echeverría, the proprietor of the pier, to hand the blancos or the indígena (an intermediary) over to “make fritada [fried pork] and eat him” (El Comercio 1959).

Coincidentally, there was a municipal dump truck nearby. The driver, after seeing the hostile behavior of the indígenas, was able to pick up one of the commissioners and drive to the city of Otavalo. Upon arriving, the driver and the commissioner turned to Senator Jaramillo, who was at the secondary school, for help.

Senator Jaramillo claims that the news disconcerted him. Since the city had only three police officers, and he did not have any organized group to call for assistance, he decided to send students from fifth and sixth year of secondary school, roughly sixteen to nineteen years old, to the lake, in the same truck. He ordered them to distract the indígenas so that the commissioners could escape. According to the Senator, when the students arrived at the shore of the lake, the indígenas became furious and attacked. The clash, he claimed, was unbalanced. Whereas the indígenas were several hundreds and carried clubs and stones, the students were less than a hundred and carried no weapons. Many students escaped, but others became embroiled in the fighting. Meanwhile, the commissioners were able to flee. Soon after, an increasing number of blancos started to arrive, many of them carrying firearms. They included a few guards of the *estanco*, the state’s liquor store, four national police officers, and around ten “ciudadanos” (citizens). They had been summoned by the call that the indios had risen up.

<sup>51</sup> He is referring to western movies made in the USA.



In the words of the Senator, the new arrivals “set themselves to stop the avalanche of indígenas, which was surrounding and pushing back the students and their fighting mates” (El Comercio 1959). All of this happened before the arrival of the Senator to the site of the fighting. After sending a telegram to the governor in Ibarra, the capital of the province of Imbabura, Senator Jaramillo went to the lake, accompanied by all the employees of the municipality, including the musicians of the municipal band that were rehearsing. The Senator said that when he arrived, hundreds of indígenas were fighting. Facing an increasing number of blancos who were arriving in numerous vehicles, the indígenas were already retreating. The police officers, guards, and others were firing into the air. The senator shouted that the firing should not kill, only frighten, the indígenas. However, “because of the ferocity of the fight, the order was not followed, and the indígenas began to fall wounded, while many others escaped” (El Comercio 1959).

A group of “vecinos” (neighbors)<sup>52</sup> who participated in the clash claimed later that Senator Jaramillo never backed down from his demand for refraining to kill the indígenas. In a group of letters supporting the Senator published by the City Council in *El Comercio*, they wrote, “In view of his stance, there was a mutiny of [non-indígena] persons who, getting closer to him, told him, ‘What do you want us to do? You want the indios to kill us?’” (Concejo Municipal de Otavalo 1959).

Around 4:15, when the clash was over, a police unit arrived from Ibarra. It could not come before because of lack of transportation. Senator Jaramillo finished his account

<sup>52</sup> During colonial times, the vecinos were the urban Spaniards and their descendents who constituted and participated in local governing. As the only group having full citizen rights, they monopolized positions of authority in municipalities. During the first decades of the colony, the vecinos were distinguished from the lesser *moradores* (dwellers). Whereas the vecinos held

presenting himself as a defender of the indígenas: “The indio is the pride of this region. He is the most important element of this land... I always have defended the indio and have been concerned for his progress” (El Comercio 1959).

After the senator’s account, the report states that the injured persons were taken to the hospital in Otavalo. On arriving, two indígenas were already dead, and the next day, another three would die. One of the dead was a sixteen-year old youngster. Among the many injured indígenas who went to the hospital, there was another youngster, who having a bullet in his abdomen was in critical condition, and a woman, who had a bullet in her leg. On the non-indígena side, a student and two policemen were lightly injured.

The authorities sent thirty-four indígenas, twenty-seven men and seven women, to the municipal prison for further inquiries, claiming that they had participated in or were the ringleaders of the incident. The report states that the indígenas did not want to give any comments. Most of them only said that they were not present when the battle occurred. In the words of the reporter, “It was obvious that they did not want to talk because of fear” (El Comercio 1959). There were a few exceptions. The grandmother of the sixteen-year old who was killed told the reporters that the blancos went to her house and stole wool, necklaces, and money. She and her relatives begged on their knees for fair treatment but the blancos kicked her grandson out, taking him away. Other indígenas said that they were returning to their homes from work, when they were brutally attacked by the blancos. One of the indígenas in prison said that he was celebrating his wedding in his house when many blancos arrived and provoked a huge fight. His new wife was also in prison. It is worth noting that in all the references to the population of Otavalo made by

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encomiendas, grants of indigenous populations, the moradores did not. The equating of vecino

Senator Jaramillo and other local inhabitants, mestizos are conspicuously absent, as if the 1959 population of the canton consisted only of blancos and indígenas.

In a later report, a lawyer defending the indígenas claimed that only sixty indígenas were present at the time of the fight, challenging Senator Jaramillo's estimate of more than five hundred. In addition, the forensic doctor that had examined the bodies indicated that most of the dead had been shot in the back. "This is to say, while the indígenas were fleeing." One of them had been shot from a short distance while kneeling. Other injured indígenas had been shot from a distance while climbing trees or escaping. The lawyer corroborated that the indígenas had been celebrating a wedding since Sunday, January 4, 1959, for three days before the incident. Accordingly, many indígenas did not remember the details of the shooting because they were drunk (El Comercio 1959).

In the same edition of January 9, 1959, *El Comercio* printed a cartoon commenting on the incident. It is entitled "Deep Roots" and portrays an indio with a few strokes. In the background, there is a sign on the ground showing the location: "San Pablo." The indio wears a poncho, holds a hat in his hands and has a quena, an Andean flute, appearing from the back of his waist. There are tears in his face. His feet, depicted as roots of a tree, are being uprooted, pulled upward by a bayonet inserted in his poncho. His words, written at the bottom, emulate badly spoken Spanish: "If you take my *llacta* (Kichwa: land, place, village) away, it would be better to kill me...!"<sup>53</sup> (El Comercio 1959). The artist represented two widely held ideas about the indio: the extraordinary and mystical devotion for his land and his vegetative state. For example, in 1957, sociologist Víctor Gabriel Garcés wrote that indígenas were indifferent to politics as they were committed

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with citizen continued during republican times until the 1960s.

to the mystic cult of the land (Garcés 1957: 63-64), and that indígenas lived in a vegetative state, although they could overcome this state by means of an integral transformation (Garcés 1957: 66).

Whether or not the 1959 incident was a levantamiento, indigenous communities across the Andes sporadically resorted to tactical revolts when avenues to resolve particular grievances failed (Thurner 1993: 42). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, significant revolts were rare, scattered across time and space. Nevertheless, in localities surrounded by indigenous majorities, a levantamiento conjured the fear of local elites of being overrun and killed by the indios in irrational mass revolt. This fear was sparked more by “the old elitist image of the irrational condition of the natives” (Prieto 2004: 22) than by a local history of levantamientos. Calling out that there was a levantamiento meant that the indios, in a frenzy of rage, have left behind their usual passivity and become “indios levantados.” On the assumption that the indios hated them, or wanted revenge as a defeated race, local elites considered that during a levantamiento, the indios would kill them at the first opportunity. This real or imagined fear dictated only one course of action: kill the indios before they kill us. For the most part, this involved killing a few indios to disperse them and put an end to the revolt. According to Kim Clark, reading press descriptions of levantamientos, during mid-twentieth century, “would lead one to expect the deaths of numerous police and mestizo townspeople” but usually the opposite was true. The indígenas, who did not carry firearms, were far more likely to receive the brunt of the violence (Clark 1998: 197).

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<sup>53</sup> Si quitais mi llecta, más mejor que mates...!

Adding to the Senator's tribulations, *El Comercio* published on January 10, 1959, an editorial arguing, without evidence, that the order to shoot the indígenas was his, inasmuch as he was the highest-ranking civil authority (El Comercio 1959). The subsequent debate pitted national against local interests. On one side, there were the numerous critics of Senator Jaramillo, including the Confederation of Workers of Ecuador, the Federation of Workers of the Province of Pichincha, the Radical Liberal Party, the National Federation of Drivers, the Federation of University Students of Ecuador, the National Union of Teachers, the Ecuadorian Federation of Indios, the ex-principal of the secondary school in Riobamba, and *El Comercio*. They claimed that the incident was not a levantamiento but rather a "horrendous massacre of indígenas" that were defending their land (El Comercio 1959). They demanded the Senator's resignation as principal of the secondary school for sending students to confront the indígenas. They argued that the municipality had erred in not taking the indio's love for his land into consideration. Asserting that the indio should be respected because he was an important part of Ecuadorian nationality, they considered that the core of the problem was a colonial attitude that condoned the mistreatment of the indio.

On the other side, there were the residents, the students, civic organizations, and the Municipal Council of Otavalo, who staunchly defended their Senator, claiming that the intervention was necessary because the "indígenas levantados" were going to kill the commissioners. They claimed that the municipality had been negotiating with the indígenas without problems for a while, but lately external agitators had been manipulating the indígenas. They protested that the terms of the accusations were against all the people of Otavalo, as if they were "savages." Some insisted on building the hotel

in the same place, arguing that this was a technical decision (El Comercio 1959). Both sides called upon the judicial system in order to punish the persons responsible for the massacre.

*Blancos in quotation marks*

The debate is a fascinating account of the dominant views on the nature of the indio and his place in the Ecuadorian nation. In particular, the anonymous editorial writers of *El Comercio* took a very active role trying to influence national public opinion. For instance, on 15 January 1959, they wrote, “The Ecuadorian nation has been constructed ‘on the back of the indio’, and his contemporary contribution to [national] production is prominent. He never was, nor is, a negative element” (El Comercio 1959). A few days later, they wrote, “The mentality of the people has evolved little in relation to the problem of the indio. He is still considered a slave. If theoretically he has rights and duties, his ancestral life style prevents him their exercise or fulfillment” (El Comercio 1959).

In their analysis of the incident, the editorial writers of *El Comercio* put the blame on the “colonialist mentality” and the “feudal spirit” that were still pervasive in Ecuador. Absolving the indígenas of any wrongdoing, the editorialists claimed that there had been little progress in relation to the Indian problem. The indígenas were the basic force moving national production forward, but they were treated with disdain.

For such state of affairs, not only the government or the lack of plans and actions to incorporate [the indio] into the mainstream of the Republic are to blame but also the way in which the “blanco” or the mestizo treat the indio in daily life. No insult is spared; no humiliation is withheld. All the violations against the indio are considered normal. From the aggressive rascal that beats him in the streets of cities and towns, that throws his hat with a slap, that shoves him, that kicks him from behind mocking and denigrating him, to the treatment that he receives in the haciendas, in which the

mayordomo (overseer) and the “master” make him and his family, including children, work from dawn to dusk, paying him ridiculously low salaries, or sometimes in exchange of food, or of the occupation of the huasipungo (El Comercio 1959).

Echoing Pio Jaramillo, *El Comercio* was responding to the widespread notion that the indio was a negative element in the formation of Ecuadorian nationality. In addition, *El Comercio* blamed the local non-indígenas, the townsfolk, for the exclusion of the indios from the nation. In the debate, the ideology of mestizaje is implicit.

Mestizaje, as Kingman argues, “repositions the problem of racism into a new plane but it does not eliminate it” (Kingman Garcés 1999: 116). According to Mallon, mestizaje in Latin America “emerges as an official discourse of nation formation, a new claim to authenticity that denies colonial forms of racial/ethnic oppression by creating an intermediate subject and interpellating him as ‘the citizen’” (Mallon 1996: 171). Following Stutzman’s seminal article, “El Mestizaje: An all-inclusive ideology of exclusion” (1981), many scholars have considered mestizaje as an ideological project of national homogenization hiding a reality of racial and ethnic exclusion behind a mask of inclusiveness (Wade 2005). Mestizaje provides for discrimination by means of a strong subtext of *blanqueamiento* (whitening), meaning that members of a national culture aspire to whiteness as the highest symbol of civilization, as the moral, aesthetic, and sociocultural norm (Stutzman 1981; Whitten 2003). As a unifying myth put to the service of state and nation building, mestizaje has been employed by whiter elites to maintain power over indigenous populations and other racial or ethnic groups (Hale 1996: 2). Arguing that all nationals are mestizos, elites have undermined any bases for political demands based on indigenousness, while continuing to take advantage of the social privilege granted by their relative whiteness.

From the 1920 to the 1980s, until the emergence of indigenous movements, many Latin American states with indigenous populations had explicitly adopted mestizaje as nation-building projects. Set off by nationalist governments at different times and with different thrusts, these include post-revolutionary Mexico from the 1920s, nationalist revolutionary Bolivia during the 1950s, the military dictatorship in Ecuador during the 1970s, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua during the late 1970s and 1980s (Alonso 2007; Hooker 2005; Sanjinés 2004; Silva 2005).

Focusing on the lived experience of mestizaje, de la Cadena and Wade have argued that mestizaje is not only a discriminatory device. De la Cadena argues that the category of mestizo cannot be contained within the notion of empirical hybridity, the product of biological or cultural mixing. She claims this category is the product of two epistemologies, one colonial, based on faith and denoting transgression, and the other based on eighteenth and nineteenth century European racial theories, requiring two previous supposedly discrete and pure categories. This epistemological hybridity, a mix of two classificatory regimes, allows for a multiplicity of voices in the power-negotiated ascription of identities. Ultimately, it is all too simplistic to follow a notion of mestizaje as solely a transitional teleology that “purify mestizos away from indigeneity”(de la Cadena 2005: 262). As she demonstrated, Peruvian “indigenous mestizos” have challenged that imposition, “because they implement an identity project that is not meant to be resolved in an ‘either (indigenous) or (mestizo)’ situation” (de la Cadena 2005: 281).

Wade proposes to see mestizaje as a mosaic rather than homogeneous mixing. Nationalist ideologies of mestizaje “contain and encompass dynamics not only of



homogenisation but also of differentiation, maintaining permanent spaces, of a particular kind, for blackness and indigenusness, and creating a mosaic image of national identity” (Wade 2005: 240). Black and indigenous peoples are not only the excluded others; they also “are *constitutive* of the very idea of the mestizo nation” (Wade 2005: 243). As seen in popular music, religious practice, and human relationships, mestizaje implies processes of inclusion that go beyond mere rhetorical discourse (Wade 2005: 254). This inclusion, according to Wade, does not dislodge the discriminatory effects of mestizaje as a nation-building ideology but makes them more complex. According to him, mestizaje “as both difference and sameness, homogeneity and heterogeneity, inclusion and exclusion as constitutive elements. These oppositions cannot be aligned with other dualisms, such as elite versus subaltern or ideology versus lived experience” (Wade 2005: 255).

In both de la Cadena’s and Wade’s perspectives, mestizaje is a space of struggle and contest in which actors have transformed its normative paradigm. These social actors, however, never go as far as to challenge the epistemological base of mestizaje: the supremacy of whiteness. Its monopoly on the conjuring of modernity, its legitimacy imagining the nation, and its aesthetic ascendancy go unchallenged.

In Ecuador by 1959, the debate about national-ness had moved from the aristocratic ideas articulated by Jijón, who claimed that the indios were incapable of incorporation, to a-yet-to-be-defined mestizaje. As Kim Clark has argued, by 1950 official discourse in Ecuador emphasized incorporation of the indigenous population by means of projects of “cultural and social reform, rather than direct racial mixing” (Clark 1998: 204).

In general, at least in official discourse, there was an emphasis on promoting a concept of the national population that was not, but *could become* homogeneous, with an emphasis on processes that would generate similarities among Ecuadorians, rather than focusing on innate biological divisions among them. I have glossed this as a

national ideology of mestizaje, although it did not in fact explicitly promote the mestizo as the main component of the national population (until later) (Clark 1998: 206).

Reflecting the state of the debate, sociologist Victor Gabriel Garcés wrote in 1957, “the indígena is a man, behind in his cultural development but a full and complete man” (Garcés 1957: 17). Science has discredited racial categorization, he argued, and men should be classified in terms of their cultural development rather than their race. Liberal, non-indígena intellectuals associated culture not only with education and literacy but also with the quality of human existence and an aspiration to improve it (Garcés 1957: 57). Indígenas had folklore but lacked culture in as much as they were uneducated, illiterate, and content with their “unhappy” existence. In addition, non-indígena intellectuals equated culture with urbanity and civics. According to Victor Gabriel Garcés, culture was the “forger of citizenship,” indígenas could not participate in politics because citizenship demanded literacy, and citizenship had not flourished in rural areas because culture did not flourish there (Garcés 1957: 61). Identifying themselves as *cultos* (cultured persons), non-indígenas considered themselves the cultural paradigms that the indígenas should imitate (Clark 1998; Prieto 2004). Accordingly, they equated social mobility with “cultural improvement,” with the opening up of possibilities for overcoming being indios (Garcés 1957: 56). Explicit racism was gradually disappearing from public discourse, but Indian-ness was stigmatized as a detrimental condition of existence because it corresponded to a lack of culture.

In contrast to current notions of the plurality of culture—the “diversity of ways in which human beings establish and live their social life in groups”—non-indígena intellectuals followed the notion of culture in the singular, assuming “a universal scale of progress and the idea that civilizations developed through time.” As Rapport and Overing

argue, “The growth of culture and rationality were thought to belong to the same process. In other words, human beings became more ‘cultivated’ as they progressed over time intellectually, spiritually and aesthetically” (Rapport and Overing 2000: 92). In *Cultural in the Plural*, de Certeau suggests that notions of culture that refer to “the features of ‘cultivated’ human beings” have strong political motivations because this is a model that “introduces its norms wherever it imposes its power” (Certeau and Giard 1997: 103). As we will see in the next chapter, the awareness of the plurality of culture by indigenous intellectuals during the 1970s will be very important in articulating a new indigenism. It is important to emphasize that the ideas for the incorporation of the indios were taking shape in public national discourse and not in local social practice. *El Comercio*’s emphasis on the incorporation of the indios attested to the tensions between discriminatory local practices and developing national ideals.

Besides these points, I want to emphasize the following. Over the subsequent months of reporting on the event, *El Comercio* set off the term blanco with quotation marks. The following translated sentence, which quotes the Senator directly, maintains all the original punctuation marks:

“The “blancos” chased the indígenas —continues the informant— until they fled in disorder, while many bleeding bodies, with serious injuries, fell to the ground” (El Comercio 1959).

The following paragraph quotes the Senator indirectly:

The informant, so many times cited, Mr. Victor Alejandro Jaramillo, says that when he arrived to Espejo, a civil parish located a few blocks from the pier of San Pablo, he could see that a few hundred indígenas were fighting and were already retreating at the presence of an increased number of “blancos,” who had gone there from Otavalo and Espejo in numerous vehicles (El Comercio 1959).

Apparently, indígenas also used the word “blanco.” The following sentence quotes a group of them indirectly.

Other indígenas... said that they were returning to their homes, after work in Otavalo and other places, when they were ferociously and thoughtlessly mistreated by the “blancos” and by the guards of the estanco and policemen, who were firing at them (El Comercio 1959).

The report written by the attorney defending the indígenas also reproduces this use of quotation marks. He writes,

the indígenas present were less than sixty. So, the attack of the “blancos” took place because the comuneros (members of an indigenous community) indicated again that they were not willing to cede their lands (El Comercio 1959).

This use of quotation marks indicates that identifying the dominant population of Otavalo as blanco was the choice of the interviewees, not of the newspaper. In addition, the use of quotation marks suggests that *El Comercio* was calling into question blanco self-identification. In any case, this subtle questioning of the understanding of social identities is difficult to interpret beyond its face value, but an editorial published on Sunday, January 11, 1959, turns this questioning into blunt denunciation. Referring to Senator Jaramillo, the editorial claims the following:

We know that the indígena is shy and will easily submit to any demand. On the other hand, some persons who call themselves “blancos” are cruel despots in their treatment of the indios. The indios have their worst enemy in this kind of mestizos, including that one who thinks himself erudite, who has become “important,” and has occupied all the main posts of the region because of special political circumstances (El Comercio 1959).

In the extensive report published on Friday January 9, 1959, *El Comercio* had published a photo, a bust shot, of Senator Jaramillo. He had pale complexion. In Ecuador, even today, he could convincingly claim being racially white. He never identified himself individually as a blanco person. He did it collectively, describing the inhabitants of Otavalo as either blanco or indígena, and portraying the confrontation as a problem between these populations. Ultimately, *El Comercio* was questioning the general trend among non-indígenas to self-identify as blancos even though they could be identified by

others as cholos or mestizos (Butler 1981: 255-256; Jaramillo Alvarado 1954: 122; Prieto 2004: 149; Stark 1981).

The questioning by *El Comercio* of blanco self-identification occurred, as mentioned before, in a context in which a national ideology of mestizaje was emerging. In 1950, no other than the President of Ecuador, Galo Plaza, had claimed, “all of us Ecuadorians have Indian blood,” in a meeting with indígenas to explain the objectives of that year national census (Prieto 2004: 219). In 1958, writer Jorge Icaza had published the novel “*El Chulla Romero y Flores*,” in which the protagonist lives illusions of social grandeur hiding his indigenous origins due to his mother. Icaza implies that the dislocation felt by the protagonist, who represents the mestizo middle class, was one of the major problems hindering the realization of Ecuador. In addition, Icaza suggests that the old landed oligarchy, with its pretensions to pass as European, had been unable to build a nation, and what was needed was the recognition that Ecuador was a mestizo nation (1958). A few years later, during the 1970s, the nationalist political ideology of the reformist military dictatorship would stress that true Ecuadorians were mestizos. According to Stutzman, this ideology of mestizaje “is based on the premise that, recent immigrants and a few endogamous elites families aside, there are no *blancos* at all among Ecuadorians. Everyone is of mixed descent. Everyone is a mestizo” (Butler 1981: 143; Stutzman 1981: 79).

### *The blanco condition*

What went into determining who was blanco? Gregory Knapp has found colonial censuses dating back to 1776 that classify the population in blancos, indios, free people of various colors, and slaves. At that time, indio was not only a social but also a fiscal

category, a person subject to the colonial Indian tribute, a head tax paid only by the indios (Knapp 1991: 23). As Oliva Harris claims,

The term Indian, used from Columbus on to refer to the native inhabitants of the Americas, became in the Andes fundamentally a fiscal category by which the obligations of the native population to the colonial state were defined (Harris 1995: 355).

After the republic of Ecuador was created in 1830, non-indígenas, who not necessarily were light-skinned, identified themselves as blancos and appeared as such in state documents and census classifications. The Indian tribute was renamed Indian personal contribution, and the newly constituted Ecuadorian state kept collecting it until 1857. Until then, the government recognized two mutually exclusive legal categories: “blancos, who were exempt from contribution, and indios, who were forced to contribute” (Guerrero 1993: 86).

This binary categorization led to a “rebelión de los blancos” (white rebellion) in 1843. People in provincial towns rose up in widespread and violent rebellion when the government tried to widen its tax base by means of establishing a “general contribution.” Identifying themselves as blancos and calling the measure a “contribution of blancos,” the leaders of the rebellion claimed that the tax was not only “degrading and detrimental” but also against their “desire for liberty” (Ramón 1991: 444-445). As one insurgent put it, the tax meant that eventually a “poor blanco” would have to sell himself “into bondage with the haciendas” (Guerrero 2003: 284). Considering that only indios paid tribute, the insurgents were concerned that the government was going to turn them into indios. Non-indígenas understood their real or imagined participation in the struggle for independence as a declaration of citizenship, as a definitive rupture from the possibility of being considered tribute-paying indios (Ramón 1991: 446).

In 1846, the census to determine the number of tribute-paying individuals indicated a total population of 700,000 in Ecuador. From that total, 41% were counted as blancos, 52% as indios, 4% as free mulattos, 1% slave mulattos, 1% free blacks, 1% slave blacks (Guerrero 2000: 28). In 1857, the Ecuadorian government substituted the Indian tribute with the “subsidiary contribution.” This was a *de facto* forced labor scheme that legally lasted until 1895, but local governments kept on relying on indigenous forced labor to build roads and bridges, sweep streets, repair pavement, and collect garbage up to the 1970s (Korovkin 2001: 46).

Reflecting a different interpretation of social categorization, the French geographer Elisée Reclus wrote in 1895 that the problem with Ecuadorians was that they were mostly *mestisses*, with only a weak infusion of Spanish blood (Reclus 1895: 446; cited in Weismantel and Eisenman 1998: 128). At that time, as Weismantel argues, most educated Europeans and Americans believed that race was the fundamental determinant of history.

In the writings of Gobineau and Gustave Le Bon in France, Mathew Arnold and Cecil Rhodes in Britain, and S. G. Morton and Josiah Nott in the United States, race was treated as the encapsulation of history, religion, commerce, language, labour and physical being... Race predetermined a nation’s economic, intellectual and military vitality; it predicted as well a colonised people’s propensity to civilisation and a colonising nation’s likelihood of achieving imperial mastery (Weismantel and Eisenman 1998: 128).

Influenced by this racial determinism, many Latin American elites, as we have seen, would explicitly support the idea of bringing Europeans to improve—or whiten—the race of indigenous populations, up until mid-twentieth century (Weismantel and Eisenman 1998: 129).

Adapting Judith Butler’s ideas on gender domination, Guerrero has argued that a binary matrix has historically determined Ecuadorian social identification. This matrix of

classification and hierarchization “generates the discursive construction of difference and establish domination in the symbolic order.” Accordingly, the ethnic boundary is a “symbolic artifice of domination that, in daily relationships of power, produce and reproduce” the indio and the blanco simultaneously (Guerrero 1997: 114).

In a book published in 1949, Aníbal Buitrón, the first Ecuadorian anthropologist and a blanco native son of Otavalo, claims that the terms blanco, mestizo, and indio were not racial distinctions anymore but social classes, used to indicate social and cultural differences (Buitrón and Collier 1949: 90). According to Buitrón, in daily life and legal records, people were classified by their dress. Blanco men wore suits, and blanco women, modern dresses. Mestizos wore cheap cotton clothing, and mestizas, a heavy, pleated, wool skirt called *centro*. Male indígenas wore ponchos, and female indígenas wore the *anaku*, a dark rectangular fabric wrapped around the waist. In his study of 1944 data of the Civil Registry, he wrote the following:

Here we follow the classification of the Office of Civil Registry when the inhabitants of the canton go to register births, marriages or deaths. This classification is based exclusively in the clothing. We know personally the case of two siblings: she has kept the characteristic clothing of the cholos or mestizos and has been classified as such; he wears the characteristic clothing of the blancos and consequently has been classified as such (Buitrón 1974 [1945]: 80).

Besides dress and social class, blanco belonging was predicated on notions of citizenship, of participation in the realm of the national (Stutzman 1981: 79). Up to the 1970s, most indígenas were illiterates and were disenfranchised as such. In contrast to the indígenas, the blancos participated in the public sphere, creating public opinion and defining political will. Furthermore, according to Guerrero (Guerrero 1997: 114-115), citizenship was constructed in terms of Bourdieu’s “practical sense” (1991). Citizenship implied the prerogative of executing “immediate and everyday strategies of power” to constantly



recreate indigenous subordination (Guerrero 2000: 13). Blancos acted on an implicit practical logic and bodily dispositions that naturalized their domination and abuse over the disenfranchised indígenas.

Based on data of the 1960s, Frank Salomon Salomon argues that blanco was “more a cultural than a racial designation” (Salomon 1981: 423). Blanco-ness was associated with wealth, occupation, culture, and urbanity, rather than strictly with skin-color. This ambiguity dictated that strangers could not be categorized unambiguously as blanco (Butler 1981: 158). They had to perform blanco-ness convincingly, speaking Spanish without accent, demonstrating literacy, wearing the right clothes, giving evidence of skilled or intellectual labor, quoting recent news from leading newspapers, and, first and foremost, hiding indigenous ancestry. Any false step unveiling traces of indigeness would amount to criticism of their self-identification as blancos. Critics could be not only top-ranking blancos but also indígenas (Crespi 1973; Weinstock 1970).

Historically, as noted before, many indígenas have assimilated into non-indígena culture, but ethnic membership was not optional. Before the 1970s, when the state made schooling accessible to the indigenous population, most of the indígenas lacked the cultural capital, such as literacy or Spanish language skills, to perform convincingly as non-indígenas. In any case, as Barth had suggested, the flow of those able to do so did not weaken the ethnic boundary. In Otavalo, according to Butler, “Social relations are more definitive not because there is no crossing of the boundary of social relations, but, since it is difficult to do so, to question the ethnicity of one who has successfully done so is... irrelevant” (Butler 1981: 253).

The stigma associated with the indio condition dictated that all non-indígenas were predisposed to self-identify as blanco if they could. According to Louisa Stark, in nearby Cotacachi during the 1970s, all non-indígenas self-identified and identified those above them in the social hierarchy as blancos. On the contrary, those above would ethnicize persons below. Accordingly, a tractor driver would self-identify as blanco but would be called a cholo by both the manager and the owner of a hacienda. The manager would self-identify as blanco but would be called a mestizo by the owner of the hacienda (Stark 1981: 395). Furthermore, social identification varied across a racial topography of different-ranked localities. A person self-identifying as blanco might be classified as such by his peers in Otavalo but labeled a mestizo in the capital, Quito (Butler 1981: 270-271). High-rank blancos often denounced that in some localities townsfolk identified themselves as blanco when they, in the eyes of the beholder, obviously were not (Garcés 1953: 19; Instituto Ecuatoriano de Antropología y Geografía 1953: 9; Prieto 2004: 117).

In brief, in the everyday experience of ethnicity, blanco was the unmarked social category. As Brubaker et al. argue,

The normative cultural homogeneity that everywhere accompanies the rise of the nation-state marks as minorities those that do not share the dominant culture; at the same time, it “unmarks” and de-ethnicizes the dominant culture itself. The dominant culture—in the first instance the dominant language—comes to be experienced as the taken-for-granted culture in and of the state; its particularity is thereby masked. The minority culture, correlatively, comes to be perceived from without and experienced from within as marked; its particularity is thereby accentuated (Brubaker et al. 2006: 19).

Marking indios as their national others, blancos took for granted that they exclusively constituted civil society and the nation-state. Moreover, the marking was not limited to the indios, and negros.

### *Mestizo marginality*

According to Meisch, in Otavalo in 1970 “there were five ethnic-categories: blanco, mestizo, cholo, moreno, and runa or indígena. In 1990, there were three: blanco-mestizo, indígena, and Afro-Ecuadoriano or negro.” She claims that hyphenated category of blanco-mestizo emerged in part because “the distinct clothing styles that distinguished cholos, mestizos, and blancos disappeared, until two basic types remained: indigenous and nonindigenous dress” (Meisch 2002: 203-205). Yet, Meisch fails to grasp two important issues. First, blanco-mestizo is not a category of personal self-ascription but of collective attribution, usually done in print by academics and journalists. In contemporary racialized interpretations, to say “I am blanco-mestizo” is an oxymoron because being a mestizo disqualifies a person from being blanco. Second, up to the 1970s, the term mestizo largely corresponded with the pejorative cholo (See also Crespi 1973).

Elsie Clew Parsons, who did fieldwork in Otavalo in the 1940s, explains that in local usage, “A mestizo or Cholo is thought of both as a half-breed and as a person of low economic status and cultural inferiority derived from Indian contacts” (Parsons 1945: 1). Parsons’s assessment of the dynamics of social identification in Otavalo is widely supported by documentary evidence. In 1957, Victor Gabriel Garcés, implicitly considering himself unmarked, wrote that among themselves they called those who were fully mestizos, cholos (Garcés 1957: 56). In addition, the equating of mestizo and cholo appears often in articles published in the local magazines *Revista Municipal* and *Otavalo Ñuca Huasi*, from the 1940s to the 1960s. For instance, Enrique Garcés, the non-indígena intellectual who promoted the construction of the statue of Rumiñahui in Otavalo central plaza in the 1950s, wrote the following:

The attitude of the mestizo, even though such mestizaje has more than eighty percent of Indian contribution, has always been capricious, perverse against indigeness. Subserviently, he adds himself to the disdain of the blanco [toward indios] and to the torture inflicted on those that even are known as the defeated race (Garcés 1955: 10).

In Otavalo, a mestizo was considered “an indio with better objective features” (Garcés 1942: 5) but he was defective in lacking whiteness.

Historically, the term Cholo/a has been used a pejorative to indicate a person whose markers of alterity contradicted his/her pretensions to pass as blanco. During colonial times, cholo meant the offspring of indio and mestizo parents, whereas mestizo meant the offspring of indio and blanco parents (Crespi 1973; Herrera 2002 [1909]; Kelly 2003). In the efforts of colonial authorities to socially categorize the offspring of interracial unions, “Cholos were a step down from Mestizos with respect to blood, and consequently were a socially inferior order” (Crespi 1973: 152). In contrast to the indios, cholos were considered social climbers. Across the Andes, the term cholo has been associated with talking too much, with deception and false refinery, while indio has been linked to traits such as being mute, stupid, fawning, or poor (Gotkowitz 2003: 97).<sup>54</sup>

Blancos set themselves as the models to be copied, but they discriminated harshly against those who pretend to pass for blancos. Accordingly, “a *cholo* dressed as a ‘señor’” was “ridicule” (Cruz 1946: 19). Criticizing ideas of nobility and pure blood and equating mestizos to cholos, Victor Gabriel Garcés wrote the following:

The cholo and the indio constitute... the polar opposites of the situation that lineage or its vestiges or nostalgias artificially creates. The cholo is almost always, for these class of proud beings, an insolent who pretends to climb positions that are not of his concern. Cholos, the audacious cholos, the spoiled cholos, they should not be but with the people of their lowly nature... [To] pretend to get closer to the nobles, to the sounding and strong surnames, is intolerable. Social rejection is unavoidable when

<sup>54</sup> For the power of the word “chola” to slander and degrade woman, and the complexity of its meanings, see (de la Cadena 1996; and Weismantel 2001).

the cholo presents unexpectedly in circumstances of aristocratic reunion. Regarding the indio, there is nothing to say because he knows that all social circles are forbidden for him (Garcés 1957: 33-34).

It is significant that in many of these writings mestizos or cholos appear mostly as the perpetrators of indigenous misery.

Even though it may look contradictory, the greater enslavers of the indio are not precisely the great land owner or the State. It is the mestizo, the cholo, whether a mayordomo (hacienda overseer) or anyone having inspectorial capacities, who is the most brutal and terrible scourge. Certainly, they act entrusted by a whole social and economic system (Fernández 1944: 19).

According to my indigenous interlocutors, this was still the case during the 1970s. For instance, Segundo Ramos told me,

I remember that here the blancos, or mestizos, whatever, I mean, those more educated, at least held back their racism, but the mestizos that were from Ilumán, Quichinche, or San Pablo (these are small towns next to indigenous communities), they were the most racists, and they were those who were closer to the indígenas because it was not long ago that they have changed their clothing, but they were the most racist (S. Ramos 6/21/2006).

Muriel Crespi argues that in the canton of Cayambe, south of Otavalo, during the 1960s, the term mestizo was rarely used. Mestizo and cholo were “telescoped into a single category collectively called Cholo” (Crespi 1973: 152). Society was stratified into *señores* (gentlemen) and *gente* (people). “These named social categories correspond, respectively, to the distinction between Indian and non-Indian, and distinguish the later as enjoying privileged access to the material and nonmaterial assets that are valued by both sectors” (Crespi 1973: 151). Cholos were surplus Indians, who were denied access to traditional occupational roles on the hacienda. They could achieve the status of señor by means of education and “status-validating employment,” permanent managerial or specialized jobs leading to the “economic power that buttresses status distinction and commands respect.” Many cholos never achieve this status, and “Indians and whites

unwittingly conspire to safeguard their own positions by refusing to acknowledge the aspiring Cholos' claims to superior status" (Crespi 1973: 161).

For high-rank non-indígenas, mestizos were too close to the indios. Because of its association with a stigmatized indigenoussness, self-identification as a mestizo person was hard to come by. According to my indigenous interlocutors, up to the 1970s, non-indígenas considered to be called mestizos an insult (N. Conejo 7/24/2006; A. Kowii 10/14/2006; L. Conterón 7/19/2006). Demonstrating the way in which social categories transform through time, the equating of mestizo to cholo was very different from the current meaning of mestizo. As Beck and Mijeski argue, today mestizo is a category bereft of ethnicity, unmarked and contentless, used to assert that one is not an indio. In addition, the term mestizo is associated with the assimilationist movement in Ecuador. Accordingly, to be mestizo is to be Ecuadorian, i.e., to identify with the nation-state (Beck and Mijeski 2000: 124). This has been so only since the 1970s, when the military dictatorship instituted mestizaje as the official ideology of the Ecuadorian state (Meisch 2002: 201; Silva 2005: 97).

### *Blanco justice*

Three days after the uprising of indígenas at the shore of Lake San Pablo, the majority of those who had been arrested were set free. The authorities kept three in prison to "continue the investigations required by the authorities for the legal summary" (El Comercio 1959). Two of those three were members of the *cabildo*, the community council. One was the president, and the other was the *síndico*, the person who organize communal work (El Comercio 1959).

In a report published on January 25, 1959, after the legal inspection of the site of the incident, two other lawyers defending the indígenas stated that two of the dead indígenas had been shot in their homes. In addition, the lawyers reported that two gangs of armed non-indígenas, of around fifteen persons each, entered into many indigenous houses, vandalizing and plundering them. The leaders of these gangs were a well-known individual and the *teniente político*. According to the report, the attackers not only mistreated the indígenas and stole their tools, textiles, and money but also tried to rape several indigenous women. Furthermore, the lawyers found more than a dozen other injured indígenas, who had not given testimony to the authorities. Most of them had been injured by bullets; others had been hit with rifles butts (El Comercio 1959).

The lawyers defending the indígenas were part of an ad hoc commission sent by the *Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador* (Confederation of Workers of Ecuador) to “supervise the carrying out of the process about the death of indígenas at the shore of Lake San Pablo” (El Comercio 1959). They denounced that the *Comisario Nacional*, the chief of police of Otavalo, had initiated a legal case against the members of the community council of Pucará Bajo de Velásquez, accusing them not only of causing the fight but also of plotting a rebellion.

For that purpose, they [the local authorities] had taken testimonies only from the indígenas that were arrested. These declarations, which evidently were coerced, refer to supposed preparations for a rebellion against the blancos, to fees collected among the peasants to defend themselves, and to fallacious information about instigations to refuse to cede communal lands. At no time, the authorities have ordered, at least, to take the declarations of those who participated in the attack to Pucará, those persons bearing firearms (El Comercio 1959).

In addition, the lawyers claimed than in the interrogations, local authorities did not provide a translator to the indígenas, as dictated by the law. They demanded to the *Juzgado de Instrucción*, the examining authorities, to read the declarations in the

presence of the twenty-one indígenas who had testified, to verify if they had said that the community council “had instigated the comuneros (the members of the indigenous community) to kill the ‘blancos’.” When the new interrogation was going to proceed with the legal presence of the twenty-one indígenas, “all the members of the city council, three lawyers, and a great number of people burst into the police station and prevented the conducting of the procedure, which had been demanded by law.” When the defending lawyers insisted on carrying on the procedure bringing a translator, the Chief of Police threatened them with imprisonment for “rebellion against the competent authority.” Only one indígena was able to testify, claiming that the “blancos” had attacked Pucará, “killing, injuring, stealing, and raping the village and its inhabitants” (El Comercio 1959).

The Chief of Police also tried to block the labor of the defending commission in other occasions. He opposed the lawyers from taking testimonies from five injured indígenas who were in the hospital (El Comercio 1959). In addition, during the legal inspection of the site of the battle,

The lawyer Jorge González demonstrated to the Chief of Police that many of the injured and dead indígenas have not participated in the supposed “levantamiento.” The houses were destroyed and looted... Even though the Chief saw all of this, and heard the testimonies of several indígenas, at the time of producing the legal record, he refused to write up this information. And, unheard of, he did not allow the lawyer González to write up his point of view in the legal record (El Comercio 1959).

By then, all the policemen and guards of the estanco who participated in the fight had been transferred to “unknown places” (El Comercio 1959). The names of the main perpetrators of abuse entering into indigenous houses were well known, but they not even were interrogated (El Comercio 1959). The senator was accused by the state for his involvement in the incident. In October 1, 1959, his parliamentary immunity was lifted, allowing the Supreme Court of Justice to summon him to stand trial (Congreso Nacional



Ordinario de 1959: Cámara del Senado 1959). Three years later, the Supreme Court dismissed the case (San Felix 1974: 335). Nobody was brought to justice for killing indígenas. In Pucará Bajo de Velásquez, as the writer San Félix claims, “the justice of the blanco triumphed again, and the guilty persons, even though they had names, stayed anonymous” (1974: 330-331).

Notwithstanding the difficulty of assessing the claims of both sides, it is clear that the blancos went beyond stopping the “avalanche of indígenas.” On the spur of the moment, gangs of blancos raided and plundered indigenous houses, threatening and even killing indígenas after the fight was over. The information indicating that the leaders of these gangs were prominent individuals suggests that the motivation for the raids was to punish the indígenas for having risen up, rather than to steal things from them.

#### *Blanco moral economy*

Foucault has suggested that modern governmentality involves the management of population in its depths and its details. “Thus we find at once a plurality of forms of government and their immanence to the state: the multiplicity and immanence of these activities distinguishes them radically from the transcendent singularity of Machiavelli’s prince” (1991: 90). Taking place during the eighteenth century, this transition marks the institutionalization of techniques of government that use the population as a datum and as field of intervention. “In contrast of sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself but the welfare of the population.” By means of introducing economy—“the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth”—into political practice, government produce a society of “regulation and discipline” in which power is decentered and its members play an active role in their own self-government

(Foucault 1991: 96). Governing agents act as if they were in the service of those who are governed, and subjects are regulated from the inside.

In contrast, indígenas in Ecuador were governed from the outside. Andrés Guerrero has argued that after the abolition of the Indian tribute, in 1857, the state shed its administrative functions over the indigenous peasants and delegated their domination to the private and patriarchal sphere of the hacendados and local petty functionaries.<sup>55</sup>

Decentered with respect to the public-state axis, a citizenly field for the exercise of power over indigenous peoples is configured. In short, in the second half of the nineteenth century the administration of populations is no longer a “public affair,” and it remained so until the indigenous uprising of 1990 and 1994 that paralyzed the country (Guerrero 2003: 292).

Under this regime, the conflicts between indígenas and non-indígenas are conceived as personal rather than societal issues. Domination, as it passes to the private sphere, “is converted into personal skirmishes between individuals.”

Domination is diluted and disaggregated in strategies that vary according to the field of power. Conflicts are euphemized, converted into “symbolic domination” and, consequently, into “everyday resistance” to oppression. Violence becomes an attribute of subjectivity (Guerrero 2003: 297).

In the haciendas, as we have seen, indígenas made politics in contests of material and symbolic unequal reciprocity between them and the hacienda owners and overseers. These contests included from the participation of landowners in local festivities to gift giving to crop grabbing to surreptitious occupation of pastures. If peasants could play infrapolitics, landowners and overseers could call in the police, the military, or thugs, “to

<sup>55</sup> Derek Williams has criticized such a polarized perspective, arguing that the “state had long depended on corporative entities that functioned partially within the state, but with considerable autonomy” (2007: 54). State formation was a rather uneven process, but centered “less on attempts to reclaim state functions from private and local corporative entities than on efforts to subordinate and centralize them under the central government” (2007: 55).

rob and beat recalcitrant peasants” without compromising their paternalist image (Turner 1993: 42, 68). Law enforcement personnel acted not as neutral agents of an egalitarian state but as accomplices of non-indígena domination.

Outside the haciendas, indígenas “used the hacienda model of unequal reciprocity as a strategy to negotiate access to their legally prescribed rights” (de la Torre 2000: 35). They would make gifts to particular authorities “in exchange for being granted the ‘favour’ of obtaining services” in state institutions, from registering the birth of a child to being given a bed in a public hospital. “These unequal exchanges of favours and obligations also allowed them a partial release from everyday forms of racial violence in white and mestizo public spaces, such as government offices, public schools, hospitals, and so on” (de la Torre 2000: 35).

Under this mode of governmental rationality, the indios of Pucará Bajo de Velásquez had risen against neither an injustice nor the ruling structure but against the blancos as persons supposedly acting in their subordinates’ best interests. Doing so, the indios had desecrated the sanctity of patriarchal power and had to be punished accordingly. In brief, raiding indigenous houses was pedagogical. As with children, punishment served to warn the indios that pain followed improper behavior.

Blancos had told Villavicencio that the indio “is obliged to serve us and work for us” because of his irrationality and racial and social inferiority (Villavicencio 1973: 127). Butler found that blancos called upon a normativity of complicity vis-à-vis their exploitation of the indios. Claiming a special understanding between themselves, blancos argued that they “must stick together” (Butler 1981: 281). The moral economy dictated

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Guerrero and Williams fail to emphasize the permeability between the state and the land owning

that blancos should not break their ranks, should never side with the indios in disputes between indios and blancos, should always treat indios as inferiors, and never marry indios or indias. For instance, non-indígenas criticized or ridiculed outsiders who greeted indigenous persons. A self-identified blanco told Cooper in 1963, “We never greet the Indians here! It’s just not done. They are inferior people” (Cooper 1965: 30). In the early 1980s, when a fair-skin, Colombian man, who had set up a carpentry shop in Otavalo, married an indigenous woman, he was severely criticized and ostracized by the local *blancos*. He was told, “*eso no se hace*” (this should not be done) (W. Gómez 7/12/2008).

In daily life, blanco complicity was fundamental for the appropriation of indigenous labor and products and for the unaccountability of racist practices. State authorities and law enforcement were legitimate on the grounds of their impersonal, rational-legal authority (Weber 1984 [1914]), and there were no laws discriminating against the indígenas as such, but the exercise of authority over the indígenas followed the “regime of customary citizenship.” Articulated in forms of thought and system of habitus, citizenship integrated modalities of domination “over those populations classified and discriminated against as non-citizens” (Guerrero 2003: 274). Accordingly, indígenas had no expectations that they could bring non-indígenas to justice. Villavicencio claims that during the early 1970s,

[non-indígenas] could injure, beat, and mistreat the indígena, counting with support of the authority to evade the law. In rural areas, there are many instances in which the mestizos attack and injure the indígenas and never receive any punishment or sanction. In the opposite case, the indígena is immediately imprisoned and beaten (1973: 255-256).

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class at a national level, and between the state and authorities at the local level.

In urban areas, non-indígenas could snatch a *prenda*, a piece of clothing, from the indígenas to force them to work in any menial task (Pallares 2002: 155; Villavicencio 1973: 255). For greater tasks, such as urban and infrastructural work, non-indígenas relied on the *faena*, a forced labor scheme. As Korovkin explains,

Sometimes, entire communities were transported in trucks to areas where workers were needed. Those who failed to show up risked losing their livestock, tools, or equipment. Their belongings could be confiscated by *tenientes políticos* as "pawned goods" (*prendas*) and held at police headquarters until their owners had "paid the fine," which usually involved performing another task without pay (Korovkin 2001: 46).

Other ways of exploitation included obligatory consumption of drink and food in the *chicherías* as a requisite for civil registry services, and the lending of money for farming or fiesta sponsorship at unreasonably high interest—as much as 20% by month. Non-indígenas often used these debts as legal instruments to dispossess indígenas of their lands (Rosero 1982).

Going to markets to sell animals or produce, indígenas faced the *arranchadores* (Spanish: snatchers). These non-indígenas grabbed the animals or produce of the indígenas by force, and coerced the indígenas to accept ridicule low prices as payment. The *arranchadores*, many of whom were women, would sell those items at much higher prices in the same market. All of this was done under the eyes, and with explicit consent and support, of the municipal police. The *arranchadores* based their leverage on their power to call the police any time to arrest the indígenas. In addition, municipal police, threatening indigenous sellers with imprisonment, forced them to lower their prices in the benefit of non-indigenous buyers (Burgos Guevara 1997; Huarcaya 2003; Villavicencio 1973). In the haciendas, the overseers could bring the police anytime and arrest the supposed troublemakers (F. Ramos 6/14/2006; See also Thurner 1993).

Blanco complicity was reinforced by kinship relationships. Many of the policemen, tenientes políticos, secretaries, area bosses, were cousins, brothers-in-law, or compadres, particularly in small towns (L. Conterón, 8/19/2006; See also Villavicencio 1973: 29, 137). In addition, blancos were obviously aware that their way of life depended on exploiting the indígenas. According to Villavicencio, not few of the blancos “affirm that this social and economic system is necessary for the survival of the blanco group as such” (1973: 127). Elites in small towns, according to Butler, were “themselves desperate to enhance their own pitiful socioeconomic status beyond the parish boundaries at expense of the indigenous people” (Villavicencio 1973: 154). But as I have been trying to emphasize, blancos were not a group. Those at the top would claim that those at the bottom were not blancos. In addition, their wealth and influence determined how they treated the indígenas. Lower-ranking non-indígenas lacked the means—land, capital, political authority—to turn indígenas into loyal, exploited subalterns by the establishing of relations of dependency. Accordingly, lower-ranking non-indígenas, such as the arranchadores, resorted to violence to extract economic benefits from the indígenas. For this reason, “indígena always seek to establish relationship with higher and higher status non-indígena” (Butler 1981: 284). To have somebody to protect them and intercede for them, indígenas tried to establish relations of compadrazgo, fictive kin relations, with influential non-indígenas.

*I am not equal to you*

In the early 1970s, Villavicencio witnessed the following incident at a market in Otavalo. Notice that she calls mestiza a woman who more than likely would self-identify as blanca.<sup>56</sup>

In the row of [vendors of] grounded grains, an indigenous woman is selling barley, quinoa, and *chuchuca* [grounded corn]. A mestizo woman, belonging to one of the wealthiest families of the city of Otavalo, arrives, and the following business proceeds:

M [Mestiza]: Give me chuchuca.

I [Indígena]: How much do you want?

M: How much is the pound?

I: S/ 1.50

M: Give me, but what is good and fair.

I: (she serves her giving her a bag filled with two gourds of chuchuca)

M: Give extra [yapa].

I: That's enough. I give the fair amount. Take (adding a handful more).

M: Take (giving her the S/ 1.50. She goes to the municipal policeman to have him weight the chuchuca. He argues that there is one ounce less. He personally goes to confront the seller).

P [Policeman]: There is one ounce less. Give me at once (He gets a handful of chuchuca and puts it the bag).

M: These indias are thieves.

I: That's enough. [You are] greedy as a starving person [Por demás, muerta de hambre].

M: (she goes forward and, in front of the police, give a strong blow to the mouth of the seller, who starts bleeding) insolent india! Who do you believe you are dealing with? I am not your equal [*yo no soy igual a vos*], and if you keep molesting I will send you to jail.

I: (Stays silent, and later protests to her fellow workmates) (Villavicencio 1973: 121).

Othring was not only explicitly voiced but also physically enforced. Its conditions of possibility were determined not only by uncompromising non-indígena complicity but also by the power to enforce obedience granted to local authorities on behalf of the nation.

<sup>56</sup> In another part of her book, Villavicencio writes “the indigenous population of Otavalo remains subordinate to the non-indigenous population, which identifies and denominates itself as ‘blanca’” (28).

According to the grammars of identity/alterity, indios were constituted as others by means of a schema of orientalizacion, by negative mirror imaging. This schema worked in articulations such as the following, “we, blancos, are clean and civilized, while they, indios, are dirty and uncivilized” (See Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998: 186). At a basic level, orientalism works as a simple binary grammar in which the “categorical divide can be filled in at will” (Baumann 2006: 19). From the non-indígenas perspective, the binary grammar of orientalism produced oppositions such as the following: we think, they labor; we act, they vegetate; we purify, they pollute; we ponder, they react; we are morally self-restraint, they are morally unrestraint. For instance, during the early 1970s, according to Villavicencio, non-indígenas in Otavalo disapproved all educational and health projects geared to the indígenas arguing that “they are only indios.” Those services should be only for non-indígenas because they “are the ones who are rational” (Villavicencio 1973: 128-129). As witnessed by many researchers, non-indígenas called the indígenas filthy, brute, ignorant, and stupid to remind them of their inferiority.

As Baumann and Gingrich argue, the grammars of identity/alterity are endowed with a certain normative force. They “inform and standardize language, behaviour, and even conceptions of agency” (Baumann and Gingrich 2006: xii ). As grievances caused by non-indígena were nearly impossible to redress, many indígenas had a disempowering notion of their own agency and had internalized the constitution of identity/alterity in terms of blanco superiority and indio inferiority.

In the schema of orientalizacion, the sense of the superiority of the dominant self also entails a sense of loss, a realization of what “we” no longer are. This “potential of critiquing one's own while still finding the other strange and inferior” is what turns the



other into an object of intellectual inquiry (Baumann 2006: 21).<sup>57</sup> For instance, Buitrón critiqued his own arguing, “the white people of the town look worn, discouraged, and apathetic... Their culture has degenerated... The Indians have what the white men have not—energy and profound faith” (Buitrón and Collier 1949: 194-195). Orientalism is not an uncomplicated idea of the self. It entails more than mere binary opposition between good and bad. The denigration of the other is always accompanied by the conflicting constitution of the self as lacking what the other supposedly still has—be it reciprocity, faith, or physical strength.

The newspaper’s challenge to Senator Jaramillo’s blanco identification demonstrates the instability of social categorizing. As de la Torre argues, in Ecuador most persons claiming blanco identity are not sure how blanco they are (de la Torre 1999: 108). Among non-indígenas there is always someone more blanco, someone who can *longear* other non-indígenas. *Longo* means youngster in Kichwa, but in non-indígena usage, the word is a pejorative equivalent to the word indio. As a verb, *longear* is to identify somebody as more indio or to treat somebody as an indio, i.e., discriminatorily. Blancos not only considered themselves superior and held a long-standing disdain for manual labor, but also they went to great lengths to avoid being seen as indios, to prevent any possibility that they could be considered as flawed blancos. Non-indígenas would not carry any load, work the land, sit on the floor, work alongside indígenas, show egalitarian manner with indígenas, nor allow their children to play with indígena children. These activities were sanctioned with disdain and criticism. They also tried to “stay assiduously

<sup>57</sup> Baumann and Gingrich argue that this reversal is implied in Said’s recognition that “Westerners not only denigrated that which they called 'oriental', but also desired it” (Baumann 2006: 20).

out of the sun” (Butler 1981: 171). In addition, many non-indígenas spoke Kichwa, but only high-ranking blancos spoke it in public. Low-ranking non-indígenas who risked being taken for cholos denied knowledge of the language of the indios (Butler 1981: 425; Villavicencio 1973: 128).

Analytically, it is not productive to claim that the dominant population in Otavalo was wrong in identifying itself as blanco, or that some non-indígenas in Otavalo were more wrong than others in identifying themselves as blancos. As Baumann and Gingrich argue, it is important to go beyond moralizing about othering (Baumann and Gingrich 2006: 13; Baumann 2006: 47). Like any other social category, blanco, or white, is a socially constructed abstraction that varies throughout time and space. In other words, a fixed definition of the term blanco does not make sense in all historical and social contexts. As de la Cadena suggests, strict racial categorization—i.e., the efforts at separating and classifying, or purifying, identities—suppress or delegitimize the heteroglossia, the multiplicity of voices and meanings, of identity labels (de la Cadena 2005: 261). As the only unmarked term until the 1970s, blanco identification was determined relationally and negatively, by its differentiation with indio identification rather than by demonstrating genealogical racial purity.

Non-indígenas have historically discriminated among themselves following the schema of encompassment. They negotiate how blanco—how unmarked—they are through negating any trace of indigenous background. With whiteness at the apex of this schema, those who are marked as more indio are co-opted into the identity defined by those who can consider themselves more blanco. Encompassment works on two levels. “The lower level of cognition recognizes difference, the higher level subsumes that which

is different under that which is universal” (Baumann 2006: 25). At a higher level, a person may be identified as part of the unmarked “us,” as a full national citizen, because of his/her education. At the lower level, any mark of Indian-ness—relatives, last name, place of origin, skin color—may weaken his/her claims to whiteness. In this grammar, difference is not situational or contextual. Rather, it is a fiction caused by the low horizon of the subaltern. His or her low level of consciousness needs the dominant to define itself. Among non-indígenas, the power-infused negotiation of identity/alterity is contextual but the values organizing who belongs and who does not are constant. In this case, these values relate to whiteness, broadly conceived. Accordingly, encompassment is intrinsically hierarchical; it does not “enshrine ideas of equality, but nonetheless it can help maintain peaceful co-existence for long stretches of time” (Baumann 2006: 48). In competitive contexts in which dominant non-indígenas want to exclude other non-indígenas, they may fall back to the orientalizing grammar, turning them into cholos or even dirty indios.<sup>58</sup> For instance, according to Butler, some individuals of the upper classes in Quito considered that all lower-class people were alike, regardless of ethnicity. Mestizos, cholos, or indígenas were all the same. Their indigenous origins righteously determined their social class.

Stutzman has convincingly argued that members of the dominant class have taken their culture, society, and physical aesthetics as the objectives of national formation (Stutzman 1981: 48). I would add that indios and non-indígenas were othered, and their subjectivities normalized, by means of different classificatory schemata, deepening or relativizing difference, and standardizing behaviour and conceptions of agency.

<sup>58</sup> This has happened recently in nightclubs in Quito and Lima.

### *Chapter III Conclusions*

Demonstrating that ethnic categories are not “substantial things-in-the-world” (Brubaker 2002: 166), blanco categorization in Otavalo was relative, contextual, and performative. Non-indígenas identified as blancos in order to assert that they, in soul and body, were not indios. Townsfolk claimed being blancos but could be called cholos or mestizos in higher ranked localities. Newcomers identifying as blancos had to perform the necessary shrewdness and practical knowledge to be considered as such. As a social category, the term blanco was heteroglossic, but its unmarkedness was monolithic.

As Brubaker argues, common sense ethnic and racial categories tend to be essentializing and naturalizing. “We obviously cannot ignore such common sense primordialism. But that does not mean we should simply replicate it in our scholarly analyses” (Brubaker 2002: 166). Taking for granted common sense, arguing that in Otavalo there were two caste-like, bounded, and culturally contrasting ethnic groups obscures our understanding of the dynamics of social categorization and ethnic discrimination. Processes of mestizaje and the instability of social identification—by which self and other identification did not necessarily coincide, even in such high-rank individuals as Senator Jaramillo—were intrinsic to the system of domination. Social behavior and interaction was determined by the everyday negotiation of belonging to or exclusion from the unmarked category, rather than by one group oppressing and the other resisting.

Scholars have demonstrated that non-indígenas have constructed indios as others by means of negative mirror imaging, the grammar of orientalization. This, however, is only part of the picture. I argue that ethnic oppression in Otavalo and Ecuador cannot be

properly understood without considering the way in which non-indígenas construct other non-indígenas as others. With whiteness at the apex of a grammar of encompassment, non-indígenas are co-opted into blanco supremacy, reaffirming its supposed condition of being superior to all other ethnic categories not only in cultural development but also in phenotypical aesthetics. Accordingly, the pyramidal hierarchization of encompassment is taken as common sense.

Belonging to the unmarked category meant ontological superiority and entitlement to institutionalized forms of exploitation of the indígenas. Largely, blanco identity was defined by the complicity dictated by the blanco moral economy, with included using the bureaucratic and repressive power of the state to exploit the indígenas. It is precisely the qualification of blanco identity as immoral that which would give the next generation of indígenas the moral grounding for the political revitalization of indigenous culture and identity.

## Chapter IV

### Challenging Blancos

*La imbecilidad de los indios, no es imbecilidad de razón de juicio ni entendimiento, es imbecilidad política nacida de su abatimiento y pobreza [...]. Así lo que tienen los indios es timidez, cobardía, pusilaminidad, apocamiento, consecuencias ordinarias de las naciones conquistadas.*<sup>59</sup>

Eugenio Espejo (1787)

*¿Qué significa mismo ser “mestizo”, o misho, como nosotros les decimos? Nadie puede responder y parece que ni les importa.*<sup>60</sup>

Mario Conejo (1995)

A mestizo is somebody who denies and detests the blood of his indigenous mother. For me, this is a mestizo. I mean, he completely disowns his roots and wants to be more and more blanco. He rejects all his roots... his Indian roots, because all the mestizos here have their roots in the indio (S. Ramos 8/11/2006).

Mestizos are those who used to call themselves blancos. So, I call mestizos those persons who used to call themselves blancos, because indígenas and non-indígenas are neither pure blancos nor pure indígenas. Historically there is a mix because the Spaniards came without women. Only men came. Therefore, all of us are mestizos. Only contemporary Spaniards or gringos from the United States should call

<sup>59</sup> The imbecility of the indios is not imbecility due to lack of rationality or understanding. It is political imbecility born of their dejection and poverty [...]. What the indios have is timidity, cowardice, pusillanimity, bashfulness, ordinary consequences of conquered nations.

<sup>60</sup> What does being mestizo, or mishu as we called them, mean? No one can answer, and it seems that they even do not care.

themselves blancos here. Beside them, all are mestizos for me. We are indigenous mestizos, and mestizos are those others who used to call themselves blancos, but they did not accept this. Today, [in contrast,] they do accept that they are mestizos. To say the least, this is important, no? (L. Conterón 8/19/2006).

For me, a mestizo is a person who does not find his identity, who suffers trying to find his identity because he does not accept his own identity. He refuses to look at himself. He is rather looking at the other, with the purpose of imitating him, or following him, or whatever. He does not dare to look at himself because he knows... the mestizo knows that if he starts to look at himself, he will find his indigenous origins... He is somebody who runs away from himself (E. Cachiguango 8/11/2006).

These definitions of the word “mestizo,” articulated by university-educated indígenas in Otavalo, Ecuador, are substantially different from the textbook, mainstream definition that states that a mestizo is a person of mixed Spanish and Amerindian ancestry. I had asked, “Who is the mestizo?” to many indigenous interviewees during fieldwork in 2005-06. For them, the question was unexpected. My interviewing was about land struggles and indigenous activism during the 1970s and 1980s, and I asked that question without warning, at the end of our conversations. Significantly, their spontaneous responses turned out to be strikingly similar. All of them have a scripted quality, indicating that they have shared their ideas about mestizo personhood. All of them are moral critiques, describing mestizos as alienated beings who lack self-worth as individuals of at least some indigenous descent. They imply that the mestizo objectification of the indígenas as inferior others has no basis because the mestizo self is not what he/she pretends to be.

I asked that question because I have found in Ecuador a widespread, indigenous articulation portraying the mestizo as the political opponent. Indigenous activists and non-activists have conveyed to me that indigenous political practice is aimed at the mestizo because he is the one who hinders indigenous realization. Certainly, leaders of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement base their social critique and demands not only on a narrative of historic dispossession and resistance but also on the rejection of the

ideology of mestizaje, which claims that the mixing of indigenous and European races and cultures is impartial and productive. Pointing out that mestizaje is discriminatory because it values whiteness over indigenoussness, indigenous leaders have questioned the legitimacy of mestizo personhood as the dominant paradigm of national belonging.

Scott Beck and Kenneth Mijeski have demonstrated the dissemination and workings of this articulation. In a study among indigenous university students, they found that those who have had more experience in mainstream mestizo society were more strident in rejecting the values and policies of mestizaje than those less “exposed.” This sensitivity to “possible threats of acculturation” leading to a “need to assert and reclaim their indigenous identities” is the product of the representational and organizational work of indigenous intellectuals. According to Beck and Mijeski,

one task for leaders of indigenous peoples has been to re-create or at least redefine a sense of indígena distinctiveness and a pride in that distinctiveness in the face of increasing pressures from power actors to “homogenize” and “modernize” the populations of their developing countries. It seems clear that one strategy for maintaining distinctiveness and thus ethnic solidarity is to reject elements of the broad, dominant mestizo society represented by the modern state of Ecuador (2000: 134).

Today, educated indígenas have the cultural capital to perform successfully as non-indígenas, but instead of claiming belonging to dominant mestizo society, they are emphasizing that they are indígenas, not only asserting cultural difference and distinctiveness but also rejecting mestizaje.

In this chapter, I trace the origins of the indigenous critique of mestizo personhood by means of studying ethnic harassment. I focus on the transformation of the construction of identity/alterity in the city of Otavalo when prosperous indigenous families, responding to ethnic harassment, called into question non-indígenas’ self-identification as “blancos.” I argue that the indigenous challenge to blanco identity was intrinsic to the emerging



indigenous cultural reaffirmation and rejection of mestizaje. The displacement of identity/alterity from the grammar of orientalizacion to the grammar of segmentation would transform interethnic relations and make visible the political potential of ethnic consciousness.

As mentioned before, motivations for indigenous grassroots organizing included not only hopes of land redistribution but also wishes to stop unaccountable non-indígena discriminatory practices. According to Blanca Chancoso, gaining respect was part of the first organizing efforts in Cotacachi during the late 1970s,

Our struggle was initiated by land, but with it also came the respect for Indians. Because in those years one could not walk on the streets. They [young mestizos] would remove the hats from men, kick them, play with them. . . . It was our main struggle, respect for the indigenous (Quoted in Pallares 2002: 155).

Indigenous anger at non-indígena abuse united several communities in supporting the foundation of UNORCAC, the Union of Peasant Organizations of Cotacachi, in 1977. According to Pallares, “Perceptions of racial discrimination in multiple realms of everyday life generated feeling of indignation and powerlessness that became a source of common identification among various communities” (2002: 77).

The struggle for respect involved stopping the collusion between racist harassment/exploitation and local governance. According to indigenous intellectual José Quimbo, the first organizing discussions among the leaders of the indigenous communities in Otavalo responded to efforts to try to stop the abuse of local authorities. Indigenous community leaders considered that this required the appointment of indigenous *tenientes políticos*. Ironically, in one of these meetings, indigenous leaders witnessed the way in which their political invisibility was part of dominant common sense. Indígenas had been able to persuade municipal authorities to allow them to use, for

the first time ever, the assembly hall of the municipality. This hall was a blanco space. For most non-indígenas, according to Mario Conejo, “it was unthinkable that the indios could be using that hall.” Many non-indígenas were shocked at the presence of indígenas in the hall, and expressed strong disapproval (Conejo Maldonado 1995: 166). As stated by Quimbo, during the meeting, a non-indígena teenager came in, and after seeing the indígenas, he told his companions, who were outside the hall, “There are no people here, only indios.” This incident put the finger on the issue—as Quimbo told his peers, “We are not even considered persons”—and reflected the emergence of a debate among indígenas about indigenousness, ethnic discrimination, and political power (J. Quimbo 9/25/2006).

I argue that the naturalization of the indios as lacking peoplehood involved more than representational politics. Meanings, as Alvarez et al. argue, “are constitutive of processes that implicitly, or explicitly, seek to redefine social power” (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998: 7). Following Foucault’s ideas about construction of the subject by discourse, many scholars studying the Ecuadorian indigenous movement have focused on the politics of representation, understood “as a process of culturally producing and politically articulating subjects” (Lucero 2008: 176). Often branching out from the basic question of “what does it mean to be an indígena?” these questions include “who represents whom” and “why do some indigenous voices become more representative than others” (Warren and Jackson 2002: 12, 5; see also Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 103; Lucero 2008: 183). Underlining the intertwining of culture and politics in representation, Lucero argues that “often the representation of what Indians are gets ahead of indigenous reality” (Lucero 2008: 183).

Recognizing the importance of representation in ethnic politics, my aim is to go beyond the questions posed by such analysis.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned before, viewing contemporary indigenous politicization as coterminous with representation implies that in the past the dominated indígenas lived under a false consciousness, reproducing their own oppression under a worldview and set of beliefs construed in the interests of the dominant non-indígenas. In other words, an exclusive focus on the politics of representation implies a distinction between a past engulfed in false consciousness and ideological control and a present guided by ethnic political consciousness. For instance, referring to the inhabitants of Shamanga in the Province of Chimborazo, Lentz argues,

The owners of the hacienda maintained their dominion by means of a paternalist and simultaneously racist discourse, in which the people of Shamanga were treated as ‘uncivilized’ and ‘stupid’, and that, in moments of conflict, made use of so hard and degrading expressions such as ‘brute indios’, ‘liars’, ‘thieves’, and ‘animals’. All dominance is based—as much in Shamanga as in other places—not only on violence or the threat of violence, but also in ideological control, a control that looks for saturating the self definition of the dominated... Especially in the accounts of the men is possible to discern how deep the dominant discourse of the hacendados carved the self-image of the *comuneros* (members of an indigenous community) (Lentz 2000: 210).

In contrast, a focus on the relation between identity/alterity and material and symbolic struggles allows us to think in terms of practices in fields of power relations rather than in terms of consciousness and false consciousness. As Marx and Engels argued, “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (Marx and Engels 1978: 155).

### *Interethnic streets fights*

<sup>61</sup> Colloredo-Mansfeld has also criticized an exclusive focus on representation: “why stop at representation? Members of indigenous communities must work out problems beyond discourse, identity, and communication” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 103)

In May 2006, a group of indigenous parents met in a *peña bar*, a restaurant featuring live music, for an event organized by the school of their children. Around 1 a.m. five indigenous couples in their mid thirties left the locale. They were walking towards their homes when a taxi full of passengers slowly passed by. Noticing that a door was ajar, one of the male indígenas said to the people in the taxi, “The door is open. Close it. You may fall!” The taxi stopped and the passengers, eight mestizos, came out. They immediately confronted the indígenas, insulting them with phrases such as “*longo de mierda*” (shitty indio) or “*indio hijo de puta*” (indio son of a whore). Ignoring the presence of indigenous women, the mestizos challenged the male indígenas to fight. The indígena who spoke first told the mestizos to calm down and go away, but they continued the harassment.

Urged by their wives to avoid the provocation and retreat, the indígenas tried to walk away but the mestizos followed them. Soon, a non-indígena started to fight with an indígena. Other indígenas tried to split them apart, but the fight escalated into a bigger brawl that lasted three or four minutes. Again, the indígenas tried to walk away, but the mestizos continued following and harassing them. At one point, all the male indígenas responded to the provocation, and a bigger and more vicious brawl ensued. Since the indígenas were fewer in number, they were losing the fight, while their wives were screaming for help.

In a bar nearby, around ten indígenas in their early twenties were drinking when they heard the screams. They ran in the direction of the screams to discover that some of the indígenas involved in the fight were their friends. Then, one of the mestizos pulled a knife. The younger indígenas did not join the fight, but they were able to stop it and expel the mestizos. When they were escorting the couples to their homes, they heard another

women screaming. In the confusion of the fight, one of the male indígenas had been left behind. A block away, six mestizos were beating him up, kicking him as he lay inert on the pavement. The younger indígenas ran to help him. The mestizos ran away, but the indígenas were able to catch three of them. Of these, two were able to escape while one fell down on the street. The younger indígenas beat him unconscious. Then, they carried the badly beaten indígena away from the scene. After the fight, many male indígenas of the first group required hospitalization. The indígena who was beaten up on the pavement had a broken leg and was seen walking with a cast a few days later. Another indígena had a broken rib. Only one of the first five male indígenas was left without injuries. When I heard about this incident, a month after it had occurred, it was already well-known among otavaleños (P. Lema 6/10/2006). The account above was told to me by one of the participants, one of the male indígenas coming out of the peña bar (F. Yacelga 9/12/2006).

In the city of Otavalo, this fight is not a one-of-a-kind incident; it is part of a series of racist assaults following the same pattern for more thirty years. First, non-indígenas insult indígenas using pejorative phrases similar to those spoken in the incident. They try to injure their dignity and self-respect by mistreating them as indios. If the indígenas respond to the provocation in any way—for instance, saying “tu tayta” (your father) (J. Pineda 10/3/2005)—the non-indígenas assume that they have the prerogative to beat them up, implying that indios should be submissive. For the indígenas, these fights are part of their common experience. All of my male indigenous interlocutors have personal stories about these fights. They are so prevalent that the musical group Winiaypa

composed a song in Kichwa about them. The song is entitled “El Chuchaqui” (The hangover):

Coming to Otavalo, I meet  
friends at the door of the peña

we drink a lot  
we talk about what we have seen in Europe

we make a racket all over the place...

we leave together  
we began to walk stumblingly  
after a while, we meet  
with drunk mestizos  
maybe we fought against each other  
how might we have returned to our town?  
when we meet next day, we find out  
that we have lost jackets and shoes

we leave things just as they are  
let's be men strong as the stone  
to achieve a better life  
(Gramal and Gramal 2000).<sup>62</sup>

As the lyrics narrate, most of these fights take place in the streets of Otavalo, late at night, and under the influence of alcohol. They involve groups of non-indígenas assaulting indígenas, first, verbally, and then, physically. Indígenas do not start the fights (See also Meisch 2002). For the most part, the fights are among young people, teenagers and young adults, but this is not always the case. As we have seen, non-indígenas also assault older indígenas, and at times, without consideration for the presence of indigenous women. F. Yacelga, an indígena who lives in the second floor of a building facing the Plaza de Ponchos, the location of the Otavalo Saturday market, has witnessed many “attacks on indígenas.” He recalls that in the 1980s,

<sup>62</sup> Translation to Spanish by Narcizo Conejo.

My father was half a block from our house when two people stopped him for no reason. He was coming with my mother... At the beginning, they insulted him with the typical terms... Then, they started to beat him up. Fortunately, my mother ran to our house and called all our relatives. My father was trying to defend himself. He unfastened his belt and tried to resist the attack, but he couldn't hold on. Fortunately, we were close and were able to rescue him (9/12/2006).

The fights have involved from small skirmishes to vigorous confrontations involving large numbers of people. The following are two noteworthy accounts of events that occurred at the end of the 1990s.

Around eight years ago, at night, I saw that many cars were arriving at the left side of the Plaza de Ponchos. Many indígenas got off and assembled in a group of around forty persons. A few minutes later, a bus full of mestizos arrived. They got off, and then, a huge fight started. The people living around here called the police, but they did not arrive in time. They continued to fight for around forty minutes, until they dispersed. Apparently, there were many people injured. Also, they damaged many cars. That was all. This incident was very shocking (F. Yacelga 9/12/2006).

The second is an account from an indígena living in Quinchuquí.

An acquaintance, an indígena, was living in the USA. When he returned to Otavalo, he brought a revolver. Once, we were in [the city of] Otavalo, and a mestizo insulted him. He responded saying, "Now, we are going to put an end to these things. Let's see who is more macho." Immediately, the people around formed two groups [indígena and non-indígena] backing each of the contenders. The indígena took the revolver out of his pocket, loaded one bullet, and spun the cylinder. Then, he flipped a coin to decide who would go first. The mestizo was chosen, but he became frightened. He did not want to keep playing the gamble. From then on, the abuses and insults towards the indígenas diminished, at least for a while (J. Pineda 10/3/2005).

Elite non-indígenas, who do not participate in these fights, usually dismiss them as non-consequential confrontations among youth. In contrast, indígenas consider them as one of the aspects of a deep-seated non-indígena racism, a last-ditch refusal to accept indígena upward social mobility. Indígenas do not report the assaults to the police. Because of historical, deep-seated police abuse, indígenas do not trust police officers. They consider that filling an official complaint leads nowhere. According to my indigenous interlocutors, non-indígenas had killed several indígenas in these assaults. The most

prominent murder was that of José Cotacachi, the father and brother of members of Charijayac, a famous otavaleño music group. He “was killed in a mugging by whites-mestizos late at night in the Poncho Plaza” in 1994 (Meisch 2002: 208).

Before the 1970s, this form of interethnic fighting did not exist. In urban areas, non-indígenas harassed indígenas but did not challenge them to fight. Harassment took the form of acts of humiliation such as kicking, shoving, and pushing hats away. In addition, non-indígenas could snatch a prenda from the indígenas to force them to work in any menial task (Pallares 2002: 155; Villavicencio 1973: 255). Individual responses might vary, but when subjected to ethnic harassment, many indígenas did not respond, even if those acts were done by children (E. Cachiguango 8/11/2006; J. C. Cachimuel 8/24/2006; S. Ramos, 8/11/2006). According to Hernán Jaramillo, an otavaleño non-indígena intellectual, up to the 1970s, when the indígenas were harassed, “there was no reaction from them. Definitively, there was submission. Conflicts never reached physical confrontation” (H. Jaramillo 8/11/2006).

In daily face-to-face interaction with non-indígenas, indígenas were predisposed to play their role of submission. On the one hand, indígenas feigned deference, ignorance, and passivity (Guerrero 1991; Thurner 1993). On the other hand, indígenas had to deal with the pervasive unaccountability of non-indígena abuse, as non-indígena exploiters and local authorities backed each other or were the same individuals. Challenging non-indígena harassers would have provoked more violence (Butler 1981, p. 282, 2006, p. 277).<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, indígenas knew that the non-indígena police always sided with the

<sup>63</sup> According to Luis Macas, a Saraguro *indígena* from the southern province of Loja and a prominent leader of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, this presentation of the self was a



harassers. As grievances caused by non-indígena were nearly impossible to redress, many indígenas had a disempowering notion of their own agency and had internalized the constitution of identity/alterity in terms of blanco superiority and indio inferiority (See Butler 1981: 17; Weinstock 1970: 160).

The interethnic fights started when indígenas started to respond and fight back. Economic prosperity, experience traveling abroad, increasing presence of tourists—including the occasional anthropologist—and increased schooling and better skills in Spanish language, all of these empowered some indígenas to demand respect. However, as we will see, considering the process as a mere confrontation between two groups, each having opposing interests, seriously limits its analytical comprehension.

### *Urban indígenas*

According to a member of a non-indígena elite family, during the 1950s and 1960s,

the presence of the indígena in Otavalo, in the urban zone of Otavalo, was very small. It was limited, on the one hand, to domestic service, and on the other, to laborers in the small fields that existed inside the houses... the houses of traditional families had little *huertos* (orchards or vegetable gardens) that were taken care of by indigenous laborers (J. Ortiz 8/1/2006).<sup>64</sup>

This depiction of urban Otavalo contrasts with this other, written by a reporter from Quito in 1944, “The streets of Otavalo, at all hours of the day, are full of indigenous transients, in groups, in an infinity of groups, with diverse attires, each of them different” (Fernández 1944: 29). The first depiction is oblivious of the great number of indígenas

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strategy for cultural survival and community autonomy. He has quoted his father as saying the following:

When the *laichus* [Saraguro term for non-indigenous people] want to win, you have to just be quiet. It does not matter whether or not you are right; if you are going to lose, just be quiet. Why keep talking? I will not win in a fight with them, I will let them hit me if they want to (Macas, Belote, and Belote 2003: 220).

who went to markets, churches, and chicherías in the city. Otavalo's main church, San Luis Obispo, is on the Plaza Bolívar, and indígenas were a significant part of the regular churchgoers. In addition, indígenas not only labored cleaning the city but also participated in the Catholic festivities held in the urban space (Garcés 1957; Rubio Orbe 1955).

In Ecuadorian cities, to ignore indígenas as if they were unable to be seen was a common strategy to claim that the urban population was not indio but blanco. As Kingman argues for Quito, "Inside that which was urban existed that which was 'not urban' (I am referring to the indigenous presence in the city) but it was made invisible, it was not registered or, in other cases, it was assimilated with barbarism, filthiness, sickness, or anomy" (Kingman Garcés 2006: 42). In contrast to local elites who deleted indígenas from their field of vision, visitors, such as the aforementioned reporter, often commented on the great amount of indígenas going around doing their business.<sup>65</sup> The invisibility of the indígenas was part of the separated and unequal mode of governance. Rather than enforcing the total exclusion of the indios from the city, this mode of governance dictated proper spaces and times for indigenous presence in the city. As much as this presence did not break the norms, it was invisible. For instance, indígenas attended Mass very early in the morning. Up to the 1960s, there were very few indigenous

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<sup>64</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>65</sup> Several foreigners visiting Quito during the eighteen and nineteen centuries had also noticed that non-indígena locals failed to recognize the great number of indígenas in the city (Toscano 1959). In 1867 Hassaurek wrote, "On the principal streets and plazas hundreds of human beings are continually in motion. It is true, they are chiefly Indians and cholos, and you will meet twenty persons in ponchos and even in rugs, barefoot or with alpargates (hemp sandals), before you meet one respectably dressed (Hassaurek 1967: 484).

households in the city of Otavalo, but the claim that indígenas did not have a physical presence there does not hold up.<sup>66</sup>

In Otavalo, during the early 1990s, Frank (1998) found out that in the non-indígena social imaginary indigenous neighbors were either invisible or considered intruders, an inauthentic part of ‘their’ urban area. He argues that non-indígenas held an ideology that conceived an a priori urban space that excluded indígenas whether or not they lived there. The urban and the rural spaces were not only different but also clearly antithetical, two mutually exclusive worlds. In addition, urban life style, as a direct expression of western culture, defined Ecuadorian nationality. By opposition, indígenas were extra-national. To be urban meant to participate in supposedly western culture and to not be indio. Notwithstanding the possibility of transformation into an urbanite, this ideology defined indigenesness in terms of biology, i.e., in terms of race. Frank points out that the official ideology of Spanish colonialism did consider urban life as a prerequisite for civilized life but did not declare that the indígena was by nature unable to participate in it.

It is only during the XIX century that the Ecuadorian urban areas (and other parts of Latin America) suddenly turned from urban center that were always ethnically mixed (and sometimes dominated by indígenas) into blanco-mestizo spaces by definition... this has to do with the full incorporation, in the second part of the last century, of “evolutionist” ideology (in its “biologized” version of “Social Darwinism”) in the thinking of the Latin-American blanco-mestizo (1998: 801).

<sup>66</sup> In the early 1940s, according to Parsons, there were no indigenous residents in the city of Otavalo.

No Indians except a few domestic service live in Otavalo, but Indians from Peguche and all the surrounding *parcialidades* (indigenous communities) are constant visitors, coming in early in the morning and returning home about the middle of the afternoon. At night no Indians are to be seen on the streets (1945: 10).

Frank questions her claim arguing that by 1940 there were at least a dozen indígenas who had been born in the city, indicating that their families were already living there (Frank 1998: 798).

According to Kingman, in his study about Quito, the idea of the exclusivity of the urban condition started to become part of common sense at the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of public hygiene and technological advances that allowed to construct the urban/rural divide. Before this time, the forms of sociability, even for the aristocracy, were more inclusive. Quotidian social relations in the city were hierarchical, personalized, and paternalist but across cultures living in the same space (2006: 188).<sup>67</sup>

In defining themselves, non-indígenas not only ignored that the reproduction urban culture was sustained by indigenous servitude but also constructed “imagined boundaries” between city and countryside, correlating blanco space with urban space (Kingman Garcés 2006: 41, 125). The fact that urban growth in Otavalo has absorbed adjacent indigenous communities, such as Monserrat and Punyaro, complicates these boundaries ever further. In any case, non-indígenas considered the Plaza de Ponchos, located in the outskirts of the city and unpaved until the 1970s, neither blanco nor urban. The indigenous families who set residence in Otavalo from the 1940s to the 1970s settled there, close to the Plaza de Ponchos, and not in its blanco core, around the Plaza Bolívar.

During the 1970s, to differentiate themselves from the indígenas, non-indígenas in urban Otavalo spoke in terms of blood. They valued being *limpios de sangre* (clean, or pure, blooded) and scorned “the physical features that betray indigenosity, such as the ‘copper color of their skin’, as products of their ‘bad blood’.” In contrast, indígenas based their condition and “differentiation from the ‘blanco’ in terms of external factors such as

<sup>67</sup> The coexistence of indígenas and non-indígenas in the same space was reflected in the great amount of Kichwa lexicon in highland Spanish. From the 1970s, this influence has been waning. Comparing the knowledge of the same 100 Kichwa words among two groups of fifty non-indígena university students in 1977 and 2002, Gustavo Fierro found out that in 1977 the students

dress, the long hair of male indígenas, and political and economic power, which they have not been able to reach” (Villavicencio 1973: 71). Pitt-Rivers explains that in the Andes the traditional popular idiom of blood, “Moral qualities, like psychological characteristics and intellectual aptitudes, are thought to derive from heredity, since the ‘blood’ is what is inherited” (Pitt-Rivers 1967: 543). As we have seen, from the 1950s, race as an explanation for the backwardness of Ecuador had faded away from intellectual and official discourse. However, in social practice, its usage has continued to mark social difference. Either in the language of blood, which persisted until the 1970s, or biology, notions of race are not autonomous from the imagined urban/rural divide.

The migration of indígenas from rural areas to the city of Otavalo was part of wider pattern of expansion of commercial activities among the indígenas of the weaving communities of Peguche, Quinchuquí, Agato, and Ilumán. Opening up markets by means of itinerant trade was fundamental for this expansion. Parsons wrote that in 1941, “A few enterprising Peguche weavers and traders even go Quito, by train or bus. But this adventuring is quite recent, and one gets the impression that the valley folk are not travelsome.” About the world at large, according to Parsons, indígenas of Peguche “have little or no knowledge. They have heard of the Oriente and of cannibalistic Jibaros; Colombia and Venezuela are known by name, but Mexico and North America are wholly unknown, and, curiously enough, Peru” (Parsons 1945: 13; see also Buitrón and Collier 1949). Considering that early forays were more widespread than Parsons believed, Chavez argues that traveling to sell weaving goods expanded the indígenas’ perceptions

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knew the meaning of all the Kichwa words, but by 2002, they only knew the meaning of 54% of the words (Haboud 2004: 76).

of the limits of the world and of economic possibilities beyond the limits of the local area (Chavez 1982: 174).<sup>68</sup>

Leading the itinerant trade were the indígenas of Quinchuquí. From early twentieth century, some of them had worked as traveling butchers. Some settled with their families in Ibarra, a major market for the meat, and later in towns along the Pan-American Highway, between Ibarra and Quito. Whereas men traveled to buy animals, women sold fritada to passing travelers (Males 1985; Preston 1963). Later, they turned to sell locally made textiles.

The men of Quinchuquí, the neighboring parcialidad, were almost as land-poor as the Peguche people... finding livelihood as traveling butchers, buying, slaughtering and cutting up pigs for sale in town markets. Perceiving the existence of a high class market for handwoven woolen goods, they began buying textiles from the Peguche people, for sale in the capital, and later in foreign countries, reaching Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, and New York, where their striking peasant dress and pigtailed give a distinctive brand to their wares (Pearse 1975: 195).

Traveling merchants sold the weaving goods in outdoor markets, fairs, and house-to-house. To meet the increasing demand, the cottage weaving industry of a few communities ramped up their production. (Kyle 432; Chavez: 178). According to some pioneers that went to Colombia, business was very good because of the currency exchange rates. Otavaleño merchants made considerable profits buying weaving goods in Ecuador with the devaluated Sucre and selling them in Colombia for the much stronger Pesos (Chavez 174; Conejo Quichua-Otavaló: 272). By the early 1960s, otavaleños had a solid reputation across Ecuador as traveling salesman of weaving goods. As Preston

<sup>68</sup> Salomon has argued that in the northernmost peripheries of the Inca Empire (including present-day Otavalo) there were politically sponsored traders called *mindaláes*, who supplied lords with sumptuary goods and redistribute wealth in order to build political influence (Salomon 1980, 1987). Some scholars and indigenous activists have argued for continuity between pre-conquest *mindaláes* and contemporary otavaleño traders. See, for instance, Maldonado (2002).

argues, the Otavaleños were “not the only Ecuadorian Indian group whose members travel within the country, but long-distance organized travel such as is undertaken by some is unprecedented” (148).<sup>69</sup>

Otavaleños not only expanded their travels, usually returning in June to harvest crops and participate in festivities, but also began to set up households in other cities. Some settled in Quito and worked as operators of electric looms in the textile industry. During the late 1940s, some otavaleño families established residence in several Colombian cities, doing both trading and production. They bought and sold articles produced by others weavers and set up weaving workshops, recruiting relatives and friends to work in them.

At the beginning, once we were established in a city, we worked doing the weaving ourselves, all the family. We labored in production from Monday to Friday, and went to sell on Saturdays, first as street vendors and later in stores. Afterward, when we needed more production, we came to Otavalo and took with us a relative, a brother, a friend or neighbor, to work as weavers. We paid their trip and gave them house and food. The worker was paid for the amount that he/she produced. The weavers that we took with us, with the sales experience, went independent quickly, setting up their own workshop or traveling to Otavalo to buy weavings. In this way, the number of residents, producers and merchants, increasingly grew (Conejo Maldonado, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 273).

As more individuals joined itinerant trading, they greatly expanded the area traveled, nationally and internationally. During the 1960s, otavaleño families settled in Venezuela and Brazil; from the 1970, in the USA and Europe; and after the 1990s, in Japan and Korea (Conejo Maldonado, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 272). Opening markets by themselves, otavaleños have avoided non-indígena and foreign intermediaries. This contrasts with many other indigenous artisans in Latin America, whose scant profits

<sup>69</sup> For instance, up to the 1930s, many indígenas from *pueblos de indios* (Indian towns) close to Quito specialized as traveling traders of different goods, from sewing supplies to livestock (Kingman Garcés 2006: 134). Most of these populations became no longer indígenas through processes of urban growth.

come from small scale, handmade production rather than from the more lucrative trading, and big scale, machine-made production (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 45).

In addition, from the 1980s, otavaleños have also traveled abroad as itinerary musicians—an economic activity, according to Kyle, “requiring little start-up investment” (Kyle 1999: 438). Some indígenas do both trading and music (Korovkin 1998: 145; Meisch 2002: 116). A few music groups that established abroad, such as Charijayac in Spain and Sisay in Japan, have been very successful. Indígenas consider them as otavaleño supergroups. Either as traders or as musicians, traveling has become for young otavaleños a “sort of rite of passage” and a source of distinction between them and non-indígenas (Maldonado 2002: 47). It not only provides plenty of adventure. It also may be a source of initial capital for business (Kyle 1999: 438).

Conducting fieldwork during the late 1990s, Julie Massal found that many otavaleños spoke of their identity in socio-professional rather than cultural terms. For them, being an otavaleño meant being a trader, an entrepreneur. They considered that professional activity and economic success were intrinsic to a proper otavaleño way of being. They promoted the strengthening of their culture but recognizing explicitly that this gave them “more opportunities for entering the market” (Massal 1998). As we have seen, Chavez (1982) had shown that urban otavaleños embraced an entrepreneurial ethic, differentiating themselves from agricultural communities in terms of economic rationality and self-reliance. Today, otavaleño entrepreneurs, rather than following the discourse of indigenous autonomy promoted by the indigenous leadership, are concerned with capital, markets, and profits (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009: 51). According to Massal, “the otavaleño illustrates the ambiguities of defining a cultural identity,” not only because the renewal of



otavaleño cultural identity takes place in a context of accelerated socio-economic transformations, but also because it is the small indigenous bourgeoisie who dictates what is otavaleño identity—epitomized in the image of the wealthy indígena, cosmopolitan, multilingual beyond Kichwa and Spanish, and proud of his/her cultural heritage (1998). Following the image of the independent and successful itinerant merchant, otavaleños disdain working as employees for somebody else. As a young trader has claimed, otavaleño culture distinguishes itself from others because its members are “traders by nature” (Maldonado 2002: 47).

As the Kaqchikel and K’iche vendors in Guatemala described by Walter Little (2004; 2004), otavaleños “use identity instrumentally” and capitalize on the commodification of indigeneity in the global market. Rather than being concerned about indigenous authenticity, they produce textiles and handicrafts for tourists.

For example, the textiles made for tourists are less brightly-coloured than the textiles made for the Otavaleños themselves or for other Indian groups. For the tourists more “earthly” colours are being used, such as brown, grey, white and black, because it was found out that the tourists recognize these colors as “typically Indian” (Windmeijer 1998).

In the Plaza de Ponchos, as Meisch claims, “some tell tourists what they think they want to hear,” claiming that they or their families have weaved the garments on display, even though this may not be true (Meisch 2002: 100). In addition, after Ecuador adopted the US dollar, garments made in Peru became much cheaper. In the Plaza de Ponchos, otavaleños sell Peruvian alpaca sweaters claiming that they are made in Otavalo. It is precisely this commercial adaptability in production and trading, in a market driven by the “pursuit of the exotic” (Foster 1982), what had led to otavaleño contemporary economic success.

Otavaleños strategically deploy indigenous identity—for instance, insisting that vendors in the Plaza de Poncho should wear traditional clothing—but, as Kay Warren has warned, indigenous identity formation is not a matter of choice, of making a decision when faced with several possibilities. “Clearly, it would be inaccurate to see identity formation as a matter of open choice of self-definition, a free market of personal identities, due to the very real structural economic, cultural, and political constraints on individual and collective actions” (Warren 1992: 205).

Reflecting on their economic and cultural accomplishments, otavaleño intellectuals argue that traveling has been central to their contemporary identity. As Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango claim, “We learned to value ourselves through traveling” (Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 274). Analogously to the mythical hero’s journey, as conceived by Joseph Campbell, who ventures forth from the world of common day into a mysterious adventure, and returns triumphantly “with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (Campbell 2008: 23), traveling for otavaleños has been transformative. The journey starts in Otavalo,

When we were confined in our communities, we felt safe and cheerful, but when we went to the city of Otavalo, we were exposed to mistreatment, to humiliation, abuse, to mockery. The presence of a mishu made us to automatically lower our heads. We lived a situation, in relation to the white and mestizo sector, in which we could not react. We could not make them feel our wrath, our anger. If we would do so, we would lose ever more (Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 274).

And continues abroad,

To go Colombia, Peru, Chile, Venezuela, to travel to North America and Europe, helped us to see, experience, and enjoy the fact that we, indios, are capable to do many things. Even if sometimes we took risks, we realized that it was possible for us to get into a car, eat in a restaurant, rest in a hotel... The travels helped us to gain security, to feel capable, to evaluate our worth, courage, and will. It help us to value what we really are and culturally have... Outside our country, we found respect, consideration, and felt very welcome (Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 274).

Through traveling, otavaleños realized that discrimination was locally determined. First, otavaleños experienced more or less discrimination in other Ecuadorian cities. From their cumulative personal experiences, they realized, for instance, that there was more discrimination against indios in Riobamba but less in Quito (S. Ramos 6/21/2006).<sup>70</sup> Second, otavaleños discovered that when traveling abroad, they were treated very well. As Meisch claims, “a leitmotiv of Otavalos’ travel stories is how much better they are treated outside Ecuador” (Meisch 2002: 77). Travelers of dominant groups expect to be treated respectfully everywhere they go, but for otavaleños, this was not the case. Their statements about the hospitality of foreigners imply a comparison with how badly they were treated by non-indígenas in Otavalo and other parts of Ecuador. According to de la Torre, every time that indígenas ventured outside their communities, they feared the possibility of non-indígena discrimination (de la Torre 1999: 99).<sup>71</sup> Abroad, indígenas did not have to confront the institutionalized practices of exploitation and harassment found in Otavalo. Foreign locals, from Venezuelan to Germans, did not insult or mistreat otavaleños because they were indios. They not only treated otavaleños with respect but also often demonstrated interest in learning about their culture (M. Pineda 7/13/2006). Helped by their unthreatening exoticism, many otavaleños have made long lasting friends traveling abroad.

Even those otavaleños who had gotten into trouble with the law abroad have commented on the considerateness of the police. Quite frequently, police or other law enforcement agents have caught otavaleños overstaying with expired tourist visas, or

<sup>70</sup> For discrimination in Riobamba, see Hugo Burgos Guevara(1997).

<sup>71</sup> Whiteness in the Andes, according to Weismantel, “has long been a kind of safe-conduct pass allowing those who possess it to rob, rape and terrorize Indians at will” (Weismantel 1997: 22).

doing business without working visas, or selling without local permits or licenses. According to Meisch, “In every case where I talked to Otavalos who had been arrested and deported they expressed their surprise that the police in Europe and the United States did not mistreat them” (Mills 1984: 195). Their collective experience of abuse in the hands of Ecuadorian police has led them to expect analogous treatment from police in other countries.

The process by which itinerary trading helped otavaleños to reaffirm their cultural identity was anything but straightforward. Up to the early 1970s, some otavaleños set out on their journeys dressed as blancos in order to avoid discrimination. However, as Weinstock argues, this was not easy.

There is the problem of feeling comfortable in the clothing of whites, speaking Spanish without an accent, and in general, comporting oneself as a white. It is usually too much to overcome. Several men have attempted the change, quite often when traveling, particularly in Colombia, and found it unsatisfying and decided to change back (Weinstock 1970: 164).

On the other hand, the first itinerary merchants traveling to Colombia and Venezuela discovered that using indigenous attire improved the sales. One of those pioneers recounted to his family that one of his friends traveling with him was an indígena who had changed his clothes.

Even though he sold the same products, at the same price, and sometimes even cheaper, he could not sell. Then, he realized that people was seeing him as an intermediary and not as an indigenous artisan. In the following trips, this friend decided to change his dress in order to carry out sales. This meant to wear indigenous dress, which helped him to succeed in sales (Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 275).

Notwithstanding the competitive advantage of wearing indigenous attire, many parents living in Colombia and Venezuela dressed their children with non-indigenous clothing, cut their boys’ braids, and spoke to them only in Spanish. In addition, those children who

had experienced the stigma of being indio in Otavalo were ashamed of their parents. Mario Conejo, whose family lived in Quito during the 1950s and in Otavalo and Colombia during the 1960s and 1970s, explains that during his upbringing he was heading to become a mishu.

My generation has experienced a fairly interesting process: it was a generation in which our parents started to raise us as “mishus.” All our childhood and adolescence, let’s say, we spent our lives under those conditions... They [their parents] thought it was better to change our clothes... when they came to [the live in] the city, they began to suffer racism on daily basis. Obviously, they did not want that to be repeated with their children. Therefore, they changed our clothes.

We also lived in Colombia... They though that it was better that we turn into mishus because of their self-contempt for their own identity, their own culture. To turn into mestizo was for them to improve social standing. In Colombia, there was no problem because we were camouflaged. Those who knew us did not know our parents, and in the streets, there was no problem being mishus... When we were children, we felt shame of being seen with my father, that [our friends] would discover that he was indio (Conejo Maldonado 1995: 157-158).

However, families that went back to Otavalo confronted social pressure from their peers to keep using indigenous dress, especially by their relatives in indigenous communities (See also Sniadecka-Kotarska 2001: 82). Mario Conejo’s father told their children that if they want to live in Otavalo, they have to use indigenous clothing (M. Conejo 6/29/2008; A. Kowii 10/14/2006).

Today, as Kyle argues, it is a truism to claim that “Otavalans have retained ‘their culture’ in the face of modernization and industrialization.” However, before the 1970s, for otavaleño families living in Ecuadorian and foreign cities things were not clear. Without the unifying cultural practices of the indigenous communities, many of their children were in the process of becoming non-indígenas. Before the “self-conscious indigenous revival,” for many indigenous persons—such as Mario Conejo’s father—to become blanco was intrinsically linked to the process of upward social mobility, to the improvement of life. Accordingly, indígenas living in urban centers outside Otavalo did

not criticize those who had changed their clothes or cut their hair, who had successfully turned into blancos (Weinstock 1970: 163). They thought, as many other indígenas who migrated to cities looking for work, that getting rid of the stigma attached to the indio was good for improve one's life (Butler 1981: 448).

### *The reconquest of Otavalo*

Indígenas started to establish households in the city of Otavalo during the late 1940s, acting on the emergent “perception of migration to an urban center as an alternative to village life” (Chavez 1982: 180). According to Chavez, the development of commercial weaving and population pressure on available land were leading some indígenas out of their communities. This coincides with migratory patterns for Ecuador as a whole, as indígenas increasingly followed labor opportunities in urban centers and coastal plantations (Hurtado 1977: 191-193; Lentz 1997). However, migrants from otavaleño weaving communities continued to work with woven goods, whereas migrants from other otavaleño communities found employment mostly in construction, domestic service, and food vending (Hollerbach 1966: 15).

The few indigenous families who settled first in the city of Otavalo were recently married couples, at a period of life in which they had to establish independent households (Chavez 1982: 180). Among indígenas, newlywed couples live in the house of the father of the husband for a few years until they can build their own house. When time comes, usually when they are having babies, the parents give them a plot of land to build their house (Lema A. 1995: 74). As a norm that not always is followed, land is pass on to sons and daughters following the principle of partible inheritance. Parents retain separate ownership of their land and pass on equal portions to each of their children (Collaredo-

Mansfeld 1994: 846; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999: 95). Unless more land is acquired, the principle of partible inheritance leads to increasingly smaller family plots. Before the land reforms, this was particularly acute in densely populated communities, such as Quinchuquí and Peguche, which were surrounded by haciendas and with no space available to grow. In 1960, according to Pearse, indígenas of Peguche had an average of 0.26 hectares per family. Those of Quinchuquí had an average of 0.77 per family, of which a large part was hillside (Pearse 1975: 194).

This does not mean that poverty due to lack of land pushed indígenas into commercial weaving and itinerant trade. Rather, relative prosperous families, having more land, were those who set up commercial workshops, developed connections, and advanced businesses beyond their localities (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999: 160, 163; Buitrón and Collier 1949: 160, 163). Nevertheless, the scarcity of land made increasingly difficult to build social prestige acquiring more land in the community. Counterbalancing this limitation, indigenous entrepreneurs were reevaluating their views of land ownership.

Commercial weavers began to perceive land as secondary, rather than primary, in importance: it was valuable, even prestigious, and still served as a subsistence base for the weaving family, but land was no longer viewed as the paramount source of available wealth, nor was investment in land perceived as necessarily desirable (Chavez 1982: 182).

Rather than waiting to inherit a meager piece of land and built reputations through fiesta sponsorships, a few indigenous families from Quinchuquí and Peguche decided to set up commercial weaving workshops in Otavalo. At that time, prospects for business were good. The increasing demand was leading the weaving cottage industry in the communities of Illuman and Peguche, Quinchuquí and Agato to hire other indígenas to increase production (Chavez 1982: 182). Moving to Otavalo was convenient for business because of the following reasons: the access to the market of weaving goods was easier;

the availability of electricity allowed an early adoption of electric weaving machines; producers could open a store in their houses; and most important, indígenas living in the city were not subject to the social pressure to participate—and expend capital—in communal offices and fiesta sponsorships.

The first generation of indigenous residents in Otavalo were illiterate but quickly realized that illiteracy limited business possibilities. A woman belonging to one of those families told Chavez that her husband received orders from Quito that he could not read (Chavez 1982: 231-232).<sup>72</sup> By 1965, most of the well-off indigenous families in Otavalo had aspirations to send their children to secondary school and even to higher education (Hollerbach 1966: 34).

According to Chavez, the early commercial weavers “influenced the perceptions of economic possibilities and behaviors of younger generations of Indígenas in Otavalo” @233}. Some years later, their relative prosperity was certainly visible. After fieldwork in 1963, Cooper wrote some indígenas in Otavalo lived in “mestizo-type” houses, multiple room houses with a central patio or two-story buildings, in contrast to indigenous houses with dirt floors and no interior partitions.

These are Indian merchants. They use a room or two as a store and weaving shop. The rest of the house serves as living quarters. Angel Ruíz, certainly one of the richest Otavalo Indians, has in Otavalo a two-story house with a large patio and garden, and a carport for his late-model Ford automobile (Cooper 1965: 35).

At the end of the 1960s, with the growing of international tourism and the popularization of ‘ethnic’ apparel, indigenous commercial activities in Otavalo started a period of even greater prosperity. The numbers of tourists coming to Ecuador significantly increased, and most of them visited the “authentic Indian market of Otavalo” (Windmeijer 1998).



Retail sales in the Plaza de Ponchos, as well as wholesale to traveling merchants and foreign outlets, grew at a fast rate. Infrastructural improvements facilitated this boom. In 1973, the government finished the paving of the road linking Quito to Otavalo, which is part of the Pan-American Highway. Replacing cobblestone with asphalt reduced travel time from more than five hours to less than two hours. In addition, the Municipality, with funding from the Dutch government, paved the Plaza de Ponchos and erected concrete kiosks for the vendors (Meisch 2002: 40).

From the late 1960s, the indigenous population in the city started to increase significantly, specially around the Plaza de Ponchos (Almeida Vinueza 1995: 18). By the second half of the 1970s, the economic success of indigenous producers and merchants was transforming the character of the urban space. As Butler claims,

the booming tourist trade in textiles has created a category of indígena who have equal economic status with the non-indígena middle class. Not only that, but indígena have been recognized as a potent tourist attraction, bringing a measure of prosperity to all in the town. Otavalo's indígenas are increasingly flaunted rather than hidden from outsiders (Butler 1981: 294-295).

In 1974, the population of the city was 13,500 inhabitants (INEC 1974), of which approximately 20% were indígenas (Chavez 1982: 7). By the mid 1980s, their numbers were increasing and “people even speak of Otavalo becoming ‘indigenous’” (Windmeijer 1998). A few years later, so many indígenas lived in Otavalo “that it was the subject of a video documentary in 1993, broadcast on national Ecuadorian television, entitled ‘The Reconquest of Otavalo’” (Kyle 1999: 439). In 2000, the first indigenous mayor of Otavalo, sociologist Mario Conejo, was elected with 45.95% of the vote, defeating,

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<sup>72</sup> Rechazo a la educación. requiere más estudio. estereotipo, entedimiento.

among others, the incumbent mayor Fabian Villareal.<sup>73</sup> In 2002, the municipality of Otavalo calculated that 60% of the urban population was indígena (Hurtado 2002: 3).<sup>74</sup>

In a 1965 survey of indigenous persons, of which 32 lived in Otavalo, 22 in Quito, and 5 in rural communities after living abroad or in Quito, Paula Hollerbach found out that around 45 percent had changed their clothing or that of their children (Hollerbach 1966: 37).<sup>75</sup> As the otavaleño families living abroad, many of the families who had moved to Otavalo raised their children as mishus. Not only they wanted to avoid discrimination against their children, but also it was difficult to register indigenous children in urban schools. For the most part, urban schools did not accept indigenous children (E. Cachimuel 9/7/2005). It was only after the promulgation of national legislation in the 1970s that urban schools were required to accept indígenas (Butler 1981: 294). In addition, to register their children, indigenous parents had to get support from non-indígena compadres and/or bribe school officials. Furthermore, in the disciplinary environment of the school, many teachers were particularly cruel reproducing discriminatory practices against indigenous children. Physical and psychological abuses were fairly common (E. Cachiguango 8/11/2006; see also de la Torre 2000: 37-38; and Villavicencio 1973: 129).

The 1970s-1980s wave of real estate purchases by indígenas in Otavalo was so overwhelming that it had become part of local myth. The process is epitomized in

<sup>73</sup> Villareal had been elected twice as mayor. In 2000, he was fourth place with 12.58% of the vote. Carmen Yamberla, the indígena president of FICI, was third with 16.51% (Hurtado 2002). In Ecuador, the jurisdictions of mayors are not only cities but cantons. Composed of civil parishes, cantons include rural and urban populations that vote to elect the mayor.

<sup>74</sup> Frank (1998) and Meisch (2002) estimated that 70% of the population of urban Otavalo was indígena.

<sup>75</sup> She does not present data by locality.

variations of the following story, which circulate widely: “a blanca woman has put her house on sale. An indígena who is interested in buying asks her the price. She responds that she does not sell to indios. He makes an offer so high that she cannot refuse and sells him the house at considerable profit.” First, the story indicates the willingness of non-indígenas to keep an uncontaminated, blanco urban space. Second, it reflects on the historical economic exploitation of the indígenas, who often had to pay extra costs to obtain anything from non-indígenas. Third, it demonstrates the power of money, which makes the woman betray her ideas about the exclusivity of blanco spaces. Indígenas returning from itinerary trading had money. They benefited from the increasing depreciation of the Sucre. Every year they got more Sucres for their hard-earned dollars. According to one of them, “each time that we returned... we had more [economic] resources because the exchange rate was each time higher” (Sarabino Muenala 2007: 56-57). Mario Conejo argues that the boom years for otavaleños were the decade from 1985 to 1995 (M. Conejo 6/29/2008). During this period, the Sucre devaluated from 42 to 3000 per dollar.

From the mid 1970s, the purchasing power of otavaleño producers and merchants produced a real estate inflation that turned Otavalo into one of the most expensive cities in Ecuador (Kyle 1999: 439; Sarabino Muenala 2007: 56). At a time in which tourism was booming, indigenous entrepreneurs considered good for business to buy property in Otavalo. For itinerary merchants, buying a house on their return became a symbol of individual success (Maldonado 2002: 47). Indígenas outbid each other buying houses from non-indígena proprietors. According to Mario Conejo,

We came from Ipiales (Colombia) when my father died. My mother offered 700,000 Sucres for a house, where today there is a building. Other indígenas offered more.

Since the indígenas brought dollars, the Sucre did not matter much for them. At the end, that house was sold for 1'600,000. With that money, the mestizos bought up to two houses, cars, and so on (6/29/2008).

The area of indigenous properties has expanded from the Plaza de Ponchos to the Plaza Bolívar. Many of the new owners have demolished the old houses and built multi-story buildings, in which they live and work. They have commercially developed the area, which match the urban space in which tourists wander, opening handicraft and textile stores, tourism agencies, restaurants, peña-bars, and later Internet cafes. Non-indígenas who sold their houses moved to new neighborhoods that were built in the outskirts of the city or to Quito. Most indígenas have not settled south of the Plaza Bolívar. Accordingly, this area has maintained a mostly non-indígena population (Meisch 2002: 112; Sarabino Muenala 2007: 57). Indígenas were driven to the city by business opportunities, urban respectability, and access to schools, services, and utilities (Hollerbach 1966: 15). Even though the reconquest of Otavalo has done much for ethnic pride, there was no explicit and collective discourse to drive non-indígenas out of the city.<sup>76</sup>

It is during this time that ethnic harassment changed. Indigenous upward social mobility generated non-indígena resentment and situations of uncertainty in the interethnic negotiation of status (Butler 2006: 257; Meisch 2002: 206). Some indígena families became much wealthier than many non-indígena families. According to a foreigner who witnessed the era, “the mestizos living in Otavalo were disgruntled, shocked, when indígenas started to buy properties and gain political power” (W. Gómez

<sup>76</sup> Some indígenas had told Edison Hurtado that they would like mishus to leave Otavalo (Hurtado 2002: 3). In addition, an indígena who had converted to evangelicalism told me that he thought that Otavalo was going to be without mestizos (M. Lema 2/27/2006). It is clear that these are later articulations, done after the fact that indígenas became the majority in urban Otavalo.

7/29/2008). Aiming to maintain their dominant position and privilege, some non-indígenas insisted on harassing and assaulting indígenas to try to force them to submit.

Scholars have noticed this strained state of affairs between indígenas and non-indígenas in urban Otavalo. Kyle argues, “Tensions between the upwardly mobile Otavalans and the downwardly mobile mestizos in Otavalo are visceral, real estate inflation from Otavalan demand is so great that many mestizos whose families have lived in Otavalo for centuries cannot afford to buy a house” (Kyle 1999: 439). According to Meisch, “an improvement in the power, status, and wealth of indígenas threatens some white-mestizos” (Meisch 2002: 206). And Butler claims,

Local mestizos greatly resented the opportunities foreigners gave indigenous people to enter the retail marketing, just as they begrudged the other economic achievements of some indian families. For example, the growing migration of Otavaleños into the town of Otavalo, the purchase by a few indigenous families of retail stores for the sale of handicrafts within the town, and the establishment of indigenously owned weaving workshop (Parsons 1945; Chavez 1982)—all were resented (Butler 2006: 257).

Adding to non-indígenas’ predicament, indígenas were also taking over the control of the rural areas. As we will see in the next chapter, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, indigenous peasants took over the haciendas San Vicente and Quinchuquí, by means of land reform litigation. These extensive estates were next to the city of Otavalo, abutting the urban perimeter to the west and north. In this context, non-indígenas were concerned about indígenas taking over everything (H. Jaramillo 9/13/2006)

Furthermore, the ultimate blow to non-indígena self-esteem was that indígenas started to have romantic affairs with light-skinned European and American woman. Among non-indígenas, whiteness does not only symbolized “the epitome of urban modernity” (Radcliffe 1999: 220) but also the ideal of human beauty (See Masi de Casanova 2004). Accordingly, non-indígenas aspire to marry lighter skin persons, following the dictum, as

they say, of improving the race. In the 1960s, a common complaint of otavaleños in Quito who were no longer using indigenous attire was the difficulty of finding women. According to Weinstock, “few men had the confidence to go after a white woman” (Weinstock 1970: 164). In addition, indígenas with darker skin were considered *fieros*, or ugly (Weinstock 1970: 164).<sup>77</sup> In contrast, by the mid 1980s, “it was fairly common to see a gringa and an Otavaleño walking hand-in-hand down the street, or gringas and Otavaleños leaving the *peñas*, restaurants, and bars together late at night” (Meisch 1994: 448). It is not far-fetched to claim that the indígenas in Otavalo were getting the women whom non-indígenas have long desired.<sup>78</sup> The intentionality of the non-indígena assaults on indígenas was evident during the 1990s, when “Indígenas leaving the *peñas* folklóricas with gringas were especially targeted” (Meisch 2002: 206).

The rapid upward social mobility of the indígenas, their increasing economic and political power, and the vanishing of blanco Otavalo not only produced non-indígena bitter indignation. As Winant argues, “the increasing empowerment of a racial minority formerly subject to intense exclusion and discrimination will engender an ‘identity crisis’ for the group formerly more absolutely superordinate” (Winant 1994: 124). Ultimately, the system of identity/alterity was going through a deep transformation.

The way in which this transformation affected the deployment of respect and mistreatment marked the life of Luz Maldonado, an indígena woman who has lived in urban Otavalo since the mid 1950s. As recounted to Magdalena Sniadecka-Kotarska (2001), Luz Maldonado moved to Otavalo with her husband after marriage. At that time,

<sup>77</sup> For the analysis of these values among low-class non-indígenas in Cuenca, see Miles (2000).

<sup>78</sup> Romantic relations and marriages between European and American men and indigenous otavaleño women are not uncommon in Otavalo and abroad.

she did not speak Spanish and learned it at home by herself. For decades, she did not experience disrespectful treatment from her neighbors but witnessed plenty of discrimination against the indios coming to Otavalo during market days. In the city, she lived isolated and without friends or acquaintances. She and her husband decided to speak Spanish at home and send their children to the best schools in town.

Her husband worked in Colombia for many years, and she stayed in charge of their textile shop in Otavalo. Producing weavings, first, and clothes, later, they became quite wealthy. For many years, they only hired mestizo workers because they considered that indígenas drunk too much and were unreliable.<sup>79</sup> They had good relations with their mestizo workers and neighbors. Nobody was bothered by the fact that she and her family were indígenas. They were wealthy but lived modestly. They participated in the urban parish council and the parent meetings of their children's school, but after three decades, they did not have friends in the city. She only had some closeness with a few priests and nuns. Her oldest son, Mario, was a very good student, and a priest suggested to send him to study to the best school in the province, in Ibarra, hiding his indigenous background. Following the priest's suggestions, they cut Mario's hair, dressed him as a mestizo, and sent him to a boarding school in Ibarra. During these two years, the last of secondary school, Luz and her husband never visited their son at that school.

By the 1980s, everything had changed. In contrast to the impersonal but respectful treatment between them and urban mestizos of the past, the ethnic social tension was insurmountable.

<sup>79</sup> During the festivities of San Juan and San Pedro, in June and July, which last several weeks, many indigenous weavers were not available for work. See Chavez (Chavez 1982: 221).

Even a trusted priest advised them to make their identity not very noticeable. Luz insists that in her behavior nothing has changed. Suddenly, the mestizos were bothered by the indígenas. The increasing number of indios and the fact that their roles have changed created a serious problem. Luz, who has lived since thirty years ago in the city of Otavalo, felt offended. She had believed that through hard work she have earned a good, well founded, and deserved social standing. She avoided conflicts, and refrained from judging... the shady actions or [new] attitudes of her mestizo neighbors. She accepted that kind of relationships that lacked friendship. She got used to the always-kept social distance but accompanied by mutual respect. Suddenly, she felt foreign in a city that she has considered as hers (Sniadecka-Kotarska 2001: 81).

Luz had earned respect from non-indígenas when the system of identity-alterity changed. In the past, non-indígenas usually respected the few successful indígenas who lived in the city. Non-indígenas refrained from cultivating friendship with them but did not subject them to daily harassment. As long as they did not threaten the blanco quality of the city, as their presence was invisible, there were no problems with them. The greater the economic status, urban experience of the indígenas, and skills in Spanish language, the greater was the acceptance by non-indígenas. Racial discrimination, according to Hollerbach, “should decrease and acceptance increase if the migrant cannot be stereotyped as the typical, illiterate, poverty-stricken Indian” (Hollerbach 1966: 19; see also Rubio Orbe 1956). Non-indígena harassment was directed mostly to the weaker indígenas, those who had less cultural capital in dominant society. In contrast, from the early 1980s, non-indígenas started to harass not the weakest indígenas but the wealthy indígenas, those who have stepped out of their supposedly proper social space. Non-indígenas specially targeted those indígenas who boasted their wealth or cosmopolitanism, or those who dated foreign women.

For the indígenas living or going to school in Otavalo, learning to respond to mestizo harassment meant, in part, how to deal with the “highly charged” word *indio*, which was



considered by the indígenas to be an offensive term (Meisch 1994: 202; Weinstock 1970: 156). According to indigenous intellectual A. Kowi, the question was the following:

How could we overcome the fear of the word indio? Because the word indio was used as a mechanism to flagellate you, no? To frighten you, no? Only with the word, no? Because the word implied... it had a connotation that automatically told you that you were inferior, and that idea was very rooted in the minds of both the person who used it and the person who received it. Thus, it gave a power of superiority to the person who used it and a sense of inferiority to the person who received it (A. Kowi 10/14/2006).

After some time, indigenous persons learned to respond to mestizo insults. They challenged the mestizo insulters by articulating a response along the following terms, “Who do you think you are? Do you think you are blanco? There are no blancos in Otavalo” (E. Cachiguango 8/11/2006; S. Ramos 8/11/2006, M. Conejo 6/29/2008; see also Villavicencio 1973, p. 239). Very rapidly, the indígenas shared this empowering articulation. This was nothing but revolutionary. After centuries of acquiescence, indigenous individuals were not only fighting back but also questioning dominant identity.

Some of them responded to mestizo harassment by arguing that at least they were not mixed persons. For example, in the early 1970s, Gladys Villavicencio witnessed a group of mestizo youth shouting at an adult indígena who was wearing now outmoded indigenous pants, which had “wide calf-length legs, a large square crotch gusset, and a waistband with ties at one side” (Meisch 1998: 67).

Mestizos: Longo! Let us borrow your underwear.

Indígena: Longo, longo! I know that you would like to be like me. I am a longo but one with money. Don't bother me because I am going to break your muzzles. I'm not wearing underwear but the pants of an indio, of a rich indio. Idiots! Again and again, you say longo, longo, but at least we are pure indios, not mixed like you, mestizos who called yourselves blancos (Villavicencio 1973: 130).

Economic prosperity, access to schooling, and skills in Spanish language were of central importance for the indígenas to challenge non-indígena harassment. According to the indigenous intellectual Enrique Cachiguango, “We began to respond to mestizo provocation when many of us started to go to school, when we started to have an education. From then on, we began to respond. Before that, we did not know what to do” (8/11/2006). In the schools in Otavalo, even wearing indigenous attire, those indigenous children who were fluent in Spanish suffered much less harassment than their peers who spoke more Kichwa than Spanish. Some migrants who returned to Otavalo after living in Colombia not only spoke Spanish perfectly but also had a Colombian accent, which at the time was considered stylishly fashionable. Spanish language skills gave them considerable leverage against harassment (S. Ramos 8/11/2006; A. Kowii 10/14/2006).

During the 1970s, the textbook ideology of mestizaje was stressing that all true Ecuadorians were of mixed descent, neither blancos nor indígenas (Butler 1981: 261; 2006: 337; Stutzman 1981: 79). In addition, the influx of North American and European tourists in Otavalo and the traveling abroad of the otavaleños were displacing the local constitution of identity/alterity in terms of blanco/indio. The lack of a significant light-skinned local population reinforced the notion that all Ecuadorians were mixed, that there were no blancos in Otavalo. Indígenas picked up this discourse and sometimes challenged their harassers in terms of their skin color (E. Cachiguango 8/11/2006; N. Conejo 6/29/2006). On the one hand, harassers were mostly lower class, differing little in terms of skin color from the indígenas. On the other hand, Otavalo did not have an

aristocratic elite who could convincingly construct a blanco lineage.<sup>80</sup> The indigenous challenge to non-indígena harassment implied that the mestizos who identified as blancos had an inferiority complex because of their desire to be blanco and their shame towards their indigenous descent (Whitten 2003). In addition, the challenge to blanco identity was pivotal in defending and valuing indigenous culture. Previous harassment and exploitation were predicated on the superiority of the blanco and inferiority of the indio. In order to dispute the hierarchical normativity of social identification, educated indígenas articulated a new indigenousness, emphasizing a positive evaluation of past and present indigenous ways of life.

This process was full of ambiguity, contradiction, and zigzagging. Among young indígenas, there was a fair amount of identity crises. At some point in their lives, many of them considered the idea of assimilating into mestizo culture to avoid the stigma and violence of ethnic degradation. Some cut their braids off and became, in the eyes of other indígenas, *mishutucushcakuna*, persons in the process of converting into mestizos (Conejo, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 277). This is a pejorative word. It condemned those who were turning into mishus because this change implied that they were changing their alliances from indígena to non-indígena.

Indigenous students in Otavalo discussed extensively about what to do about non-indígena harassment. Segundo Ramos, who was in the same school as Mario Conejo,

<sup>80</sup> After visiting mid-eighteen century colonial Otavalo, Juan de Velasco commented that the great majority of the population of Otavalo were mestizos and indios. There were a few decent families, who called themselves blancos, but nobles, “who properly are from Quito, and have here their businesses and fiefdoms,” were rare (de Velasco 1998 [1789]: Vol. III, 306). De Velasco equates the blanco condition to nobility and lineage, given that claiming descent from the conquerors was the only way to demand noble and blanco status.

argues that the latter proposed assimilation as the solution. Ramos quoted Conejo as saying the following:

The person has to develop. The more we develop, the more we have to lose the culture of the Inti Raymis, the dress of indígenas. This has to end. It is in this situation when there is more racism. The issue is to integrate into society. If we integrate, we will not be noticed, and there will be no more humiliation. Now, they humiliate us because we are different (S. Ramos 8/11/2006).

In his turn, Mario Conejo describes his crossings of the ethnic boundary in the following terms.

[When we returned to Otavalo] We have switched [to indigenous] clothing almost by force. Then, we started to live a different relation between blancos, mestizos, and indios. The treatment was different. Some spaces are hostile to the indio; for instance, an office. I think that the indio enters an office on the defensive. He may be prepared to answer, but the mishus makes him nervous; his hands sweat, and he is afraid that they would be violent with him... It is because of this contempt that I had to change my clothing again. I live like that [as a mishu] two or three years... But since we always have been linked to organized groups... we organized a student club in Peguche. There, we were reflecting about our condition, our identity. We realized that we were insecure in our position. Ultimately, I felt that I did not have weapons to confront the contempt. To be oppressed and feel ashamed of oneself at the same time was contradictory. One could say, "For what being indio, if I can define myself as I want?" But this did not take away the terrible sensation of having something upon which people could make you feel ashamed. This made us think and talk with many fellows that were in the same situation, thinking about the "disgrace of being indio" and lamenting being born like this (Conejo Maldonado 1995: 158-159).

The turnaround came when they devalued the mishu condition.

The case was that we kept going as mishus and talked about this contradiction. And, of course, it reached a point in which we said to ourselves: "well, we speak so much about that which is indio as the best, and that we feel proud of being indios. Then, what are we doing as mishus? We are not consistent. It was hard, but we were able to mature. We reached a moment in which we turned into super racists. It was that only what was ours had value and the mishus were bullshit (pendejada). But, to reach that level allowed us to wear our attire and with this, return to our culture (Conejo Maldonado 1995: 159).

The student club in Peguche evolved into a more formal organization. By 1976, indigenous high-school students created an organization to "defend the cultural manifestations of the Quichua people" and "consolidate the cultural identity of the

Quichua man and the Quichua world” (Quinchiguango 1987: 9-10). They called it *Taller Cultural Causanacunchic*, which translates as Cultural Workshop We had lived; We are living; We will continue living. The group included around fifty students going to school in Otavalo and nearby Cotacachi, many of who went on to higher education (Hoy 2001). Seeking to democratize the relationship between indígenas and non-indígenas, they promoted cultural events, debated about indigenous culture, and set up support groups for indigenous students. “It is then,” according to Kowii, “that we started the search for indigenous identity” (A. Kowi 10/14/2006).

Rather than denying the concepts—such as indio—the idea was to use them and appropriate them...We always thought that in order to be able to confront that situation, the reaffirmation of cultural identity was fundamental. It was fundamental to recuperate the esteem and pride of identity.

I would say that there was an advantage in some way for indigenusness because there was a labor of reflection. Instead, during that time, in the subject of mestizness, there was nothing. The idea of being blanco was prevalent, no? The poorest of them strongly believed that he was blanco. Only because by being blanco, he had power and authority vis-à-vis an indio, because of the ideological weight. There was a strong labor of reflection about indigenusness and none about mestizness (10/14/2006).

The *Taller Cultural Causanacunchic* set up a social sciences library specialized in indigenous issues, and started a study group that focused on the historical and sociological analysis of non-indígena domination and indigenous subordination. Reflecting the prevalent political debate, they read plenty of leftist literature, from the writings of Che Guevara to Eduardo Galeano’s *Open Veins of Latin America*. They also manifested their solidarity with leftist causes in Latin America, such as the Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua (M. A. Carlosama 4/3/2007; A. Kowi 10/14/2006; see also Abad 2003).

For some members of the *Taller Cultural Causanacunchic*, learning the Marxist concept of class struggle was an epiphany. On the other hand, they distrusted the

prevalent idea among non-indígena Marxists that culture was merely an epiphenomenon of the structural base. Leftist activists not only manifested an exaggerated sense of knowing a higher truth (M. Burbano 1/16/2006), but also considered that the emergence of ethnic consciousness was adverse to the formation of class consciousness. As a platform for social demands, ethnicity disunited the peasantry because of differentiated access to state concessions (Ibarra Illanez 1987: 183, 244). Conceiving indigenous culture as merely ideology or false consciousness was in direct opposition to the mission of the group (M. A. Carlosama 4/3/2007). This group of young and urban indigenous intellectuals had more autonomy from the influence of leftist activists than the indigenous rural leaders who were fighting for land. As demonstrated in the next chapter, the rural leaders depended on the leftist activists because of the latter's role as intermediaries with the state.

Rather than subscribing to the idea that indigeneity was not the focus of the struggle, the urban indigenous intellectuals aimed, from their shared experience of discrimination, at articulating defensive social scripts against non-indígena harassment without having to renounce their identification as indígenas. For instance, in response to the non-reciprocal social convention requiring the indios to remove their hats when addressing the blancos, the members of the *Taller Cultural Causanacunchic* insisted, for the first time, that indígenas should not take their hats off in public because this practice, they claimed, was alien to indigenous culture. Articulating this stance on hat wearing as a demand for respect as practitioners of indigenous culture, they coordinated among indigenous students in Otavalo a collective refusal to take their hats off when the national anthem was playing (M. A. Carlosama 4/3/2007; A. Kowi 10/14/2006). Other indigenous leaders

not only from Otavalo but also from other parts of Ecuador had later followed this stance on hat wearing.

Soon, proactive indígenas started to respond to non-indígena discrimination by self-identifying as indios (J. Quimbo 9/25/2006; A. Kowi 10/14/2006). “Being indio was no longer something to hide, but rather had become a factor of pride and fundamental re-vindication” (Conejo Maldonado, Yamberla, and Cachiguango 2001: 277). Many mishutucushcakuna grew their hair back. Probably the most famous is Mario Maldonado, the son of Luz Maldonado. After studying in Ibarra, he studied medicine at the Universidad Central in Quito, Ecuador’s main public university. For seven years, he dressed as a non-indígena and was considered as such, but on graduation ceremony, he took everyone by surprise. He showed up with indigenous attire and brought his family from Otavalo. He even had his hair long enough to make a little ponytail (Sniadecka-Kotarska 2001: 82-83). This was not foretold. He was going to graduate with a western suit, but a few months before the event, his cousin Mario Conejo convinced him to wear the poncho. “When he was going to graduate,” recalls Conejo, “I told him, ‘if you are going to graduate with a suit, you will be one of the bunch, but if you wear a poncho, people are going to look at you and is going to say that you are a worthy representative of your people’” (Conejo Maldonado 1995: 171). The strategy worked, notwithstanding the few people who voiced racist comments. The graduation ceremony was a success for Mario Maldonado and his family as indígenas. Indigenous culture had turned from an stigmatized into worthy way of being, providing support for those who decided to come back.

This emerging indigenous reaffirmation increasingly undermined the correlation of indigenosity with stigma and subservience, transforming the way in which indio-ness and blanco-ness had ordered social relationships. Non-indígenas had to transform their expectations about indigenous behavior and their ways of interacting with the indígenas (de la Torre 1999: 102).

### *Othering the mishu*

When orientalism reigned supreme, indios could not argue for equality. However, when selves and others constituted through the grammar of orientalizing break down, then “their mutual differences are often relativized by means of a segmentary grammar” (Baumann 2006: 29). Whereas orientalism excluded the indio by negative mirror imaging and exoticized appreciation, and encompassment set whiteness as the universal apex of social hierarchization, the grammar of segmentation made possible to challenge the constitution of identities and alterities in terms of blanco superiority and indio inferiority.

The grammar of segmentation determines identities and alterities according to context. In contrast to orientalizing, in which identities and alterities are matters of absolute criteria, the grammar of segmentation determines identities and alterities according to the “structural level of the conflict or contest, coalition or cooperation that is at stake at any one given moment” (Baumann 2006: 23). According to the contextual awareness of the segmentary grammar, the other may be foe at one level and friend at another level. Indígenas pinpoint the mestizo as the one who discriminates against them while denying his own indigenous heritage. On the other hand, indígenas ally with mestizos in many other contexts, from protests against neo-liberal reforms to political campaigning.



In the grammar of segmentation, parties are conceived as formally equal, leading to a political order in which none of the parties has hegemonic dominance. As Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, “The Indigenous Movement has broken the nationalist ideology challenging its pretended universality . . . and denouncing its particular origin: the white and mestizo, urban, catholic and Spanish-speaking elites” (Rodríguez Maeso 2005: 173). The embodiment of universality into a national Subject has gave way to “a space of identification in which the social appears fragmented and the horizon of modernity becomes blurred”(Rodríguez Maeso 2005: 156).<sup>81</sup> Since this grammar is subject to disputes about the right placing of the apex, it makes possible claims for equality. If orientalizacion created the conditions of possibility for the Indian problem, in the grammar of segmentation the crucial question is who can define the apex of the pyramid and the intervening classificatory levels. Displacing orientalizacion with the segmentary grammar, indígenas have dislodged blanco-ness from the apex of the constitution of identity/alterity, at least in some spheres of life, allowing them to revalorize indigenousness to demand equality without assimilating into mestizo culture.

A prominent example of this is the current discourse that indígenas have a culture whereas mestizos lack one. After spending a few nights dancing the Inti Raymi in Otavalo and Cotacachi in June 2008, I was taken aback by the unexpected comments of non-indígena women. One of them said to me, “I am not a racist, but there are things that I cannot stand” (C. Flores 7/14/2008).<sup>82</sup> She resented the opportunities given to indígenas, such as scholarships granted by NGO’s, arguing that education should be the

<sup>81</sup> This is what Hale (2006) calls mestizo universalism.

<sup>82</sup> A pseudonym.

same for everybody. Obviously, she was oblivious to historical conditions that has restricted indigenous access to education and social mobility. She complained that the indígenas were ungrateful. Her father was a mayordomo, and according to her, he had treated the indígenas well. Indígenas have taken over hacienda land, or have received titles for land that already possessed, but as soon as they had the titles, she claimed, they have sold the land. At the time of the haciendas, she continued, indígenas worked well, but “now the land is abandoned.” A companion who was with her, another women, claimed that the indios were racist. The first woman emphasized that they always have been racists. “They always have been against the blancos” (C. Flores 7/14/2008).

Another woman told me that indígenas exploited their peers in the weaving shops, without considering the economics of local weaving production. She resented that people, specially foreigners, considered the indígenas as good people, when she knew better, they were not. She argued not only they were unprepared for the political positions that they were occupying but also that they untrustworthy and immoral, privileging their own personal gain. Inadvertently, she had set a much more strict moral standard to indígenas than to non-indígenas (E. Ríos 1/16/2006).<sup>83</sup> As ladinos in Guatemala, who feel “identity-less” in the face of indigenous activism, two of the women above, after her disparaging remarks, stated that ultimately indígenas were better off than mestizos because indígenas had a culture and mestizos did not.<sup>84</sup>

Pachano, inquiring about the transformation of the peasantry leadership’s orientation from class demands to ethnic demands, has claimed, “something must have happened for

<sup>83</sup> A pseudonym.

this to occur” (Pachano 1993: 173). I argue that the transformation of identity/alterity in Otavalo decisively affected the process that made indigenosness visible and viable as a unifying platform for social demands. Some of those young indígenas who started the search for indigenous identity by challenging blanco self-identification in Otavalo would later become the main ideologists of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement. They include, among others, Mario Conejo, Ariruma Kowii, Luis Maldonado, Blanca Chancoso, Auqui Tituaña, and Nina Pacari. They would articulate a coherent critique of the exclusionary nature of the Ecuadorian “nation-state” and its imagined national subject—the mestizo.

#### *Chapter IV Conclusions*

The emergence of the indigenous intellectuals who articulated and demonstrated a new political horizon for indigeneity was not foretold. Following the basic national tenet that equate education with assimilation, many of them were already leaving indigeneity behind, as it marked social inferiority and could be used by non-indígenas to provoke feelings of shame on indígenas. The analysis of the contingent constitution of this intelligentsia, which happened to being so without having to be so, demonstrates the limitations of groupist analytical perspectives. Considering ethnic categories as “substantial things-in-the-world” having a real autonomous existence, has led analysts to infer that these things ought to have consciousness when they become aware of their positions and interests.<sup>85</sup> In addition, considering indígenas and non-indígenas as

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<sup>84</sup> This is also happening in Guatemala. The problem for ladinos, as one of Hale’s interlocutors said, “is that there’s nothing there. Indígenas have lo maya, but for us, it is only imitation” (2006: 114).

<sup>85</sup> Here I am paraphrasing E.P. Thompson, who criticizes viewing class as a thing. Class for Thompson is neither a “structure” nor “category” but a fluid and historical relationship,

enduring and antagonistic bounded groups implies an always-existing resistance, hidden or explicit, to domination. Groupism is oblivious to the “subjective ambivalence” of subaltern subjects, who may not resist but even collaborate with dominant individuals. As Sherry Ortner argues, “there is never a single, unitary, subordinate” (Ortner 1995: 175). On top of that, the grammar of encompassment of *mestizaje* dictated that subaltern subjects not only may collaborate with but also become, under certain circumstances and in certain contexts, dominant individuals.

Becoming urban and educated, young *indígenas* in Otavalo intensively mulled over the *indio* condition, aware that *indios* have to be made into *indios* before they could be exploited and humiliated as *indios*. As stated before, being categorized as an *indio* meant yielding to the embodied social superiority of the non-*indígena* doing the categorization. No one accepted being categorized as an *indio/a*, in the terms in which, and by which, identity and alterity were constituted. The dislodging of the naturalization of indigenous inferiority cannot be explained solely in terms of structural enablers and political opportunity, since these perspectives also fall into the trap of groupism, as though the *indígenas* were unitary collective actors ready to take advantage of those opportunities. In Otavalo, *indígenas* overcame the social inferiority normalized by the role of the *indio* by means of undermining dominant identity as defined in terms of *blanco* superiority. *Blanco* was the unmarked social category, the way in which individuals and families self-

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impossible to specify synchronically. It is not an “it” having a real autonomous existence, as “so many men who stand in certain relation to the means of production.” Considering class as a thing leads to deduce that “it” ought to have a class-consciousness if “it” was becomes aware of its position and interests. But “it” does not exist “to have an ideal interest or consciousness.” According to Thompson, “If [class] experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not” (Thompson 1964: 8-13). These ideas are pertinent to the analysis of ethnic consciousness.

identified as people of worth. But as with all social categories, it lacked referential fixity, and never achieved definitive closure (Howard 2009).

Acquiring cultural capital, demonstrating upward social mobility, and discovering that indigenous stigma was not universal, indigenous intellectuals had the agency to displace the constitution of identity/alterity from the absolute difference of the grammar of orientalization to the contextual negotiation of the segmentary grammar. As Mario Conejo claims, being indio no more is something to feel ashamed.

During school, when they told us that we were indios, we felt offended, but today, I do not think, I have not seen anybody who has become offended because they called him indio. Rather, he says: Yes, I am indio. And the aggressor turns out to be mestizo and starts to uncover that he is not blanco. The conflict of identity is transferred to the other (Conejo Maldonado 1997).

But this is not the whole story. Struggles for land would engender a new indigenous historical consciousness that also transformed the constitution of identity/alterity.

## Chapter V

### Challenging the Hacendado

*No hay hacienda sin indios*<sup>86</sup>

Manuel de Rojas, Jesuit hacienda administrator, 1686 (Cushner 1982: 117)

*En cuanto a la reforma, no hubo, pero hubo la posibilidad de organizarse para tomarse las  
tierras*<sup>87</sup>

Miguel Angel Carlosama, indigenous activist, 2007

On October 31, 1980, the Ecuadorian political magazine *Contrapunto* featured on its cover a photo of a young man behind bars. The black and white photo shows him from head to chest. He is grabbing the neck of his shirt, with his fingers on his sternum. He is wearing a light-colored cap and a white shirt with drawings of flowers arranged in two vertical lines. The color of his shirt contrasts with his fairly dark skin color. His eyes look a bit down, but he seems calm and poised. The title of the cover, captioning the photo with big letters, reads “Quinchuquí: the Trick of the *Gamonal*” (Contrapunto 1980).

<sup>86</sup> There is no hacienda without Indians.

<sup>87</sup> Regarding the reform, there was none, but there was the possibility of organizing to take over the land.

Quinchuquí referred not to the indigenous community of Quinchuquí but to the Hacienda Quinchuquí, which at that time was on trial for expropriation under land reform legislation. Gamonal is a derogative term designating hacendados who, having unrestricted local power, are extremely abusive to their laborers. At that time, leftists used often the term gamonal in their critique of the hacienda regime.<sup>88</sup> The magazine *Contrapunto* was leftist and supported the peasants. Using gamonal instead of hacendado, the magazine was trying to defame him, depicting him as corrupted landlord holding sway over local authorities and police. As explained in the magazine, the “Trick of the Gamonal” was his sale of plots to indígenas who were not members of the organization demanding its expropriation. He did so in order to weaken the organized peasants, sidetrack the expropriation demand, and keep the best part of the hacienda. The sale not only was illegal, since land under expropriation trials could not be sold. It also provoked violent confrontations between the indígenas who were buying the plots and those who were demanding the expropriation of the hacienda. The former were mainly better-off indígenas from the communities of Peguche and Quinchuquí; the latter were mostly poorer indígenas from the communities of La Bolsa, Guanansi, Carabuela, and Ilumán.

Showing a young man in prison, the magazine denounced the repression orchestrated by the landowner against the peasants. However, the link between the photo and the caption is not self-evident because the young man behind bars does not look as a peasant or an indígena. Rather, he looks like an urban non-indígena, with his hair cut short and an wearing an urban cap. The man in the photo is Segundo Ramos who was twenty or

<sup>88</sup> In the 1970s, according to Ibarra, “the identification of gamonalism as a form of domination and exploitation of the rural population was a topic of leftist and agrarian discourse that was incorporated into the political language” (Iconos 137).

twenty-one years old at that time. He was one of the activists leading the demand for expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí. His older brother, Florentino Ramos, was the main leader. Some supporters of the hacendado had denounced Segundo Ramos and generated a warrant for his arrest. Ironically, he was captured by a group of indígenas siding with the *compradores* (buyers), the group buying those plots, who captured him, beat him, accused him of being a thief promoting land usurpation, and handed him over to the police (S. Ramos 9/20/2006).

Twenty-six years after the shooting of that photo, in 2006, I asked Segundo Ramos about the clothing that he was wearing at that time, considering that today he always wears indigenous attire and his hair long, tied in a single braid.

I was a staunch admirer of Che Guevara. I always wanted to look like Che Guevara, and many times in the city I wore a cap... I [also] had a beret, yes, a beret in Che's style. In that photo, I had almost no beard, but for most of my life during that time, I had a beard like Fidel... I grew up following Fidel or Che as models. I wanted to look like them. This was before I went to study [to the university], but when I studied, when I read, I realized that I should have my own identity. I should be myself and not try to look like Che Guevara nor Fidel. I should have my own particularity. From that time, I said no. I am going to be myself. I don't want to look like somebody else (9/20/2006).

Segundo Ramos' trajectory, from alienated leftist revolutionary to self-identified indigenous activist, reflects the complexities of an ongoing historical and personal process of becoming rather than being indígena. As many others young indígenas at that time, Segundo Ramos was able to invest in a subject-position as an indígena only after being a non-indígena for a while.

In the highly flammable arena of the land struggles of the 1970s and early 1980s, at a time in which increasing numbers of indígenas were attending school and the old hacienda regime was collapsing, the future of social identification could not be predicted with certainty. Non-indígena leftist activists as well as indigenous leaders set to raise not



only class but also historical consciousness in order to construct a political identity for the peasantry defining entitlements, demands, and alliances. When and to what extent did indigenous peasants emphasize campesino or indígena political identity? Scholars have recognized that the agrarian reforms of 1964 and 1973 played a decisive role in transforming the structure of the agrarian sector, but they have written little about the way in which class and ethnicity were enacted and experienced on the ground, among individuals and local organizations fighting for land for many years.

Melina Selverston-Scher claims that in spite of distributing only eighth percent of the arable land, the reforms eliminated servile relations of production and decreased the concentration of ownership of land leading to small, more capitalized and efficient haciendas (Selverston-Scher 2001: 7). Fernando Guerrero and Pablo Ospina emphasize that land expropriations during the land reform had a little impact on the agrarian sector. On the other hand, they stress that the land reform opened a land market that contributed to the transformation of the agrarian structure (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 88). Amalia Pallares argues that the transition towards a wage labor system, set off by the agrarian reforms, eliminated the buffer effect between indigenous peasants and urban mestizos of the old hacienda system. Accordingly, many indígenas went to urban areas to take advantage of work opportunities, schooling, and basic services (Pallares 2002: 42-43). William Waters claims that during the land reform indigenous communities learned how to negotiate with both landed elites and state agencies (Waters 2007: 136).

Zamosc has written that “among the peasants who had to organize in order to fight for the land, a sense of collective purpose emerged based on appeals to primordial loyalties” (Zamosc 1994: 54). Falling into the traps of groupism, Zamosc idealizes indigenous

solidarity as historically existent, implying a preexistent ethnic consciousness. But the political identity articulated by the indígenas fighting for land was a work in progress, ambiguous and inchoate rather than the coherent and developed ethnic identity articulated by the CONAIE a few years later. In other words, the political identity of the indigenous peasants fighting for land was not the predetermined development of politically self-conscious and unified subjects acting upon their historical consciousness. Instead, as the Comaroff argue for the Tswana in South Africa—when they confronted a new colonial situation brought by missionaries—the efforts “to fashion and understanding of, and gain conceptual mastery over, a changing world” led to experimental practice (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 31). The responses of Ecuadorian indígenas to the transformation of the rural social environment, far from being a reflection of their historical consciousness, were practical means to producing it.

In addition, studies have overlooked the way in which the state implemented the 1973 land reform and the consequences of this implementation for the peasants’ political identity. The reform provoked direct, violent, and years-long confrontations between organized indigenous peasants and hacendados and their collaborators. Indígenas had to organize not only to demand the expropriation of haciendas but also to protect themselves from repression. The reform not only favored the hacendados, providing safeguards to avoid legal expropriation, but also was a procedural nightmare beleaguered by ubiquitous corruption and influence peddling. Its outcomes varied greatly from case to case. During this process, the state became both an institution responding to the peasants’ aspirations for land, expropriating land that was “not fulfilling its social function,” and a channel for influences and corruption, hindering expropriations proceedings (López 1994).

Nevertheless, the reform offered a window of opportunity for organized indigenous peasants for acquiring land. Notwithstanding the odds against them, indigenous peasants achieved some significant victories that demonstrated the leveraging power of their agency. During the 1960s and 1970s, many policy makers across the world saw land reforms as governmental instruments of social and political control, as mechanisms to limit the peasants' capacity for mobilization and political action (Korovkin 1997: 26). In Ecuador, however, things went the opposite way. Rather than demobilizing the peasantry through state intervention, the 1973 land reform incited indigenous mobilization.

The participants involved framed the struggle differently. Whereas leftist activists emphasized class struggle, the hacendados and their collaborators resorted to ethnic stereotyping to discredit and repress the organized peasants. For their part, the peasants added an extra moral grounding for their land demands learning and mobilizing the notion that the conquerors had taken the land from their ancestors. In this chapter, I analyze the way in which class and ethnicity played out in the land struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí. First, I focus on the problems faced by indigenous leaders in recruiting support among their peers to demand the expropriation of the hacienda. This was a difficult endeavor because many indígenas considered that they could not win a dispute against non-indígenas, and less so, a legal fight against the powerful hacendado. Second, I focus on the emergence of an indigenous historical critique as an outcome of those organizing efforts. Comparing the application of land reforms in Ecuador and Peru, I argue that the development of a new historical consciousness among Ecuadorian indigenous peasants was fundamental for the creation of an indigenous imagined community sharing a historical experience and a present purpose.

### *The Hacienda Quinchuquí*

Having almost 700 hectares of prime agricultural land, the hacienda Quinchuquí dominated the landscape to the northeast of the city of Otavalo. It occupied the flattest area of the valley and controlled the main source of water for irrigation, a stream coming from the Lake San Pablo through the Waterfall of Peguche. Extending east-to-west from the foot of Mount Imbabura to the Ambi River, the hacienda was split in half by the Pan-American Highway, the most important road connecting all main cities in the Ecuadorian highlands.

During colonial times in the Audiencia of Quito, the conquerors and their descendents appropriated and monopolized the best agricultural land very early, from the sixteenth century on. According to Karen Vieira Powers, this was so because of the relative lack of precious metals, and the relative autonomy of the Audiencia of Quito from the Viceroyalty of Lima (Vieira Powers 2000: 11). The Hacienda Quinchuquí resulted from the merging of four colonial haciendas: Quinchuquí Alto, Quinchuquí Bajo, Cotama, and Peguche. Until its expropriation in 1983, this land had been in the hands of an aristocratic lineage. In 1740, the haciendas Quinchuquí Bajo, Quinchuquí Alto, and Peguche belonged to the aristocrat Cristóbal de Jijón, the owner of the *obraje* (a colonial textile factory using coerced indigenous labor) of Peguche (Guerrero 1991: 159). Cristóbal de Jijón was an ancestor of Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, the aristocrat archaeologist and industrialist whose ideas are explained in chapter II. In 1910, Beatriz Larrea de Barba inherited Quinchuquí Alto from her mother, Rosa Jijón de Larrea. In the same year, the husband of Beatriz Larrea de Barba, Alfonso Barba Aguirre, winning a bidding for the other haciendas, consolidated the Hacienda Quinchuquí as their property. In 1959,

Alfonso Barba Aguirre donated the Hacienda Quinchuquí to his son Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea (Donación y partición Notaria Olmedo del Pozo).

Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea had adopted the last name of a hero of Ecuadorian independence, Juan Pío Montúfar, to whom the Barba family was distantly related. He added Montúfar to Barba making a compound last name: Montúfar Barba. In 1961, Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea legally separated Quinchuquí Alto and Cotama from the Hacienda Quinchuquí and donated these two parts to his children, Carlos, Juan, Santiago, and Gloria Montúfar Barba Freile, who were still minors. That land could not be further divided. Notwithstanding the partition, Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea kept administering the whole hacienda as one property (Testimonio de la Escritura... 1961). More than likely, the subdivision of the property among his children was a strategy to reduce possibilities of future expropriation, if ever a land reform was going to be implemented. Since 1959, there were discussions at state level about implementing a land reform (Barsky 1988: 39).

Indígenas who participated in the land struggle had told me that the family of the hacendado owned many haciendas.

The owner of this hacienda was called Carlos Montúfar Barba. They [his family] had nineteen haciendas in the country. When we started, thirteen of those were under land reform litigation. Right there in the IERAC, we met with people who were also reclaiming land from the same family: Montúfar (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

A notarized document written in 1959, in which Alfonso Barba Aguirre donates and distributes his haciendas and other real estate properties to his children, lists those nineteen haciendas (Notaria Olmedo del Pozo 1959; see also CONADE 1979). According to Jaime Galarza, during the 1960s, six aristocratic families concentrated the ownership

of 160 latifundia in the central and northern highlands. These families were Jijón, Plaza, Lasso, Gangotena, Ponce, Barba, and Donoso (Galarza 1979: 24).

Until the early 1960s, the Hacienda Quinchuquí was predominantly agricultural producing mostly corn, potato, wheat, and barley. It was somewhat mechanized, using two tractors since the 1950s. In 1962, the hacendado replaced the few ordinary cattle with many pedigreed Holstein cattle, turning the hacienda to milk production. By 1967, having as much as 500 head of Holstein cattle, agriculture had become complementary to milk production, and most of the land was growing artificial pastures. During the early 1970, a plague affected the grass, curbing further increase of milk production. The hacendado increased agricultural production, requiring more labor force (Guerrero 1991: 161, 169).

The Hacienda Quinchuquí was part of a trend in the northern highlands to “modernize” the haciendas, in contrast to the southern highlands, which continued to operate under the old hacienda regime. The modernization of northern haciendas involved capital investment in infrastructure and mechanization, strong control over resources, transformation from agriculture to milk production, direct management, disposal of unproductive land, and replacement of servile labor arrangements with wage labor (Barsky 1988: 52; Waters 2007: 128). On the one hand, this trend responded to the increasing urbanization of Ecuador and the concomitant increasing demand for dairy products. On the other hand, this trend was a response to the increasing criticism of the hacienda system as obsolete, as an obstacle for national development, by liberal and leftist politicians. During the 1960s, land reform became a prevalent idea to modernize Ecuador. Not only there had been widespread land reforms in Bolivia, in 1952, and Cuba, after 1959, but also the United States was promoting land reform in Latin America

through the Alliance for Progress program. Fearing peasants' unrest leading to communist revolutions, John F. Kennedy's program emphasized the need for more equitable land and income distribution in Latin American countries.<sup>89</sup> In Ecuador, according to Walter Waters, "between 1960 and 1962, six agrarian reform measures were proposed by different—often diametrically opposed—groups. All called for abolishing servile labor arrangements and for redistributing some of the land then in large holdings" (Waters 2007: 125).

In a process that varied greatly, some hacendados saw that the best way to keep their haciendas was to turn them from big inefficient traditional estates into smaller efficient modern productive units, breaking in the process their dependence on servile labor force provided by indigenous communities. While for some hacendados "modernization" meant turning the hacienda into a full capitalist enterprise, for others, it involved placing a few cows to graze on hacienda land to avoid claims of underutilization (M. Bustos 7/20/2005). As a modern and efficient hacienda fully controlling its resources, having no unproductive land and no property issues, the Hacienda Quinchuquí was not besieged by

<sup>89</sup> In the Charter of Punta del Este, Uruguay, signed on August 1961, the republics in the Americas agreed to adopt the following fundamental goal:

To encourage, in accordance with the characteristics of each country, programs of comprehensive agrarian reform leading to the effective transformation, where required, of unjust structures and systems of land tenure and use, with a view of replacing latifundia and dwarf holdings by an equitable system of land tenure so that, with the help of timely and adequate credit, technical assistance and facilities for the marketing and distribution of products, the land will become for the man who works it the basis of his economic stability, the foundation of his increasing welfare, and the guarantee of his freedom and dignity (Special Meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council at the Ministerial Level, Punta del Este, Uruguay, August 17, 1961, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001426/142605eb.pdf>).

the indigenous peasants.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the hacienda had not followed modernization to the letter, keeping unfree labor arrangements until the indigenous peasants initiated the procedures for an expropriation trial in September 1977 (CONADE 1979).

The 1964 Land Reform did little but prohibit the *huasipungo*. As stated before, in this arrangement of unfree labor, the *huasipunguero* and his extended family worked four to six days a week on the hacienda in exchange of the usufruct to a small parcel for a small house and subsistence farming (Waters 2007: 122-123). *Huasipungueros* were considered part of the hacienda inventory and were sold as such (Meier 1996: 125). The 1964 Land Reform mandated the *hacendados* to give *huasipungo* parcels in property to the *huasipungueros*. In 1964-5, the Hacienda Quinchuquí gave parcels to twenty *huasipungueros*. As was common during that land reform, the *huasipungueros* did not receive the 5-7 hectares of land passed down from their fathers but one hectare plots on hilly land next to their communities (Guerrero 1991: 161, 170). Many of these *huasipungueros* continued working on the hacienda for a wage, mostly as *wakracamas*, caretakers of the cattle, on permanent basis.

The 1973 Land Reform Law made the continuation of unfree labor arrangements a cause for expropriation. In spite of this, the Hacienda Quinchuquí kept on using the *yanapa* to procure labor. Under this arrangement, *indígenas* of the neighboring communities worked two to three days a week in exchange for access to hacienda resources (Waters 2007: 123). In the Hacienda Quinchuquí, these resources included a) pastures to feed sheep and some cattle—*indígenas* took their animals to natural pastures,

<sup>90</sup> Rafael Barahona has argued that resident and non-resident peasants exerted internal and



or to artificial pastures after the hacienda cattle had eaten or before the plowing of a parcel, b) grass to feed guinea pigs, c) firewood for cooking—not cut-off logs but fallen branches and leaves from the forested areas of the hacienda, d) water from springs for domestic use, for their animals, and for washing wool for textile domestic production, e) pathways to get in and out their communities, and f) harvest leftovers—the gathering of which indígenas call *chucchir*, in Kichwa.

Peasants under the yanapa arrangement worked collectively in *mingas* (Kichwa: collective or communal work). The mayordomo assigned a *tarea*, a task to be done in an area or length, to a family or a group of yanaperos. During harvest, up to 120 persons could work in a minga, although that number was probably smaller during the 1970s (Guerrero 1991: 162). The yanapa relationship was based on established custom and reciprocal rights and obligations for both peasants and hacendado, and not on peasant indebtedness. Originally, it included material as well as symbolic exchanges. Traditional festivities “central to village social status and manhood incorporated the *hacendado*... as the central symbolic sources of authority” (Kyle 2000: 136). As a “modern” and absentee hacendado, Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea did not participate in local festivities. There is no memory of him participating. Living in Quito and having many haciendas, aristocratic landlords such as him did not cultivate personalized and paternalist relationships with the indígenas working on their property. These hacendados were too detached from the social life of their haciendas to participate in ritual practice. When the communities of La Bolsa and Guanansi celebrated the fiesta del gallo capitán, the mayordomo selected the sponsor, and the exchange of food took place between both communities, rather than between the

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external siege (asedio) on the haciendas (Turner 1993: 47).

peasants and the hacendado. Sometime during the 1970s, people stopped celebrating this fiesta all together because of the expenses involved.

Most of the labor force of the Hacienda Quinchuquí came from the communities of La Bolsa, Guanansi, and, to a lesser extent, Carabuela. Some peasants from Ilumán and Chimbaloma also labored for the hacienda. In contrast to the free communities of Peguche and Quinchuquí, which are higher on the valley, across the Pan-American Highway, La Bolsa, Guanansi, and Carabuela were hacienda communities, next to the prime agricultural land in the lower part of the valley. Peguche and Quinchuquí provided almost no labor to the hacienda. In 1941, according to Parsons, of 122 households in Peguche, only 3 were “‘hacienda Indians,’ tenants working out their rent on the hacienda” (Parsons 1945: 8). In contrast, La Bolsa, Guanansi, and Carabuela depended on haciendas for their social reproduction up to the 1970s.<sup>91</sup> Located at the foot of a big, steep hill, La Bolsa and Guanansi were circumscribed by the Hacienda Quinchuquí. Carabuela, at a lower and gentle hill, was sandwiched between the Hacienda Quinchuquí and the Hacienda Pinsaquí, further north. Inhabitants of La Bolsa, Guanansi, and Carabuela had to labor for those haciendas in exchange of use of pathways. They could not walk freely to go out of their communities. According to the Ecuadorian civil code, hacendados had the right to charge for the use of pathways in their properties (Galarza 1979: 157).

Inhabitants of these three communities had very little land of their own, mostly next to their houses on hilly terrain. They owned an average of 460 square meters in La Bolsa, 600 in Guanansi, and 420 in Carabuela (CONADE 1979). Besides laboring for the

hacienda as yanaperos, they supplemented their income having some animals: cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, and guinea pigs. In addition, they produced some handmade textiles, such as scarves. In Carabuela, during the 1970s, the development of commercial knitting, making wool sweaters, had reduced the dependence on yanapa labor of some of the inhabitants (Korovkin 1998: 135-141; Meier 1996: 217).

Considering the historical divide between hacienda communities and free communities, David Kyle, following Guerrero (1991: 165), claims that the communities tied to yanapa relations—La Bolsa and Guanansi—had a “worldview radically different from that of nonyanapa communities”—Peguche and Quinchuquí.

A worldview shaped by the physical borders of the hacienda and the social universe of the hacendado and the church. Perhaps more important, the common experience of colonial domination among yanapa communities “y los de arriba” (and those socially and geographically higher) shaped each community’s perception of themselves and their relation to other communities (Kyle 2000: 136-137).

This divide was reflected in the ritual fighting during the Festivities of San Juan, in which those communities participated in opposite groups trying to take the plaza of the Church of San Juan, west of Otavalo (Conejo 1995; Kyle 2000: 136). In addition, interacting with non-indígenas, their presentation of self, in the sense given by Erving Goffman (1981), was different. While inhabitants of La Bolsa and Guanansi were submissive, those of Peguche and Quinchuquí were self-assured (Guerrero 1991; Rubio Orbe 1955). Furthermore, up to the 1970s, La Bolsa and Guanansi had a much higher percentage of Kichwa monolinguals. Indígenas learned Spanish going to school, or traveling or migrating outside their communities (F. Ramos 6/14/2006). Peguche and Quinchuquí had more bilinguals not only because many of their inhabitants turned to itinerant trading but

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<sup>91</sup> Prieto has analyzed the way in which Ecuadorian elites viewed the indios libres and indios de

also because those communities had primary schools decades before La Bolsa and Guanansí.

During the 1970s, Guerrero witnessed that the indígenas of Peguche and Quinchuquí considered themselves superior to the “indios de hacienda” of the communities of La Bolsa and Guanansi. Free from the authority and coercion of the hacienda, they valued their own entrepreneurial spirit and their capacity to interact as producers and merchants with the non-indígena population of Otavalo. They perceived the inhabitants of La Bolsa and Guanansi as having the opposite characteristics: “submissive personality, shrunk intelligence, and reduced self-esteem” (1992: 104). They considered the inhabitants of La Bolsa and Guanansi as “‘silly, poor, weak,’ as less advanced people, who let themselves be exploited by the hacendado” (Guerrero 1991: 174).

The hacendado, Carlos Montúfar Barba, came to the hacienda a few times a year, for short visits usually at times of harvest. On daily basis, one administrator and three mayordomos run the hacienda. The mayordomos were assisted by a few *mayorales*, foremen recruited from the indigenous communities. Two of the mayordomos supervised the cattle caretakers, who received wages, and the milkers, who were all women and received milk in exchange for their labor. The other mayordomo recruited and directed the yanapa laborers and guarded hacienda territory and resources. The hacienda huge and domineering space was a metaphor of the hacendado’s overwhelming power. Nobody could enter the hacienda without permission of the mayordomo. Eduardo Cachimuel, one of the indigenous leaders during the land struggle, recalls the way in which the mayordomo conducted yanapa work.

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hacienda as deeply different (Prieto 2004).

One of the mayordomos was called Nicolás Domínguez. Mounted on horse, he toured the communities shouting, “¡a la minga!”... I think that as a part of their domination, they made us drink... The mayordomo, himself, gave drinks (chicha and trago) as refreshment to everybody. So, the people got drunk, and returned to the communities, even at night, very drunk...

People feared that if they did not show up, the mayordomo was going to catch them. He wrote names and kept a record... If, supposedly, somebody missed work, and on Wednesday, he tried to gather water, the mayordomo would come and take away everything from the person’s hands. If the person had a calf with him, the mayordomo would also take it away, taking the animal to the hacienda.

Then, the mayordomo gave him tasks for his whole family... as punishment.

The mayordomo... toured the communities every day, every day. He went around on his horse, in the morning, in the afternoon, anytime he pleased (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

The mayordomo knew all the yanaperos by name. When the mayordomo caught somebody who supposedly should not be gathering hacienda resources or using hacienda pathways, he usually snatched a prenda. He would write the name of the owner in a piece of paper and pin the paper to the prenda. In addition, if an animal of an indígena entered hacienda pastures without permission, the mayordomo would take the animal away. He would ransom the prenda or the animal until the owner and his/her family labored for the hacienda on the amount dictated by the mayordomo. This practice of taking a prenda, which frequently used physical force, was common across the Andes (Skar 1995).<sup>92</sup> The indígenas were very aware of the mayordomo’s whereabouts in order to gather resources without been caught. Many indígenas gathered resources at night trying to avoid troubles with the mayordomo. In view of the extension of the hacienda, it was apparently easy to

<sup>92</sup> Collier and Buitrón wrote:

In their dealings with whites and mestizos, Indians always face exploitation. Any white or mestizo believes himself entitled to take a “token” (a prenda) from an Indian—perhaps his broad-brimmed hat—and oblige him to work on private or public projects without pay (Buitrón and Collier 1949: 91).

According to Lund Skar, the practice of taking prendas “seems to have been introduced by the haciendas, possibly with antecedents in colonial law” (Skar 1995: 792). Peter Gose suggests that the practice may be associated with the *reparto de mercancías* (Gose 1994).

avoid being caught, but the problem was that other indígenas, more likely the wage laborers or the mayorales, denounced the gatherers to the mayordomo. In case of being caught, the punishment was severe, having to work much harder than in a minga (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

Indigenous peasants consider that the mayordomo, the overseer, always “*mezquinaba*”—he was stingy—harassing people who were gathering the resources, even those who have worked in the minga (J. C. de la Torre 8/5/2005; see also Guerrero 1991: 186). People recalled their frustration when the mayordomo “*tomaba prenda*,” for reasons that they thought were not fair; for instance, when a small animal escaped and entered the hacienda for a moment, without eating anything. When catching people gathering water, the mayordomo often would break their *pondos*, their big pottery jars (Ramos 1986: 14). This lack of consensus over redistribution was a source of endemic conflict and resentment towards the mayordomo. Accordingly, the institutionalized reciprocity of the yanapa relationship was in permanent tension (cf. Lyons 2006: 157).

In the implicit contract of exchanging hacienda resources for yanapa labor, not all the resources ranked equal. Indígenas resented that they have to work in exchange of water and use of pathways. They considered unfair that they could not access flowing springs of clear water that were close to their communities, and that they could not walk freely to get out their communities. They resented that they had to sneak out, trying to avoid being seen by the mayordomo. After all, they knew that people in Peguche or Quinchuquí did not have to labor in exchange for access to water and pathways (J. C. de la Torre 8/5/2005). The irrigation channel of the Hacienda Quinchuquí went through the communities Peguche and Quinchuquí, and crossed underneath the Pan-American

highway. Indígenas living in those communities could gather water for domestic use but could not use it to irrigate their own fields, which sometimes are just next to the channel. They depended on rain for irrigation (Parsons 1945: 8). Indígenas in La Bolsa, Guanansi, and Carabuela, more than anything, resented the mistreatment exerted by the mayordomo. Many commented that one of the last mayordomos was particularly cruel. They said that people was terrified of him (F. Ramos 6/14/2006; S. Ramos 7/21/2006; see also Rogers 2001: 86).

Dealing with abusive mayordomos, parents told their children not to resist the taking of the prenda, that it was worst to fight than letting the mayordomo take the prenda. The mayordomo could beat the supposed infringer or get the support of the police in Otavalo and take him or her to jail. The mayordomo's behavior followed a social script: it was harsh and explicitly racist. During mingas, he whipped men for supposedly not working at a fast pace. He went around the hacienda mounted on horse and accompanied by big dogs. His language of command was always offensive, constantly insulting the peasants as indios, using variations of phrases such as "indios vagos (lazy Indians)," "indios hijos de puta" (son-of-a-whore Indians)," and "indios de mierda" (shitty Indians). The mayordomo spoke to the indígenas in Kichwa, but when insulting them as indios, he used Spanish, reflecting the hierarchical relationship between both languages (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina 2004). The mayordomo acted with the explicit complicity of the wider non-indígena society. Anytime, he could bring the police and arrest the peasants. For instance, Florentino Ramos retold to me the following story,

My parents had four cattle. They used to take the cattle to pasture around 10 at night or during dawn up to the forest, but always there was somebody who informed on them, no? Some people were accustomed to work for the hacienda and supported the hacendado. They were convinced that this was the way of life of the indígenas. They

did not know how to liberate themselves, no? They informed on other people to the hacendado. Thus, he knew what was going on at night. One time, the mayordomo and a police had gone up and had taken my father and others to prison. At that time, the people spoke almost no Spanish, and were not organized. At that time, people were very frightened (6/14/2006).

The relationship between the mayordomo and the indígenas was personal. Head of families tried to improve their relations with the mayordomo by means of establishing relations of *compadrazgo*. Male head of families also interceded on behalf of minors and women. Their success in lessening or avoiding labor punishment depended on the strength of their influences on the mayordomo. Indicating their social proximity, Eduardo Cachimuel, a member of leadership of the pre-cooperative, went together with the children of the mayordomo from the hacienda to Otavalo every school day, by foot or bus, when they were boys attending school (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

Out of rage and with considerable risks, young adults would very sporadically challenge the mayordomo. In 1971, in a nearby hacienda, a young indígena killed a mayordomo. Responding to the whiplash of the mayordomo, the indígena attacked him, cutting his head off with a shovel (Villavicencio 1973: 136).<sup>93</sup> The following testimony from an indígena from Carabuela, involving the mayordomo of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, is telling in terms of the morality and negotiation of respect involved.

I was gathering firewood when the mayordomo came [unexpectedly] towards me [on his horse]... He insulted me. Then, I said to [him,] a mestizo—because I spoke a bit

<sup>93</sup> According to Muriel Crespi, Molding Indians into docile labor force is a burden many patrons accept as inherent in their own roles. As one Cayambe patron depicted it, the making of a “good” Indian is analogous to breaking a horse:

In order to be tamed, Indians must be held firmly by the reins and shown that any attempt to throw or bite their riders is to no avail. You must never reveal your fear. If the Indian suspect your fear, he will surely attack. But if you are consistently unyielding, he will become trained to your liking... soft-spoken, responsive to your commands, and good (Crespi 1973: 154-155).



of Spanish—"We had lived in the hacienda since we were children. Our parents, our grandfathers had lived serving. Why do we want to gather and keep the firewood? Why?... Because we work and work all of our lives."

"This firewood goes to the hacienda," the mayordomo said. "Indio son of a whore," he said to me.

Then, I said, "whom do you think are treating like that?" "Maricón [faggot]," I said to him.

He wanted to give me a thrashing. I, in turn, have a machete, very sharp. I said to him, "you kill me or I kill you. Here we are on equal ground. I going to defend myself the best as I can. Because I am an employee of the hacienda, you are not going to treat me bad, as you please. I am taking firewood not for the hacienda but for my own need," I said.

Then, he wanted to give me a blow with the whip. I grabbed the whip and made him come down to the ground. I grabbed him by the neck. That morning it was raining hard. The water in the river was running high. I was pulling him toward the river to push him in the water. I was very angry...

Then, there, grabbing him by the neck, at that moment that we were close to the river, he said, "Carlos, calm down!"

"You've been too sly," he told me.

"Is not that I've been to sly. It is that you have threaten me," I said.

Right there, he let me go. "Now, go away. Keep the firewood," he told me.

From then on, he never treated me wrong, never.

Sometimes, when I met him on a path he would say, "Carlos, you should come to the faena. We have a faena in the hacienda. You have to help. If you want to gather anything from the hacienda, you need to work."

"Well, I will be delighted to do that, but I do not like to be mistreated. We are proper indios, no? As you are a mestizo," I said.

I stood strong. That is the way it was. Then, I was twenty year old. There, I stood strong (J. C. de la Torre 8/5/2005).

In his narrative, the peasant does not challenge the legitimacy of the yanapa exchange. Rather, he challenges the mayordomo as the executor of mistreatment and demands respect from him. It is significant that the peasant felt empowered to challenge the mayordomo by his ability to speak some Spanish. In addition, he introduces another common theme in the indigenous critique of the hacienda: the articulation that parents, grandparents, and older ancestors had spent their lives working for the hacienda and their descendents deserve something back. The implication is that exchange under the yanapa has been unbalanced, that the labor provided has exceeded the resources taken.

The abusive nature of the relationship between the indígenas and non-indígenas was a major theme during the festivities of San Juan and San Pedro, in late June. Many indígenas would dress up as mayordomos and blancos, wearing blanco boots, clothes and hats. Carrying whips, they would dance in groups imitating the actions of the mayordomo. As Erving Goffman has argued, during festivities, subalterns invert their social roles to profane their superiors. In those moments, those acts are legitimate because they substitute conspiracy by expression (Goffman 1972).<sup>94</sup>

During the 1970s, several youth from the agricultural communities attended school in the city of Otavalo. Those in secondary school, having learned civics, felt indignation facing the abuse of the mayordomos. In those situations, they asked themselves, “What can we do to stop this?” (C. Yamberla 10/4/2005). The first collective confrontation with the mayordomo occurred when around twenty young indígenas, who had been entering the hacienda surreptitiously to play soccer, since there was no other space available, stood firm and claimed that they, as everybody else, have the right to play sports (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

### *Making the expropriation of the hacienda imaginable*

Florentino Ramos, who initiated the demand for expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, learned about land reform through his work as literacy teacher, in a national literacy campaign in 1977 during the military government. He is from the community of

<sup>94</sup> Rites of reversal have been an early topic of anthropological analysis. Gluckman sees them as cathartic expressions serving as social binders (Gluckman 2010). Victor Turner emphasizes their liminality but claiming that ultimately they serve to restore social relations, reaffirming the order of social structure (Turner 1969). The literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin underlines their subversive aesthetics, the grotesque, which expresses the reversal of moral assumptions and hierarchic levels (Bakhtin 1974).

La Bolsa. Having completed primary school, he worked at night teaching adults to read and write in the community of Cotama. This community, not to be confused with the part of the Hacienda Quinchuquí that is also called Cotama, is approximately one kilometer and a half from La Bolsa, at the other side of the hill that shelters both communities.

At that time, some peasants of the community of Cotama were involved in land reform litigation to expropriate the Hacienda San Vicente. Florentino Ramos started to participate in their meetings, and learned that there was a law supporting organized peasants demanding land. In addition, adding legitimacy to the peasants' demands, he learned that in the province of Chimborazo, Monsignor Leonidas Proaño was on the side of the peasants (F. Ramos 6/14/2006). Known as the "Bishop of the Indians," Proaño was a liberation theology priest who fought passionately for social justice for the indígenas. He supported land reform and expedited the expropriation of haciendas that belonged to the church in Chimborazo, the province under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction (Cornejo Menacho 1992; Lyons 2001, 2006).

The Hacienda San Vicente belonged to the Municipality of Otavalo. Its previous owner had lost it to a bank because he did not keep up paying the mortgage. The Municipality bought it from the bank on September 1971 (Ilustre Municipio de San Luis de Otavalo 1961). The leader of the indígenas of Cotama demanding the expropriation of the Hacienda San Vicente was José Clelio Cachimuel. The way in which he learned about land reform exemplifies the role of contingency in initiating expropriation demands. As a boy, José Clelio Cachimuel assisted school for only one year. As a young man, he served in the military as a conscript, from 1974 to 1975. After he returned to Cotama from military service, his sister became embroiled in a conflict with the mayordomo of the

Hacienda San Vicente. One Saturday, she was herding their few animals close to the hacienda. Then, one of their piglets entered the hacienda when the mayordomo was approaching. He seized the animal as a prenda to coerce the family to work for the hacienda. The woman did not want the mayordomo to seize the piglet and exchanged her shawl, necklaces, and bracelets for it. Since the hacienda belonged to the Municipality, on Monday the family received a citation, an order to appear in the Municipality, or face prison or fees. José Clelio Cachimuel went to see a non-indígena acquaintance, a woman, who contacted him with a lawyer. Both, the woman and the lawyer, were leftist activists and lived in Quito. Two days later, since nobody of the family had appeared in the municipality, the comisario municipal (senior officer of the municipal police) issued a warrant for the arrest of the head of the family.

Then, I presented myself to the Comisario on Wednesday. He told me, “Cachimuel, you are the rebel who does not show up, who ignores the authorities.” I told him, “I am not ignoring the authorities, but I have been busy. Precisely, I came to present myself and to present this legal document.” The lawyer had written, “any damage to the hacienda must be verified by experts from the Ministry of Agriculture. They have to evaluate the damage made by the animal. Otherwise, nobody can be fined.” The Comisario said, “What’s up with you Mr. Cachimuel? Why are you spending money if we can solve all the problem here?” He called a policeman who was in the plaza, a municipal policeman, and said to him, “get a taxi and go right now to bring that prenda [from the Hacienda San Vicente]” (J. C. Cachimuel 8/24/2006).

This incident, in which an indígena confronted non-indígena institutionalized abuse, made José Clelio Cachimuel renowned in his community. In the next election for community authorities, he ran for president and won. He called the lawyer with the news, and the lawyer told him to organize a minga among his peers. On February 15, 1976, after inviting the lawyer, José Clelio Cachimuel led an agricultural minga for the benefit of the community.

[There,] I told him, ‘I am the leader of this community. This is my community. This is the people that live working in San Vicente.’ ‘Very good,’ he told me.’ So, let’s

organize a pre-cooperative, and the hacienda in six months or so can be yours.’ [I responded] ‘Uhm, what? What is the Law of Land Reform?’... The Law of Land Reform argued that if there was yanapa, the hacienda should to be given to the community or organization that worked the land (8/24/2006).

Recruiting members for the pre-cooperative was difficult. Many of the indígenas of Cotama were fatalistic. They asked José Clelio Cachimuel, “How are we going to win if they are mishus and we are indígenas? How? We do not want problems here.” Less than a half of the heads of households in the community enrolled. The pre-cooperative was legally constituted with 109 members, but most of them quit. The fact that the hacienda was considered part of the urban expansion of Otavalo complicated the expropriation process. In addition, the mayor of Otavalo not only threatened the leader of the indígenas with massive repression but also offered him to expropriate the Hacienda Quinchuquí in exchange. At the end of a murky litigation, in which the pre-cooperative got 45 of the 240 hectares of the defunct hacienda, only 45 members remained (J. C. Cachimuel 8/24/2006).

In the Hacienda Quinchuquí, there was no criticism of the legitimacy of the ownership of the hacienda before learning about land reform and initiating the demand for expropriation. Rather than fighting for land, some indígenas in La Bolsa and Guanansi wanted to buy some land from the hacendado, a few plots between La Bolsa and the Pan-American Highway. They wanted the land not only for their families but also to have a free path to enter and exit their communities. They knew that the hacendado had sold ten hectares in same area to a non-indígena. In the mid 1970s, they went to the house of the hacendado in Quito, taking chickens, guinea pigs, potatoes, and lima beans as gifts. They asked him to sell this piece of land, but the hacendado refused (F. Ramos 6/14/2006; S. R., 7/21/2006).

In 1977, under the leadership of Florentino Ramos, around thirty young indígenas of La Bolsa met a few times and decided to form a pre-cooperative. In his words,

Seeing the situation in Cotama, some youth of my generation asked ourselves, ‘why we do not organize if Cotama is doing it?...We started the litigation because of two reasons. First, because we saw that there were possibilities for expropriation through the law of land reform, as they were doing in Cotama. And second, because the owner of the hacienda did not sell land to us. Instead he was selling to other people with money. He did not want to sell little plots [to us] (6/14/2006).

The initial stages of organizing were full of doubts and insecurity. “At the beginning, we did not know what we were doing, because we had no experience and did not know about law. In brief, we did not know where to start” (F. Ramos 7/14/2006).

After establishing the pre-cooperative, the leaders did nothing for a few months. Due to this lack of action, some of the initial members started to get worried and cast doubts upon the capacity of the organization (Ramos 1986: 17). They took their complaints to the leadership and claimed, “If we cannot do it, why do we have become organized?” (F. Ramos 7/14/2006). In addition, the mayordomo was well aware of their organizing efforts. Some persons had already informed on them. In retaliation, the mayordomo accused the members of the pre-cooperative of being communists, and expelled them from the hacienda when they were doing yanapa work. He told them to go to Ramos and ask him for food for their animals. This pressure from below made the leadership aware that initiating expropriation procedures involved serious responsibility (F. Ramos 7/14/2006). A legal struggle would surely halt all yanapa work and access to hacienda resources. After all, the indígenas in La Bolsa and Guanansi depended on the hacienda to feed their animals.

The initial idea of the leadership was to demand the expropriation of the same piece of land, around twenty hectares, that their parents had unsuccessfully tried to buy from

the hacendado. They planned to initiate the demand for expropriation with the participation of only the communities of La Bolsa and Guanansi (Ramos 1986: 17). It never occurred to them to demand the expropriation of the whole hacienda. Not knowing what to do, Florentino Ramos went to talk to José Clelio Cachimuel. The latter explained to Ramos how to start the demand and told him to contact the lawyer supporting the pre-cooperative in Cotama. A few days later, Florentino Ramos led a commission to Quito to talk to the lawyer. In that meeting, Ramos and his peers were blown away.

The lawyer told us, “Why don’t we take all the hacienda from the hacendado? Why don’t you organize all the surrounding communities? You can take all.” For us, this was impossible. It was something that we couldn’t do. We did not think such a thing. All we wanted was to buy the little access to La Bolsa. Our cooperative included La Bolsa and Guanansi... to form a cooperative and start a legal trial, but only for that little part, only for that access area.

So, when the lawyer told us that, those of us in the commission left frightened. First, we were unknown *guambras* (youths). So, people were not going to believe us. Well, in our communities, they could believe us but not in the others, because they did not know us... the lawyer said to us that organizing all the communities, we were going to have more strength, no? And we dared. We took the risks and said, “then, let’s do it, whatever happens” (6/14/2006).

The Law of Land Reform of 1973 emphasized agricultural productivity over land distribution, explicitly framing the former as its main objective. The law stated that economic inefficiency was a major reason for state intervention. However, the law included a clause giving hacendados a grace period of two years to improve their haciendas and avoid expropriation (Pallares 1998: 163). Legal grounds to expropriate hacienda land included having inefficient production, unused land, unfree labor, or high demographic pressure. The latter existed in areas in which the peasants did not have enough land to meet their subsistence needs. There was also a provision allowing the expropriation of high-altitude pastures, called *páramos*. As a ground for initiating expropriation trials, demographic pressure was seldom used. Since it could target highly

efficient haciendas, according to Korovkin, “it went against the modernizing ‘productivist’ spirit of the land reform. As such it was opposed not only by landowners but also but many government officials who feared that the application of this clause would disrupt the flow of commercial surplus” (Korovkin 1992: 18).

To initiate a demand for expropriation under the 1973 Law of Land Reform, peasants had to organize themselves in pre-cooperatives, with the aim of forming a cooperative or association once the land was expropriated. To keep economies of scale and avoid the *minifundio*—subsistence-oriented smallholdings—the government forbade the subdivision of expropriated land. Peasants could also file a demand as registered communes, which had legal existence under the Law of Communes of 1937, but most peasants organized as pre-cooperatives in order to keep the same core leadership. The authorities of the communes were elected every year and could have different perspectives on land expropriation, risking the derailing of the litigation process (M. Burbano 1/16/2006). Requiring peasants to organize to demand land produced three outcomes. First, many haciendas that could be expropriated never were because peasants did not organize to file a lawsuit. More than likely, they lacked information and/or feared repression. Second, in order to avoid or stop expropriation lawsuits, the hacendados sold some land to the peasants. Since this land was marginal, the hacendado kept the best land. Finally, peasants who were able to organize and file an expropriation lawsuit entered into direct conflict with the hacendados and their collaborators. In addition, the organized peasants had to find a trustworthy lawyer to represent them during the years-long litigation, which included appeals to reverse expropriation judgments. During the 1970s, virtually all lawyers in Ecuador were non-indígena. Many of them supported indígenas in



land struggles following leftist ideals, believing in a better future for all Ecuadorians. On the other hand, many others demanded land in exchange for their services, or made under-the-table deals with the hacendado (M. Burbano 1/16/2006).

The indigenous communities in or adjacent to the Hacienda Quinchuquí were La Bolsa, Guanansi, Carabuela, Ilumán, Quinchuquí, Chimbalo, and Peguche. To convince people to join the pre-cooperative, the leaders explained the existence of the land reform, which the former did not know about it.<sup>95</sup> They also told them that in other parts of Ecuador indígenas were successfully taking over other haciendas. Since the expropriated land was going to be owned collectively, the leaders could not mobilize the idea of private ownership of the land. They explained that in the future they would work for themselves without patronos nor mayordomos. According to the Law of Land Reform, the state compensated the hacendado for his land, and the beneficiaries of the expropriation had to pay the money back to the state at low interest rates and long terms. This, the leaders did not tell. Even until the end of the litigation, most of the members did not know that they would have to pay for the land. To recruit members in other communities, leaders used kinship relations, as many had family ties with people in other communities. They also used mingas, and cultural and sport events to encourage people to sign up. At the beginning, the main motivation to join the pre-cooperative was to stop the abuse of the mayordomo. In particular, the schooled, younger generation was unwilling to put up with it any longer (C. Yamberla 10/4/2005; J. C. Cachimuel 8/24/2006; E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

<sup>95</sup> Newspapers, such as *El Comercio*, covered extensively the land reform, before and after its promulgation. Even considering that most of the adult population in the indigenous communities was illiterate, their exclusion from the public sphere is revealing.

The main barriers for recruiting members were the assumption that it was impossible to take the hacienda from the hacendado and the fear of repression. Explaining why inhabitants of his own community, Guanansi, and that of La Bolsa did not join the pre-cooperative, one of the leaders told the following reasons to Elizabeth Rogers: “illiteracy; ignorance of the law, specifically the agrarian reform measures; the inability to think that the patrón could be overcome; the existence of gamonalismo (abuse); and the fathering of children by the mayordomo” (2001: 295). The inexperience and immaturity of the leaders of the pre-cooperative, who were in their early twenties, exacerbated these ideas. The leaders had a hard time trying to convince people in Peguche to join the pre-cooperative. According to Florentino Ramos, “there, people are involved in handicraft production. Since we were a very poor community, they did not believe us. ‘How are those *lluchos* (Kichwa: very poor and thin) going to take over a hacienda?’ At the beginning, they made fun of us, and we were not able to organize many people there” (F. Ramos 6/14/2006). For many indígenas, to take over the whole hacienda was against their “sense of limits”—the way in which the social order is inscribed in people’s minds. According to Bourdieu, objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of limits acquired by experience, creating a ‘sense of one’s place’ in the world. In other words, taking over the hacienda was against doxa, the structuring of experience of the social world in adherence to relations of order that are accepted as self-evident, because they structure inseparably both the real and the thought world (1991).

The leaders were able to set a committee with a president, vice-president, treasurer, a *síndico* (supervisor), and secretary. They also set sub-committees in all the communities involved. For them, it was imperative to demonstrate with actions that winning was

possible. “If we did not demonstrate with something, some action, some practical feat, the people would not believe [that expropriation was possible]. Very easily, we could lose the leadership” (E. Cachimuel 9/7/2005). When they were recruiting members for the pre-cooperative, before filing the expropriation demand, the leaders organized the peasants into entering the hacienda pastures to feed their animals. Rather than taking hacienda resources individually and surreptitiously, these entrances were collective challenges to the authority of the mayordomo. This collective action required the articulation of a response to the mayordomo.

The people who brought their animals were conscious about why they were doing that. They already had words to respond if the mayordomo would come to expel them. For example, they would say... I have given two days [a week] of unpaid labor... just to use pathways or gather water, but these are not enough... We want to use the pastures, and this is our right because we have worked the land.... Why can't we use at least some pastures? Since you, by your own will, are not going to allow us to use them, we are bringing our animals into them (E. Cachimuel 9/7/2005).

The leaders coordinated the entrances of at least twenty families with their animals. They targeted plots that had been recently harvested, or those in which the hacienda cattle had already fed. The instructions were to defend as a group, stay put, and not allow the mayordomo to seize any animal.

If only one person was there, the mayordomo would simply have seized the animals. With his horse, he would have taken all [the animals] to the hacienda [corral], and the person would be fined or punished. But at that time, not one person but the community was there. There were many people, and they knew how to defend themselves. They spoke with reason (E. Cachimuel 9/7/2005).

The mayordomo came, insulted, discussed, and went away. “Then, little by little the people were encouraged. They participated. They said, ‘well, it seems that it is going to be for real.’ The people started to enter with their animals and the mayordomo could not expel them” (E. Cachimuel 9/7/2005). According to Guerrero, the leaders carried out two tactical moves,

on the one hand, ‘push the animals’ of the comuneros (more than 1,000 adding cattle and sheep) into the lands of the hacienda, knowing that even if the hacendado call the police, they could not take the animals as pawns to the hacienda barn in order to charge fines, as it effectively occurred later. On the other hand, the peasants organized legally in a ‘pre-cooperative’ and initiated an expropriation trial (Guerrero 1991: 181).

Many of my interlocutors indicated that the peasants in both haciendas articulated their participation in the land struggles in terms of having provided unpaid labor for the hacienda without proper reciprocity. They articulated a shared sentiment that grandparents, parents, and themselves had spent their lives working for the hacienda (“hemos venido entregando la vida a la hacienda”) and they deserved something back (J. C. Cachimuel 8/24/2006; J. C. de la Torre 8/5/2005). This maybe, in part, an outcome of the handing over of huasipungo plots during the 1964 Land Reform. In 1977, when organizing started, many older indígenas complained that even that they have worked all their lives for the hacienda, they did not received any huasipungo plots (F. Ramos 6/14/2006).

In September 2, 1977, the pre-cooperative with 303 members filed a demand for expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí on the grounds of continuation of yanapa labor. Membership was distributed in the following way.

Community	Families	Members	% of families that were members
La Bolsa	80	45	56.25
Guanansi	70	38	54.29
Carabuela	411	70	17.03
Ilumán	342	60	17.54
Quinchuquí	625	30	4.80
Chimbaloma	50	40	80
Peguche	330	20	6.06

(CONADE 1979)

Members had to be heads of households. Their distribution in the chart demonstrates that even in the communities engulfed by the dominance of the hacienda, La Bolsa and Guanansi, just over half signed up. Peasants from Chimbalo provided yanapa labor to both haciendas, San Vicente and Quinchuquí. Since they were not included in the pre-cooperative San Vicente, they signed up in mass in the pre-cooperative. Membership for the indígenas of Peguche and Quinchuquí, the better-off weaving communities, was more complicated. Following a class discourse, the leaders of the pre-cooperative Quinchuquí restricted membership to poor peasants, provoking the resentment of some well-off indígenas of Peguche and Quinchuquí. But, unknown to the leaders during the initial recruitment, there were good reasons for excluding them. In the assessment of the expropriation demand, the IERAC evaluated the qualification of the members and disqualified those whose primary occupation was not agricultural work. In any case, it is clear that well-off indígenas of Peguche and Quinchuquí did not have any interest in working in an agricultural cooperative. They wanted land to bequeath a place to live to their heirs, and there was no more land available in their communities (J. Quimbo 9/25/2006; B. Chancoso 7/25/2005).

In the IERAC first examination, in which inspectors verified in situ the existence of an organization demanding the expropriation of the hacienda, the lawyers of both parties presented their cases. According to Eduardo Cachimuel, who attended the event, the lawyer of the hacendado argued there were no grounds for expropriation. The hacienda was fully productive, and the cities of Otavalo and Ibarra were going to lose their milk supply. The indígenas were workers of the hacienda, and the hacendado had paid them well for their labor. As retold by Cachimuel, the lawyer of the hacendado asked, “How it

is that they want to expropriate (the hacienda)?" In addition, the lawyer claimed that the indígenas neither were in condition nor had the capacity to administer the hacienda, as the owners were doing, running an efficient enterprise. He warned that in the hands of the indígenas the high production of the hacienda would be lost. For his part, the lawyer of the pre-cooperative responded that the indígenas had provided unpaid labor to the hacienda when the law of land reform had already prohibited. He claimed that they had the right to expropriate the land because of their labor. Accusing the hacendado of absentee ownership, the lawyer of the pre-cooperative claimed that he and his family had not worked in the hacienda. They were never present and did not even know the boundaries of the hacienda (E. Cachimuel, September 10, 2005).

The lines of argumentation used by the lawyer of the hacendado to question the expropriation were prevalent at that time. In contrast with the Peruvian case during land reform, the Ecuadorian government did not abolish the organizational structure representing the interests of the landowning elite: the chambers of agriculture. As an organized group, Ecuadorian landowners were able to influence the ways in which the law of land reform of 1973 was written and implemented. From the years before its promulgation and throughout its implementation, they set into action a media campaign against the land reform. According to Amalia Pallares, the landowners mobilized three basic themes: a) the depiction of the past as a period of greater production and wealth, brought to deterioration and chaos by the land reforms, b) the appeal to the ideal of modernity as the ultimate end of the Ecuadorian nation, a project in which they self-identified as protagonists, and c) the conflation of the indio with the minifundio, the antithesis of modern agricultural production (Pallares 1998: 165). In addition, the

landowners accused the reformist military government of being communist, threatening private property.<sup>96</sup> Emphasizing indigenous alterity and designating the peasants as *indígenas*, instead of *campesinos*, the landowners argued that what was at stake was the Ecuadorian nation because the *indígenas* were not only pre-modern and unproductive but also unable to contribute to national development (Pallares 1998: 166). In their efforts to discredit land expropriation and redistribution, the landowners framed the land struggles in terms of race and ethnicity, a confrontation between modern and efficient landowners and archaic and inefficient *indios*.

At the local level, this discourse resonated with the widespread stereotyping of the *indígenas*. During the 1970s in Otavalo, according to Yuri Zubritzki, *blancos* and *mestizos* considered that the *indígenas* were indolent, lacking any desire to improve their lot beyond their basic needs. They were, correspondingly, a dead weight for the progress of the nation (Zubritzki 1990: 85). When the *indígenas* in La Bolsa and Guanansi organized to demand the expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, they not only sparked the repressive reaction of the *hacendado* and his collaborators. They also prompted criticism and harassment from most of the non-*indígenas* population of the

<sup>96</sup> In his study of land reform in Latin America, Thiesenhusen argues the following:

In arguments opposing land reform, detractors may plead the sanctity of private property, suggest that production will fall precipitously during reform, advertise that there is plenty of idle land at the frontier to colonize, or imply that there already is too much government intervention in agriculture and that agrarian reform would provide the straw of inefficiency that breaks the camel's back. Others argue against reform because "uneducated peasants are unable to make rational management decisions." This, in fact, is the most common argument against reform by the landowners in Latin America. One frequently hears it expressed by the dominant elite in Ecuador: [L]andowners such as former President Galo Plazo Lasso (1948-1952) expressed their disapproval of land redistribution. "If a *latifundio* is being inefficiently farmed it should be subject to redistribution. All too often, however, the most productive estates are turned over to peasants who don't know how to farm them." (Handelman 1981, 6) These assertions usually disregard the nonformal and life-experience learning in which the *campesinos* have abundantly participated (Thiesenhusen 1989: 6).

canton. Fearing the cracking of the social order, from *chicheros* (owners of *chicherías*) to teachers sided with the hacendado, accusing the organized indígenas of being thieves and communists. In addition, even the indígenas who supported the hacendado followed the same discourse to discredit the indígenas fighting for land, calling them communists. Even in 2006, a few indígenas of Peguche told me that those of La Bolsa were communist, equating communism with land takeover rather than the public ownership of the means of production (See also Rogers 2001: 299). The discourse qualifying the indígenas as incapable for progress contradicted progressive public opinion and the assimilationist policies of the military government (Zubritski 1990: 88), reproducing the debate between Pio Jaramillo and Jijón y Caamaño. The subject positions of the non-indígenas involved was reflected in the terms they used to refer to the peasants. Whereas leftist activists and the government called the peasants *campesinos*, the landowners and local non-indígenas called them *indios*.

It was not true, as the lawyer of the hacendado had claimed, that the Hacienda Quinchuquí provided milk to Otavalo and Ibarra. The hacienda sold all of its milk to a dairy processing plant in Cayambe. In addition, the argument that haciendas were inherently more productive than smallholdings was not accurate. According to William Thiesenhusen, haciendas were not as productive as the landowners argued.

In fact, *campesinos* on their small properties—even on *minifundios*—have been shown in some sense to be more efficient in their operations than large haciendas: they tend to maximize production yielded by their scarce resources, land and capital... Small farmers... tend to press all arable land into production (Thiesenhusen 1989: 18-19).

### *Leftist Activism*



Attending a wedding in Guanansi on July 2006, I saw two 16mm film reels hung from nails on a wall of the adobe house. The FENOC (National Federation of Peasant Organizations) had provided the films and a projector to the leaders of the pre-cooperative to organize screenings and workshops to raise the class consciousness of the peasants. In 2010, after cleaning the films and getting a projector, I was able to watch them. The films are cultural documentaries made in the Soviet Union during the 1970s, with a voice over in Spanish language. They were produced by the “Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Other Countries.” One of the films is about the celebration of the Russian winter festival. The other is about art in the Soviet Union. Lacking obvious communist indoctrination, the films could have been shown on broadcast television without raising an eyebrow. They neither promote the overthrow of the government nor condemn capitalism. The films, rather than being connected with an specific revolutionary agenda, promoted goodwill in the audience toward the source of information, to “its specific attitudes and orientation” (Hazan 1976: 29). The leaders of the pre-cooperative carried films and projector through the dirt paths connecting the communities. They set up screenings, and showed the peasants that alternatives to their lives were possible. However, it is difficult to imagine Ecuadorian indigenous peasants showing interest in Alexander Pushkin or Russian opera. To me, the only sequence that pertained to the Ecuadorian situation was one in which the Soviet Union is shown as inhabited by many nationalities, each of them in equal political footing and practicing their own culture.

The Russian films in Guanansi were traces of the labor of leftist agents during the 1970s, a decade of profuse leftist activism. Emphasizing class as the main anchoring of

social struggles, leftist activists went to the countryside to raise the class-consciousness of the indigenous peasants. They considered that the hacienda regime, reproducing pre-capitalist relations of production, was a hurdle to overcome in the march toward socialism. In the context of the land reform, they encouraged, supported, and sometimes initiated the organization of the peasants to demand land expropriations (M. Burbano 1/16/2006; A. Parra 6/14/2005).

It is ironic that one of the first leftist activists who came to La Bolsa and Guanansi was a member of the state apparatus. During the years of 1976 and 1977, the government implemented a literacy campaign for adults hiring indigenous students as instructors. The provincial coordinator of this program not only instructed them in literacy teaching but also in class struggle and socialist revolution. In their turn, the instructors taught literary and class consciousness to the adult indígenas assisting to their evening classes. They questioned their subordination to the hacienda from a class struggle perspective asking, “Why do we live like this, all our lives, exploited, dominated?” (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

During the land struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, the pre-cooperative received significant support from the class-based FENOC. This class-based organization provided legal and public relations support, writing letters to state authorities and newspapers, getting leaders out of prison, and building coalitions with other organizations. In addition, the FENOC worked jointly with the indigenous leadership to organized talks and discussions to galvanize membership. These workshops featured indigenous leaders who spoke about their experience in successful land demands in other parts of the country. They also included the screening of films to spark the debate.

Leftist activism had two distinct periods, before and after the new constitution of 1978. This constitution enfranchised the illiterate population. Since the creation of the Republic of Ecuador in 1830, literacy had been a requirement for voting. Until the 1980s, most of the indigenous population was illiterate and, consequently, disfranchised. The constitution marked the end of seven years of military dictatorship. On January 15, 1978, a referendum ratified the constitution, and on July 16 of the same year, Ecuadorians went to the polls to elect a new president. Whereas before 1978, a few leftist activists had visited those communities to raise class-consciousness and talk about revolution, after the referendum, an increased number of them visited the communities to gather electoral support, trying to register indígenas as members of their parties.

After the referendum ratifying the constitution, the leftist activists, with an eye on elections, also talked about the workings of the state. According to one of the indigenous instructors, leftist activists arrived at the communities and organized talks.

They said to me, “get your group of youth for a talk.” We met in a house. They gave us political guidelines, such as, what are the political parties? What is the organic structure of the state? How is the state organized? because most of us, indígenas, did not know. We only knew that there was a president of the republic. We did not know that there were powers [of government]. Today, we know that there are the executive, legislative, judiciary branches, that there are ministers, and so on. But then, the indígena did not know those things (E. Cachimuel 8/13/2005).

The political parties coming to the communities were two: FADI (Frente Amplio de Izquierda: Broad Leftist Front) and MPD (Movimiento Popular Democrático: Popular Democratic Movement). The FADI was an electoral alliance bringing together the PCE (Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano: Ecuadorian Communist Party) and the PSRE (Partido Socialista Revolucionario del Ecuador: Revolutionary Socialist Party of Ecuador), along with Christian leftists. While the PCE was pro-Soviet Union, the PSRE was pro-Cuban. The MPD was the electoral branch of the Partido Comunista Marxista Leninista

(Communist-Marxist-Leninist Party) of Maoist tendency. The lawyer of the pre-cooperatives of San Vicente and Quinchuquí was a prominent leader of the MPD. When the invasion of the hacienda of San Vicente by the peasants was imminent, a strategy proposed by the lawyer to move the expropriation demand forward, members of the MPD wrote a song to encourage participation. Framing the event as a minga, the idea was to rally support from other indigenous communities. The song, written in Spanish with a few words in Kichwa and the rhythm of the indigenous sanjuanito, is entitled “*Los Comuneros*” (members of an indigenous community). These are the lyrics:

Let's go comuneros that in San Juan we have to stomp (dance),  
with the pals that will come from the communities.  
The land of the runas (Kichwa: people), some persons want to take away.  
Neither the police nor the gamonal will frighten us.  
We will be in the minga, fighting,  
without resting,  
to the sound of the flute and the drum,  
playing the shell trumpet to call up.  
Pals are arriving from Quinchuquí and Ilumán.  
Agato, Peguche, Guanansi will join.  
La Bolsa, Cotama, Carabuela will not stay behind.  
The hill will fill up with ponchos, ay caraju (Spanish exclamation expressing emphasis or anger)! (<http://www.mpd15.org.ec/musica/-comuneros.mp3>).

Written by non-indígenas, the song fictionalizes an indigenous subject position, using the pronoun “we” to include the speaking subject and the subject speaking about, the comuneros. The use of some words in Kichwa, the pronunciation of caraju instead of carajo—imitating indígenas who had difficulty pronouncing the Spanish “o”—and references to indigenous culture, add to this effect.<sup>97</sup> As an example of “ventriloquist

<sup>97</sup> Spanish has five vowel sounds and Kichwa/Quechua three. Kichwa speakers who learn Spanish as a second language have problems distinguishing between the Spanish ‘i’ and ‘e’, and ‘o’ and ‘u’.

representation” (Guerrero 1997), the song reveals the ingenuousness of its authors considering the indígenas as easily manipulable.

Leftist activists had a problematic relationship with the better-off indigenous traders and weavers living in Peguche, Quinchuquí, Agato, and Otavalo. Leftists considered that the indígenas had to become proletarians, working-class people regarded collectively, in order to achieve class consciousness. Rather than proletarians, better-off indígenas were becoming part of the bourgeoisie, the class upholding the interests of capitalism. According to indigenous intellectual José Quimbo, who is from Peguche, leftist activists “accused the indígenas of becoming bourgeois when they built their own little house” (9/22/2006).

### *Repression*

The north region chief of the IERAC ruled that the four farms comprising the Hacienda Quinchuquí were not liable to expropriation, and on June 20, 1978, the regional committee of appeals ratified his verdict. The pre-cooperative had lost the litigation based on the claim of unfree labor. The regional committee of appeals justified the verdict on the following grounds: a) the owners administered the hacienda directly, b) the members of the pre-cooperative had not demonstrated grounds for expropriation, and c) the main occupation of most of the inhabitants of the surrounding communities was handicraft production rather than agricultural labor (CONADE 1979). According to the verdict, there was no yanapa labor in the hacienda. Later, the CEDHU (Comisión Ecuémica de Derechos Humanos: Ecumenical Human Rights Commission) would argue that there was no way that the peasants could feed their farm animals without yanapa labor. The CEDHU, created in 1978, is directed by Sisters of the Catholic mission movement

Maryknoll. Members of the pre-cooperative had 3 or 4 farm animals per family, mostly sheep and some cattle, besides chickens and guinea pigs. Having a total of more than 1000 sheep and cattle and no access to other pastures, they had to use the hacienda to feed their animals (CEDHU 1979). In addition, in a later interview by IERAC's agents, the mayordomo of the hacienda unwittingly recognized that the hacienda used yanapa labor: "We have conducted mingas with the voluntary participation of 15 to 20 persons fixing irrigation channels, ditches, etc. The mingas have been occasional, and we attended the participants serving them food and refreshments" (CONADE 1979).

Surveyors, who were hired on ad hoc basis, had evaluated that the main occupation of the members of the pre-cooperative was handicraft production. Coming to the communities, they interviewed the members of the pre-cooperative. Since many of them did some handicraft work, as it was common among peasants in Otavalo, the surveyors took this as evidence that the members' main occupation was not agricultural labor. On the one hand, the leadership of the pre-cooperative recognized that they had not prepared the members for the interviewing of the surveyors. They also claimed that the lawyer should have instructed them about this. On the other hand, years later, Segundo Ramos met one of the surveyors who admitted that he and his workmates had been paid by the hacendado to claim that most of the members of the pre-cooperative were artisans and not peasants, and that there was no yanapa labor (9/20/2006).

By then, the government's drive for land reform was waning. On August 31, 1975, the government of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara survived but was weakened by an attempted coup. On January 1976, the leadership of the armed forces cast him aside and forced him to resign. His "nationalist and revolutionary" government was never exempt

from the influence of landowning oligarchy, but in 1976, the military triumvirate that seized power was more sympathetic to the hacendados.<sup>98</sup> Emphasizing “productivity as the criteria for evaluating state policies,” the government followed the hacendados’ claim that modern haciendas were inherently more productive (Pallares 1998: 164).<sup>99</sup> In addition, the ruling triumvirate “was far less tolerant of organised labor. It banned strikes and demonstrations and did not hesitate to use repression in quelling labour unrest” (Isaacs 1993: 121). On August 1979, trying to contain the increasing land invasions by peasants demanding land, the government promulgated the Law of National Security, which links national security and development under the tutelage of the military.

Segundo Ramos received the news that the pre-cooperative had lost from his brother, Florentino.

Well, my brother told me, and then, we cried. [At the beginning] nobody knew about this. Only us and a [non-indígena] supporter who has always helped us [knew]... Following her advice, we dealt with the psychological aspect... We saw that if we had just told [the members] that we had lost, they were going to separate, to disorganize. We had an significant compromise. There were people loyal to us but also others against us... People had placed their trust and a little of money on us... We could not lose.. So, we didn’t say. We did not tell them [that the pre-cooperative had lost] (6/21/2006).

On the other hand, the mayordomo went to the communities with a copy of the IERAC’s verdict announcing that the pre-cooperative had lost the litigation. According to Segundo

<sup>98</sup> The key promoter of the land reform of 1973, General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara, was also an hacendado. After retiring, he devoted himself to cattle ranching in hacienda in Pujilí, Province of Cotopaxi. General Guillermo Duran Arcentales, the strongman of the succeeding ruling triumvirate, was also a rancher (Isaacs 1993: 77). Needless to say, their estates were not expropriated.

<sup>99</sup> The IERAC, the government institution expropriating and distributing land, was always overburdened and underfunded. Peasants who received land did not receive neither appropriate technical assistance nor necessary credit. According to a former director of the IERAC, “Really, IERAC’s only job was to intervene and distribute land. Technical assistance and the distribution

Ramos, “The owner was telling, but since he had told so many lies about us, we said that this was another lie... He has said that we were keeping the money [from the pre-cooperative] to go to Spain... that we were stealing the money” (6/21/2006). The woman who supported them is the same person who helped the peasants in the struggle of the Hacienda San Vicente. Arguing that the indígenas are those who should tell the story, she declined my request for an interview and insisted on remaining anonymous. Following her suggestions, on August 20, 1978, the pre-cooperative filed another expropriation demand, this time on the grounds of demographic pressure. By then, the pressure to quit the struggle had taken its toll. Almost all members of the community of Chimbalo and Peguche quit the pre-cooperative. The verdict against the pre-cooperative had confirmed the notion that indígenas could not win against non-indígenas.

Repression started on December 1997, when a group of policemen tried to raid the community of La Bolsa. Mistreating the inhabitants, the police demanded them to withdraw their demand for expropriation or face further retaliation. However, in this and other raids, the police not only were easily outnumbered but also encountered organized resistance. Blocking entrances, throwing stones, and defending themselves with poles and farming tools, the indígenas did not let the police to enter their communities, even when the police used tear gas (E. Cachimuel 10/5/2005). What followed were years of confrontation with the police. Reflecting the hacendado’s political influence, a squad of seven policemen came to the hacienda to work full time watching over it. In addition, a squadron of conscripts of army paratroops was stationed in the hacienda for several months to practice shooting. Their presence, more than likely, was due to fact that one of

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of credit were the responsibilities of other agencies, but they refuse to assume them” (Isaacs



the sons of the hacendado was an army colonel. It is obvious that the conscripts were brought to intimidate the indígenas, but they did not engage in direct repression. A few months before, on October 18, 1977, the police had killed around a hundred strikers in the sugar plantation of Aztra, in the Province of Cañar, after declaring the strike illegal. The massacre produced widespread condemnation and protests across Ecuador. In addition, Maryknoll Sisters and other human rights activists created the CEDHU following the Aztra massacre. The military government wanted to suppress the mobilization of workers and peasants, but it was not willing to openly repress peasants who were following legal procedures.

With the halt of the yanapa, indígenas could not take resources from the hacienda. Still, they needed to feed their animals. The police patrolled the hacienda and assaulted and/or arrested any indígenas who was found pasturing animals, even if they were in creeks or ditches. The mayordomo orchestrated the repression but let the police to do the dirty work. Many indígenas were legally accused of robbing wood or cattle. In October 1978, a television news program broadcasted an interview in which Florentino Ramos denounced the repression. From then on, the case received significant attention from the media and support from leftist political magazines. The police captured Florentino Ramos and kept him in jail for eight days for the crime of accusing publicly the hacendado and the local police of conducting a campaign of repression against the members of the pre-cooperative (F. Ramos 6/14/2006; see also Villamarín 1979: 52).

The supporting magazines and the leaders of the pre-cooperative blamed the hacendado for the repression, but this does not explain fully the actions of the police.

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1993: 75).

These actions included a) seizing animals belonging to the indígenas, taking them to the hacienda or to Ibarra, b) killing the animals for police consumption c) assaulting peasants, including women, in or around the hacienda, d) arresting peasants, with or without legal accusations, taking them to jail in Otavalo or Ibarra, e) mistreating incarcerated peasants, f) interrupting the pre-cooperative meetings, and (g) seizing things from the indígenas, such as bicycles and farm tools. In particular, the police assaulted and/or arrested people from La Bolsa and Guanansi, or anyone who they thought was related to the leadership of the pre-cooperative. In the language, the intentional humiliation, and the economic exaction, the police harassed the peasants as indios. They called them “indio hijo de puta,” and “india puerca.” They beat them in the volleyball court next to the prison in Otavalo. They made them run in the jail yard of Ibarra carrying tires on their shoulders and tripped them up to make them fall down. They extorted them to pay to get out of jail, to avoid arrest, and to recuperate their animals. Even some policemen, who were known by name, had a personal vendetta against those indígenas who had confront them when they tried to enter the communities (CEDHU 1979; Contrapunto 1980; Villamarín 1979). As in the supposed uprising of Pucará Bajo de Velásquez in 1959, they wanted to teach the indígenas a lesson.

### *The reasons for the struggle*

Sometime between August 1978 and March 1979, the lawyer of the pre-cooperative arranged a meeting between the leaders of the pre-cooperative and the owners of the hacienda, the one daughter and three sons of the hacendado, to negotiate an out-of-court settlement. In the meeting, the owners offered the leaders the sale of part of the hacienda if they withdrew the demand for expropriation. The leaders argued that they did not have

the cash to buy the land. They also argued that they needed to talk with the members of the pre-cooperative. The owners insisted saying that the leaders should get a loan to buy the land (E. Cachimuel, September 13, 2005). This and a second meeting came to nothing but planted the suspicion among the leaders that their lawyer was conspiring with the owners to reach an out-of-court settlement. At another level of analysis, it is significant that the dynamics of the land struggle had turned young indígenas into a negotiating party vis-à-vis the owners of the hacienda. During hacienda times, indígenas did not dare to speak to the hacendado (Rogers 2001: 85).

On March 6, 1979, the leaders of the pre-cooperative asked for help from the CEDH arguing that the hacendado and the police were retaliating against the members of the pre-cooperative with brutal and relentless aggression. Agreeing to support their struggle, the CEDH resolved a) to find them a new lawyer, b) to go to the communities and demonstrate support and explain the situation to the peasants, c) to inform the public and other human rights organizations about the repression in order to rally support, d) to denounce the repression to the minister of government, and e) to get a “provisional resolution of possessory status” from the IERAC, “this is to say that the situation [of the peasants’ access to resources] should be as it was before litigation, until the determination of proper legal measures, and that the hacendado should halt the illegal sale of land plots, until the public examination of the process” (CEDHU 1979). Weeks later, after the CEDH interceded, the police squad and the army squadron withdrew from the hacienda.

By then, the hacendado was selling plots to wealthier indígenas, mostly Peguche weavers. Those plots were in the area between La Bolsa and Peguche, the same area accessing the Pan-American Highway that the parents of the leaders of the pre-

cooperative wanted to buy from the hacendado. According to Florentino Ramos, he did so in revenge for having demanded the expropriation (F. Ramos 6/14/2006). Moreover, on March 1979, the executive director of the IERAC offered the leaders of the pre-cooperative land in the coastal province of Esmeraldas. The implication was to grant that land to the pre-cooperative instead of the hacienda. This was unclaimed forest needing clearing for farming, requiring a two days trip to get there (A. Yamberla 8/6/2005; see also Pre-Cooperativa Quinchuquí 1979).

In April 1979, the leaders of the pre-cooperative, with support from the FENOC, wrote a declaration geared to influence public opinion explaining the “reasons for our struggle.” In the document, the leadership described in detail the historical abuses against the indígenas providing labor for the hacienda. It explained that the pre-cooperative is acting according to the law of land reform, condemned the repression led by the hacendado, and denounced that he was selling some hacienda plots illegally, as land in an expropriation demand could not be partitioned or sold.

Our struggle is against all the exploiters, and our voice stands up together with all the proletarians of the world.  
Because in the countryside, the spark of the revolution has ignited.  
Because of that, combat is our cry.  
Our struggle is class struggle!  
Our struggle is the struggle of the poor.  
Patrones and gamonales get out of the countryside. The land belongs to those who work it.  
Let's go forward compañeros campesinos with the organized struggle.  
Jatarishun tucuilla runacuna! Tandanajushun! [In Kichwa in the original: Let's rise up, all the indígenas! Let's unite!] (Pre-cooperativa Agrícola Quinchuquí 1979).

Using a fair amount of revolutionary rhetoric, the leadership framed the land struggle in terms of class, reproducing the then common leftist slogan: “land belongs to those who work it.” It did not frame the struggle in terms of recuperation of indigenous lands.

For the young leadership, revolution was not merely rhetorical. Reflecting the political atmosphere of the 1970s, in which many leftist activists assumed that revolution was imminent, some of the young leaders committed themselves to follow the path of Che Guevara's guerrilla revolutionary war, if the expropriation would have failed. On the one hand, revolution is easier said than done, and claims of revolutionary commitment were common among young non-indígena intellectuals at that time. On the other hand, considering that they had to protect themselves from repression, the leadership organized a defense committee. At one time, they bought a couple of old, almost useless rifles—which I have seen—with the intention of scaring policemen away from entering the communities. At other time, those indígenas who had been conscripts in the army conducted warfare training. In addition, some of them learned to make Molotov cocktails, the crude incendiary devices. In a training session, one of these devices exploded earlier than expected and seriously burned the hand of the person handling it.

On August 1979, Ecuador returned to democracy after seven years of military rule. The General Guillermo Durán Arcentales, who led the triumvirate ruling Ecuador during the last years of the dictatorship, was the brother-in-law of the first lawyer of the pre-cooperative. He had expedited the expropriation of the Hacienda San Vicente, which belonged to the Municipality of Otavalo, but it was a different issue to expropriate a private and supposedly modern hacienda. Even though he met with the leaders of the pre-cooperative, he was not inclined to help them (E. Cachimuel 10/5/2005). It is unlikely that during the triumvirate, the IERAC would rule in favor of the pre-cooperative. The

new and young president, Jaime Roldós Aguilera, who emphasized the protection of human rights, offered better prospects for the pre-cooperative.<sup>100</sup>

On October 22, 1980, a few weeks before the new trial would declare the expropriation of the hacienda—on November 10, 1980—hundreds of indígenas, mostly from Peguche, who wanted to buy or were buying land-plots from the hacendado attacked members of the pre-cooperative who had occupied the disputed area between La Bolsa and Peguche. The ensuing pitched battle left 35 indígenas injured. The buyers' group, who had formed a housing cooperative, took control of the plots, but it was pressure to withdraw after several weeks. While the authorities demanded to respect the possessory status, and the hacendado appealed against the expropriation, more confrontations between the two groups of indígenas took place. According to the member of the AEDH, Laura Glynn,

On April 14, 1981, the Regional Committee of Appeals confirmed the sentence of expropriation... This provoked more violence against the campesinos of the Pre-cooperative. On April 29 they were attacked by members of the hacendado's cooperative. About one hundred, armed with carbines, attacked the campesinos... Witnesses testify that the landowner himself was distributing the arms... From May 18 to 20 1981, the people sympathetic to the hacendado, with the tacit approval of the local police, succeeded in chasing the campesinos off the land with carbines and tear gas. Thirteen campesinos were wounded; ten makeshift shelters, two adobe houses and a tractor were burned along with blankets, ponchos, pots, pans and farm tools (Glynn 1984).

In these confrontations, all in the same area, the police helped the buyers' group and the hospital in Otavalo refused to treat injured indígenas from the pre-cooperative. They had to go to Quito, hours away, to receive medical treatment. Considering that local police was colluding with the attackers, the CEDH succeeded in having the ministry of

<sup>100</sup> President Roldós died on May 24, 1981, in a plane crash. His vice-president, the political sociologist Osvaldo Hurtado, assumed the presidency.

government to send police from Quito to prevent more attacks (Glynn 1984; Guerrero 1991: 188).

By then, the conflict was on national news, featured on television, newspapers, and political magazines. In *El Comercio*, on May 4, 1981, the recipient of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize, the Argentinean Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, demanded justice for the peasants of the pre-cooperative Quinchuquí and condemned the repression to which they were subject. While in Ecuador, he had written to state authorities urging a prompt solution to these peasants, who were legally demanding land (El Comercio 1981).<sup>101</sup> In addition, on July 6, 1981, Time Magazine published an article on the work of the Maryknoll sisters, explaining the situation in the Hacienda Quinchuquí.

Laura Glynn of Hartford, Conn., and Elsie Monje of Guayaquil, Ecuador, who organize destitute peasants in Ecuador and, as a result, endure constant denunciations as "Communist agitators." Based in Quito, the nuns advise labor and peasant organizers and students. Just now they are obtaining medical aid for several hundred Andean Indians squatting on unused hilly farm land. More than 30 have been wounded by gunshots in repeated skirmishes with police and thugs hired by landowners, but local hospitals refuse to treat them (Ostling).

The buyers were motivated not only by the possibility of buying a plot of land from the hacendado but also by their conviction that the indígenas could not win. In her study of the conflict among indígenas in the Hacienda Quinchuquí, Rogers found that the group of

<sup>101</sup> Pérez Esquivel has visited Ecuador before. On August 12, 1976, while attending a meeting of bishops from all the Americas in Riobamba, an squadron of around 70 men arrested him and the bishops.

They took us to a police headquarters in the city of Quito, and they accused us of subversion and conspiracy. According to reports that we received after we were set free, several governments had warned the Ecuadorian military dictatorship that the group that met in Riobamba were bishops of the Theology of Liberation, and that the meeting was "subversive" (Pérez Esquivel 1999: 9).

This was an example of the collaboration among the intelligence services among Latin American countries during "Operación Cóndor," the USA-supervised campaign of political repression aimed to eradicate leftist influence and subversion. In Ecuador, the most serious abuses against

compradores held the firm belief that the indígenas of the pre-cooperative could not win the struggle. Based on their experiences with the hacienda, they “simply did not believe that the Ramos brothers would or could be successful in their attempt to win the land of the hacienda Quinchuquí and thus best its *patrón*” (2001: 303). As one elder from Peguche told her,

Both Florentino and Segundo Ramos, between brothers, thought up the plan; they told others that they were going to start a cooperative to get the land of the *patrón*. But we didn't believe... How was one going to beat the *patrón*. The *patrón* is the owner! (Rogers 2001: 304).

The collaborators of the hacendado shared the same motivation. In the community of Carabuela, a non-indígena *cantinero*, a man who sell alcoholic drinks, was a staunch supporter of the hacendado. On several occasions, he arranged the arrest of the president of the sub-committee of the pre-cooperative in Carabuela. As retold by the president, Joaquín Cachimuel, the *cantinero*, whose brother was a policeman, led a group of people supporting the hacendado. The *cantinero* would come with the police and harass, beat, and arrest the leadership of the pre-cooperative in Carabuela. Because of his actions, Joaquín Cachimuel was jailed six times. The *cantinero* still lives in Carabuela but do not sell alcohol any more. He owns two buses for public transportation. According to Joaquín Cachimuel,

Now, we are in good terms. When he is drunk and finds me on the walking paths, he cries to me, remorseful. He says, “I repent. Excuse me, I did not know all these things. I did not think that the indios could win. I did not think that. Please, excuse me.” He says that. Now, he not longer gets angry (11/13/2005).

### *Indigenous Historical Consciousness*

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human rights under Operación Cóndor happened during the presidency of León Febres Cordero, 1984-1988 (Comisión de la Verdad 2010), after the Hacienda Quinchuquí was expropriated.



In 2005, when I interviewed Carmen Yamberla, an indigenous activist who participated in the land struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí and was later the president of the FICI, she framed the expropriation as a recuperation of ancestral land. This prompted me to ask her about the local, indigenous reproduction of historical memory: “So, before the land struggle, was there a consciousness... or a memory that the land had been yours, that the Spaniards took it away from you? Was there some reproduction of that memory?” She answered that there was none.

No, no, maybe because everything was passed down orally, never, to the best of my knowledge, no. In this case, the organizations themselves, the leftist political parties that collaborated in the land struggles, socialists and members of the MDP, in their discourse, they talked about the past, 500 years ago and beyond, what had happened in 1492, the way in which the land was owned then... From then on, the people started to assimilate [this information]. They said, “So, this is true. Therefore, this land is ours. Why do we have to be serving the hacienda?” (10/4/2005).

I had taken for granted that indigenous Andeans had a customary way of accounting for the past before and after the conquest. I assumed that they reproduced a sort of a “historical wound,” a mix of history and memory invoking “the past as the site of the original slight and as the site that calls for redress in the present”, framing their interpretations of their historical subjugation and disempowerment (Attwood, Chakrabarty, and Lomnitz 2008: 1). After all, many historians and anthropologists have argued that indigenous Andeans reproduce a memory of the Incas. In the communities of La Bolsa, Guanansi, Peguche, and Quinchuquí this was not the case. All my consultants told me that before schooling and the land struggles, there was no deep memory in circulation, no narrative of pre-conquest descent and post-conquest subordination, no memory of a time before the haciendas. Segundo Ramos belongs to the first generation from La Bolsa and Guanansi, born in the late 1950s and early 1960s, who attended school. According to him,

We, the young persons already understood, but the others, the elders, were in total ignorance because the hacienda had taken charge of stupefying them, no?... The generation of our parents and those before were in effect stupefied by alcohol. Therefore, they did not have consciousness of those things... They were not conscious of history because it was in school where one learned it (6/21/2006).

At least since the early twentieth century, scholars have noticed that indigenous highlanders in Ecuador did not reproduce a memory of pre-conquest times. In 1918, the Ecuadorian archeologist Jacinto Jijón y Camaño (1890-1950), whose ancestors owned the haciendas of Quinchuquí Alto and Bajo and the hacienda and obraje of Peguche, claimed in 1918 that the indígenas did not know their past, that it remained a mystery to them. The German-born archeologist Max Uhle, who conducted research in Ecuador between 1919 and 1925, expressed doubts about cultural continuity of the Ecuadorian indígenas because they did not remember the origins of their traditions (Prieto 2004: 96-100). After fieldwork in the early 1940s, the first anthropologist to study in the canton of Otavalo, Elsie C. Parsons, noted that among the indígenas of Peguche “no world before the advent of the Spaniards is conceived of” (Parsons 1945: 13).

Contemporary studies have also demonstrated that Ecuadorian indígenas do not reproduce a memory of pre-conquest times. In a study during the early 1990, in the parish of Pangor in the Province of Chimborazo, Barry Lyons was unable to find any “traditional” articulation of pre-conquest identification among the indigenous residents of an ex-hacienda.

Haciendas were simply a fact of life. Most villagers say that, before the changes of the last few decades, they and their parents did not know that there had ever been any other dominant form of land tenure. I was unable to learn about any “traditional” narratives or practices that implied any special association with autochthony, any identification with the pre-Conquest inhabitants of the land, or indeed, any idea that the whites had their origins in a different place (Lyons 2006: 129).

Carola Lentz, studying in the community of Shamanga, also in the Province of Chimborazo, oral history does not go further than the dominance of the hacienda. “A history of the time ‘before the hacienda’ does not exist. There is no memory of an ancestral communal ownership of the land, arguing it was later usurped by the hacendado, no memory that could serve as basis for an oppositional ownership discourse” (Lentz 2000: 211). Finally, on my on previous research in the indigenous jurisdiction of Cacha, also in the Province of Chimborazo, I did not find any articulation of a pre-Conquest past outside of what people have learned in school since the early 1980s (Huarcaya 2003).

In contrast, Michelle Wibbelsman has heard claims of pre-Columbian indigenous descent in Otavalo. She writes, “Otavalos claim direct descent from Rumiñahui” (Wibbelsman 2005: 180). Wibbelsman also heard an account explaining the significance of the Lechero, a sacred tree and site. An elder told her that following a battle between the Scyris and the Incas, “In front of the Lechero, the great lords of both nations or empires died, Inca and Scyri . This place is venerated because of the importance of the persons buried there” (Wibbelsman 2005: 181). There is no doubt that these accounts are recent indigenous incorporations of official historical narratives, learned directly or indirectly from what the state taught in schools and commemorated in public spaces. As we have seen in Chapter II, the dynasty of the Scyris is a fictional account that the state used as the master narrative of Ecuadorian national descent (Stutzman 1981: 58). The state has also turned Rumiñahui into a national hero. As stated before, he belonged to a mitimae population and not to the local pre-conquest Caranquis from whom the otavaleños have descended (Estupiñan 2003; Caillavet 2000). In as much as indígenas of

Otavalo reproduce the fictional tropes of the state trying to historicize Ecuadorian identity, it is clear that those narratives are recent incorporations.

When the young leaders initiated the expropriation demand, they formed a community of inquiry trying to understand the history of ownership of the hacienda vis-à-vis their social condition as indios. Since the hacienda encroached deeply into their communities, they asked, “Why do we live so squeezed?” They compared their situation with that of Peguche and Quinchuquí, which were bordered by the hacienda but not engulfed by it. To find out, they interviewed the elders of the communities. The latter told them that their communities had a little more land before. They were not as squeezed between the hacienda and the hills. The peasants had lost that land during a drought, in which they did not have anything to eat. The hacendado gave baskets of corn in exchange of their plots (F. Ramos 6/14/2006). In 1910 and 1923, there were terrible droughts in the province. It did not rain and people went hungry (Ruiz 2005: 184). These events may be what the elders reproduced as memory. They did not reproduce any memory going further back.

Leftist activists often told the indígenas that before the conquest the land belonged to them, that the Spanish conquerors had usurped it from their ancestors. This was part of their strategy to motivate indigenous organizing during the land reform and keep their motivation high during the hardships of the land struggles. The 1973 Land Reform did not question the colonial origin of hacienda property.<sup>102</sup> Claims of first occupation by indigenous communities and colonial land titles did not provide any legal advantage in expropriation lawsuits. Nevertheless, the articulation of land expropriations as land

recuperations provided to the indígenas a higher moral ground and motivated them to participate in and continue the struggles.

For their part, the young rural leaders, as their urban counterparts, became eager readers of history, especially that referring to Inca civilization (J. Quimbo 9/25/2006; E. Cachiguango 10/11/2006; E. Cachimuel 9/992005). In addition, they discussed national history and found some contradictions. In school, they learned that Pío Montúfar, a marquis during the colonial regime, was a national hero. In 1810, Pío Montúfar led a coup d'état against the president of the Audiencia of Quito, at a time when Napoleon ruled Spain and kept its king, Fernando VII, under guard in France. Although Pío Montúfar pledged alliance to the king, national history has constructed this event as the first independence movement. Since the owner of the Hacienda Quinchuquí was also a Montúfar, the young leaders linked the hacienda to indigenous dispossession and questioned the rationale of making him a national hero.

History talks about a Montúfar. Then, Montúfar Barba, the owner of the hacienda, was a descendent of Montúfar, the hero of independence. Thus, in our reasoning, he was a thief, an independence hero that precisely had stole this lands, no? We deduced these things. We commented on these things, no? (S. Ramos 6/21/2006).

Fearing that members may quit, viewing that the hacendado was selling plots, and trying to put pressure on the IERAC for a prompt resolution, the leaders decided to massively invade the hacienda. The new lawyer did not support this idea, since an invasion was illegal. Under the Law of National Security, it could bring serious repression and criminal charges. Police or military could come anytime and forcefully expel the participants in the invasion. The lawyer argued that the pre-cooperative needed to find a second lawyer

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<sup>102</sup> The 1964 Land Reform claims that “the structure of land ownership is an inheritance from the colony,” but it does not provide any legal advantage to proven earlier indigenous occupation.

to deal with criminal charges. The plan was that each of the five communities participating in the land struggle were going to enter the adjacent hacienda land, build makeshift shelters, and work planting the land. The invasions required a permanent presence of members of the pre-cooperative in the disputed land. According to the leaders, it was then when the leaders increasingly used the discourse of land recuperation to motivate the participants in the invasion. According to Carmen Yamberla,

Then, this moved the people into action. We did not say who was bad or who was good [in reference to the mayordomo]. The struggle was against the haciendas, to eliminate the haciendas, to pass the land to the people that work it as a recuperation of their land. So, we kept the struggle in this sense. Of course, during the process, people justified the expropriation saying that the mayordomo was bad, but by then, that was not the issue for us. The issue was that this land had to be recuperated because it had been ours. To talk about of the mayordomo as bad was like an excuse. There was demographic pressure, we needed more land for our families, and fought against the exploitation in which we lived. Therefore, haciendas had to be eliminated (10/4/2005).

The process radicalized the indígenas, who claimed that they did not have fear anymore (S. Ramos 6/21/2006). If at the beginning of the struggle, the main motivation for organizing was to stop the mayordomo's abuse, at the time of the land invasion, the struggle had turned into a legitimate land recuperation as the indígenas learned that before the Spaniards all the land belonged to indígenas. In addition, learning that other indígenas were fighting for land in other parts of the country constituted an imagined community whose members shared the same historical experience and imagined future. On March 5, 1981, hundreds of members of the pre-cooperative invaded the hacienda.

Frank Salomon has written that in the Huarochiri Province in Peru the inhabitants of the peasant community (comunidad campesina) of Tupicocha have relativized the concept of the autochthony. Living in the shadow of racial and/or linguistic stigma, they define themselves "as being, at the same time, heirs of the ancient dead while

genealogically discontinuous from them” (2002: 480). In explaining how they can be “authentic” heirs of the land and yet not incur the racially unacceptable category of the “Indian,” villagers claim that “the first and original owners,” the “Indians,” committed mass suicide during colonial times and left the land to them. Moreover, the suicide redeemed them from bondage under the Spanish conquerors. Aiming to achieve citizen status and social dignity in the dominant national paradigm of racialized ethnicity, villagers emphasize historical discontinuity with the first and original owners of the land.

In contrast, in La Bolsa and Guanansi, indígenas started to emphasize historical continuity with the original inhabitants as this legitimized their claims for taking over the hacienda. The previously locally unknown past had become a useful past (See Rappaport 1990). Reflecting the development of a historical consciousness among indígenas in the Otavalo valley, during the early 1980s, the indígenas of the community of Quimsa wrote to the IERAC asking help to acquire a nearby hacienda. They argued that while the owners of the hacienda “had only held property in the parish since the 1850s, the members of their communities, *as descendants of the Incas*, had a greater right to this disputed territory since their ancestors were *the original inhabitants of the valley*. They argued that Spanish colonization and later the Solano family’s acquisition of the territory had disposed their people”(Crain 1990: 55 Italics in the original).<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> The adoption by the state of *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* as the main narrative of national descent has complicated all claims about ancient past. *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* narrates that the Caras, arriving by boat to the coast, went up the highlands and conquered the Quitus. On this case, the landlord, Mr. Solano, claimed that the original inhabitants of the territory in which his hacienda was located were “*not Incas but Cara Indians*.” He “argued that in this case claiming to be of Inca ancestry was no better than being of Spanish ancestry as both groups were conquerors who appear to have dispossessed the original Cara inhabitants. He stated that the Indians should get their facts straight if they want to make a strong case for their rights to land” (Crain 1990: 55).

In November 23, 1983, after seven years of struggle, the Hacienda Quinchuquí was given to the pre-cooperative. Some of the leaders that emerged from the land struggles of both of the haciendas, Quinchuquí and San Vicente, would take land recuperation farther. With the cultural capital acquired, they organized indígenas in other haciendas and participated as advisors in new demands for land expropriation. They succeeded in expropriating eleven of twelve haciendas.

The closure to the question of ownership could not have been more poignant. Florentino Ramos, the leader of the pre-cooperative, and Carlos Montúfar Barba Larrea, the hacendado, saw each other only once, in a meeting set by the IERAC in the hacienda, in which both parties present their cases. The attendees were the hacendado and his lawyer, functionaries of the IERAC, and the leaders of the cooperative supported by Jaime Hurtado, a prominent black lawyer and politician. Hurtado was a well-known leader of the MPD, the same leftist political party of the first lawyer of the cooperative. In addition, numerous indígenas of the pre-cooperative were present.

In the dispute, only the hacendado, the functionaries, and the lawyers participated. The indígenas, even the leaders, did not participate; they only observed. According to oral sources, the hacendado said that the indígenas of the pre-cooperative were mostly weavers, not peasants, and that they have not worked in the hacienda. He also had said that if they want some land, they have to pay for it. Then, Jaime Hurtado started questioning the hacendado about the ownership of the hacienda. Hurtado asked the hacendado from whom did he buy it, who sold it to him, in what year. The hacendado said that he inherited it from his ancestors. Hurtado kept the inquiry, asking the hacendados from whom his ancestors bought it, who sold it to them, if there was



documentation about that first sale. José Carlos de la Torre, who at the time was president of the cabildo of Carabuela, recalls that the hacendado “could not say a thing. Without documents, there was no way... there was nothing to say. He [hacendado] stayed silent and tears fell for that land, tears fell. I was there watching.” In front of a multitude of indígenas, the hacendado cried. José Carlos de la Torre concluded, “Only when the Spaniards came, they grabbed the land from indigenous people. Because this land belonged to indígenas not to mestizos” (J. C. de la Torre 8/5/2005).

The expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuqui, as Rogers argues, did more than reshaping the landscape of the valley.

It also marked a substantive change in the subjective understandings and positionings of the area’s indigenous and white-*mestizo* residents, as well as the interactions between them. As Mama Dulu explained, “Before, we were paupers; now, we have surmounted the whites.” With the establishment of the Agricultural Pre-Cooperative of Quinchuquí (the Cooperative) and its legal expropriation of the hacienda, a variety of Otavaleños began to imagine the possibility of a better life for themselves, one less dependent upon a patronizing, abusive white elite. What previously had been unimaginable—the contestation of patronal authority and dominance—became not only imaginable but tangible with the Cooperative’s victory (2001)

The irony here is that the indigenous matriarch Mama Dulu, from the community of Quinchuquí, belonged to the group of buyers who were supporting the hacendado.

According to Rogers,

Even people who had not been members of the Cooperative began to perceive themselves as potential victors in possible encounters with whites in the area. Hence, Tayta Antonio [Mama Dulu’s husband] once confessed to me that he had never even thought of confronting the *patrón* before there was the Cooperative, but that afterwards, he could imagine emerging the winner. Regardless of the fact that he had been a leader in the competing Buyers’ Group, he, like many other Otavaleños, perceived the Cooperative’s successful engagement of elite authority as a victory achieved by all *indígenas*. Describing the ultimate resolution of the conflict, he framed the appropriation of the hacienda by local *indígenas* as the surmounting of the *hacendado* by a collective “we.” In the words of Tayta Antonio, “The *patrón* was caught, he was strangled. We had him surrounded, we were choking him.”

Rogers does not mention that the IERAC did not transfer the entire hacienda to the pre-cooperative. The IERAC gave land to schools in Quinchuquí and Peguche, of which the latter is an agricultural secondary school. It also gave land to some indigenous communities to build soccer fields and meeting houses. In addition, the IERAC divided an area next to Peguche into lots of five hundred square meters and sold them to buyers who signed up, more than seventy heads of household. Thus, the victory of the pre-cooperative benefited many other indígenas who were not members. In any case, the moral “we” of social memory, which Tayta Antonio mobilizes, has redefined the land struggle in terms of a victory of the indígenas against the blancos, overcoming not only the previous rivalry between the members of the pre-cooperative and of the buyers’ group but also age-old feuding between the traditionally-free communities and the former hacienda communities.

#### *The form of the agrarian reform*

In June 1982, before the Hacienda Quinchuquí was expropriated, the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería (Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle Ranching) sent to the IERAC a “Report of verification of the existing improvements in the rural property Quinchuquí,” which was part of the assessment valuing the estate. In the conclusions, the agronomists who wrote the report claimed, “The application of the Agrarian Reform to this type of rural properties is destroying the ‘units of agricultural production,’ with the consequent decrease in production and productivity and serious damage to the national economy” (Herrera and Villacíz 1982). This was an unasked-for statement, beyond the scope of the report and without the capacity to change the course of events. Nevertheless, claiming that the state should not expropriate the Hacienda Quinchuquí, the report

reflects the existing clash over land reform amidst the deliberations and actions of the Ecuadorian state.

In Ecuador, the execution of the 1973 land reform was a feeble and conflicting enterprise. The hacendados, organized in agricultural chambers, never lost significant political leverage. They influenced crucially the drafting of the law and its implementation. Their opposition to the reform led to a law that “stopped short of attacking existing structures of land tenure” and to the resignation of key agrarian reform officials (Isaacs 1993: 74-75). In addition, according to Anita Isaacs,

landowners displayed their political acumen by exploiting existing divisions within the military regime. In particular they sought to take advantage of an apparent split among officer corps... Not only were sectors of the military concerned about the political and economic impact of the reform but the enactment of agrarian reform would also affect scores of military officers who were landowners in their own right. Reveling a relatively weak corporate ethos, the natural tendency of most of these officers was to identify more closely with other landowners than with fellow military officers who were advocating agrarian reform (1993: 77).

In Peru, in contrast, the dictatorship of General Juan Velasco Alvarado executed the agrarian reform with remarkable efficiency. Set off on June 24, 1969, with Velasco’s legendary proclamation, “Peasants, the landlords will no longer eat from your poverty,” the Peruvian reform “led a frontal assault against rural property” (Mayer 2009: 83). Top military administrators of the reform successfully resisted influence peddling, and the government effectively neutralized the hacendados, dissolving in 1972 their main organization, the *Sociedad Nacional Agraria* (National Agrarian Association) (Mayer 2009: 95-102). The government also created an ad hoc judiciary system, the *Tribunal Agrario* (Agrarian Tribunal), to expedite the resolution of land disputes. According to Linda Seligmann,

Appointed by the president, the well-paid judges (*jueces de tierras*) of the Agrarian Tribunal served as an ideological arm of the reform under the jurisdiction of the

Ministry of Agriculture. Their mandate was to assist peasants in following proper procedures for the transfer of property rather than to remain independent and unbiased (Seligmann 1993: 28).

By the late 1970s, “the government had expropriated 15,826 properties and 9 million hectares” (Mayer 2009: 20), and the Peruvian rural oligarchy had ceased to exist.<sup>104</sup> Explicitly supporting the peasants and neutralizing the hacendados—who basically were sent packing—the implementation of the Peruvian reform did not provoke widespread, local confrontations between the hacendados and their supporters and the indigenous peasants.

In Ecuador, the IERAC adjudicated only 744,395 hectares, about eight percent of all agricultural land (□Zevallos 1989: 50). In contrast to Peru, the implementation of the agrarian reform in Ecuador led to long and violent local conflicts, a state of war across the ethnic boundary, sometimes extending over a decade. Indígenas organized to demand land, often invading the haciendas, and the hacendados and their collaborators violently repressed them as indios. Analyzing data from the CEDHU from July 1983 to 1990, Alain Dubly and Alicia Granda have identified 217 serious, violent rural conflicts across Ecuador involving peasant communities and organizations. According to North et al,

Their study chronicles violent episodes of evictions involving the destruction of crops and houses, of land invasions which indigenous villagers considered recoveries of stolen properties, and of homicides fueled by the peasants’ struggle for land and the estate owners’ opposition to agrarian reform and redistribution. Ecuador’s provincial and local police forces, the armed gangs or “private armies” maintained by landlords, and (less frequently) the country’s armed forces battled with peasant and rural worker organizations throughout the 1980s (North, Kit, and Koep 2003: 6).

In addition, across Ecuador, indigenous and black populations were specially targeted (North, Kit, and Koep 2003: 3). Repression was worse during the right-wing government

<sup>104</sup> The number of hectares includes cropland and pastures.

of León Febres Cordero, 1984-1988, but many of the violent conflicts preceded his presidency by many years (Dubly and Granda 1991: 16).

The Ecuadorian land reform gave indígenas a possibility to organize and fight for land. Having a strong organization did not guarantee success but a weak organization got the indígenas no land. The ambiguous implementation of the land reform, which did not neutralize the hacendados, left to the indígenas the tasks of organizing and defending themselves. Reflecting the different distribution of agency in both agrarian reforms, in Ecuador people explain the dissolution of the expropriated haciendas claiming that the indígenas seized the land. In Peru, in contrast, people attribute all the agency to General Juan Velasco Alvarado. Peruvians called it Velasco's reform.

#### *Chapter IV Conclusions*

Indígenas claim that during the land struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí they lost their long-established fear and ceased to be passive and uncomplaining. They are no longer the silly, poor, and weak indios who let themselves be exploited by the non-indígenas. Considering the indígenas a group, we could claim that they have changed, but the young indígenas who led the land struggle were never the passive and uncomplaining indios depicted by the stereotype. In contrast to their parents, they went to school, learned civics, had the right to vote, and got into deep trouble fighting for land. Their political identity was not predetermined by cultural worldview and membership to an indigenous group. Rather, it was a work in progress.

Members of this leadership were literate, spoke Spanish, and had much more cultural capital than their predecessors. Some of them went to school only for a few years, but non-indígenas could not easily make them dependent to exploit them paternalistically.

Even though some of them might be in the process of becoming non-indígenas, the implementation of the land reform, which did not neutralize the hacendados, led to violent confrontation across the ethnic boundary. Peasants fighting for land were repressed as indios, following customary practice of discriminatory discipline and punishment. That being so, they framed the adjudication of the hacienda as a victory over non-indígenas, even though they had received support from non-indígenas from Quito. Certainly, the adult population of the communities could not be but indígenas. In addition, the indígenas had found historical continuity in the exploitative actions of all non-indígenas. Arranchadores as well as hacendados shared the immoral stand of the conquistadors, who appropriated that which was not theirs. This happened at a time in which indígenas were challenging blanco self-ascription and transforming the constitution of identity/alterity in the city of Otavalo. Some of the leaders of the pre-cooperative went to school there, and participated in those confrontations.

Participation in the land struggle not only produced a new historical consciousness but also transformed indigenous notions of agency, demonstrating that even powerful non-indígenas could be defeated. This was an outcome of the implementation of the land reform across the Ecuadorian highlands. The land struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí was exceptional because of its wide publicity and the related major confrontations among indígenas, but it was ordinary in terms of the dynamics of the land struggle.

On July 2005, in a conversation about the struggle of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, Blanca Chancoso told me, “it was the strength of the community that which defeated the hacienda” (07/25/2005). The examining of the struggle demonstrates that this collectivity was not a primordial entity united by ancestral loyalties, but a pre-cooperative led by

young people who gained conceptual understanding of their lives and culture, and did not give up.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusions

#### Challenging the Nation-State

*Nosotros no somos las ovejas de antes. No somos los indios de antes. Ahora estamos organizados y vamos a defender a nuestro pueblo para que siga viviendo.*<sup>105</sup>

Blanca Chancoso (1984)

*que mientras allpa mama  
inti taita vivan  
los runas no hemos de desaparecer.*<sup>106</sup>

Ariruma Kowii (2000)

In *Las costumbres de los Ecuatorianos* (The customs of the Ecuadorians), Osvaldo Hurtado argues, “it was not possible for the country to build a national identity, which Ecuador has always lacked and so much needed (Hurtado 2007: 214).<sup>107</sup> Hurtado, a

<sup>105</sup> We are not the sheep of the past. We are not the indios of the past. Now we are organized, and we are going to defend our people to keep living.

<sup>106</sup> that while mother earth (and) father sun live, we, the runas (people), would not disappear.

<sup>107</sup> In an opinion article, Fernando Tinajeros disagrees with Hurtado. According to Tinajeros, Ecuadorian identity is paradoxical. “40 years of reflection on this topic has led me to discover that we have an identity that precisely consist of denying that we have it.”



political sociologist who have written extensively about Ecuadorian politics and society, was the head of state during the expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí. A few years before Hurtado's writing, the Ecuadorian government had declared 1992 as the "Year of National Identity." This initiative was a palpable response to the defiance of the indigenous movement to the imagined Ecuadorian nation. Then, the president was the jurist Rodrigo Borja, who was also in office during the levantamiento indígena of 1990.

Mobilizing huge numbers of indígenas, who became visible on highways, city centers, and television, the uprising of June 1990 shocked everyone. President Borja asserted, "when we need national unity the most, irresponsible agitators are manipulating the highland indigenous peoples to make them commit acts of violence that conspire against the economic progress of Ecuador" (León 1994: 34). Denouncing external leadership and manipulation, President Borja, as most non-indígenas, could not believe that the indígenas could be leading or have organized such massive and effective protest.<sup>108</sup> Some non-indígenas in main cities revealed that they felt threatened by the discovery that "millions" of indígenas still existed in Ecuador.<sup>109</sup> At the grass-roots level,

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Ultimately, his assessment of national identity is as downhearted as Hurtado's. "When we deny our identity," Tinajeros argues, "we consider everyone else as nobodies ('ninguneamos'), which leaves as helpless and lonely, and unable to undertake any project together (Tinajero 2007).

<sup>108</sup> Following the same stereotypical trend, the military characterized the emergent indigenous movement as subversive, arguing that it was supported by "the so-called progressive church, overseen by foreigners, and financed by money from outside the country" (Serafino 1991: 71). As the events unfolded and a group of politically well-informed indigenous intellectuals emerged as the actual leaders of the uprising, the accusations of external leadership and manipulation subsided. President Hurtado resisted calls for widespread repression from the hacendados, and opened the dialogue with the indigenous leadership.

<sup>109</sup> An acquaintance of Ecuadorian sociologist Andrés Guerrero told him, "I, who had assumed that there were no more indios in the country, found out in television that there are millions. They come out from everywhere. They live in misery" (Guerrero 1997: 98). According to sociologist and journalist Gonzalo Ortiz,

For the first time, in a generalized way, urban inhabitants of Ecuador became fully aware of the existence of the indios, that they were there and shared the national space, that they had

indigenous participants expressed their amazement at experiencing a new collective strength as indígenas (León Trujillo 1994: 52-53). Lastly, indigenous leaders honestly recognized that the mobilization had exceeded all their expectations (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina Peralta 2003: 33; León Trujillo 1994: 51; Ortiz Crespo 1991: 101).

The magnitude of the protest demonstrated that indígenas had not become extinct, as mestizaje had predicted. Notwithstanding the widespread astonishment, indígenas had consolidated their organizing as an indigenous movement a few years before the levantamiento. By 1988, according to Natalia Wray, the indigenous movement already featured: a) an organizational structure across the country, b) a focus on fighting ethnic oppression, c) an articulation of ethnic demands as specific and different from class demands, d) an emphasis on identity as consciousness of a shared indigenous condition across state boundaries, e) an openness to establish alliances with other popular sectors willing to acknowledge the specificity of ethnic rights, and f) a relationship with the state in order to demand reforms towards the recognition of ethnic rights (Wray 1989: 84).

As reflected in the anxiety of both presidents about national identity, it is clear that the indigenous movement has proven to them that the imagined national community has been a failed project. A single Ecuadorian national community, in which national culture and politics were coextensive, has never existed but now, after several levantamientos, is not even imaginable. This development, I argue, rather than historically necessary was genealogically contingent. In June 1983, five months before the expropriation of the Hacienda Quinchuquí, Blanca Chancoso, as secretary-general of ECUARUNARI, had

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very serious problems, and that they, potentially constituted —something that urban Ecuadorians had never imagine!— a threat to their tranquility (Ortiz Crespo 1991: 106). During the levantamiento, Ortiz was the secretary of communications of the government.

brought into question the national community imagined by ex-Presidents Hurtado and Borja. Asking, “into what they want us to integrate?” (Ediciones Nueva 1983: 42) she not only questioned the assimilationist ideologies of the state but also the qualities of the national mestizo culture. This questioning started in the streets of Otavalo, when indígenas responded to non-indígenas harassers challenging their identity as blancos. Their articulation and denunciation of the mestizo as immoral and alienated preceded their criticism of the imagined mestizo nation. The indigenous intelligentsia that emerged in that milieu constituted itself not only thinking about but also enduring firsthand the dilemmas of indigeneity. Transforming the construction of identity/alterity, they constituted a new way of being indigenous. These young intellectuals, not exclusively but predominantly, would be behind the creation of the CONAIE and the articulation of its political manifesto.

Arguing for the existence of indigenous culture, Blanca Chancoso discounted notions of culture in the singular, which meant that indígenas lacked culture. In 1984, she claimed,

When they speak about integration, we asked ourselves, to where do they want us to integrate?” For us, to speak of civilization is to disrespect the indígenas, disrespect our culture. It is the same as if we had to tell you that you are not civilized (Chancoso 1984).

Ultimately, she argued, policies of integration were deliberate projects of ethnocide, to “finish off our culture” (Chancoso 1984). Her questioning not only challenges the “naturalized right of the cultured to rule” (O’Sullivan et al. 1994)—as the usage of the term “culture” was undergoing transformation—but also implies an awareness of the workings of mestizaje, a grammar of encompassment, by which individuals aspire to whiteness denying indigenosity. Assimilation into mestizaje was a key concern among

indigenous leaders. In June 1983, indigenous activist Alberto Andrango, relating indigenous cultural reproduction to land struggle, claimed, “it is poverty that which obliges the indígena to turn into a mestizo” (Andrango 1983: 51).<sup>110</sup> Needless to say, Blanca Chancoso’s questions went unanswered. First, aspiring to be blancos, non-indígenas did not conceptually relate to mestizo culture—which at the local level was unarticulated. Second, Blanca Chancoso’s questioning revealed the limits of assimilation. More than likely, indígenas would enter into mestizaje at the bottom of the pyramidal encompassment. Assimilating into national culture, they could become cholos who deny their indigenous heritage. Questioning this paradigm was the foundation of a new political identity for those young indígenas involved in experimental practice of political consciousness amidst land reform struggles. These young leaders, who during the 1970s and early 1980s criticized the lifestyle of their parents and distanced themselves from indigeneity, would later embrace indigenous culture as valuable and as their own. In November 1985, years before Hurtado and Borja expressed their concerns about Ecuadorian national identity, indigenous leaders wrote the following in the Declaration of the Eight Congress of ECUARUNARI:

The Ecuadorian nation is not a stable community. It is kept by force. It was not historically formed with the consent and will of all the national sectors and the originary pueblos. It appropriates our history to justify its existence, [and] the historical elements that should constitute it are destroyed... in conclusion, the Ecuadorian nation does not exist (Pallares 2002: 214).<sup>111</sup>

The questioning of dominant identity and culture moved the constitution of identity/alterity from the grammar of orientalizacion to the grammar of segmentation. In

<sup>110</sup> Andrango’s statement echoes Muriel Crespi’s ideas of the cholos as surplus Indians (Crespi 1973).

<sup>111</sup> Translated by Amalia Pallares.

the grammar of orientalization, non-indígenas claimed that they as blancos had culture whereas indios did not. In the grammar of segmentation, indígenas argue that they have a living and millenarian culture while mestizos are uncertain about their culture.<sup>112</sup> As Baumann and Gingrich argue, the application of either of the grammars of identity/alterity depends on the actors' agency. Lacking economic and cultural capital, indios in the past did not have the agency to evade the stereotyping and derogatory power of their pre-established slot (See Trouillot 1991). Up to the early 1980s, most indigenous individuals who acquired cultural capital invested it in abandoning indigeneity. They only started to invest in the subject position in which they were hailed after they had questioned non-indígena identity and culture, after indigenous culture became, in their eyes, more valuable than non-indígena culture, and after otavaleños had demonstrated that indígenas did not have to turn into mishus to overcome poverty and acquire respect. This development was not the outcome of rational choice, nor the unmasking of false consciousness, but a long process by which indigenous consciousness became embodied in value-systems, cultural reproduction, and organizing efforts through practice.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Indígenas speak of having a *cultura milenaria* in Spanish or *wiñay kawsay* in Kichwa (See also Wibbelsman 2008: 1). In this context, the term milenario (millennial) refers to have lasted one or more millenniums. The Kichwa phrase means eternal culture. Both phrases have neither the figurative meaning of a utopian period of good government and prosperity nor the sense of imminence of a better age that the term may have in English (New Oxford American Dictionary 2005). Norman Whitten's extensive use of the term millennial, in his edited book *Millennial Ecuador*, is therefore confusing. In millennial situations, Whitten argues, "strong authoritarian sentiments are expressed, symbolic inversions abound, and movements of self-determination emerge" (2003: x). Whitten relates millennial to the Kichwa concept of "*pachacutic*, the return of the space-time (chronotope) of a healthy past of that of a healthy future" (2003: x). In Andean studies, the problem with using the term millennial analytically is that it may bring back stereotypical ideas of archaism and messianism attributed to Andean cultures.

<sup>113</sup> Referring to class consciousness, E.P. Thompson wrote:

The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born--or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are

Today, indígenas construct their identity being explicitly political, whereas in the past, they did so undertaking the sponsorships of festivities, and participating in reciprocal drinking (See Butler 2006).

Deborah Yashar (2005) claims that indigenous peoples in Latin America have mobilized because neoliberal citizenship regimes have threatened the local autonomy of indigenous communities. Marc Becker (2008) suggests that Ecuadorian leftist activists and indigenous leaders have collaborated under egalitarian terms from the 1930s. Michelle Wibbelsman (2008) argues for an intrinsic relation between ritual and the political mobilization of otavaleño communities. Yashar does not attend to evidence demonstrating that ethnic exploitation was based on making indígenas dependent to non-indígenas. In the Andes, not even the free communities were exempt from non-indígena economic exploitation, including forced labor schemes. Becker assumes indigenous personhood without explaining who, in terms of cultural capital and self-ascription, those actors were. An egalitarian relationship between an illiterate indio and well-read Marxist, trying to give raise to class consciousness, seems implausible. Wibbelsman idealizes indigenous ritual as a “return to origins in moral-religious and political terms” (2008: 141), analyzing indigenous culture per se, as autonomous from relations of power.

Considering indigenous peoples as discrete and substantial groups, these lines of work imply a transcendental indigenous subject, an indígena a priori presupposed rather than constructed through categorization. If theoretically, these and other analyses consider ethnicity as relational and context dependent, the analyses do not follow through and fall into groupism: a sharply defined struggle of indígenas versus blanco-mestizos.

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handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional

Ultimately, neither the indio, nor the blanco, nor the mestizo exists outside dominant categorization.<sup>114</sup> What transcends past and present is social practice: hierarchical categorization and marking, while social labels are permeated with new political and cultural meaning. If during the last decades dominant discourse has whitened the mestizo, as it has become an unmarked category, from the perspective of the indígenas, the blanco has become more cholo, as he has been forced to accept a social identification that in the past he considered as degrading because of its proximity with Indianness.

Groupist analytical perspectives are also oblivious to the way in which mestizaje constitutes indigenous culture and personhood, leaving ethnic discrimination not fully explained. As it is well known, indigenous identity is something that an individual or a family can leave behind, acquiring cultural capital, in one or more generations. However, analyses have neglected the double constrain that mestizaje imposes on the indígenas. Mestizaje not only provides for ethnic discrimination constituting indigenous persons as peripheral to the nation, forcing indígenas—and non-indígenas—to deny their indigenesness to avoid ethnic degradation and increase upward social mobility. Mestizaje also regiments indigenous identity and culture by means of defining and policing it. If an indígena does not wear the proper ethnic markers—for instance, a jacket instead of a poncho—non-indígenas at once comment on him as an “*aculturado*” (acculturated), as somebody who is losing his culture and traditions, implying that he has

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forms (Thompson 1964: 10).

<sup>114</sup> Proposing the term nationality to define indigenous peoples, Blanca Chancoso herself recognized the discriminatory objectivation of labeling a population as an ethnic group.

Ethnicity, for us, has a sense given by any scientist who has wanted to study us. So, it has a sense akin to “guinea pig.” Even when the concept of the anthropologists, the scientist, may be different, such as the study man, I think that it minimizes us. We feel this way, and for this

an inferiority complex (See also Leifsen 2006). The ideological implication is that indígenas cannot change. If they change, they are not indígenas any more. Policing the ethnic boundary, mestizaje exacerbates, rather than eliminate the ethnic boundary (See also Lane 2003: 91). Today, a younger generation of otavaleños are challenging this ideological constraint. They want to be indígenas wearing whatever they like. They may not even speak Kichwa, although the main emblem of difference among male otavaleños, long hair, is not negotiable.

During the land struggles, indigenous participants became aware of the contradictions of the state. At times, the ideas and actions of national and local state agents opposed one another. In addition, indígenas learned that by organizing they could influence the decisions of the state. Furthermore, they found out that they could establish alliances with non-indígena supporters, who, more than likely, were non-locals. Articulating a new indigenous identity, indigenous intellectuals seized a higher moral ground and gave aesthetic coherence to their lives as practitioners of indigenous culture. The interplay between these two processes made visible the viability of indigenous consciousness and motivated the indigenous challenge to the Ecuadorian nation-state.

These processes engendered two leaderships: one urban and the other rural. While many rural leaders faded away after the land struggles, many of the urban leaders became “professional activists,” embarking not only in indigenous organizing but also in the many professional opportunities that the state and development agencies opened for them. Reflecting their urban origins, many of these activists do not have experience participating in communal government, in which decisions are reached by consensus.

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reason we reject this concept because it smells like a study, an experiment. Because of this



Their individualism has created a great divide in the indigenous movement because other leaders consider that grassroots consultation is the foundation and strength of the movement. The divide goes even deeper. In Otavalo, many indígenas expressed to me their resentment toward the indigenous intellectual elite, arguing that they have enriched themselves without doing enough for all the indígenas. As Janet Lloyd argues, “While professional activists have provided leadership and direction to the indigenous movement in Ecuador, their presence has also been a source of antagonism and division” (Lloyd 2002: 130). In a political workshop in the community of Huaycopungo, she witnessed the way in which Luis Maldonado, one of the members of the otavaleño indigenous intelligentsia, interacted with the comuneros. He appeared unaware that his authoritative “method of communication was inappropriate among indigenous peoples. *Comuneros* resented what they perceived as a high-handed approach and were only too aware that, as one Huaycopungo *comunero* declared, ‘nos tratan como huahuas’ (‘they treat us like kids’)” (Lloyd 2002: 132).

This divide also became visible in the nomination of Ariruma Kowii as Undersecretary of Education of Indigenous Peoples in August 2006. This new office was a creation of Kowii and the Minister of Education, Raúl Vallejo. Other indigenous leaders heavily criticized Kowii because the new office took away the autonomy of the administration of bilingual education from the CONAIE.<sup>115</sup> Ironically, in July 2009, when

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we have rejected this term and have re-vindicated ourselves with the term nationality.

<sup>115</sup> In addition, in January 2006, Mario Conejo, the mayor of Otavalo and brother of Ariruma Kowii, resigned from the Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik-Nuevo País (Movement of Plurinational Unity Pachakutik-New Country), the political party representing the interests of the CONAIE.<sup>115</sup> Even members of the same intellectual elite criticized him for this decision. According to Luis Maldonado, “it was our responsibility to develop things in relation, let’s say, to what the indigenous movement could achieve, to overcome its problems. To say,

Kowii visited the offices of bilingual education in the Province of Cañar and refused to meet with a group of indigenous leaders who wanted to question him, he was submitted to indigenous justice. An old female *yachak* (healer) flogged him with a stinging nettle, while other indígenas repeated to him that he should remember that he is a son of the indigenous movement, and that he is wrong to betray it (Red de Comunicadores Interculturales Bilingües del Ecuador 2009). Indígenas have dislodged the naturalization of ethnic discrimination and transformed the Ecuadorian political arena, but the future of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement is uncertain. The divergence between some members of the indigenous intelligentsia and the grass roots is certainly clear.

Today, becoming a politicized indígena is a way of participating in the global system, but as I hope to have demonstrated, indigenous consciousness is not determined. In Ecuador, unlike Peru, indígenas were able to transform the constitution of identity/alterity. They did so, as Mario Conejo argued, transferring the conflict of identity to the other, the non-indígena (Conejo Maldonado 1997).

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“this no longer useful. I'm going alone with my own things” is not a solution. Thus, the project becomes one absolutely personalistic” (221).

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