

FROM “*INDIOS MISERABLES*” TO “*NACIONALIDADES INDIGENAS*”:
DISCOURSE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN ANDEAN
ECUADOR

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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In recent decades, the indigenous populations of the highlands of Ecuador have become one of the most politically successful and best-organized ethnic movements in South America. The Indian Movement of Ecuador of the last decade has transformed the image of the Andean Indian- rural, poor, ignorant, and oppressed- into an active political agent with a sense of awareness and an unquestionable space in the Ecuadorian political arena.

My research analyses this identity transformation and the discourse trajectory that enabled and accompanied this process during the last fifty years. For the purpose of the argument being made, I use subaltern and postcolonial studies as my framework. This approach will help to better contextualize the current movement not as a phenomenon of the last decade, but rather as a progression in the ongoing process of the negotiation of identities inherent to the relation between the dominant and the subaltern. It is within this approach that the power relations in Andean Ecuador are analyzed in this study. I

specifically focus on Hacienda politics, the Agrarian Reform process of the 1960's and 70's, as well as in developmental programs, and the influx of Evangelical Protestantism in the region as tools appropriated by the Indian subaltern to propose an alternate and strong ethnic identity.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION:
UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Partly because of the empire, all cultures are involved in one another: none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic (Said 1994: xxix).

The Ecuadorian Indian¹ uprising of June 1990 will be remembered as the one that changed the history of the country. Indians for the first time were able to put together a massive mobilization that virtually paralyzed the country for more than a week, forcing the government and the white/mestizo population to listen to their demands, and to acknowledge their legitimacy. Furthermore, with this renowned *levantamiento*, Indians positioned themselves at the heart of politics in Ecuador. Their chant of “*nunca más sin nosotros*” certainly proved correct. Indians have become not only an important political actor, with a political party and several seats in congress, but hold governmental positions at the local and national levels, and are perceived now as important sector of the electorate. Moreover, the indigenous movement was a key actor in overthrowing President Jamil Mahuad in 2001, as well as in electing the current President, who won the elections due to the massive Indian support.

The indigenous movement of Ecuador is yet another example of the strong resurgence of ethnic movements during the last decades of the twentieth century. This

¹ I will be using the word Indian throughout this study, instead of indigenous peoples. The current movement has chosen this word as a discursive tool in the process of reappropriating their language. This is a statement supported by the intellectual leaders of the movement (refer to chapter 4).

ethnic resurgence has produced innumerable debates as to the extent to which a rediscovered notion of ethnicity has been a strategy by dominated populations to access spaces of power. In this sense, ethnicity could be defined as a negotiating tool with which subalterns seek to position themselves vis-à-vis the white/mestizo population in a constant negotiation of their identity. Ethnicity then becomes a strategy of distinction, a political tool; thus, this problematizes the definition of ethnicity, underscoring its conflictive nature. Ethnicity becomes a fluid expression and cannot be reduced to a fixed category of analysis (Cervone 1998 a). It continually redefines itself in a contestatory manner in which, in the case of Ecuador, Indians construct and propose alternate identities from the ones attempted to be imposed by the dominant population, in order to question existing structures, or to access spaces of power. The construction by the dominant population of the “other” as discourse (Said, 1978) is appropriated by the subaltern as an empowerment strategy. The subaltern then produces an alternate discourse that underscores his/her difference as a source of political platform, and construction of alterity within their right to difference. In this sense, the tools of the dominant become the tools of the dominated in a continual give-and-take nature inherent to every relation of power (Loomba 1998).

In this study, I will focus on the fluidity of ethnic construction prevalent within the Indian vs. the white/mestizo relation in Ecuador, which contradicts the official discourse of a fixed, millenarian, and unchanging ethnic identity (Said 1978). It is under this discourse that the elites have attempted to construct an imagined nation state (Anderson 1991), but it is also this discourse of alterity that has been appropriated by Indians in their strong resurgence of the last decade. The rediscovered and very powerful

notion of ethnic identity with which the indigenous movement has framed its return has to be analyzed using alternative methods of analysis, since traditional analytical methodology, I think, does not suffice. The resurgence of ethnicity as a political tool within the Indians' plight for their right to difference cannot be fully explained from a Marxist perspective or a purely Indianist focus. The *levantamiento* (1990) claims put forward by the Indians went well beyond traditional ethnic proposals of their right to land, culture, language, and education, to a more elaborate agenda including issues affecting the majority of Ecuadorians. (Macas 1991; Ramón Valarezo 1993). On the one hand, the leftist approach addressed ethnicity as an aspect of class struggle, and converted the Indians into peasants, giving saliency to the latter, and virtually annulling the ethnic aspect of the fight. Moreover, the class centered approach considered Indians incapable of their own representation since they were subjected to levels of domination that prevented them from producing change based solely on their ethnic identity (Ferrín 1982; Sylva 1992; Velasco 1979). On the other hand, the *Indigenista* approach concentrated solely on racial discrimination issues, from a perspective of the *no Indios*, in an attempt to redeem the Indian of centuries of domination by romanticizing in a protective and paternalistic manner about the Indian.² *Indigenismo* facilitated the role of the state as Indian redeemer through integration, but never questioned social reproductive mechanisms (Arcos, unpublished draft provided by the author).³ Clearly these

² The *Indigenismo* current started in literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, with works that emphasized Indian exploitation. It moved on to become what could have been a vindictive force, with the influence of Mariategui, but was soon appropriated by populist governments throughout Latin America, attributing to Indian populations a sudden importance and a significant place as key forgers of an imagined "national identity," but without altering the structure of power. For an extensive critique to the *Indigenista* theory and authors, refer to Barre, 1983; Rivera, 2003.

³ Carlos Arcos. July 2003. Personal Communication. Refer to Arcos, 1984 for a finished version of this draft.

approaches, though they might have served indirectly the ethnic plight, cannot fully explain the resurgence of an Indian with a clear sense of political agency, aware of his/her ethnic subaltern status, but acting beyond the ethnic boundary. Thus, this study will focus on the trajectory of the Indian voice (though not necessarily in a written manner), the use of language, and how these elements, as part of a larger discourse in the representation of this population, changed, evolved, and adjusted, during the last few decades to a white dominant discourse, while at the same time claiming undisputable spaces of political power.

I believe it is crucial to understand the trajectory of resistance and of appropriation of language and reversal of discourses from the dominant to the subaltern, which, although not considered within the official historical account, has had an undeniable role in influencing identity construction during the last few decades. The analysis of history from the perspective of the subaltern's pervasive presence, contestatory approach, and influence on the history writing process, will help explain the ethnic resurgence with which the indigenous movement was brought into the political spotlight with the 1990 *levantamiento*. Hence, I will analyze the trajectory of this transformation of discourses, of this intermixing of voices, of this encountering of beliefs and of a prevailing reinvention of ethnicity as a crucial aspect in the accomplishments of the ethnic movement. I will also point to the ambiguities that have emerged through its trajectory, as a subaltern group struggling to position itself in the white dominated field of politics and government.

This study will concentrate on the decades following and immediately before the Land Reform of the 1960's, the circumstances that led to it, and the effects it produced

not only in land distribution, but also in helping to solidify an Indian proposal through appropriation of practices, symbols, and discourses that are being utilized in the current movement. I will argue that through resistance, Indians have constructed alternative identities from the ones being imposed by the white population. It is in this fluid process of imagined identities and alternate proposals that voices and discourses mesh, cultures clash, and hybrid identities emerge, giving rise to new ways of “being Indian.” It is then in the dynamic aspects of identity construction, where I want to concentrate. On the one hand, Indians, once considered the “miserable race” (Guerrero 2000), have entered the late twentieth century in a “plurinational state,” recognized by the government after the 1990 uprising. The former identity constitutes an effort by the white dominant population to construct the notion of a homogenous, imagined nation state (Anderson 1991) in which the Indians were regarded as children in need of protection (Guerrero 2000), incapable of their own representation, or to access the status of citizenship. This exclusion continued throughout the twentieth century in which Indians were constantly represented as a burden in the modernizing project of the nation. As late as the 1970’s, then president Guillermo Rodríguez Lara granted invisibility to the Indian population when declaring in a public speech: “In Ecuador there is no more Indian problem, we all become white when we embrace the goals of national culture” (Stutzman, 1981: 45).

The official version of history, which systematically ignores any Indian role, and continually portrays this population as backward, millenarian, rural, and ignorant, proves to be ambiguous and incomplete when confronted with the current indigenous movement, in which a different, almost contradictory identity of the Indian is put forward. The Indian is a political agent, aware of his/her rights as citizen, and with knowledge and

ability to manipulate the white's discourse in which to frame his/her claims. On the other hand, in order to solidify their position as political agents, Indians must frame their discourse to suit not only a white/mestizo government-audience, but also foreign audiences, who have gained importance during the last decades, as is the case of several NGOs working with Indian populations, and evangelical missions which provide much needed funding in areas of predominantly Indian presence (Muratorio 1981; Paredes Alfaro 1980). The trajectory of discourse, then, is not lacking ambiguities in its constant give-and-take position vis-à-vis the dominant population.

The white/mestizo population might be the dominant, but it has not existed in a vacuum, immune to the Indian culture. The dominant has certainly influenced the Indian culture, while the Indian influence continues to shape the former in a way that, although not acknowledged, has been prevalent. This interpenetration of cultures makes it impossible to retrieve an Indian voice that not only does not exist in a pristine or pre-colonial state, but that can only speak in a condition of subordination to a dominant population (Loomba, 1998; Spivak 1988), as the Indian condition continues to be. Notwithstanding the formidable accomplishments of the indigenous movement that has reshaped the political scenario of the last decade with massive uprisings capable of paralyzing the country; their nationwide organizational recruiting ability; and their now important, and very visible presence in governmental positions, they still must conform to the white discourse, in order to legitimize their own discourse. In other words, and to use Andrés Guerrero's expression, ventriloquism in the Ecuadorian Indian representation has not ended. Hence, I find myself with probably more questions than before I began my research.

I have come to the realization, however, that social processes, such as the trajectory of the voice and discourse in the Indian representation of Ecuador, in their continual negotiation of an ethnic identity, and the sovereignty of such representation, are not a matter of beginning or ending, but rather, as the term connotes, are in constant movement, they are dynamic, dialectical, fluid, porous, elastic, inventive, and creative. What is important to point out, after two years of reading and researching about this topic, is that this fluidity, which allows Indians to negotiate and even reinvent their identity vis-à-vis the white population and the government reassures their survival not only as a population with an important percentage (calculated at 35% by CONAIE in 2001), but also as a group that has positioned itself for good as a political actor that can not be ignored again in the Ecuadorian political arena. Indian identity in Ecuador has found a renewed sense of strength, in a time when globalizing processes are challenging notions of identity and nationalism. This population now more than ever have found their “indianness” (however defined) and have found a nation (even within a plurinational context) they can feel part of.

This is a two-part study. The first part is the result of bibliographical research done over the past two years. The many readings on postcolonial and subaltern studies, along with many more on the new historiography being proposed in the Andean region, convinced me of the importance of situating my study within this analytical framework. It will provide an alternate tool of analysis, and hopefully a helpful one, from the traditional theories that have been proposed on the topic. The second part of this study is the product of the fieldwork I carried out in Ecuador during the summer of 2003. I spent 7 weeks in that country, compiling literature, interviewing Indian leaders of the movement,

as well as FLACSO intellectuals who have done research on this topic, and a traditional landowner of a highland hacienda. The results of the first part of this study will be analyzed in chapters 2 and 3. The findings of my fieldwork along with a discussion on *el levantamiento* and the homogenous Indian identity it put forward will be discussed on chapter 4. The remainder of this chapter will review the literature on the indigenous movement, its history and its predicaments, as well as post-colonial and subaltern theory and how it applies to the Ecuadorian case. The last section of the present chapter will be an outline of the chapters to follow.

What Has Been Said Out Loud, What Has Remained Silent.

Since the 1990's there has been an array of Ecuadorian historians and intellectuals dedicated to analyzing the indigenous movement. I will concentrate on a few that I consider crucial to include in this study. Andrés Guerrero has written extensively on the Indian population during the 19th and 20th centuries. He provides a brilliant rendition of what he calls the ventriloquism process during the 19th century, by which the Indian voice was lost in an act of trans-scripture in the hands of the mestizo authorities (1994). Guerrero also examines at length the rich symbolism of Indian rituals and how these depicted, reaffirmed, and at the same time, challenged hacienda relations at the beginning of the 20th century (Guerrero 1991). Touching on this same topic, Emilia Ferraro (2000), focuses on the symbolism of the fiesta as a reaffirmation of the subaltern position of the Indian vis-à-vis the *patrón*, as well as a legitimacy of the unequal yet symbiotic relation among them, in which the *patrón* accepts his role as protector and provider of the Indian. Ferraro also focuses on the changes of the relationship that have affected the ritual aspect of the *fiesta* after the hacienda disarticulation of the 1960's with the Agrarian Reform.

Although the *patrón* and the hacienda are no longer the center of the celebration, its practice continues as an expression of ethnicity and a way to ritually make sense of the rapid changes Indians have confronted in the last decades (Ferraro 2000). Amalia Pallares (2000) argues that the ritualizing of social interaction in Indian and mestizo communities serves both, as a reinforcer of racial barriers and as a source of a sense of property by the Indians. They considered, or imagined, themselves as main protagonists of the celebrations, even though they had to go to innumerable mestizo channels to produce it (Pallares, 2000). Emma Cervone also provides a case study of ritual transformation after the 1980's in a community of the central Ecuadorian Andes from an interethnic rivalry to an ethnic confrontation between Indians of the region and the white/mestizo population (Cervone 2000).

Besides analyzing ritual symbolism, Guerrero also challenges the veracity of the official discourse put forward regarding the land reform law of 1964. Guerrero argues that there was an important and prevalent pressure “from below” that forced many landowners to divide their haciendas before the law was even enacted or enforced (Guerrero 1983). León Zamosc(1989) also argues for an alternative discourse regarding the official version of agrarian reform as a way to modernize the agrarian sector and change relations of production from a semi-feudal (the hacienda), to a capitalist relation between landowners and workers. These arguments serve my study in the analysis of the trajectory of a subaltern presence and discourse affecting the official decision making process. Along these lines, Galo Ramón Valarezo (1993) argues for the Indian project in Ecuador. He analyzes the 1990 *levantamiento* as a challenge to the stereotypes of history regarding the Indian. Ramón Valarezo, like Guerrero, provides an alternate view of

hacienda relations in the highlands as a local project of resistance that although, at that time, did not generate a more national proposal of change, it was political. He also analyzes how, as Indians gain more spaces of power through education, and the emergence of an Indian middle and wealthy class, far from distancing themselves from their Indian origins, they reaffirm their identity. The more an Indian learns to manipulate the world of the whites, the more ethnic they become.

Blanca Muratorio writes on the different ways the Indian “other” was imagined by the white/mestizo population during the 19th and 20th centuries, and the ways in which the *imaginados* accepted or refused the imagined identity in a constant cultural transformation of both the *imágenes* produced and the *imageros* who constructed them (Muratorio 1994). Muratorio’s approach challenges the notion of a static, monolithic dominant culture, which supports my argument of the dialectical and fluid nature of identity construction. This author has also written on the influence of religion as a tool for identity negotiation. More specifically, Muratorio concentrates on the role of Protestantism and how it provided a new sense of ethnic pride among an Indian region in the central Ecuadorian Andes. The translation of the bible into the quichua language, along with the opening of the first Quichua radio station were key factors that literally and symbolically provided a voice to the Indians of Chimborazo during the post-agrarian reform time (Muratorio 1981).

On the subject of appropriation of discourse by the Indians, I find the work of Víctor Bretón most informative and useful for my study. His argument relates to the failure of the *desarrollista* programs that followed the Agrarian Reform of the 1960’s, many of them funded by the U.S. government. He specifically refers to the Andean

Mission and how it failed its initial purpose as a developmental program of Indian incorporation into the modernizing project. The program attempted to provide training for the Indians on different fields, so as to urbanize part of the population and help the rest modernize their agricultural techniques. This program, though, served as a catalyst for organizational purposes and creation of leaders that would later become key in the current indigenous movement (Bretón 2001). One such leader is Luis Macas, who served as Secretary of Agriculture during the first six months of the current administration, and a key leader within the indigenous movement. Bretón's argument is crucial since it points to the dynamics of domination and resistance. While processes point in one direction, solutions seem to point in another (Bretón 2001). In his view, NGOs and their developmental programs have replaced the State and have become the modern "ventriloquist" representative of the subaltern.

Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies Theories

Before going in depth on the postcolonial and subaltern studies theory that will serve to frame my argument, I believe it is important to provide a brief definition and historical trajectory of each. Post-colonial theory and subaltern studies stand in sharp contrast to prevalent notions of historicism as an elite discourse. Thus, suggest post-colonial historians Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gyan Prakash, one of these disciplines' main tasks is to challenge and deconstruct this notion of historicism in which the West stands for history, where Europe is its theoretical subject, and is described as the genesis of modernity, capitalism, and Enlightenment (Chakrabarty 2002; Prakash 1994.). I consider important to begin this analysis from the notion that colonialism did not write itself on a clean slate and therefore, cannot be held accountable for everything that might be considered today to be post-colonial. Nor can the post-colonial critique be an attempt to

rescue native, or pre-colonial cultures, as if they were something that could easily be retrieved in its pristine state, once the burden of the colonial is lifted from their histories (Spivak 1998).⁴ The colonial rule had a profound impact on both, the colonizer and the colonized in which ideas, notions, beliefs, and religions were muddled, altered, and transformed. Colonization never occurred as a one-way process but rather as a meeting place where disparate cultures met, creating asymmetrical and unequal relationships of domination and resistance.

Postcolonial historicism, followed by subaltern studies are not only an attempt to restore political agency to local histories, but also to understand that the postcolonial process is more of a spectrum than a dichotomized and always polarized relation of power. It is within this process that subaltern agency, beyond the Marxist determinist approach, can be reinstated. Subaltern studies, going beyond solely class oriented Marxism, incorporates into the plight for representation, human groups such as women, peasants, and Indians, whose histories became subordinated to the European and elites' histories and therefore lacked the legitimacy of acquiring theory status. Contrary to the suggestion by Hobsbawm of a "pre-political" consciousness, Ranajit Guha, considered the father of subaltern studies, argued that peasant insurgencies in India were in fact of a political nature and that the subaltern was fully aware of the contemporary world around. This awareness, which Guha read as political, involved an inversion of "the codes through which their social superiors dominated them in everyday life" (Chakrabarty 2002), a symbolism that, as in the case of the Andes, was missed by the historians and

⁴ Refer to Loomba, 1998.

relegated to the realm of the native, and by the very nature of the discourse surrounding him/her, the pre-political.

Postcolonial critique does not depart completely from the historical theory, since European Enlightenment notions, through the colonization experience, had become part of the subaltern's history. In other words, the subaltern did not construct his/her history in a vacuum. Third World histories could not be written as if they existed in a separate realm, since the colonizer and the colonized interpenetrated each other's notions, cultures, and ideas, even though it is Europe, impersonated in the white, male, and dominant, who gets to write his version of history as power, giving it universal connotations. This version of history has no room, in the dominant's concept of the nation, (or imagination of it) for the Indian other who is therefore relegated to the realm of the a-historical being. In the case of the Andes, and more specifically of Ecuador, this notion is constantly being contested and challenged by local histories and memories, in a continuous struggle to accommodate and appropriate dominant notions and practices, making room for a dialectical process and a plurality of relationships (Chakrabarty 2000). Post-colonial and subaltern histories are part of each other, depend on each other and are further connected with European Enlightenment notions of history for its appropriation and rejection, since it is precisely this contradictory relationship with European social and political thought that has been crucial in the achievement of political modernity in the Third World.

An important work, and I would even venture to say the catalyst essay in post-colonial critique, is Edward Said's "Orientalism", a seminal piece in post-colonial critique and theory. In it, Said proposes the construction of the "East" as discourse of the

“West” for domination and control. For the purpose of my study, Said’s argument is extrapolated to the construction of the Indian in Ecuador, as discourse. Hence, Said’s West can stand for the white/mestizo dominant elite, while the East stands for the Indian “other”. Said argues that the West constructed the East as a negative mirror image of itself. Therefore, everything that the West is, the East isn’t. Whereas the West is dynamic, evolves and advances, the East retains its millenarian ways; it cannot change by its own will, because it has no will apart from its innate laziness, its uncontrollable lust and violent ways. Therefore, it is the West’s moral duty to rescue it, to hold its hand and guide it, to own it, to penetrate it, to control it, and in so doing, to save from its own destiny. They must be kept, for their own good, under close watch and control. Within this rationalization, the West is then also entitled to exploit the Orient’s rich resources for western consumption and comfort, since by definition “it (the oriental) is not quite as human as we are” (Said 1978:108). The lack of humanity argued by Said, is clearly exemplified in the representation of the Indian throughout history in Ecuador. From the miserable race, with a children-like self, as the Indians were referred to at the end of the 19th century; to the ignorant, half drunken, and backward hacienda Indian of the beginning of the 20th century; to representing a “problem” for the modernizing project of the nation-state and the consequent developmental, integrationist programs of the post agrarian reform era; and finally, to becoming invisible, in the words of President Rodríguez Lara. The construction of the other as discourse provided by Said, is then an important analytical tool that I will use throughout this essay.

Said’s argument, in the Andean case, has been used by Orin Starn, in what he labels as “Andeanism” (Starn 1991) and that works with a similar logic. In the Andes, he

suggests, the self/other construction is necessarily dichotomized in order to produce an essentialized other. *Lo Andino*, which stands for the highland culture, is then constructed by the dominant population as discourse, and presented as millenarian, and fixed in the past. He suggests that the representation of the Indian is that of a population that somehow is not connected to modernity; his/her situation systematically ignored by social scientists that fail to connect the native, the indigenous, the Andean, with anything modern (Starn 1991). In this sense, the discourse surrounding the appearance of the dreadful *Sendero Luminoso* in Perú, and the outbreak of the 1990 *levantamiento* in Ecuador can be paralleled. They were both perceived initially as having nothing to do with the noble Indian, and being the work of outsiders, agitators, infiltrators, “a force completely external to the peasantry” (Starn 1991: 71). The dichotomous construction of the Indian by the whites set clear boundaries to the Indian identity. The Indian was not political, continued to live in an imagined, pre-colonial state, unconnected with the urban, and unwilling to evolve and modernize. It becomes the whites’ responsibility then (in Said it is the West) to guide it by the hand, to represent her interests, and to save the subaltern of her own destiny. Although the argument I make is for a contestatory and challenging nature of ethnic identity, vis-à-vis the white/mestizo population, Said’s notion of the West as discourse, dichotomous, and unchallenged, is crucial for my suggestion of appropriation and reversal of discourses. It provides a ground floor for further analysis and even for the deconstruction of the fixed notion of the discourse Said’s suggests. Moreover, Said’s analysis is vital, since it provides space for deconstruction, for the emergence of hybrid identities, the interpenetration of cultures, and the ambiguities that the constant appropriation of discourses, and proposal of alterity

by the subaltern engenders. Furthering this notion, Hommi Bhabba proposes that in the very processes of their delivery, discourses are diluted and hybridized (Loomba 1998). In other words, the identities imposed by the colonizer on the colonized are proven unstable since both, colonizer and colonized are part of a complex and uneven reciprocity in which “ the colonial subjects can negotiate the cracks of dominant discourses in a variety of ways” (Loomba 1998: 232).

Gyan Prakash, is one of the post-colonial scholars that goes beyond Said’s proposal. If the colonizer constructed the native, then surely, he argues, the native must have also constructed the colonizer (Prakash 1995). Expanding on binary definitions, and conceiving them as more fluid within the dialectical process of colonialism, Prakash looks not up at the Western colonizer, but down at the subaltern and to how h/she resisted and responded to colonialism by shuffling identities, and appropriating discourses. It is within this realignments and rearranging of values and social identifications that an alternative source of knowledge emerged from beneath the official colonial historiography. Here, another form of “after-colonialism” takes shape that must be incorporated in the post-colonial quest. There are an array of accounts of resistance of the colonized, as well as descriptions of the people, though none have been given the status of post-colonial theory. These accounts, until recently were left for Anthropologists to study and interpret, not as part of history, but precisely the opposite; they belong to the people left out of history. They speak of local stories, more than “real history”, one that until recently was relegated to the realm of native’s mythologies, but one of “agency and knowledge alive in the dead weight of the colonial past” (Prakash 1995:5). Every time that the colonial history, with its totalizing and universalizing

argument is confronted by local histories and knowledges and hence proven inapplicable (at least as presented), a new, hybrid and alternative type of knowledge emerges. These local knowledges, I think, are not the post-colonial outcome of a European history, for they have existed there, in the local, in some form or another; being transformed and redefined with the colonial experience, but alive before its arrival. Hence, the subaltern engages in more than mere response to the dominant, s/he incorporates and appropriates practices and notions in a continuum rather than a fixed notion of history and identity.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has also written extensively on the subject of subaltern studies. His argument of Europe as center in the construction of the other could only exist as such by a systematic relegation of the non-Europeans to a secondary status, culturally, racially, and politically. The notion of “first Europe and then the rest”, based on the centrality of Europe vs. the secondary status of “the rest”, was crucial in the construction of a universal, homogenous identity of the non-European, that stressed the fixed and dichotomous identities of the colonizers and the colonized as unchanging realities. Geographic location, local histories, and colonial experiences were massified under the label of non-European (Chakrabarty 2002). This binary conception, argues Chakrabarty, was at the heart of the construction of South East Asia as the rest, the non-European, which served the discursive purpose of colonialism. Chakrabarty’s “Europe vs. the rest” notion could also be used in describing the Andean Indian within this massified “rest” that necessarily remained backward, lazy, uncivilized, dirty, and irrational. In the colonial construction of the Third World, and the consequent postcolonial critique, as Chakrabarty suggests, it is Europe that is the real subject of all the colonial world’s histories.

The East as discourse was internalized by colonized populations, and produced a split identity. Partha Chaterjee suggests that the identity produced in the colonial subjects stands at the very core of historical contestation. One is the public, the historical subject, anxious for European modernity and its enchantments; the other private, which existed in contestation, challenging and undermining the former. Following this logic, the more modern and western- like an individual succeeded in becoming, the greater the need to retain the private culture (Chaterjee 1997). Ramón Valarezo (1993) makes a similar argument in reference to the emerging Indian middle class in Ecuador. The history of the self, in this sense, becomes then the contested frontier, where private and public subjects collide, where dualisms and binaries meet to produce a hybrid consciousness, a postcolonial consciousness, made of East and West, or of white/mestizo and Indian. This consciousness emerged as much in a contestatory manner, as it did in a dialectical manner. It will continue to redefine the terms of the dialogue, and the notions to be challenged depending on historical, political, and social conjunctures, thus, it is not closed. Though this dialogue is by no means democratic, as Chakravarty reminds us, it is nonetheless crucial for the subaltern in the constant definition of the self vis-à-vis the dominant. It is in the undemocratic nature of the dialogue, where the Ecuadorian Indian finds a continual source for resistance. Ideally, continues Chakrabarty, in a dialogue the outcome is unknown since both parties have equal weight in the argument they are engaged in. However, the dialogue between subaltern and dominant is far from ideal since it takes place “within a field of possibilities that is already structured from the very beginning in favor of certain outcomes” (Chakrabarty 2002: 34). The Indian, on the one hand is aware of the subordinate condition of his/her discourse; while on the other, knows

it is this ongoing dialogue, though undemocratic, what allows him/her to access spaces negated to him/her before, even if these spaces are negotiated under the dominant's conditions. The key issue here, in my view, is that the subaltern enters into the conquered spaces of power as an Indian (with probably a whole new definition of what this entails), but as an Indian nonetheless.

This study is by no means an attempt to apply blindly theories that emerged from a different colonial experience than that of the Ecuadorian Indian. I am fully aware that the domination of the American colonies cannot be compared to what the Asian colonies endured. They entailed different processes of control that responded to a specific set of relations. Hence, I fully agree with Stuart Hall when he argues that the postcolonial cannot happen in the same way, or at the same time since "it is in effect a construct internally differentiated by its intersections with other unfolding relations" (Hall 1996: 245). Along these lines, Mark Thurner makes a similar argument for the ongoing post-colonial experience in the Americas. Post-colonial theory cannot make a valid argument for every colonial experience, since none were identical in their historical trajectories, or in their ongoing post-colonial proposals (Thurner 2003). In this sense, each region must create its own definition of the postcolonial and write its own theory. Thus, Postcoloniality should stand against the homogenization of theory by analyzing social formations and movements "as constituted by (rather than in spite of) heterogeneity and to reconceive social bonding as constituted by (rather than in spite of) difference" (Pratt 1998: 431).

My hypothesis incorporates the paradigmatic framework of postcolonial and subaltern studies, as explained here, into the Ecuadorian Indian resistance, with full

awareness of its limitations and ambiguities. However, the notion of subalternity, and the ongoing plight for self-representation, I think, is shared by subaltern populations the world over. Post-colonialism and subaltern theory can be a meeting point where dispersed and subaltern histories meet, not to produce yet another universalizing theory, but to converse among each other. As former colonies, Third World regions know enough about European and official histories and how to relate to them, or against them, from their various locations and experiences.

Research Methods

The research done for the first part of this study was conducted at the University of Florida, and has expanded, as explained earlier, for a period of roughly two years. In Ecuador I conducted library research at FLACSO, *Universidad Salesiana*, and the *Aula Benjamín Carrión* of the *Biblioteca del Banco Central del Ecuador*. In Otavalo I photocopied several documents at the *Notaría Primera del Cantón*, where all documents related to land disputes between previous *huasipungueros* and landowners of the region are kept. I also analyzed many *libros de rayas* (sort of attendance record kept in haciendas) as well as *libros de suplidos* (an accounting record kept by notaries in the haciendas of the moneys lent to *peones*), in a hacienda in Machachi, in the north central highland region.

Interviews and unofficial meetings with various people that share an interest in this topic were held throughout my stay in Ecuador. I had both, the pleasure and the honor to interview several intellectual and influential leaders of the current movement. For the purpose of maintaining their privacy, I will refer to them only by initials. I interviewed: L. M.T., who at the time worked as assistant to Nina Pacari (Secretary of Foreign Relations); A. K., an *Otavaleño* writer and poet, as well as National Coordinator

for PRODEPINE (Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador); L. U., from Cotopaxi, who served in the Ministerio de Previsión Social; and M. S., linguist and philosopher. In FLACSO I talked to Fernando García, *Coordinador del Programa de Maestrías en Estudios Etnicos*; Carlos Arcos, researcher and professor. I also interviewed and had numerous and enriching conversations with R. G. T., a landowner, who many consider to be one of the last traditional Quiteño landowners. The data obtained in these interviews, and further analysis represents the views, opinions, and perspectives of the participants. It does not intend to generalize as being that of the many actors involved in this process.

Outline of Chapters

This study is divided into five chapters. The next three chapters consist of the following: Chapter two will explain the hacienda relations of the beginning of the 20th century. It analyzes Indian practices in the hacienda, such as rituals, petty theft, Indian gossip, and the Agrarian Reform process of 1964, within the subaltern studies approach, focusing on an alternative analysis of the *patrón-peón* relationship. This analysis perceives the *peón* as active political agent in an unequal, yet symbiotic relationship with the dominant, rather than the oppressed, powerless individual constructed by the official discourse. Chapter two also touches on Indian rituals both, within the reign of the hacienda as well as after the agrarian reform. The rich symbolism of these rituals, in which the *patrón* is brought down to the *peón's* level, provided the subaltern with a way to both reaffirm his/her subaltern status; while at the same time challenged the *patrón*. It was a constant reminder of rights and obligations that affected these actors as members of this relationship of power.

Chapter three provides an analysis of the developmental programs that were applied, or were rather attempted, after the agrarian reform, in an effort to integrate the Indian and to modernize this population. It will specifically focus on the Andean Mission program of the highlands and how it became a venue for Indian expression and appropriation of discourse in a different direction than what it proposed. In this chapter, I will also discuss the issue of migration and how it provided yet another venue, not of acculturation, but rather of reaffirmation of Indian identity. The influence of Protestantism in the highlands, as a source of reaffirming ethnic identity will also be analyzed in this chapter. This chapter will also cover the developments shortly before and after the 1990 *levantamiento* as well as the post-1990 Indian politics.

Chapter four will include my findings on the interviews carried out during my fieldwork in Ecuador, as well as a discussion on these interviews and the ambiguities presented by the homogenous Indian identity that the movement has put forward in Ecuador. This identity has served as a very valid political platform from which the movement has positioned itself at the heart of the Ecuadorian political arena, but which is many times ambiguous and contradictory.

The final chapter will include my conclusions, in addition to ideas for future research. I will review the more salient aspects of this study and how they helped frame my argument. I will also discuss aspects of this study that did not work as well as expected, road-blocks encountered along the way, as well as suggestions as to how to improve this type of study in the future. I will show though, that an alternate analysis of history was in place, in order to understand the emergence of the current indigenous movement. This analysis, however incomplete, and many times ambiguous, allows the

subaltern to emerge as subject of his/her own history, in a fluid and elastic process of negotiation, resistance, and contestation vis-à-vis the dominant population, which stands at the heart of the history writing process.

CHAPTER 2
HACIENDA RELATIONS, THE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL ALTERITY IN
ANDEAN ECUADOR, AND THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROCESS.

Introduction

From a historical perspective, the indigenous movement of Ecuador could be considered an almost “overnight” event which, during the last decade of the twentieth century, rose up to become not only the most important social movement in Ecuador today, but which has positioned itself at the heart of the political life of the country. The indigenous movement, which became officially acknowledged as such after the 1990 *levantamiento*, emerged with such strength and organization that not only took the government and the general population by surprise, but also shook the country at the political and social levels in ways never expected from this population. The movement, using Indian intellectual leader and activist A. K.’s words, “will provide social scientists with plenty of work for decades to come.”¹

Far from being an overnight event, the indigenous movement of Ecuador must be understood as a historical process with a long trajectory of resistance and activism within the dialectical nature inherent to every relation of power. The constant dialogue and negotiation of identities between the subaltern and the dominant population, now acknowledged by scholars of post-colonial and subaltern studies has enabled an alternate vision of history to emerge. Within this perspective, domination is viewed as one part of the relation, while resistance is the other, with a constant crossing of ideas and transgression of boundaries

¹ Personal communication. Quito, July, 2003. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

(Chatterjee, 2000; Prakash 1995; Loomba, 1998; Guerrero 1991). It is within this analytical context that I will concentrate on hacienda relations in Ecuador, which, in the highland region, were demarcated by the dynamics of the *patrón-peón* relationship.

In this chapter I will focus on this alternate version of history. I will analyze how, along with the official account of history, written mostly by the elites, another kind of history was also being woven; a local history, or rather an array of subaltern histories. These accounts, until recently were left for anthropologists to study and interpret, not as part of history, but precisely the opposite; they were viewed as belonging to the natives, the people left out of history (Prakash 1995). Stories of resistance of the colonized, as well as descriptions of the people, traditions, rituals, tales, and beliefs that were told by the local people, which although were an important aspect of the larger historical accounts, were never given the status of official theory.

For the purpose of this study, I will concentrate on hacienda politics in the highland region during the early twentieth century. The hacienda constituted not only a defining place of domination and resistance practices, but also the site of numerous acts of rebellion related to land struggle. The hacienda was the focal point in the fight for land, and the place where this struggle took form, and organized during the 30's and 40's (Ramón Valarezo 1993; Velasco 1979)². Analyzing hacienda relations, in my view, will aide in comprehending within this alternate context, the emergence of the elaborate and well-organized current indigenous movement. In no way is this an attempt to provide clear answers as to the gap that seems to puzzle social scientists regarding the almost revolutionary effect that the indigenous movement has had during the last decade. How the Indians managed to

² L. U. also referred to the hacienda as the focal point of struggle during these decades, evolving from small confrontations to massive demonstrations and land sieges. Personal communication, July, 2003.

accomplish what they have accomplished in the political, ethnic, and social fields, I believe, present challenges and questions beyond the scope and coverage of my study, and, I am sure, will continue to be the material for much further and deeper analysis. My intentions are simply to shift centers a bit, to analyze history within the dynamics of discourse and identity construction from a perspective that until recently had not been acknowledged as history. I will analyze the various events and developments, forged by a prevailing subaltern presence, which helped shape the more current history that this study covers. My discussion will concentrate on how these events influenced not only the agrarian reform of the post-hacienda era, but also how this subaltern presence continued to forge an alternate history, which will aide to comprehend in a more eclectic context, the elaborate and very political nature of the current indigenous movement.

Under hacienda relations, I will be discussing issues such as religious rituals in the hacienda, petty thefts, and the construction of the *patrón's* identity in the hands of the peons. An identity that emerged not only in response to the one being imposed on the Indian by the dominant population, but also as a reaffirmation of such identity, and the recognition of its subordinate status. (Guerrero 1983, 1991; Lentz 1997; Pallares 2002; Ramón Valarezo 1993; Santana 1995). Further, I will also argue that identity construction has always been a two way process that played a crucial role, within the hacienda relations. It helped bring the *patrón* to a lower level, one that Indians could relate to and even feel if not materially, at least morally superior to, in the constant give and take relationship of hacienda politics. This analysis of the *patrón-peón* relationship adds to my argument of a prevailing subaltern presence, which although never acknowledged as political, had nonetheless, an important political weight within hacienda life. Moreover, Indians in the hacienda had a direct and a

decisive influence on ending the hacienda era, as I will argue in the next chapter. I will also discuss the issue of women and their involvement in the resistance movement during the 1940's which set the ground work for the important role women have had as leaders in movement of the last decades, and the difference in the way in which these women, who belonged to different historical and political moments, addressed issues of gender within the movement.

The new understanding of hacienda relations stands almost in contradiction to the prevailing historical notion of an almost total domination on the part of the *patrón*, and the utter subjugation and oppression endured by the Indians (Ferrín 1982; Velasco 1979; Yáñez del Pozo 1988). If one takes this approach, the current movement would be impossible to understand, since it leaves no room for any kind of political agency and manipulation of discourses in the hands of the Indians. What interests me, for the purpose of this study, is the new historiography that has emerged during the last two decades among many Andeanists and Ecuadorianists alike. Following a more post-colonialist and subalternist approaches, this historiography depicts the Indians as active participants of internal political processes in the hacienda, with capabilities to influence the decision making process and with a strong presence in it (Cervone 1998a, 2000; Guerrero 1991, 1994, 2000; Lentz 2000; Pallares 2002; Thurner 1993). The current indigenous movement could not have emerged with the strength, the organization, and the mobilization capabilities it has demonstrated during the various *levantamientos* within the former prevailing perception of an oppressed, dominated, and powerless population. Although, for the most part, historians have ignored the Indian political self, it is clear that the current movement was born out of earlier organizational efforts by the Indian population (Becker 1997). Thus, under the new Andean historiography

Indians were indeed political beings from early on, aware of how to manipulate issues and discourse for their benefit. With this I am not suggesting that in fact Indians were in the same negotiating level as white landowners, or that they could manipulate at will the hacienda developments. What has been suggested is that the constructed identity of the Indian by the white/mestizo population as an ignorant, powerless, lazy, and half drunken individual could not have been transformed in such a short period of time into that of a politically aware Indian, with a sense of agency, organizational skills and strong ethnic, social and political demands. These are all characteristics put forward by the current movement, and evident in the *levantamiento del 90*.

This chapter will address the politics behind the Agrarian Reform Law of 1964, and events that led to it, from an alternate perspective than the official state discourse. Issues such as land sieges and *huasipungueros* increasing sense of unrest will be analyzed as another, though unofficial reason behind the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law. The official discourse emphasized the modernization of the agrarian sector, the need to change and dynamize the relations of productions from a feudal (the hacienda) to a capitalist system. The main purpose was to eliminate the *huasipungo* tenancy service by distributing these plots of land among *huasipungueros* and hence introduce the hacienda to the modern, capitalist relations of production, favoring wage labor over the *huasipungo* system. Hence, during the late 50's to the early 60's many haciendas in the Sierra made this historical transformation at different paces with varied results (Guerrero 1977; Arcos 1984; Barsky 1978; Zamosc 1989, 1994). I will argue that though the argument put forward by the government accounted for part of the reasons behind the elimination of the *huasipungo* and the consequent land distribution among Indians, there was a

prevalent subaltern presence throughout the land reform process. This pressure from below, not recognized by the government's official position, was a decisive force behind the decision by many landowners to divide their farms even before the law was enacted, and prompted others to sell, in response to the prevailing threat of land invasions by the Indians and of losing the hacienda to the government without any monetary compensation (Guerrero 1977; Zamosc 1989; R.G.T. 2003)³. This prevailing threat, or “specter of rebellion by the peasantry which haunts the consciousness of the dominant classes in agrarian societies, shapes and modifies their forms of exercise of domination” (Chatterjee 1993: 171). Hence, though the hacienda “transformation” in the Ecuadorian Sierra of the 60's and 70's did not transform as expected land tenure distribution (Zamosc 1989), it is important to analyze this process from the perspective of the ongoing dialectical relation of power between the dominant and the subaltern, in which the latter is situated as subject of history, and his/her role assigned a proper theoretical value.

Hacienda Politics

In the Andean region, the relationship between indigenous groups and landlords, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has been understood until recently as one

³ R.G.T. Personal communication. He suggested that in *Zumbahua*, a classical example of the hacienda that was transformed by land reform, as early as the 1930's, there was a prevalent fear of an imminent Indian siege. The Indians became more and more confrontational with increasing land demands. Furthermore, he argued that when his father leased *Zumbahua* he immediately put an end to exploitative practices enforced by the previous landowner, Sr. Moncayo, who had it for some 18 years. There were practices as collecting a set amount of eggs from the *huasipungueros*, regardless of whether they raised chickens or not. The *patrón* also collected a % of sheep from every *huasipunguero* yearly as payment for the right to pasture the animals in the hacienda. Every worker was to bring to the hacienda house a large log to be used as firewood on a monthly base; with 700 *huasipungueros*, this provided wood for the *hacendado* for many months at a time, and could even be commercialized. All these practices were terminated when R.G.T.'s father leased the hacienda. To this measure, the *mayoral* (a kind of administrator) confronted the *patrón* arguing that if he followed through with the new, more lenient approach to managing the hacienda, soon, “*los indios se van a tomar la hacienda*” (the Indians would invade the hacienda). R.G.T. stated that after three years of dealing with increasing uprisings, his family left the hacienda. They were the last landowners to lease *Zumbahua*. Shortly thereafter, the Indians

of complete subjugation and dominance on the part of the *patrón* or landowner. Within this narrative, the *patrón* held all the power and used it against his peons in an oppressive and exploitative way (Yáñez 1988; Velasco 1979; Ferrín 1982). Though these are valid claims, addressing a very real condition of abuse that existed, without a doubt, in the hacienda system they concentrate only on one aspect of the relationship, that of the domination of *patrones*. I, on the other hand, base my analysis on a more Foucauldian notion that oppression can only exist in the presence of resistance, in a constant dialogue of power and contestation (Foucault 1972). Hence, my interest lies on the second aspect of this relationship, that of the response given by the subaltern.

Today, scholars working on a new historiography of the region, propose the ideal framework for my analysis. They present an alternative conception of the Indian within the Andean hacienda, one in which Indians were part of a dynamic political system (Guerrero 1991, 1994; Thurner 1993; Lentz 2000; Cervone 1998 a). Indians, under this new perspective, are seen as active political agents in a give-and-take symbiotic relationship with the *patrón* which, although unequal, gave the Indians power to manipulate, negotiate, and affect the decision making process within the haciendas, and construct an ethnic identity. It is in the confrontation with the “other” that identities are constructed, where one perceives oneself while at the same time discovers the “other” (Guerrero Arias 1993). This simultaneous confrontational and dialectical process carries an unmistakable political weight. The production of alterity is the meeting point of “us” with “them”. The recognition of difference allows and implies negotiation and fluidity of identities. In this case, the *patrón* and the Indian constantly recognized each other’s differences and negotiated identities where

invaded the hacienda and it was handed over to the *huasipungueros* years before the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law.

these could meet. This was an ambiguous meeting point, an area of contestation and dialogue, of reaffirmation and resistance, of recognition and differentiation that enables identity construction (Guerrero Arias 1993).

Within this perspective hacienda relations were not feudal and of complete exploitation, but rather of a paternalistic nature on the part of the *patrón*. Moreover, it is argued that the landowner did not only provide a salary but, more importantly, he was responsible for the well-being and security of the peons and their families, that Indians who worked and lived on the haciendas were better off than those who worked independently, (Guerrero 1991; R.G.T. 2003)⁴ and that the hacienda *huasipungueros*⁵, were key players in the cultural reproduction within hacienda limits as well as in the free communities around it (Turner 1993).

The *peón*, in “appreciation” for this protection, worked the land (Guerrero 1991). Under this new understanding of a symbiotic relationship, the history of the hacienda becomes the history of how landlords attempted to get something out of the Indians who were occupying and living off the hacienda lands as well (Turner 1993). The localized way of hacienda politics, in which Indians had some degree of political power and influence, is an important theoretical analysis under which the emergence of the more elaborate indigenous movement of the last decades can be understood, underscoring the dialectical nature of hacienda politics, the Indian as an active political agent, the two way identity construction

⁴ Interview with R.G.T. August, 2003. He is a landowner who shares a similar view of the privileged position that hacienda peons had when compared to independent Indians. Hacienda workers were protected by the *patrón*, in his view, under the paternalistic nature of this relationship. Outside Indians were always looking for ways to be related to the hacienda and be recognized by the *patrón* as such.

⁵ *Huasipungos* were small plots of land allocated within the hacienda territory and given to the *huasipungueros* who, in return, worked the hacienda lands.

that characterized the *patrón-peón* relationship, and although never equal, the symbiotic nature of this relationship.

***Robos Tolerados* (Tolerated Petty Thefts)**

An example of the symbiotic nature of hacienda relationship was the *robos tolerados*, or tolerated thefts (Bonifaz 1979), a prevalent practice in most Andean haciendas.

Systematic, small quantity thefts by *huasipungueros* that were overlooked by *patrones*, who were fully aware of the fact, but let it happen since this was an unspoken understanding, part of the *patron-peón* relationship (Bonifaz, 1979).⁶ These *robos tolerados*, as explained by Bonifaz, had a direct relationship with the Indian ancestral beliefs as well as social and political organization patterns which are characterized by communal property of the land and its resources. The existence of these *robos tolerados* could be viewed, on the one hand, as small acts of every day resistance proposed by James Scott (1985) in what he refers to as “weapons of the weak”, by which dominated populations exercised their response and resistance to the oppressive conditions that peasants in Southeast Asia were subjected to. On the other hand, and as proposed by Pallares (2000), the notion of resistance proposed by Scott, can only be understood in the absence of a more elaborate resistance, implying small acts of appropriation, that enabled dominated populations to bear the weight of their domination, but absent of negotiation and the proposal of alternative solutions. Scott gives more importance to what he perceives as covert acts of rebellion, and not enough to overt, as many Indian uprisings were, acts of rebellion. With this position, he underplays the importance of the combination of the many forms of resistance and rebellion inherent to

⁶ R.G.T., an *hacendado* in the area of Machachi, an area of the North Central Andes, he referred to similar accounts of petty theft and abuses of hacienda property by peons in Zumbahua, a farm his father leased prior to the Agrarian Reform, as well as in other Andean haciendas. Personal communication, Quito, August 2003.

subaltern populations, which were not isolated, but rather became organized and systematic (Gutmann 1993). Furthermore, the idea of “weapons of the weak” could become a political tool, in my view, to be utilized by Indians. Let me elaborate on this. Bonifaz, as mentioned earlier, argued that the existence of *robos tolerados* within hacienda relations had to do with a different cosmo-vision Indians had. Bonifaz, himself a landowner immediately dismisses any kind of political intent to manipulate his own ignorance, probably part of his own prejudice and racist perception of the Indian. Under his perception, the Indian’s understanding of the world was completely alien to the whites’. He acknowledges, with his comments, the inherent distance of the Indian culture from his own, even though they (Bonifaz and Indians) had daily contact. The two cultures, for Bonifaz, are fixed in time. The Indian unable and unwilling to modernize, and the white untouched and “unpolluted” by his own contact with the subaltern (Said 1978). In other words, the Indian could use his/her weapons of the weak as an ethnic justification that allowed them to get away with behavior that would be considered unacceptable if committed by a *mestizo* or a *cholo*⁷. In the specific example provided by Bonifaz, a female Indian, who worked as a maid in the hacienda house, was caught in the act of stealing grass in the hacienda pastures. Her justification, when confronted by the *patrón* (Bonifaz) was that she did it because what is on the land belongs to everyone, appealing to the notion of communal land, which she knew did not apply to the hacienda, a private property, but which was part of this ancestral, unchangeable culture. Moreover, when she is caught in the act, and feels cornered by the *patrón*’s questioning, she goes on to say that she would not steal things from the hacienda house, which puzzled Bonifaz, because, under this same Indian belief, what is in the house belongs to the *patrón*

⁷ *Cholo* is the term used by both Indians and *mestizos* alike to refer to Indians who leave their obvious Indian identity (clothes, language), and attempt to pass for *mestizos*.

(Bonifaz 1979). Whether or not this type of behavior could only be labeled as weapons of the weak is not within the interest of my study, but it does present the alternative of maybe being more than ignorant, Indian behavior, something Guerrero refers to as a reading *entre bastidores* (between the lines) (Ferraro 2000). It is possible that Indians were not so ignorant of the white culture and how it functioned, and did not just hold on to their unchangeable ancestral traditions and beliefs, but rather that they used them, as well as the white/mestizo discourse construction of their (the Indian) millenarian and fixed culture, as a tool, a very political tool, to manipulate events to their advantage. If this could be the case, then Indians were keen enough to use their ethnicity to their advantage, fully aware of the white culture and its body of regulations, way ahead of Bonifaz and his ignorant, essentialist perception of the Indian. Since answering the question I raise here, as I said, is not within the scope of my analysis, I will leave it there. However, raising this question is important for the purpose of identity as discourse in the Andes, a concept I will continue to address throughout the following chapters, as a prevailing aspect that informs discourses, notions of the “us” versus the “other”, and hence is interwoven in every historical development.

The Symbolic Richness of Rituals and the Power of Gossip.

Another important sphere of political participation included in the new historiography that acknowledges the dialectical and fluid nature of the hacienda relations and the two-way identity construction inherent in them were rituals and religious festivities celebrated almost year round in the Ecuadorian Andes (Cervone 1998 a, 2000; Ferraro 2000; Guerrero 1991; Pallares 2000). These rituals involved the active participation, during the celebration, of the *peón* and *patrón* as equals, exerting a definite impact on the relationship between them. A participation of mutual recognition, “*una vinculación compleja y melosa*” in Guerrero’s words (1991: 40) that had little

concordance with the official discourse of utter subjugation, domination, and exploitation of Indians by their *patrones*. Hence, this camaraderie, even within a symbolic context of the ritual, said more about the complexities of domination and resistance than the official liberal discourse of the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries acknowledged.⁸ By incorporating the *patrón* into the Indian ritual, as one of their own, the habitual hierarchy in the *peón-patrón* relationship was brought to an equal level, probably underscoring the more fluid and dialectical nature of their relationship.

After the land reform, and into the present, these celebrations continue to be an important source of affirmation of ethnic identity, though they have changed and had to be reinvented (Ferraro 2000), since the hacienda and the *patrón* as central axis of these rituals ceased to exist. The notion of *prioste* for the fiesta is a case in point.⁹ During the hacienda time, the *patrón* appointed the *prioste*, who in turn had to borrow money from the *patrón* and further add to his debt (Cervone 2000; Guerrero Arias 1993). Currently, the appointment of *prioste* continues, though no longer centered in the figure of the *patrón* and his exertion of power, but on the different actors that are now part of the celebration (Cervone 2000).¹⁰ It is interesting to take a closer look at these celebrations since, on the one hand, they are considered a key element within the discourse put forward by the indigenous movement as well as by leftist intellectuals, in which peons are depicted in constant state of debt and drunkenness during hacienda times, adding to

⁸ For a detailed review of the liberal discourse during this time, refer to Guerrero, 1994.

⁹ The *prioste* is the individual that stands at the center of the celebration. He is responsible for providing food, drink and along with any other expense required for the *fiesta*. *Priostasgo* had its origins during colonial times and had to do with the Indian notion of reciprocity and social status within the Indian community.

¹⁰ Cervone here refers to SGO's, religious organizations, and even government representatives, who today play an important role in Indian communities.

their misery and oppression. On the other hand, Indians living in *comunidades* today remember the fiestas with a sense of longing, and tell of how much better these celebrations were in the time of the hacienda, when the *patrón* would “kill several cattle to feed beef to everyone, and chicha would flow abundantly” (Ferraro 2000: 148). At the same time, they continue to acknowledge the notion of the total subjugation and oppression in which they lived in the haciendas. This ambiguous affirmation of the current vs. the past underlies the also ambiguous nature of identity construction. On the one side, the Indian reminiscence of the fiesta during the hacienda time, probably has to do with the different socio-economic context of the hacienda, in which roles, though unequal and of an unfair nature, were understood, respected, and reaffirmed with these types of celebrations. Moreover, resistance tactics were centered on the central figure of the *patrón*, who personified domination. It was in his image, upon which Indians could reflect and construct the image of an ethnic, different *nosotros*. With the elimination of the hacienda and the *patrón*, the source of power and oppression becomes more diffuse, but does not cease to exist. The Agrarian Reform and further development programs, with their discourse of progress and liberation for the Indian, had limited effect on the poverty and racism in which most of the Indians continued to live. Under the new world order, rituals and celebrations, far from disappearing have taken a new ethnic tone, within a different focus. No longer focused on the hacienda or the Indian relation to the *patrón*, the new fiestas shifted to the *comuna*, their new epicenter and the place where Indians got reaffirmation, a safe place amidst a racist system that changed little after Indians attempted to become landed “*campesinos*.” The Indian identity, in response to the rapid changing economic, social, and political model, adjusted to accommodate and responded

to a new kind of discriminator and racist actor, the *mestizo*, who had to differentiate his/her identity from the newly freed Indian, though they shared the same class related claims. Hence, ethnicity becomes again the contested terrain, where a racist discourse, not different from the hacienda discourse prevailed, and which produces yet an alternate response from the Indian.

Rituals, after the agrarian reform continued to be a source of identity, as expressed by Ferraro, but within an alternate focus. No longer as a symbolic negotiation of space and recognition it had during the hacienda time, but within the very Christian focus of “eternal salvation, understood in continuity and in material, social and cultural reproduction of an ethnic group” (Ferraro 2000: 160). Ritual celebrations and fiestas, in this sense, far from disappearing have gotten a reinvented ethnic strength. They are a way by which the highland Indian population reaffirms its sense of “us” stressing their difference from the new “other,” the *mestizo*. Currently, even more than before, rituals play a crucial role, since sources of domination are not longer personified in one figure, but are harder to identify and hence to resist. This non-rigid nature of the Indian identity is, exemplified in the shifting, yet prevailing ethnic focus of the symbolism given to rituals and celebrations has been, in my view, an important element of identity, a flexible and dialectical ethnic identity, which has enabled this population their continual survival as an ethnic group. A dynamic Indian identity has prevailed in a country with institutionalized racism which, until recently, denied Indians a part in the nation’s homogenous identity, presenting them, in Mary Crain’s words, “as the primitive contrast for the Ecuadorian national subject” (Crain 1990: 2) It is precisely the dialectical nature

of this identity that has aided in continually generating a reinvigorated sense of ethnicity that has prevailed.

Gossiping among Indians of the hacienda is another important aspect of this dialogue of domination and resistance, although not much has been written on this subject. Carola Lentz (2000) discusses this issue as an important tool of resistance and reaffirmation of a valid and worthy identity. “*Dinino era así: como cualquier animal; cuando creían las muchachas, ya eran para ellos*” (Indian recollection of a *patrón*'s behavior in the hacienda).¹¹ This is one of many tales told during the hacienda time with which Indians constructed an alter identity of the *patrón*. A dark, immoral, overly sexual, and evil being was the other side of the *patrón*. Attributes that brought him to a human level lower than any Indian could ever be. He (the *patrón*) could hold the physical and economic power in front of the Indian, but they knew of his shameful instincts, of his low moral character and this identity was then used to write a different discourse of the dominant. In this discourse, the roles are reversed and the *patrón* becomes the object of domination within which the Indian dignity and ethnic affirmation is restored and the *patrón*, because of his aberrations, is perceived by his *peones* as less than human. In this reversal of roles, it is the Indian who imagines an alter identity of the *patrón*, the Indian becomes the *imaginero* and the *patrón* the *imaginado*, incorporating this alter *patrón* to his/her discourse of difference, only, in this case, the Indian becomes the subject, objectifying the *patrón*, and granting him less humanity than their own.

¹¹For the entire transcript, refer to Carola Lentz 2000: 212. “Dinino was like that, like an animal; when girls came of age, they became theirs” (the landowners’ property, VGT).

Gender and Resistance during the Hacienda and Today

The presence of women leaders in the indigenous movement is not a recent phenomenon. During the decades of the 1930's and 1940's strong Indian women leaders emerged in the northern haciendas of the highlands. Within this movement two women stand out, Dolores Caguango and Tránsito Amaguaña. Among indigenous people of Ecuador, these two names evoke almost mythical images and serve as inspiration to today's leaders, though their plight seems to have different agendas, as I will explain.

As Muriel Crespi suggests, the lack of rights indigenous women suffered from, in the hacienda system of the thirties and forties, was an important reason why women started to mobilize. Their involvement in the movement was somewhat easier than that of the male *huasipungueros* since women at this time were not officially employed by the haciendas (Crespi 1976). What seems puzzling is that in the contemporary movement, indigenous women leaders recall the leadership and heroism of Caguango and Amaguaña, but refrain from mentioning that an important aspect of the previous leaders' fight was centered around women's rights within the broader claims made by the indigenous movement of their time (Prieto 1998). The movement of the 1930's, under the leadership of Caguango and Amaguaña, brought to the agenda issues of improved living conditions and wages for the Indian population at large, along with the abolition of women's work in the household of their *patrones* as unpaid labor (Rodas 1988). These women had a strong position against violence, especially against women, from the *patrones*, local authorities, and priests. During the hacienda time, it was a common practice for *patrones* to demand sexual favors from indigenous women. Probably gossiping about the *patrón's* alter identity among Indians, discussed earlier, had to do with this practice and it is possible that this was the only way Indians could bring it to the

open without fear of reprisal from the *patrón*. There are, to my knowledge, no empirical studies to support this notion, although the veracity of this practice is, for the most part, common knowledge.

The women leaders' claims for justice, during the hacienda period, included such 'women issues' as the gender division of labor, systematic spousal abuse, and pervasive drunkenness among their husbands that further aggravated violence against women. These claims fell into what could be viewed as a feminist agenda and not a purely ethnic one, further supporting the notion that Indians had a political awareness that enabled them to frame such claims outside of the purely domestic realm. Male leaders of the movement of the 30's and 40's, which was mainly oriented to land struggle within the hacienda, openly criticized Caguango for bringing to the table issues that did not belong specifically to their main claims, and for holding numerous meetings with urban feminists (Prieto 1998; Rodas 1988). Like contemporary leaders, Caguango perceived the indigenous fight first in terms of ethnicity and class, embodied in the fight for the land, but did not negate the existence, and urgency of addressing gender as well.¹² "She (Caguango), had the triple oppression of her race, her class, and her gender" (Rodas 1988: 68). The current women leaders' political focus is on ethnic, cultural, and broader economic issues affecting them as Indians as well as citizens, but do not address gender issues. Nina Pacari, an important leader of the current movement explained the unified position of the Indian population when she declared, "in the dominant society, men as

¹² The current movement has distanced from class-related claims and has concentrated their plight based solely on the bases of ethnicity. This was not the case in earlier decades when leftist organizations included Indian claims in their agendas, giving saliency to the class struggle over the ethnic one.

well as women are discriminated against for their Indian condition” (Black 1999: 19).¹³

In the current indigenous discourse, there is an obvious absence of the more gender related claims put forward by the leaders of earlier decades. The explanation could lie in what Chaterjee has called an “inner domain of sovereignty” (1997:242). In other words, women’s issues such as spousal abuse and division of labor, belong to a realm separate from the more politically homogenous presence of the current movement vis-à-vis the State. To include gender claims would break the current homogenous discourse put forward by the movement as a population oppressed solely on the bases of ethnicity. Moreover, it would further inform the discursive framework under which Indians have been imagined, that of savage, backward, and incapable of acquiring modernity. The current movement has presented itself indeed as a very modern political movement, led by many well-educated Indians with advanced degrees. The image of a more “modern ” Indian has distanced the movement from the former identity. Hence, the image of modernity portrayed by the subaltern has to be consistent with the nationalist project (Chaterjee 1997). In other words, there could be a double discourse with which Indians on the one hand assert their modernity, personalized in the public figure; while the private retains traditional and “Indian” (however defined) values, a place of ethnic reaffirmation as suggested by Chakravarty (2002). Speaking of the women’s issue in India, Chaterjee further argues that “in the world, imitation of and adaptation to Western norms was a necessity; at home, they were tantamount to annihilation of one’s very identity” (1997: 246). In Ecuador, the double discourse regarding gender issues within the indigenous movement seems apparent. The public discourse that presents the

¹³ Nina Pacari is an *otavaleña* indigenous leader and attorney. Her original name was María Estela Vega, she changed it to Nina (fire) and Pacari (daybreak) to stress her Quichua origin.

indigenous population as egalitarian to the eyes of the dominant society coexists with a more private discourse in which gender problems do appear. Cervone, (1998 b), argued that in some communities indigenous women did not negate the existence of gender inequalities such as violence against women, sexual division of labor, female lack of participation in the decision making process, and the double load of work indigenous leaders face on a daily basis.¹⁴ Indigenous women leaders talk about these problems at a communal level, but refuse to make these issues part of their national ethnic struggle.¹⁵

On the other hand, there is no question that during the past decades, indigenous women leaders have developed acute political awareness as well as verbal and negotiation skills that have, in turn, helped them reach important leadership positions within the Indigenous Movement, and enabling them to access spaces of real power and influence within their communities as well as in the national political arena.¹⁶ Women's acquired spaces of power and leadership came partly as a result of the land reform process. Traditional relations of production in the hacienda changed as a result of this law, forcing many men to migrate to urban centers, and posing new challenges and opportunities for further ethnic organization, as well as a strong subaltern presence in the process as I will argue next.

¹⁴ There is ample literature suggesting that there is indeed a hierarchy among indigenous population. For the Ecuadorian Andean case, see Weismantel, 1998; Prieto and Cervone, 1998.

¹⁵ L.M.T. addressed these issues during my conversation with her. However she pointed to them as part of the many sacrifices, part of the commitment that women in the movement have.

¹⁶ Nina Pacari served as Secretary of Foreign Relations during the current administration. Likewise, L.U. , and L.M.T., leaders from Cotopaxi and Otavalo respectively, held important political positions at the time of my interviews with them.

The Agrarian Reform Law of 1964

*Zumbahua parecía una hacienda abandonada. No se veía Indios en los campos. Había alrededor de 700 huasipungueros y cada uno tenía familias extensas. La tarea que se le asignaba a cada trabajador la hacía toda la familia en muchísimo menos tiempo, por eso no se veía gente trabajando.*¹⁷

On July 11, 1964 the Agrarian Reform Law was passed with the support of a strong sector of landowners who endorsed the modernization project, and in spite of fierce opposition of a smaller, more conservative sector (Bretón 1997, 2001; Guerrero 1983; Murmis, Bengoa, and Barsky 1978).¹⁸ The main focus of this law was to put an end to the *huasipungo* tenancy system that had been in practice within the haciendas of the highlands since 1918. While the main focus of this law was the *huasipungo* system, the Agrarian Reform Law of 64, which had limited results in some areas of the highlands, had more specific goals, according to Bretón, hidden behind the official discourse of modernization of the agrarian sector (1997). With the abolition of the *huasipungo* system, Indians were awarded their plots of mostly marginal lands, while the basic structure of land tenure would remain intact (Bretón 1997, 2001; Guerrero 1983; Murmis, Bengoa, and Barsky 1978; Ramón Valarezo 1993). At the same time, under the new relations of production, former *huasipungueros* would have no legal access to hacienda resources (water, grasslands, etc), would be forced to remain close to the hacienda, since now they owned their plot of land, making them, in turn, a handy and cheap labor force.

¹⁷ R.G.T. Personal communication. August, 2003. “Zumbahua seemed like an abandoned hacienda. There were no Indians on the field. There were around 700 huasipungueros, each with big extended families. The whole family did the chore assigned to each employee in much less time. This is why you didn’t see people working.”

¹⁸ One fraction of the landowners proposed the end of the *huasipungo* system within an impressive modernizing agenda for the agrarian sector that pushed for a strong capital investment, and the introduction of technologically advanced equipment to replace hand labor. This position pushed to the elimination of less productive haciendas. The second fraction of landowners wanted to end the existing relations of production but without altering the basic structure of hacienda management. Refer to Murmis, Bengoa, and Barsky, 1978.

The process was a way “to guarantee the accumulation of the haciendas, as well as an attempt to guarantee a peaceful transition to accommodate previous *huasipungueros* to their new position as *minifundistas* (small plots owners), and for the most part, that of semi-proletariats” (Murmis, Bengoa, and Barsky 1978: 98). Moreover, the so-called land distribution would demobilize the Indian population, which was organizing and gaining strength with claims that focused on land tenure, provoking confrontations between Indians and landowners, which became more and more frequent and violent in the years previous to the land reform law (Barsky 1990; Bretón 1997). It becomes obvious that the official position regarding the land reform was, for the most part, to put an end to a land tenure practice of the *huasipungo*, considered feudal and exploitative, which, according to the modernizing landowners’ sector, was beginning to show signs of decline (fear?), adding to the Indian unrest. The law was an attempt, under the banner of modernization, to change the production relations in the agricultural sector in a way that would benefit the landowners, since the subordination of the *ex-huasipungueros* with the *patrón* was left intact. Moreover, the landowner had no further “paternal” obligation towards the Indians and their families, as in the hacienda times, and could use their labor only in the amount needed. Hence, although the relations of production changed from pre-capitalist to capitalist, the basic structure of land tenure remained basically unchanged, with large haciendas mostly untouched, while others distributed lands located mostly in the *páramos*, with very little production value, or in areas of poor-soil and highly eroded marginal terrains (Barsky 1990; Zamosc 1989). Though Barsky provides a useful analysis of the real agenda behind the Agrarian Reform Law of ’64, he largely ignored the Indian voice within the process. Barsky speaks of the lack of consciousness among

Indians and their lack of organization as one of the reasons that enabled landowners to carry out the land reform as proposed. He also points to the increased fragmentation the Indian movement would suffer after the enactment of the law, which would further facilitate the development of landowners' strategies in "relative peaceful and controllable conditions" (Murmis, Bengoa, and Barsky 1978: 95). This notion expressed by Barsky of a lack of organization, of an almost spontaneity of the subaltern's way to protest, could be attributed to what Chatterjee refers to as the domain of peasant politics (1993). If the subalterns' actions, in this case, the mobilizations within the haciendas, the land seizures, and the several localized Indian uprisings are evaluated under the scrutiny of the formal, official domain of politics, they remained incomprehensible. The dominant's perception of politics must be accompanied by certain codes of action, language, and behavior, absent in the subaltern's political domain. Hence, the practices in which the Indians engaged continued to be labeled as unorganized and lacking consciousness, as stated by Barsky. These practices, far from being acknowledged as political, further added to the notion of the Indian other as irrational, and a-political, and did not receive any historical or theoretical value.

Contrary to Barsky's and Murmis' overview on the land reform, there is an alternative perspective of the forces at play behind the official discourse, suggesting that the law responded not so much to a monolithic proposal from above, but, though by no means in equal standing, to a dialectical process between subalterns and dominants (Guerrero 1983; Ramón Valarezo 1993; Zamosc 1989). Ramón Valarezo suggests that the idea among the Indian population that the status quo could be altered, began with the expropriation of haciendas from religious orders at the beginning of the century, which

further inflamed resistance practices. Furthermore, by mid-century there was the increasing number of *huasipungueros* living in hacienda properties adding, on the one hand, to the landowners' fear of a threat from below and, on the other, to a financial stress since more and more resources were utilized by *huasipungueros*.

To confront this crisis, landowners attempted to employ more *yanaperos* and *arrimados* and freeze the number of *huasipungueros* within the hacienda. This tactic also fell into crisis when *yanaperos* and *arrimados* began making demands on the landowners to become *huasipungueros* and be awarded a plot of land, leaving landowners with limited tactics to continue to practice hacienda politics in the traditional way.

Furthermore, in the early 1960s the U.S. government was urging changes in land management tactics throughout Latin America, and funded programs like the Alliance for Progress, in an effort to prevent more "Cubas" in the region. Hence, a change was needed, one that would aide landowners to solve the crisis in which the hacienda had fallen into, and which had exhausted any possibility of resolving in a traditional way (Guerrero 1983; Ramón Valarezo 1993; Zamosc 1989). Guerrero further argues that the land reform cannot be analyzed solely from the economic perspective of the landowners who put forward the "modernizing" discourse, as presented by Barsky and Murmis.

During the years prior to the reform, landowners were viewed as directly responsible for the agricultural crisis, because of their inability to increase production. Thus, a class that itself was in disarray (the landowner) could not be the sole actor of a project that was far more than economic; it was political (Guerrero 1983). Furthermore, Barsky's and Murmis' theory does not fully explain, as expressed by Guerrero, that many haciendas distributed the land before the law was even enforced, caused by the landowners' fear of

losing everything if their hacienda were to be invaded by the Indians. During the decades of the 50's and 60's, there were massive Indian mobilizations pressuring for land distribution, one of which, in 1961, counted more than 15,000 Indians and *huasipungueros*, the largest the country had ever seen, marching through the streets of the capital demanding land distribution (Guerrero 1983, Lentz 1997). Finally, why would landowners want to modernize their relations of production that had proven so profitable, in a manner that would, in turn, represent a complete change in social and political relationships with the Indian population, which, if analyzed from the dominant's discourse had been vertical, profitable and had gone unchallenged? To simply frame the land reform process as a modernizing effort from above, constitutes a reductionist vision of the more intricate processes that marked the hacienda relation and its history, which were explored and explained in the previous chapters.

There was unequivocally an alternate agenda within the land reform process held by *huasipungueros*, which was focused on the preservation of their land and their job on the hacienda (Zamosc 1989; Guerrero 1977, 1983). *Huasipungueros* engaged in different forms of resistance practices to force change in the system. There was a constant "harassment" argues Zamosc, on the landowner for better working conditions and more access to hacienda resources by *huasipungueros*, as well as the also never ending demands of *arrimados* and *yanaperos*, as explained earlier. "In general, it is important to note that the growing intensity of the *asedios* (sieges) had a lot to do with the demographic pressures that were being felt within the hacienda communities" (Zamosc 1989: 18). Furthermore, there were *huasipungueros* who did not want to end their relationship with the hacienda completely. They were fully aware that the benefits of

having the hacienda resources for their usufruct would end with the new regulation. Many *huasipungueros* wanted to continue, to some extent, with the existing relations by which they could make use of the water, pastures, firewood, etc. of the hacienda, while they demanded from the hacendado paid employment to supplement their income. Issues surrounding the land reform then, are more complicated, and involve more actors than what the government and the landowners would want to admit to.

The outcome of the land reform of '64 was not simply the enforcement of a vertical and monolithic law. The process was an attempt to solve the hacienda crisis, in which many actors were involved, each affecting the outcome and influencing the process. Hence, the land reform did not have a uniform effect on the distribution of the land, or on the level of change in hacienda relations (Guerrero 1983). What remained clear, through this process is that it was not a monolithic event where decisions by the dominant landowner population went unchallenged, nor was it by any means peaceful and controllable, as argued by Barsky. Throughout the process, there was a subaltern discourse constantly challenging, responding, pushing, negotiating, and influencing the outcome of the land distribution, in ways beyond the solely modernizing and economically focused official discourse.

The recuperation of land represented for the Indian far more than just a betterment of life conditions, it was also a symbol of identity expressed by leaders of the current movement, wealthy Otavaleño merchants, as well as *huasipungueros* who struggled in its name. The significance or relevance of land tenure might vary, responding in turn to political and economic situations confronting the Indians in different historical times, and even responding to current social and economic conditions within this population.

Sometimes it is utilized solely to reflect social position and wealth, with little to do with their daily activity (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999). For other Indians, land is vital for their everyday survival as they continue to depend mostly on subsistence agriculture. Land can represent solely a symbol of their ethnicity and heritage; or it can become a rhetorical tool, a political platform utilized in their plight for representation, under their discourse of difference. But however conceived, the land has remained a symbol of struggle, and of collective identity.

The land distribution of the 1960's also became a symbol of triumph and change, even with the lukewarm results it produced. The traditional notion of the hacienda as a site of domination ends, further providing the Indian population a unifying sense of identity, in the recuperation and appropriation of what had been a symbol of domination. In the land struggle, the tools of the dominant become the tools of the dominated (Loomba 1998). It is not a coincidence, that Zumbahua, the hacienda to which I refer earlier, is one of the first to be divided, and by Indian demand, the I.E.R.A.C (*Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización*) agreed to make this division into *comunas*, the traditional Andean way of working the land (Guerrero Arias 1993). Even if not verbalized and thus formalized as political, the Indian project, after the Agrarian Reform, gave clear and definite signs of revitalization made apparent in the resurgence of *comunas* as organizational axis; the emphasis in the use of their language and traditional dress and the emergence of a more directly ethnic discourse among Indian intellectuals (Ramón Valarezo 1993).

In 1973 the second Agrarian Reform Law was enacted. This new law was to some analysts the result of tremendous political transformation in the country. There was

increased favoritism in the government's discourse for more developmental and modernizing projects that only got exacerbated with the discovery of oil in the Ecuadorean Amazon (Velasco 1979). The State sought to reinvest some of the oil revenue by embarking again into an ambitious plan of land redistribution (Zamosc 1989). After the Agrarian Reform law of '64 the areas adjacent to the capital (Quito) had enough resources to absorb labor into the emerging capitalist agriculture, this was not the case in other areas. The Central and Southern Ecuadorean Andes were perceived by the elites as a possible source of uprising. Small landholders (*ex-huasipungueros*) had received land but very limited access to resources, technology, and credit (Velasco 1979; Zamosc 1989). Thus the government was determined to engage in a land reform that would provide more structural changes than the previous law. The land reform project of '73 was part "of a broader nationalist project that sought to adjust the countryside to a new stage of industrial development" (Zamosc 1989: 27). This law was probably more ambitious in scope than the '64 law, due mostly to the increase in oil revenues that facilitated the creation of State agencies to provide aid in funding, technology assistance, and other resources to the Indians. It was done though, under a pervasive modernizing discourse. This implied the incorporation of the Indian into a new era of progress and development, again marginalizing the subaltern's opinion in the process, granting it invisible. It is in this context that the famous speech by then President Rodríguez Lara was delivered and which I quote in Chapter 1. In his view, as well as the dominant's, the "Indian problem" ceased to exist, because modernity made all Ecuadoreans white. The Indian then went from problem population to invisible. The owners of a disposable ethnicity.

Although the land reforms of 1964 and of 1973 did not change dramatically the distribution of land in the highlands (refer to table 1), it did however open venues of expression and organization to the Indian. As argued here, this process was a result of a broader spectrum of actors and interests involved than the government or the landowners would recognize. The subaltern took advantage of a political juncture such as the land reform to convert an unequal and unfair pact with the dominant, into an opportunity to create an ethnic space, as was argued within this alternate analysis of the Agrarian Reform process. This shows that the Indian population was active and capable of long term strategies of survival, while the white landowner and the government could only concentrate in short term and highly contradictory approaches to the increasing Indian “problem” (Ramón Valarezo 1993). The subaltern’s actions, albeit outside the dominant’s political discourse and not given such status, informed, nevertheless, the political outcome and the consequent social changes that the land reform process brought, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

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consequent social changes that the land reform process brought, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Table 2-1. Distribution of land in the Ecuadorian sierra by number and size of farms, 1954-1974.

Size (hects.)	Number of Farms (thousands)				Area (thousand hectares)			
	1954		1974		1954		1974	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Up to 10	234.6	90.4	281.0	87.1	496.4	16.4	560.8	18.2
10 to 50	18.3	7.0	32.1	9.9	362.2	12.0	663.1	21.6
50 to 100	3.6	1.4	6.0	1.9	218.7	7.2	368.1	12.0
100 to 500	2.4	0.9	2.9	0.9	471.1	15.6	504.7	16.4
500 and more	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.2	1,472.2	48.8	977.6	31.8
Total	259.6	100.0	322.6	100.0	3,020.6	100.0	3,074.6	100.0

Source: León Zamosc (1989) "Peasant Struggle and Agrarian Reform" in *Latin American Issues*. San Diego: University of California.

Conclusions

The different aspects and realms in which hacienda politics were carried out, during the late and early twentieth centuries, discussed in this chapter, are part of a very dynamic, contested, and constantly negotiated Indian identity. Far from having a millenarian, fixed, and essential definition of the Indian, ethnic identity, proved to be a dialectical, accommodating, and negotiable term, though not acknowledged as such in the official white discourse, which continued to construct it within these terms. Through a variety of tactics, perceived by the white population as fundamentally Indian and hence unchangeable, *peones* living and working in the hacienda continually and simultaneously reaffirmed and contested their identity. Indians, as argued in this chapter, were not merely lazy, ignorant, and unwilling to change. In fact, they were active political agents with strong notions of

resistance and organization capabilities that went unchecked by white *patrones*. At the same time they (the Indians) accepted their condition as subordinate and dominated within the hacienda, they also acted in a political way, by maintaining their ethnic grouping, exercising their difference as source of recognition, and manipulating hacienda developments in what is now perceived as an unequal, yet symbiotic nature that was at the heart of this relationship. Through different practices, such as petty theft, symbolic rituals, and even gossiping about the *patrón's* true identity, Indians, during hacienda times were engaged in a dialectical, dynamic and elastic relation, which although still lacking a more national proposal, hints at organizational processes, ethnic discourse, negotiating techniques, and political awareness. All these aspects will resurface time and time again during the following decades, with more coherent actions, more elaborate demands, and a clear notion of the fluid nature at the heart of ethnic identity, which proposes an alternate version of the Indian identity, originating during and before hacienda times.

The position of women leaders within the movement is, at best, ambiguous. They present themselves as part of a hegemonic group, the Indians, downplaying their gender conflicts and claims with their male counterparts, in order to provide a unified ethnic claim. However, it is evident that gender relations are a crucial aspect of the everyday life, which stands at the heart of Indian resistance. It is from the *cotidiano*, the daily activities, as proposed by Guerrero Arias (1993) that Indians have been able to put such a formidable resistance and have prevailed and found strength and a constant source of ethnicity from where to confront and dialogue with the dominant. This position then stands in clear contradiction with the denial of a gender conflict in favor of an ethnic one. Gender issues are discussed in the privacy of the *comuna*, but not at the national level. A position that could be

understood as placing gender in the domestic, private, traditional sphere, away from the public, political, male one. The more one presents him/herself as modern, the more the need for the private and traditional (Chakrabarty 2002). On the other hand, women within the movement have obtained unquestionable spaces of power on this discourse. Again, the self presents itself as the terrain of confrontations of identities and shuffling of discourses.

Regarding the Agrarian Reform in Ecuador, it has been argued in this chapter that this process did not respond to a monolithic, vertical discourse, as the dominant population had imagined it to be. Modernity, which stood as the axes for the Agrarian Reform, within the dominant's discourse was hybridized in the hands of the subaltern. In other words, and as argued by Chakrabarty, modernity affects all individuals, but is not a homogenous process. As colonialism and capitalism, modernity too becomes part of a negotiation process between dominant and subaltern. It is appropriated in different contexts and responds to different processes and ideas (Chakrabarty 2002). This argument problematizes the dominant discourse of the Indian "other" caught up in its millenarian and unchanging identity, which can be changed and modernized solely by the hand of the modern white. As argued in this chapter, the land reform and the profound social and political changes that preceded it and that, in turn, this process generated were the result of an ongoing dialectics with modernity by the subaltern and dominant populations, as well as with each other. While the landowners proposed a narrow and unilateral approach to modernizing the agricultural sector, the subaltern had also some ideas of his/her own as to how to embrace this process. The proposal of the subaltern, as expressed by Ramón Valarezo (1993), had a broader vision to ensure their survival, while the dominant remained caught up in an ethnocentric, and short-term conjuncture.

Modernization from above was envisioned in only one way: the male, white, urban, and enlightened way, and the subaltern with his/her backwardness, dark skin, rural condition, and ignorance had no part in it. The result of the land reform is far from what the dominant proposed. Though the land reform had mixed results, and land tenancy remained overwhelmingly in the elites' hands, the process was the outcome of a continual interaction of ideas, and negotiation of practices between the actors involved. Although it remains clear that the subaltern stands at an unequal negotiation level due to his/her condition of subalternity, it is also clear that s/he had an unequivocal presence that influenced the outcome of the land reform process. Hence, problematizing the discourse put forward by the government and the elites of it being the result of a unified agenda to embrace modernity, within a homogenous, mestizo nation. This further demonstrated the dominant's failure to speak for the nation. "The subaltern classes are as caught up in modern institutions as the middle and upper classes are. And this is what produces some of the most challenging questions of modernity" (Chakrabarty 2002: xx).

CHAPTER 3
MIGRATION, *DESARROLLISMO* AND RELIGION AS KEY ASPECTS IN THE
EMERGENCE OF A REVITALIZED ETHNICITY THAT FACILITATED *EL*
LEVANTAMIENTO DEL 90.

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the developmental programs that emerged throughout the Andes, during the mid-decades of the twentieth century, in an effort to incorporate the Indian into a project of modernization. *Desarrollista* programs were an attempt, on the one hand, to rescue the positive values of the Indian culture, while on the other, to integrate this population with proper training, so as to raise their economic level, into the market economy and the urbanizing trend that characterized the Import Substitution Industrialization (I.S.I.) economic model (Bretón 2001). I am particularly interested in one such program, the Andean Mission, established in Ecuador in the early 1950's. My interest is to analyze the discourse under which this program was established, the many pitfalls it encountered, and its consequent failure. For the purpose of my study, I will argue that although Andean Mission failed as a program directed not only "from above," but also "from abroad," as I will later discuss, it provided notions of leadership and organizational skills that would serve the current Indigenous movements. This chapter will also analyze the migration phenomenon, both urban and international, of this time, which, far from becoming a cause for acculturation of the Indian, had, in fact, an opposite effect. Migrants from the Sierra found in their *comunas* a renewed source of support, a sense of belonging, which translated into a reaffirmation of ethnicity (Belote and Belote 2000; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Lentz 1997, 2000). In this chapter, I will also focus on

religion as critical feature within the analysis of discourse, its appropriation and the influence this has on the negotiation of ethnic identity. I will argue that the growth of Protestantism in predominantly Indian regions of Ecuador became central in the reinvigoration of Indian identity, as well as an important venue through which an Indian voice emerged (Muratorio 1981). Finally, this chapter will cover the 1990 uprising, or *el levantamiento*, as it is commonly referred to. I will point to political conjunctures in the previous decade that led to the organization and mobilization of this historical event, its development, and how it served to transform the construction of the Indian in the dominant imagination.

Migration as a Source of a Reinvented Identity

The Land Reform, along with the increased urbanizing effect produced by the I.S.I. model of development forced many Indians who remained landless to look for sources of employment in cities. Though this phenomenon began before the land reform was implemented, the enactment of the law, which produced uneven and unequal results through the Sierra, was a determinant factor influencing the massive migration. Many *huasipungueros* realized that the plots they had been allocated barely covered their subsistence, and since they could no longer use hacienda resources to supplement their needs, they had to find alternate means of survival. Moreover, the haciendas affected by the land reform employed only a fraction of all the *ex-huasipungueros*, leaving many members of the family that previously shared the *huasipungo* and worked in the hacienda, out of land, out of work and with migration as their only alternative (Carrasco and Lentz 1985; Lentz 1997).

Migration presented itself as an ideal process for the incorporation of Indian populations into the nation building process. It could have been the venue by which to

disseminate the prevailing modernizing discourse of a mestizo nation embracing a modern future. The prevailing notion towards this modernization implied “acculturation and assimilation of subordinate peripheral heterogeneity to the dominant homogenous center” (Stutzman 1981: 49).¹ The cultural goals of the nation were to become as less Indian as possible; thus, miscegenation and “blanqueamiento” were the only ways to achieve modernity. Indians, after all, continued to be imagined in a “Saidian” way: backwards, unable to modernize, unwilling to change. Hence, the proletarianization of Indians would translate into a loss of cultural values, as they became urbanized, and a consequent loss of ethnic identity that would further help the national agenda. This theory, though, proved flawed in many sectors of the Ecuadorian Andes. There is evidence that just the opposite was the case in several prominent Indian regions. In the migrant, “we are confronted with a new social actor, in constant movement and in permanent transformation” (Carrasco and Lentz 1985: 11). This transformation did not necessarily mean a loss of ethnic identity. In many cases the migrants imagined or rediscovered a new notion of ethnicity that translated into a sense of belonging and security, when confronted with the rough city conditions and brutal racism. When the migrant abandons his/her community they lose the social network to which they belong, a source of security, respect and identity. They become simply *Indios*, part of a homogenous group synonymous with dirty, lazy, and liars (Lentz 2000). “*Tenia bastante miedo, sin conocer la ciudad, sin poder hablar*” (Migrant testimony. Carrasco and Lentz

¹ Since it is impossible to become acculturated, I think the term coined to describe this process used by Linda and Jim Belote (2000) fits more this purpose. They use the term “transculturation” to define the abandonment of one’s culture for another.

1985: 47).² Several case studies point to similar conclusions. Carola Lentz in her study of the *Comuna Shamanga* in Chimborazo, argues that migration to the coast became a necessity after the enforcement of the land reform, but that in no way this process signified a loss of identity. This population demonstrated great flexibility to manage the new conditions for cultural reproduction (Lentz 1997). Moreover, migration in Shamanga represented a new tool to reaffirm their ethnicity in a better financial and social condition than before. Shamangueños who migrated to the coast learned to speak the dominant's language and to fight racist comments and attitudes with more self-assurance. "*Ya la gente empezaron a dar cuenta, comenzaron ya en San Carlos* (place of employment on the coast, VGT). *Ahí ya iban avispados*"³ (Shamangueño testimony. Lentz 1997: 55). On the other hand, migration also proved an important point to this and many other Indian migrant populations in Ecuador: racism is a real and brutal force that does not end solely by abandoning one's ethnicity. Many Indians attempted to migrate to the cities and "pass for" mestizos by changing clothes and emulating city habits, only to find out that they still were subjected to a system of institutionalized racism that provided little room for manipulation with or without an ethnic imprint.⁴ The certainty that they would continue to be regarded as Indians regardless of their actions, and in many cases in

² "I was very afraid, not knowing the city, and unable to speak."

³ "People began to realize, they started in San Carlos. They awakened."

⁴L.M.T., personal interview, July, 2003. She related the experience of current important leaders of the movement in their attempt to migrate to the city, and abandon their Indian identity by cutting their hair and changing their clothes. These Indians held college degrees, spoke Spanish well, sometimes much better than Quichua. They attempted to leave their native Otavalo in search for a better future, away from the stigmatization of their identity, only to return some time later disappointed and ashamed. This experience served them to not only go back to their ethnic ways, but was a catalyst to become organized, turn to activists, and get involved in politics with a reinforced and vindictive ethnic discourse. Former Secretary of Foreign Relations Nina Pacari was in this group, as was former Secretary of Agriculture Luis Maldonado, who served in the previous administration, and A.K., current National Coordinator for a major Indian organization

spite their economic situation, also served as a driving force behind the renewed ethnic discourse, (Belote and Belote 2000; Lentz 1997; 2000). This notion has also distanced this population from a leftist discourse in the decades after the land reform process. If anything, the land reform and the migration practices of the Indian population demonstrated that far from a lack of an ethnic project, what existed was a downplaying of ethnicity by leftist mestizo leaders, acting on a stronger and more goal oriented class-based discourse. The ethnic discourse became clear only after the “fog” of the class discourse was removed (Ramón Valarezo 1993).

Among migrants, ethnicity also becomes an important tool to reorganize the social network left behind in the *comuna*. Migrants who come from the same area help each other beyond any blood or kinship relation. There is an unspoken solidarity among Indian migrants in the city. This translates into a new understanding of rules of reciprocity, a key aspect of Indian communal life. Furthermore, the ethnic boundary becomes even more apparent than in the limited and enclosed hacienda space. In these new social and historic conditions, ethnicity takes on a new definition: migrants perceive themselves in the imposed white/mestizo identity of Indians. Their racialized definition of Indians is internalized and transformed into a source of mutual solidarity, respect, and reaffirmation, which, in turn, has helped in the resurgence of a pan-Indian consciousness that goes beyond the more localized identity they shared in the *comuna* (Lentz 2000). In many cases, Indians working and studying outside their *comunidades* have maintained their ethnic identity; in others, Indians have gone back to their traditional dress and have learned Quichua in order to emphasize their ethnic roots (Lentz 1997, 2000; Belote and Belote 2000; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999). Furthermore, the presence of Indians in public

spheres previously reserved solely for whites has also provoked a crisis in the mestizo identity with the realization that the subordinate, poor, rural, and ignorant Indian no longer corresponds to the reality (De la Torre 1996). Moreover, in many prominently Indian regions of the Ecuadorian Sierra, income is generated from a variety of sources, not solely agriculture (Bretón 1997); hence it could be argued that Indians are forced to migrate to the cities or the coast in order to continue to live like *comuneros*. “The migration from areas with a strong Indian presence has become a strategy for social reproduction. Consequently, temporary migration could be seen as an integration to modernity, while at the same time it is a way to resist this integration” (Bretón 1997: 39). Migration, then, becomes a more complex phenomenon than simply a survival strategy forced solely by financial pressures, resembling more a contestation approach adopted by Indians who propose a variety of ways to inhabit and navigate modernity.

The racist white/mestizo discourse regarding the Indian, though still vivid in the dominant imagination, has little to do with the new identity put forward by many middle class Indians. Hence, many mestizos refer to this new Indian who is educated and in many cases wealthier than themselves, as not the “real” Indian, and speak with nostalgia about the traditional and true Indian culture (Lentz 1997). This notion of a lost true Indian identity has also influenced intellectuals and even politicians, demonstrating that enlightenment notions of west as modern, excludes non-western populations (Chakrabarty 2002). The west, impersonated by the white/dominant, perceive Indians as fixed in time, incapable of achieving modernity or evolving (Chaterjee 1997; Prakash 1995; Said 1978). When the subaltern challenges established notions of identity, s/he is perceived by the dominant not only as a transgressor attempting to invade spaces established

(imagined?) for the white/mestizo, but also as a traitor to their “true” identity, by becoming, in the dominant imagination, less authentic. The notion of middle class, westernized Indians as not being true representatives of their culture, put forward by the white/mestizo population, does not extend homogeneously to every Indian population, making it even more ambiguous and harder to sustain. In the case of Ecuador, an exception to this concept is the Otavaleño population, as I will explain.

The Case of the *Otavaleño* Transmigrants

Otavalo, a small rural town located in the province of Imbabura in the northern highlands of Ecuador, has been estimated by CONAIE, as having one of the highest percentages of a homogeneous indigenous population in Ecuador. Of this population, around 26,000 people live in the town of Otavalo, according to the latest census, although it has been estimated that there are approximately 60,000 Otavaleños in the surrounding communities (Meisch 1997). Directly opposing the image of a fixed, unchangeable ethnicity, Otavaleño middle class transmigrants, for example, have the luxury of refusing to engage in wage labor abroad, the primary source of employment for a large majority of mestizo transnational migrants, since they rely primarily on the sale of their colorful garments that they bring with them (Kyle 2000). The sale of their ponchos and handicrafts, accompanied by the sound of their *quenás* (flutes), is a common sight in major cities around the world, and a very profitable enterprise that has changed the way Otavaleños relate to the white/mestizo dominant class in Ecuador (Kyle 2000; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999). Although the Otavaleño trading class spends many months abroad, they maintain a close relationship with the land, an important aspect of their ancestry and culture, and identified as a crucial source of identity by many of them. Furthermore, Otavaleños have turned their closeness to the *llacta* (piece of land) into a political tool.

They see themselves (or use this rhetoric) to further strengthen their political position as closer to the land than the mestizo migrant; the land is precisely what differentiates them from the white/mestizo migrants (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999; Korovkin, 2001).

“Runacuna⁵ do not travel like that,” argues an Ariascu⁶ merchant, “businessmen always return to their wives, their children and their land” (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999:206). This comment stresses the difference in migration practices between Indians, who keep a close contact with their land and their kin, vs. the migration of whites who, according to Indians, leave and do not return. It is not surprising then that wealthy Otavaleño merchants will come back for planting or harvesting seasons in their lands usually worked, in their absence, by a relative or *compadre*.⁷ To Otavaleños, this is a necessary reaffirmation of their culture more than a working practice, since many traders do not work the land anymore due to their demanding obligations in the trading business.

Relationship to the land, along with a series of important rituals and practices throughout the year, has institutionalized the Otavaleño social networks, provided legitimacy and continuity to their identity, helped to maintain Otavalo itself as a cultural homeland (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1999). “The influence of tourist spending has, if anything, led to entirely new expressions of indigenosity” (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999:198). Furthermore, Otavaleños use their conspicuous ethnicity to facilitate their traveling abroad as an ethnic population, different from the mainstream. Again, their identity, a source of stigmatization and prejudice, becomes a tool that sets this population

⁵ *Runacuna* is the *Quichua* word for Indians.

⁶ Ariascu is a small community close to Otavalo where Colloredo-Mansfeld did his research.

⁷ Godfather. *Compadre* literally means co-parent.

apart from the mestizos and frees them from any negative, racial connotations. The roles in this case, are reversed. Many other migrants (mestizos) speak of the importance of a “good appearance” in order to get a visa, particularly to the United States (Kyle 2000; Margolis 1994). They are aware that they must convey a message of “whiteness” in their dress, accessories and body language while talking to consulate employees, if they are to be successful in getting a visa. This is not the case for Otavaleños. They insist on wearing their traditional clothes when dealing with the consulate’s personnel. It is precisely their ethnicity that makes the process easier, since their identity as weavers and traders, not as permanent labor migrants, is widely known (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Kyle 2000; Meisch 1997). It is not surprising then that Otavaleños rarely travel illegally, even if their trading becomes an illegal practice since many travel only with tourist visas (Kyle 2000). The relative ease with which Otavaleños acquire a visa facilitates and encourages new generations to migrate, strengthening the trading tradition in this region. Since many Otavaleños, primarily the wealthier traders, own their industries and means of production, they are not bound to working schedules; hence, it facilitates their return for important rituals and communal events. In turn, the autonomy of their labor, done entirely by Otavaleños, has given this population an increased sense of self-determination and legitimacy vis-à-vis the government. It has become, in short, an important political tool. It is not surprising that Otavalo has produced many important political and intellectuals leaders of the current indigenous movement. “Otavalo contradicts the steamroller image of modernization, the assumption that traditional societies are critically vulnerable to the slightest touch of outside influence and wholly passive under its impact,

devoid of policy for coping with it beyond a futile initial resistance” (Salomon 1981: 421).

Migration as a process of incorporation and modernization of the Indian population worked in many cases in ways unforeseen by the dominant population. Although in some cases Indian migrants have become assimilated into the mestizo society, in many other cases, Indian migrants have incorporated the benefits of becoming a temporary urban population, and have used it to imagine a new way of becoming Indians. They are more urbanized, better informed, and, in the case of many *Otavaleños*, wealthier⁸. However, the ambiguity of discourses and imaginations to which I referred in a previous paragraph, goes both ways. The new generation of migrant Indians, who have adopted, to an extent, city ways, refer to the older, more traditional Indian population as backward, and less civilized, thus reproducing the dominant discourse from which they have distanced themselves (Lentz 1997). In this case, the *Otavaleños*, are in my view an exception since they have never “worn” the Indian imprint on the body. They are for the most part, (or have successfully conveyed this image), successful business entrepreneurs and are well educated; hence they do not carry the stigma of being dirty, ignorant, and poor, characteristics that are an obvious imprint on the Indian body. In this sense, *Otavaleños*, along with modern *Salasacas*, *Zuleteños*, *Shamangueños*, and other highland migrant groups, have distanced themselves from the image of the *Indio miserable* prevalent during the second half of the nineteenth century and into the hacienda era, and are becoming a hybrid identity, a mix of urban and rural, and of white and Indian (not

⁸ A. K’s position on this issue was that in order to defend yourself (your culture) you have to know the ways of the dominant. This, he argued, gives you a margin of advantage because you learn to navigate both worlds, something that the dominant is unable to do. (Personal communication).

racially, but in wealth and education), yet, are emerging with a strong ethnic discourse. The problem, in my view, would be the extent to which this new hybrid, ethnic discourse represents the “other” Indian, the one who remains poor, dirty, rural, and ignorant. This, and other issues, will be addressed (though not answered) in the next chapter. For now, I will focus my analysis on yet another venue used by the subaltern to express and strengthen ethnicity: the developmental programs that originated in the decade of the fifties. I will focus specifically on the Andean Mission as a prime example of these programs.

The Andean Mission: *Desarrollista* Program or Ethnic Tool?

The Andean Mission or MAE (*Misión Andina del Ecuador*) stands out from many other developmental and integrationist programs in the Andean region because it represented, without a doubt, the most ambitious program of this nature (Bretón 2001; Belote and Belote 1981). Although there have not been many studies of the MAE’s work in Ecuador, I consider it important to scrutinize its role, not only as a failed attempt to incorporate the Indian into the modernization agenda of the nation-state, but also as a mechanism which enabled Indians to appropriate tactics, funds, and teachings, to further aide their ethnic agenda.

In 1953 the Andean Mission began to work in Ecuador, as well as in Peru and Bolivia. With funding and support of various agencies of the United Nations, and organized by the International Labor Organization (I.L.O.), this program was designed to aide in Andean communal development (Bretón 2001). Besides the agenda associated with developmental agencies of the time (the modernization of the so-called traditional societies), there was a non-agricultural job skills training program designed to better prepare Indians who would migrate to the cities (Belote and Belote 1981; Bretón 2001).

Furthermore, there was a clear mission that the MAE “had to fight against ignorance, against frail health, against superstition, and sometimes, even against entrenched Indian ways” (Bretón 2001: 67). The MAE from the very beginning operated with urban technicians, who knew little (and were not interested in learning) the ways in which Indian communities operated. The personnel involved in the project had no knowledge of Quichua, agendas were established by bureaucrats in Quito, not by people in the field (Belote and Belote 1981; Bretón 2001). There was among the mestizo people involved in the project an a-priori conviction that their condition as urban, modern and educated, would suffice for the integrationist agenda from above they embarked on carrying out. There was no input from anthropologists or social scientists in the process (Belote and Belote 1981). An example of how the MAE operated is self-explanatory in the sheep and rabbit projects the mission attempted to carryout in the Saraguro area of the central Ecuadorian Andes during the early 1960’s. The MAE in a characteristic vertical, ethnocentric, and hierarchical approach attempted to replace traditional guinea pig raising with a more expensive rabbit raising practice. The program also attempted to replace the traditional sheep raised in this area, with expensive merino sheep (Belote and Belote 1981). Many indigenous communities throughout the Andean region raise guinea pigs, a source of cheap protein, with proven practical and inexpensive raising techniques. The Saraguro community affected by this measure was never consulted regarding the reasons behind their preference of one type of animal husbandry vs. another. It was assumed by MAE personnel that the practice was based on tradition, was ineffective and did not agree with the mestizo concept of modernization. The results, as could be expected were disastrous and was yet another expensive failure of the MAE (Belote and Belote 1981).

Though examples like the former abound, there were also some instances where the MAE did find a way to serve its role. Ironically, this usually happened when the community was involved in the decision-making process. This was the case of community-organized *mingas*⁹ for a variety of infrastructural projects, carried out in various highland regions during the decades of the 60's and 70's. With MAE funds, the traditional meals offered, as was customary with *mingas*, and the extra incentive of paid labor, there was strong Indian support and collaboration (Belote and Belote 1981).

Indians continued to use the MAE for projects they (Indians) considered important for their *comunas*, and rejected with strong opposition and even threats (Bretón 2001) others they deemed unnecessary. Also during this time, a Saraguro community involved with the MAE decided to hold their own secret meetings, MAE style, to discuss their own agenda, without informing mission personnel. They had learned to organize and create minutes for the meetings from the MAE, and they adapted this strategy to their community council meetings (Belote and Belote 1981). Road construction by the MAE in the area of Imbabura, in the northern region, facilitated mobilization of *comuneros* (community members), further eroding (though indirectly and unintentionally) the hacienda regime still in place when the MAE began operating in Ecuador (Bretón 2001).

Moreover, communities like the *Saraguros* became aware

that they received attention and benefits such as financial and technical aid, scholarships, medical care, etc., because they are ethnically distinct...they learned how to manipulate the change agents to get what they wanted without either giving up too much or losing the resource altogether (Belote and Belote 1981: 470).

⁹ A traditional Andean practice in which all members of the *comuna* participate in the construction of infrastructure projects for the *comuna*, or the building of houses for its members.

Furthermore, the training of leaders provided by the MAE, with the purpose of mobilizing human resources from the interior of the *comunas* with individuals that spoke the language and were trusted by the population, served many Indian communities in the formation of leaders who could represent their interests in front of the mestizo government agencies (Barsky 1990; Belote and Belote 1981; Bretón 2001). One community leader expressed that because of the MAE, “*la gente empezó a despertar*” (“people began to awaken”) (Bretón 2001: 83), which greatly aided in the ability of Indian communities to get organized with techniques and tactics learned from the MAE, and further their collective action in their fight for land and ethnic rights. According to Bretón, Luis Macas, an important leader of the current indigenous movement, former CONAIE President and former secretary of Agriculture, is an example of leadership training provided by the MAE.¹⁰ Besides developmental programs as the MAE, the emergence of Protestant missions in the Andes proved to be another important ethnic tool used by the Indians to express a new way of being Indian.

The Protestant influx: A New Way to Express Ethnicity

The exponential growth of Protestantism in Ecuador, especially in the province of Chimborazo, in the central Andes, in my view, deserves closer scrutiny. During the last decades, Protestantism in this area has become yet another way to express ethnicity, by transforming it from a foreign doctrine into an alternate way of being Indian. Religion, a traditional tool of domination is converted it in into a means to accommodate Indians’ needs, though not without ambiguity, as I will argue.

¹⁰ Victor Bretón. Personal communication, FLACSO, Quito. July, 2003.

Before the Agrarian Reform, and despite the many efforts by the GMU (Gospel Missionary Union),¹¹ only a handful of indigenous people had converted to Protestantism (Paredes Alfaro 1980). The new converts were seen by the rest of the community as being children of the devil, were often made fun of, and many went back to Catholicism for fear of reprisals from the community (Muratorio 1981; Paredes-Alfaro 1980). It was only when the mission opened a small hospital, where free medical services were offered to Protestant converts or their sympathizers that the resistance they once faced began to fade. Suddenly, many indigenous called themselves Protestants and came to the clinic for treatment and Bible readings (Paredes-Alfaro 1980). Medicine, one of the most pressing needs in this impoverished community, was crucial to Protestant proselytism in Chimborazo.

Around the same time, and with many indigenous people professing the new Protestant faith, the first New Testament to be translated to Quichua was distributed among the few who could read. This was an important move to bring the new Protestant religion to the indigenous communities. They no longer had to listen to missionaries speak in Spanish or broken Quichua about a foreign God. This God now communicated to them in their own language. A Protestant convert recounted how, for the first time, when he read the Quichua Bible, he felt included in what it said, “it spoke to my heart,” he exclaimed (Paredes-Alfaro 1980:149). Another crucial step taken by G.M.U. missionaries during this time, was the opening of the first long-wave radio station to propagate Protestantism in Quichua. Considering that radio broadcasts as well as books

¹¹ The GMU, a U.S. based missionary program was the first Protestant mission to arrive in Ecuador. They began operations in 1896 in regions of the Ecuadorian Amazon and later in the Chimborazo province, where they were confronted with a formidable resistance from the catholic Church, the many landowners in the region, and the Indian population, highly influenced by catholic teachings.

had been, until then, symbols of the white/mestizo culture, one can argue that these events were truly revolutionary in these communities. The radio station and the Quichua Bible provided, in the literal and symbolic sense, a voice to indigenous people in the *páramos* of Chimborazo. Although it was a voice that spoke of Protestantism, it did so in the Indians' own language.

The Agrarian Reform undermined to some extent the hacienda system in Chimborazo, which led to the break up of the local power relations that had prevailed for centuries in this region. A few landholdings were divided up and handed over to individuals. But many indigenous people, who had previously lived under the hacienda system, remained landless and consequently migrated to nearby towns. Andrade (1999) argues that, although this process permitted a certain degree of autonomy and freedom for indigenous in this region; it also altered the kinship network on which this population relied, as I will explain. The emergence of Protestantism during this time could also be a response in the indigenous groups' search for a new value system, a way to express a new social order and in so doing, rebuild community bonds. Bastian (1986) refers to the process of symbolic reconstruction of an identity and sense of community as Syncretic Protestantism. This process is well exemplified in Chimborazo.

Evangelical Protestantism forbids alcohol consumption, fighting, and the ill treatment of wives, among other practices, while fostering thrift, hard work, and individual advancement rather than communal gain. Evangelical Protestantism did promote mutual support among brothers in faith (Andrade 1998, 1999; Muratorio 1981; Stoll 1990). This new set of values presented an alternative to many Indians in Chimborazo who were affected by Agrarian Reform, the expansion of capitalist relations

of production, and with it the slow disappearance of their way of life based on kinship and community. For many, Protestantism also provided a new and positive self-image as “one with God” (Muratorio 1981), which the years of exploitation and domination by the hacienda system, with strong support of the Catholic Church, did not permit (Paredes-Alfaro 1980). An important practice of the Protestant Church that goes along with the new notion of self-image is the observance of the body as a “clean temple” (Muratorio 1981; Paredes-Alfaro 1980). In every day practices, this has resulted in indigenous converts concern for external cleanliness, and total abstention from tobacco and alcohol. The new behavioral pattern among converts has translated in a new found self-respect and dignity vis-à-vis the mestizo culture, distancing the Protestant indigenous population in this area from the image of the *Indio sucio y miserable*, discussed earlier, and very much prevalent in the dominant discourse.

The individualization of religion often associated with evangelical forms of Protestantism had to be adapted to traditional practices in Chimborazo. Here, as in many other regions in the Andes, peasant reciprocity is still an important aspect of the relations of production and of the maintenance of kinship within communities. Under Catholicism, this reciprocity was expressed through relationships of *compadrazgo*, which were made sacred during baptism rituals. The *compadre* figure became crucial as a way of extending the kinship network in the peasants’ subsistence economy. Since Protestantism eliminated *compadrazgo* as a pagan relationship (Andrade 1999), Indians in Chimborazo accommodated it to the notion of *hermano en la fe* (brothers in faith) (Muratorio 1981). Hence, the new brotherhood provides the same kinship support previously provided by the *compadres*. Migrant workers in cities could rely on different

hermanos for food, lodging and even job connections from *hermanos* already established in the cities. In this sense, *hermanos en Cristo* has become an extension of the *comuna* kinship network (Andrade 1998, 1999; Muratorio 1981).

Finally, what became a catalyst for a reaffirmation of ethnicity within Protestantism, in Chimborazo, was the ordination of Quichua pastors (Muratorio 1981; Paredes Alfaro 1980). When the G.M.U. handed over to the Indians the celebration of religious service with their own preachers, the native church began to take on a life of its own. Many indigenous people converted only after listening to Indian preachers, even though they had been attending more or less regularly Protestant services for a long time (Paredes Alfaro 1980). Protestantism provided this indigenous community with the capability to preach in Quichua and by *Quichuas*, in their own cultural terms. This was perceived by Indian believers as a notion that one can become Protestant without becoming something other than Indians. Hence, Protestantism became a means to legitimize their culture and their Indian identity. Indian Protestant converts select what to include and adapt to their identity. Religion, as well as every other aspect of their identity is negotiable, elastic, and adjustable.

Notwithstanding the ability to manage and adapt to changing social, political, and spiritual relations of Indian communities in Chimborazo, and to appropriate symbols into their ethnic discourse, Protestant growth in Andean Ecuador does come with its share of grey areas, and ambiguous positioning. On the one hand, it has presented an alternative ideology, further expanding the notion proposed by Ramón Valarezo (1993) that Indians have, for many decades, contemplated the possibility of altering the status quo. This has no doubt fueled their continual and systematic proposal and construction of alternate

discourses and has given rise to a malleable ethnic identity, as is the case of this new Evangelical Indian. The Quichua Bible and Quichua radio station, along with Indian preachers provided a newfound sense of ethnic pride, and a new Indian, though religious voice. On the other hand, and as proposed by Muratorio (1981), Evangelical Protestantism, in the case of Chimborazo, stresses that antagonisms, such as land rights and plight for better working conditions, must be postponed to find resolution in the afterlife. The doctrine professed by the G.M.U. teaches that authorities are representatives of God and should not be questioned. This belief could alienate Indian converts from any confrontation. What is perceived as a new religion for many indigenous people, becomes, with this kind of preaching, simply an extension of the status quo of the dominant class, which has now found support in this doctrine (Muratorio 1981). Furthermore, far from seeking confrontation, Protestantism promotes progress and modernity within the capitalist discourse. One of the most controversial claims of the progressive Liberation Theology priests in this region was, besides land tenure issues, the recognition and respect of the indigenous culture (Andrade 1999; Muratorio 1981; Pérez Esquivel 1984). Contrary to this positioning, Protestantism calls for submission to authority, hard work and thriftiness (Paredes Alfaro 1980). These protestant “virtues” could be used, in turn, “by urban capitalists to keep a more docile, quiet and efficient labor force” (Muratorio 1981: 526). Since Muratorio carried out her study of Protestant growth in Chimborazo, the political scenery in Ecuador has completely been altered with the 1990 *levantamiento*, hence a more in depth study of the effects of the success of the ethnic movement on the Protestant doctrine professed by Indian converts is necessary. As suggested by Uzendoski (2003), though there are no

specific studies on the ongoing transformations and political-cultural relations involved in the acquisition of the new Protestant identity in Ecuador, “reality is more complicated, as there are also highly conservative strands of Catholicism as well as emergent/historical forms of Evangelical liberation theology” (Uzendoski 2003: 147). For the most part though, and as suggested by García¹², Evangelical Indians have become active in the movement while keeping their Protestant affiliation, probably having molded it to further accommodate their new political identity. Furthermore, the FEINE (Federación de Indígenas Evangélicos) besides actively participating in previous mobilizations, has now distanced itself from CONAIE and negotiates assistance directly from the government, in what is viewed by some as a government tactic to fragment the indigenous movement. FEINE, on its part defends its position acknowledging that in times of crisis every bit counts (*Hoy*, February 24 2004).¹³

El Levantamiento of June 1990, Antes y Después

Previous Developments

In 1979, after seven years of military rule, Ecuador returned to a democratic government. Democracy brought with it the creation of a new constitution that, among other issues, provided universal citizenship, giving illiterates the right to vote and also enforcing bilingual education (Quichua and Spanish) in densely Indian populated regions (Black, 1999; Korovkin 2001; Ramón Valarezo 1993). The new constitution and subsequent changes provided a legal basis from which indigenous people could organize,

¹² Fernando García. FLACSO. Personal communication. July, 2003.

¹³ On August 19, 2003, a day after CONAIE officially broke ties with the government with the resignation of all its members from government positions, FEINE representatives visited the president to offer their support. In return, they received some of the posts left vacant by CONAIE members, along with money for infrastructural projects in regions where FEINE has significant representation, and were promised more jobs at the local and municipal levels.

unite, and have a legitimate political presence in the country - necessary developments for the formation of a pan-Indian confederation - which further aided in the organization and mobilization of the 1990 uprising. In 1986, CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*) was created as a mechanism to unite indigenous populations in Ecuador.¹⁴ With the creation of CONAIE, the Indigenous movement went from dependence upon the Church and political movements on the left, to one directed and organized solely by Indians.¹⁵ The strong political Indian presence in the country snowballed from the creation of CONAIE and made its historic and permanent arrival to the Ecuadorian political arena with the June 1990 *levantamiento*.

Here, I deem it necessary to point out other important historical milestones achieved by the indigenous movement during the last decade. For space restrictions, I cannot address them individually in this study, but these events must be mentioned, since they are of historical and political relevance:

1. 1992. *Caminata* from the Amazon to Quito. Amazonian Indians walked what is remembered as the “500 kilometers of resistance” (to parallel the slogan of “500 years of resistance” to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America).

¹⁴ CONAIE was able to unite, for the first time, indigenous populations of the highlands, the coast and the Amazon basin, bringing under the organization issues concerning different ethnicities, cultures, and languages.

¹⁵ F.E.I. (Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios), the first organization to officially incorporate Indians was created in 1944, but was still mostly run by urban workers. It did not question *huasipungo* practices per se, but went against landowners who did not fulfill their part in the relationship, as explained in previous chapters. In 1972, largely by the presence of the progressive Catholic Church in the representation of the Indians, ECUARUNARI (Ecuador Runacunapac Richarimui) which translates to “The Ecuadorian Indian Awakens” was created. This was the first highland organization to be formed under an Indian identity, giving saliency to ethnic over class-oriented claims. For a more detailed rendition of the history of the transition from peasants’ to ethnic oriented organizations, refer to Pallares, 2002; Becker 1997; Cevallos and Lluco 1998.

They demanded land as well as the management of Yasuní National Park. The Indians were later granted over a million hectares of territory (Brysk 2000).

2. 1994. Indian uprising in response to the new Agrarian Reform Law. The uprising succeeded in putting a stop to the government's proposal of inserting into the land market the Indian communal land.
3. 1997. Indian uprising against the corrupt government of Abdalá Bucaram which not only helped depose the president, but also succeeded in significant constitutional changes in favor of the pluricultural status of the nation and collective rights.
4. 2000. Indian uprising against the neo-liberal agenda adopted by president Jamil Mahuad's government, which ended his presidency.
5. 2000. Uprising (September) against the dollarization of the economy and the consequent impoverishment of the most vulnerable sectors of the population.
6. Successful participation of *Pachakutik*¹⁶ in local elections throughout the country.
7. 2003. Overwhelming victory of Indian supported presidential candidate Lucio Gutiérrez. The Indians gained two important ministries and several other important positions within the government (Whitten 2003).

Source: Chiriboga 2001, unless otherwise noted.

El Levantamiento

When a peasant rose in revolt at any time, s/he did so necessarily and explicitly in violation of a series of codes, which defined his/her very existence as a member of that colonial society. For his/her subalternity was materialized by a structure of property,

¹⁶ *Pachakutik* was formed in 1996, it is the Indian political party. The word means "new beginning."

institutionalized by law, sanctified by religion and made tolerable - and even desirable- by tradition (Guha 1988: 45).

On May 28 1990, a group of Indians asked the priest at the Santo Domingo Church in the heart of the historic *Plaza de Santo Domingo* in Quito for a mass. Much to the surprise of the clergy and the usual *devotos* present, Indians began to enter the church and take possession of it. In many highland regions, highways were being barricaded by thousands of Indians on their way to the capital. It was a massive march, yet still underplayed by the government, who assumed that the military presence and clearing of barricades would scare the agitators. The Indians skillfully avoided army elements that were sent to clear the highways, meticulously went back to barricade the Pan-American highway, and dug ditches in the main roads leading to and from their *comunidades* (Barrera 2001). Simultaneously, in every important mestizo town along the way, Indians were conducting symbolic *juicios* (court hearings) against mestizos who had, as claimed by the Indians, systematically robbed and exploited them. In each case, they used official *papel sellado*¹⁷ (official sealed paper) on which they (the Indians) signed their agreement to punish the mestizo authorities for allowing such injustices to occur against the Indian population (Barrera 2001).

On June 6, 1990, Ecuador woke up to the news that an Indian uprising that counted in the hundreds of thousands had arrived in one of Quito's main plazas¹⁸. Highways had been blocked, food and other supplies could not enter major cities, and panic reigned among the white/mestizo population. Ecuador remained paralyzed for 11

¹⁷ Paper with the government seal used for any official procedure. The use of a white/mestizo legal tool symbolically legitimized the Indians actions.

days in what is remembered as a massive, methodically planned and unprecedented event that took the government by surprise. Indigenous leader Luis Macas referred to this event as a decisive change in the future of the indigenous movement. “ We have achieved a political space,” he said, “we have entered into the political scene of the country” (Macas 1991:5). President Rodrigo Borja reacted to the news of the indigenous uprising with a speech in which he eliminated the possibility that such a well-organized and massive event could have been planned solely by Indians. He accused the protesters of being unpatriotic and of utilizing maliciously the noble Indian race (Guerrero 1994). His speech resonated with notions of an Indian identity largely imagined by the white population in which the *Indio imaginado* remained untouched by modernity, unaffected by politics, a child-like, apolitical being, virtually unchanged from the Indian image of the 19th century.¹⁹ In these two interpretations of what the uprising represented, one given by an Indian, the other by a white president, there is an obvious contradictory discourse. In the interpretation of their leaders, Indians had finally become subjects; they had ‘entered’ for the first time a place denied to them by history. They had achieved a space of power within the national political arena, that of national citizens, they had a voice.

On the other hand, in Borja’s speech, the Indians continued to be objects, helpless, manipulated, incapable of their own representation and of speaking for themselves, a definition that underscored the Indian image created by the white/mestizo population

¹⁸ Communal leaders had been in Quito since the previous days, as explained here, but the massive mobilization of Indians to the capital was carried out on this date.

¹⁹ Refer to Guerrero, 1994 *Una Imágen Ventrilocua...* for a detailed version of the highland Indian image of the time, discussed by members of the parliament.

during the early days of the republic, which continued to fuel the dominant discourse through the 20th century. The political nature of the subaltern's actions during the last decades, as argued through this study, remained largely underestimated, as expressed in Borja's speech. In his speech, the president referred repeatedly to the prevailing construction by the dominant population of the Indian other: "*Quiero decir a los comuneros de todo el pais, que en 500 años ningun gobierno ha hecho tanto por resolver los problemas de las comunidades indígenas, como lo ha hecho mi gobierno... para que sean tratados como seres humanos*" (Guerrero 1994: 198).²⁰ Clearly then, for the President, the Indians were indeed less than human, following the construction of the "other" as discourse, in which the Indian "other" was necessarily dehumanized. The imagined identity of the Indian has to be in condition of sub-humanity, since it is the excuse used by the dominant population to exert control, and guide the "other" by the hand, under the dominant's control (Said 1978). Little had changed in 500 years of colonialism in how the Indian is imagined by its *imageros* (Endara 1998).

The Indians through time have been internalized in different manners according to the historical moment, although, as proposed by Muratorio (1994), this internalization and reflection of the Indian shifts in form, though not in essence. The Indian remains a distant "other", either as the backward and dangerous savage, or as a poor victim of progress (Muratorio 1994), never quite measuring up, never achieving modernity. The Indian, in the imagination of the dominant is a permanent inhabitant of a "not yet" realm (Chakrabarty 2000). The Indian is "not yet" ready for his/her own representation;

²⁰ " I want to tell the *comuneros* (members of indigenous communities, VGT) of my country, that in 500 years no government has done more to resolve the problems facing the Indian communities, as my government has, so that they (the Indians, VGT) be treated as human beings."

subject, but “not yet” ready for full citizenship. Considering that this is the prevailing imaginary of the Indian, *el levantamiento* came as a shock to the majority the white/mestizo population. It represented the ultimate transgression by the subaltern. Their presence could no longer be ignored. The dominant population could no longer look the other way when confronted by the uncomfortable, dirty, out of place presence of an Indian in the city. The Indians took control of a symbolically important plaza: a public, urban, mestizo space, and of a Church that had for centuries symbolized colonial legacy, and vertical hierarchy. It would seem that overnight the Indians were transformed from submissive, humble, and passive, to political activists, angry and assertive. For the first time in the history of Ecuador, the Indian leaders negotiated face to face with government authorities. The Indians demonstrated that ethnicity is anything but fixed, and proposed a new, reinvigorated Indian identity, which was the result “not just of resistance, but is also an interplay of relations of power, and new cultural syntheses” (Radcliffe 1997:9). *El levantamiento*, as expressed by Indian leader and former CONAIE president Luis Macas, “had many virtues: to make evident that the Indian question does not relate to Indians alone, that it is a national problem involving the Ecuadorian society as a whole” (Macas 1991: 18). Backward and millenarian they were not, as expressed in the words of this leader, and which the *levantamiento* made very clear to a nervous and unprepared country that did not see this coming. Furthermore, Macas, with this comment emphasized the *levantamiento* as a national event, positioning the movement beyond solely ethnic claims. They are no longer relegated to the closed realm of the natives, to the people without history. They speak for other marginalized populations of the country, they speak as citizens, and they speak as Indians.

The white/mestizo population viewed this act with a complete denial (fear?) that it could have been coordinated and organized solely by Indians (remember President Borja's speech). During the weeks and months following the *levantamiento*, there were many references from the white/mestizo population that pointed to the role of foreign individuals in the coordination and organization of subversive actions (Bustamante Cárdenas 1991). A major newspaper editorial, regarding the position of the government on the uprising read: "*Existen algunos agitadores indígenas que nunca han trabajado que viven explotando a los trabajadores del campo. Con estos no es el diálogo, el diálogo es con los campesinos*" (*El Comercio*. 8/24/90).²¹ Again, the dominant *imaginero* fails to grant the condition of political subject to the Indian, at least initially, and continued to deny him/her any capabilities besides the essential aspects of the identity that they (the dominants) had imagined for the subaltern. "*Con estos*" (with these people) also presents an ambiguous position as to the real identity of these agitators; *estos* could be anybody, but it excludes Indians, since *estos* do not fit the Indian imaginary in the government's view.

The notion of an imagined, homogenous Indian was initially constructed during the 19th century, with the labeling of a generic Indian, who was granted the condition of a race (Guerrero 1994), overlooking any difference among the many ethnic populations in the country. This construction, more than anything else, stood as a negative reflection of the white citizen. The uprising, no doubt, transformed the national image of the Indian. In the white mentality, for the first time the subaltern not only invaded spaces not designed for him/her, but also acted as a political subject. S/he went beyond local acts of

²¹ "There are several Indian agitators, who have never worked, who live of the exploitation of peasant workers. With them there is no dialogue, the dialogue is with the peasants."

resistance without political connotations, to execute a massive, public, and very political action. *El levantamiento* was indeed the catalyst that transformed the Indians in the white/mestizo imagination into national political agents (Guerrero 2000).

The leadership of the movement was comprised mostly of individuals from the elite sectors of the Indian population, who have not abandoned their ethnic identity in spite of their western education and middle class status. Native elites were fully involved not only in resistance practices, but also in the negotiation of their culture, their share in the power and wealth of the nation, and, more importantly, in demonstrating that the development of a consciousness was not an attribute exclusive to the dominant group (Guha 2000). However, the new image of the “modern Indian,” as embodied by the current leaders of the movement, well attuned to the white/mestizo political and legal practices, presents new problems and increasing ambiguities in their representation, as I will argue in the next chapter.

Conclusions

The challenge, on the part of the subaltern, of a white/mestizo conception of modernity stands at the heart of the subaltern’s actions. This challenge, or rather the appropriation of modernity within the subalterns’ terms is what has fueled, in the last few decades, the contestatory relationship of dominant and subaltern in Andean Ecuador. On the one side, the dominant, in his inability to grant the subaltern notions of modernity, attempts to impose on him/her an imagined notion of modernity, while, on the other, the subaltern proposes an alternate version of what modernity entails and signifies for him/her. One can be modern and ethnic; rural and urban; wealthy and Indian, is the subaltern proposal. Contrary to this proposal, the white dominant perceives them as exclusionary in their binary conception product of enlightenment understanding, although

these ideas have continued to be manipulated and negotiated in everyday, local politics. This has been the case of hacienda relationships, as well as migratory practices, and even in the invention of an ethnic Protestant identity, which appropriated the terms of the doctrine, to become a native church with Quichua preachers. This allowed the Indian population to express an unequivocal Indian voice, even within Protestant terms, while also relying on the support (funding?) of foreign missionaries that could tend to their needs better and faster than the government. The Indians, in this sense, manipulated circumstances to meet their agenda, while retaining self-determination. Furthermore, although Evangelical Protestantism, as the one preached in Chimborazo promoted a kind of modernity in religion that undermined traditional Indian identity and practices, the Indian utilized from the mission and its teachings what served him/her, while maintaining and strengthening a new, evangelical way of being Indian.

Another aspect argued in this chapter that deals with appropriation and self-determination refers to Indian migrants and their experience. This population, far from fulfilling the ideals of miscegenation, *blanqueamiento*, and incorporation into the modernizing project of the nation, proved to be the genesis of a hybrid identity. Indians could juggle both; the urban temporary worker and the rural, sometimes even more temporary Indian. While the urban financed the rural, the rural provided a sense of security and belonging to the stigmatization of being called *Indio sucio*²² in the main migratory destinations for Andean Indians. On the other hand, the new hybrid identity proves to have an ambiguous side to it. The urbanized Indians, those who spend most of their time either in the cities or abroad, as is the case of many Otavaleños, had fallen into

²² For more on hygienic racism and its discourse on the Indian image, refer to Carlos de la Torre, 1996.

the dominant, binary oriented discourse, by defining the more traditional sector of the population, those who have not migrated and have remained rural, as being backward and uncivilized. This realization could be the result of the influence of urban consumerism on this population, which has not been completely appropriated, negotiated, and adapted by the younger generations of migrants. On the other hand though, they continue to profess their Indian identity, which given the importance of the indigenous movement in Ecuador, proves much more beneficial than being a simple *cholo*. Hence, ethnicity, as proposed in this chapter remains a negotiable terrain, with dynamic definitions that produce highly elastic identities, capable of molding and adjusting to ever changing realities, with ever changing identities.

The strength displayed by the movement to coordinate and mobilize local organizations into a pan-Ecuadorian uprising points to the notion, argued throughout this study, of a pervasive subaltern presence and practices that continually influenced political and social processes. Once the historical opportunity presented itself, the Indians were fully aware of the political conjuncture facilitating their action, and proved, to the dominant's surprise, their acquired skills in navigating the legal and official channels. Moreover, the *levantamiento* brought out into the open the ability of the leaders to utilize the dominant's discursive framework to communicate their claims. For the first time, Indian leaders spoke face to face with the president, without interpreters, accessing in this way spaces historically reserved for the dominant population. *El levantamiento*, without a doubt, altered the image of the Indian population that had been utilized to reaffirm dominance, within a discourse of an Indian "other" fixed in time. Once again this discourse was challenged by the subalterns, who further reinforced, with the list of

demands presented to the government, their openly political identity, not only as a marginalized ethnic population, but also as Ecuadorians fully aware of the social, historical, and political issues affecting the country at large. On the one hand, *el levantamiento*, more than any other historical event, during the last decades, brought to the surface the disparity and dichotomized nature of the discourse being put forward by the government. The “imagined” Indian, submissive, passive, ignorant, and apolitical had little to do with the new Indian leadership.

CHAPTER 4
A HOMOGENOUS INDIAN IDENTITY AND LEADERSHIP: WHO SPEAKS FOR
THE SUBALTERN?

Introduction

The homogenous identity presented by the leadership of the movement during and after *el levantamiento*, proved to be an unquestionably powerful political tactic. The image of a unified, almost generic Indian with claims of sovereignty and cultural recognition gained ample support among the many Indian nationalities that participated in the *levantamiento*; it was in fact a catalyst for the massive Indian mobilization and consequent success of the uprising. The Indian leadership assumes homogenous class and ethnic interest of the Indians, emphasizing an almost essentialist discourse, which, in this case, has enabled successful collective action (Rubin 1998). However, after the Indian positioned him/herself at the heart of the Ecuadorian political arena, s/he had to tune his/her discourse to suit the white/dominant and foreign audiences as a way to legitimize his/her demands. The “right to difference” under which the Indians mobilized and paralyzed the country had to be negotiated under the dominant’s rules; the only channel the subaltern has to assure audibility. Under these circumstances, can there be, as claimed by many Indian leaders, a sovereign Indian voice? In other words, has this discourse adjustment, in the hands of mostly western educated Indian elite who now represents the subaltern, once again left the subaltern’s voice silent?

This chapter will focus on my personal conversations with some of the intellectual leaders of the current indigenous movement. Though the issue of heterogeneities of

identities underneath a homogenous, pan-Indian identity in the Ecuadorian highlands was not the initial goal of this study, it must be addressed. It is, in my view, probably the most salient feature that emerged from these conversations, and the biggest challenge confronting the movement in the coming decades. The ambiguities that emerge from the contradictions of a homogenous identity put forward by the indigenous movement and the many heterogeneities it engenders, will have to be dealt with by the many actors involved, and will further outline the basis upon which ethnic identity will be proposed, contested, and negotiated in the future. In this sense, homogeneity between the dominant and subaltern, as well as within the subalterns themselves becomes “an ambiguously defined dialogic field, where a dynamic of power struggle characterized by constant agreements and disputes, produces a conflict-laden consensus, usually narrow, yet politically crucial” (De la Cadena 2000: 9).

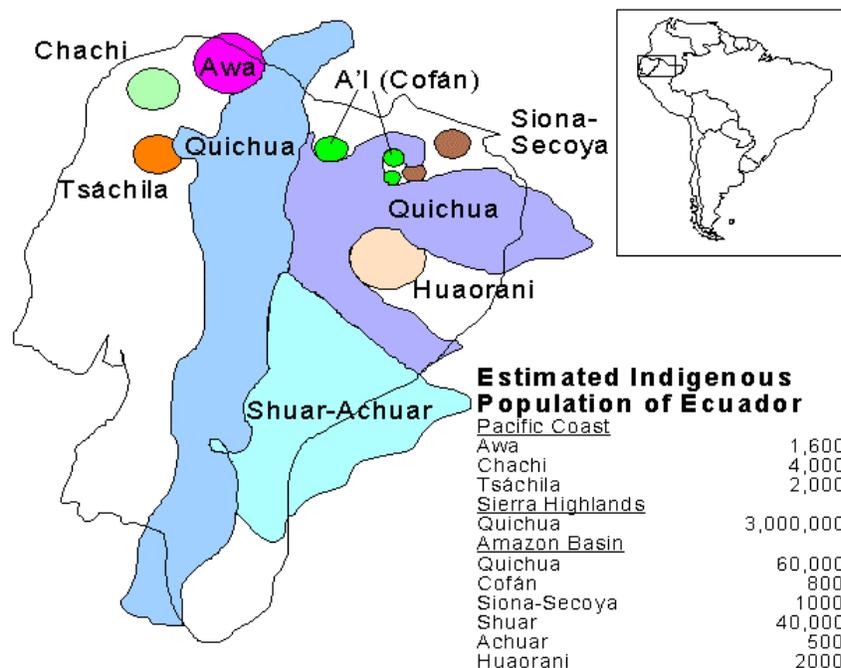


Figure 4-1. Map of the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

Source: CONAIE 2001.

The not so Homogenous Indian Identity

Alison Brysk (2000) points out that in Ecuador alone there are many different ways of organization, according to region, language, and nationality. Within the Amazon region, Indian human groups organize at the tribal-kinship level (Huaorani); by language groups (Shuar); through bio-regions (COFENAIE: Confederación de Naciones Indígenas de la Amazonía); through a national representation (CONAIE); even through a diasporic activity (Otavalo). Solely based on these differences, there is hardly a homogenous identity. Each group answers to different problematics, sets of needs, and even ways to relate to the white/dominant population. Yet, the success of *el levantamiento*, which forced the government to negotiate and legitimize the Indians' demands, was presented under an almost essentialist image of the Indian population. Ironically, this same essentialist and homogenous Indian identity under which this population was subjected to domination, emerges again as a key political tool of resistance, now in the hands of the Indian intellectuals, in a move from a constructionist position (the claim of plurinationality) to an essentialist one. The Indian leadership uses essentialism to concentrate on their differences vis-à-vis the dominant population, and constructionism in their plight for representation and sovereignty (Rappaport 2003). The subalternity they propose stands in constant tension as a project of deconstruction of formal politics to represent the subaltern and of constructive articulation of political agency within a new globalized, hegemonic context (Guha 2001). These are the new social actors in weak states, whose mobilization abilities and resistance strategies are “disturbing traditional patterns of social control” (Rodríguez 2001: 27).

Fieldwork Findings and the Emergence of Heterogeneities

To further the argument of heterogeneity even among members of the intellectual elite of the indigenous movement, I want to turn now to my conversations with some of these leaders. As stated earlier, I had the opportunity to have open-ended interviews with four leaders of the current movement who, at the time, held important positions in government institutions as well as in N.G.Os.¹ The assignment of strategic positions inside the government, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and of Foreign Affairs to top CONAIE representatives, were part of the conditions negotiated by the indigenous movement with the current government for their support in the last presidential elections. Current President Lucio Gutiérrez won by a very comfortable margin with the support of the Indian electorate.²

I arrived early on a cold and brisk, typical Quito morning, to A. K.'s office. When I contacted him, a few days earlier, he told me in a casual manner, untypical of any individual holding an important position, that he normally was in his office by 7:00am and that I was welcome to come at that time. "*Si vamos a hablar de mi vida, tomemos un vasito de agua, porque vas a estar aquí un rato largo.*"³ With these words, the current national consultant for PRODEPINE (*Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador*) greeted me in his office. *Otavaleño*, in his early forties, intellectual

¹ I also contacted a 5th person, but he asked for \$200.00 and a all-expenses paid stay in a Quito hotel in order to grant the interview, to which I refused.

² Since my field research in the summer of 2003, CONAIE had severed ties with the government, and now this top Indian organization stands again in the opposition.

³ "If we are going to talk about my life, lets get a glass of water because you're going to be here for a while."

and poet, he projected a very relaxed attitude. The son of successful Otavalo merchants, his experiences, beliefs, and his position regarding the direction of the movement greatly differed from other members of the intellectual leadership. A. K. clearly stated that reasons behind Indian organizations respond to different problematics, depending on geographical regions, and historical realities, which in turn directly affected the white/Indian relationship. In the case of the *Otavaleños*, he spoke of “better negotiating conditions with the whites,” which, he believes, influenced *Otavaleños* to feel different from other Indian populations. It is this difference in colonial experience that is at the heart of the strong *Otavaleño* ethnic pride, he argued. The reality was different in the central Ecuadorian Andes, (Chimborazo), where Indian’s main activity has been almost exclusively related to the land. Because of this difference, A.K. believes levels of exploitation were stronger, which delayed the opening of a space so that an ethnic discourse could emerge.

His background, as opposed to a great percentage of the Indian population in Ecuador, is not rural, since he spent many years in Ipiales, Colombia with his family before settling definitively in Otavalo. He lives and works in Quito now, but constantly commutes to his native city. His experience as an urban Indian is probably, in my view, what most influenced his ideas. He pointed to the dichotomous notion of space division that most affected him while growing up, and where he faced the most discrimination. “The city is the space of the dominant, and the periphery belongs to the subaltern” (A.K.). He spoke of what it was for him to be a subaltern in the city, accessing spaces reserved mostly for whites: poetry writing and university life. Notions of space distribution, product of a colonial discourse of order and domination, and embodied in

the configuration of the city were constantly being challenged by the Indian presence in it. The city symbolized the white, educated elite, while the rural belonged to the ignorant, dark Indian (Rama 2002). A.K. being a poet and urban, clearly trespassed urban spaces not designed for him.

The notion of what stands at the heart of the Indian problem and its organization is quite different for M.S. When we met, he was not wearing any conspicuous Indian attire, and did not specify his nationality, which I respected. When we met again the following week for the interview, he asked me again for my last name, which I had told him when I introduced myself the first time, and said: “With that last name, you must be a *Quiteña*. I know who you are.” This remark gave me the certainty that he had a preconceived notion of my identity. I felt as if being watched. Furthermore, during our conversation, he stopped twice to talk to other *compañeros* working in the room, and spoke to them in Quichua, and throughout our conversation, more than once he spoke of the white population using the term “*ustedes*” (you people). I felt like the “other” he probably wanted me to. In my view, this could have been a tactic of role reversal to which I refer in earlier chapters. The feeling of ease I had when speaking to A.K. was definitely not there.

As opposed to A.K., M.S. never referred to his life memories and experiences as point of departure for his current activism. A philosopher who studied in Spain and Argentina, M.S. currently works at the *Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas* (I.C.C.I.), and writes the editorial for the Institute monthly’s publication. When we spoke, he was also involved in the coordination of the *Primer Congreso Internacional de la Nacionalidad Quichua* that was to be held in Quito in January of 2004.

M.S. pointed to the notion that individual reality had little to do with the process of domination that subjugated Latin America for almost three centuries. A domination process, he explained, that materialized in a form of discourse within which an imagined human being was constructed. *“El hombre bueno, el hombre trabajador, el hombre cristiano, el hombre blanco. El runa tenía que ser cristiano y trabajar por dinero para ser considerado ser humano.”*⁴ M.S. spoke of discipline and punishment as the colonial tactics to impose a new culture on the Indians within the discourse of domination, in which the Spanish authorities controlled the external body, while the Catholic religion controlled the internal. His position is quite different from the one explained by A.K. To him, geography and colonial experience did not play a major part in the domination process; it came as a homogenizing discourse of the Indian “other” as proposed by Said (1978), and discussed earlier. He seemed intensely interested in the history of Indian domination as a monolithic force, which left little room for negotiation, at least, until recently, as he proposed. He also referred to the idea that the discourse, though homogenous in its depiction and imagination of the Indian, was not complete; it broke down, he said, because most of the Indians could not be fully indoctrinated. To this discourse fracture he attributes several factors. Resistance, in a Foucauldian sense is one: *“todo proceso de dominación tiene un proceso de resistencia,”*⁵ he insisted. The second, in his view, was language and culture. The colonizers could not control either one, and they became resistance tactics. However, M.S. pointed out, this does not mean that the

⁴ “The good man, the working man, the Christian man, the white man. The runa (Quichua word that literally means human being, but that have been used by the dominant population as a pejorative form to refer to the Indian, VGT), had to be a Christian and work for a wage to be considered a human being.”

⁵ “Every process of domination has a process of resistance.”

appeal of capitalism did not attract many *compañeros*, with which many agree. In his view, these Indians have “fallen” in the white trap, and themselves exploit other Indians for self-benefit. There were, and are others, he said, that could see beyond the trap, and who disagree with the white economic, political, and social proposal, but they naively continue believing solely in a cultural resistance. The indigenous movement, in his view, has gone from resistance to confrontation, and now to leadership. It has the responsibility of making a new proposal. I asked about this “new proposal” he referred to. This was his answer:

We speak of a new process, one we call *Pachakutik*. It is a movement of change. From the roots, to the soil, to the seeds to be planted, it is the emergence of a new force in a collective action, not in violence, but in an intercultural existence. We can be equal in the difference. We cannot go back to a previous state. This would be dangerous. In the movement, there are *indigenista* currents, and even racist ones. But we can work for an intercultural state.

Opposing M.S.’s stern, almost homogenous approach to the colonial and current domination of the Indian, A.K. consistently emphasized his ethnic pride. Even though his parents sent him to a mestizo school, hoping this would liberate their children from the stigma of being Indians, they did not dress him in the traditional attire and spoke to him only in Spanish. At the same time he remembers his parents speaking only in Quichua among themselves and the extended family in Otavalo, and talked with great pride of their ethnicity, their culture and their traditions. The notion that Guha refers to of constant reaffirmation and contestation seems appropriate here. Albeit an upbringing that eulogized integration, at the same time reaffirmed ethnicity, A.K. analyzes his ethnic

pride as a result of the empowerment his people (*Otavaleños*) had through history due to the preferential treatment they received since colonial times.⁶

He remembers leaders as Dolores Caguango with respect, but also emphasizes the clear influence of a class-based discourse that had primacy until after the 1960's. He acknowledges the left for enabling the emergence of spaces for the more ethnic oriented conscience to emerge, but is aware of strong mestizo tutelage in the process. "*Los mestizos dirigentes y blancos estaban al frente siempre y se invisibiliza a la población indígena. Nos dan pensando, nos dan diciendo, y nos dan hablando. Se convierten en ventrílocos de la población indígena.*"⁷ A.K. referred to the "invention" of the Agrarian Reform as a political tactic by the government and the dominant elites, based on fear of what had happened in Cuba. He also used the term "trap," as M.S. had done, to refer to the Indian leadership of the time (1960's), since they believed in the proposal of the land reform. In his view, it took too long, and too little was done. It was the emergence of cultural groups in the Otavalo area that served as a catalyst in the following years, he believes, for a new way to express ethnicity. These students of music and art were rejected by the Indian leadership of the time. A.K. again refers to the difference in nationalities as a barrier, since, he believed, there was a level of jealousy by the leadership against these youngsters with new ideas. Despite these differences, A. K.

⁶ Refer to Meisch 1997; Salomon 1986 for more on the colonial history of Otavalo.

⁷ The white and mestizo leaders stood in front and always the Indian population became invisible. They thought for us, they spoke for us, they articulate for us. They become the ventriloquists of the Indian problem."

The notion of ventriloquism was first coined by Guerrero (1994) when referring to the way Indians had to communicate with mestizo authorities. It was done through a transcriptural act by which the indian's speech was transformed into an intelligible argument so that mestizo authorities could address it. Refer to Guerrero, 1994.

believes that the emergence of these groups enabled a cultural discourse to emerge, alongside the class-related one, prevalent during the 1960's and 70's. A new consciousness emerged during this time, he argues, that vindicated indigenous culture and language. The white population insisted on labeling what these groups produced as folklore, "we saw it as art," he said. From then on, there is an increasing awareness of the need to learn, to acquire knowledge. "We came to the conclusion that it was important to deconstruct the semantics of history." The movement began to realize the importance of appropriating symbols as a tool to strengthen ethnicity. He spoke of the use of the "*wilpala*"⁸ as an Indian symbol, in the same way that the colonizers used symbols, and the appropriation of language. "*Indio es la palabra con que nos oprimieron, Indio es la palabra con que nos levantaremos,*" he said, making reference to Tomás Tupak-Katari's uprising slogan (leader of an Indian uprising during colonial rule). A.K. points to this slogan as determinant in the current Indian plight. The word "Indio" becomes a focal point of reappropriation by the movement. In order to do so, he argued, the movement had to "turn history around." "We had to make the people, who had felt bad for so long when they heard this word (Indio), to feel good again." This was the beginning, in his view, of the education movement and of a process of rewriting history in order to understand the significance of historical events. He spoke of the baptism of Atahualpa before he was put to death, not as giving-in to colonizers' demands, but rather to enable his return, in accordance with Inca cosmivision.⁹ The death of Atahualpa, in

⁸ Huilpala is the Indian flag, believed to be from the time of the Incas. It shows the 7 colors of the rainbow.

⁹ Incas believed in the return from the afterlife, but only if their bodies were buried following specific rituals. By changing his name before being killed, Atahualpa assured his return since he did not die with his Inca name. Hence, he remained. For more on Inca ritual practices and beliefs, refer to Moseley, 1992.

accordance with Indian beliefs system, is referred to as the “darkening in the middle of the day.” In other words, reflects A.K., the life of the Inca was cut short. “We paraphrase this statement and turn it into ‘coming of dawn in the middle of the night.’” This is, in his view, the mission for the new generations and this is also the name of the Indian formed political party, *Pachakutik*.¹⁰ For the Indians, the movement represents this new dawn after a long night. A.K. feels very strongly about the importance of the appropriation of the white/mestizo symbols. He explains this notion with an example: the Indian hat. It is customary for Indians to remove their hat when greeting a white/mestizo authority figure.¹¹ There is an agreement among the leadership of the movement to not remove their hats, a very conspicuous Indian piece of attire, used by many nationalities, especially in the highlands. He remembers, with a laugh, how he and other *compañeros* would go into government offices to hold meetings and speak with government representatives and would keep their hat on. Whoever removed his hat, would get a “*coscacho*” (slight smack on the head) by his fellow *compañeros*. Once, while a group of Indian leaders attended one of the first ceremonies in the parliament, the national anthem was played. Much to the shock of the white/mestizo congress representatives, the Indians kept their hats on and did not sing, as is customary. A.K. remembers how a mestizo congressman turned to them and angrily demanded they take their hats off in a demonstration of respect to the national anthem. They did not. “*Indios malcriados*,” (these ill-behaved Indians), he said to them. At the end, A.K. approached

¹⁰ The choice of this name is no coincidence, according to FLACSO researcher Fernando García. He believes the name is part of the appropriation of symbols carried out by the movement. Personal communication, July 2003.

¹¹ During hacienda times, the Indian would bend down on his/her knees, remove the hat and kiss the *patrón*'s hand.

this man and said: “Sir, you are the ill-behaved one, not showing respect and talking to us while “your” national anthem is playing.” Language is, in his view, another important symbolic element. He argues that there is a consensus to recall the word *Indio*. “*No somos indígenas; somos Indios y hemos aprendido a sentir orgullo al escuchar esta palabra.*” A. K. believes that openly challenging the national symbols, as was done here, helps change the image of the Indian in the white mentality and construct an image of difference, but not less, not submissive to the white.

El levantamiento is to him the catalyst that positions the Indian as a political agent, since until then the Indian was not part of the political realm. The planning, he remembers, was carried out in the same way that the great uprisings of colonial times, in total secrecy. During that time, there was what he referred to as “flirting” between the government and the CONAIE. The government created different coordination centers for the aid in bilingual education and other Indian related programs, but provided no funds. The leadership took this, he explained, as an act of “*burla*” (mocking) on the part of the government. He referred to President Borja’s reaction to the uprising in a manner similar to the one presented in earlier chapters. According to A. K., the president underestimated the Indian capabilities because he was immersed in the white, paternalistic view of the Indian, hence he deemed the Indians incapable of carrying out something like *el levantamiento* on their own. The first talks of a massive mobilization, oddly enough, he points out, did not come from the movement leadership, but from much lower ranked leaders, inside the *comunas*. He goes back to the issue of differences fracturing the unity of the movement, even in the months preceding *el levantamiento*. The coordination inside CONAIE, of which Luis Macas was in charge,

was not helping to the extent it should have with the planning of the uprising. Two weeks before the event, Macas abandoned the project and left for the U.S. But he is the one who took the glory for the event. Nevertheless, he pointed out, it was a historic accomplishment. He finishes our conversation with some personal comments on the future of the movement. In his view, the leadership has not realized the potential that the uprising engendered. Today, he believes, the leaders are more worried about being part of the leadership than in carrying out their mission. He pointed out to fractures between the CONAIE leadership and *Pachakutik* that could damage the movement's credibility among its constituents. He fears for what could happen if the movement fails. He sees a growing gap between the leadership in CONAIE and the thousands of poor, rural Indians who believe that change will come through the movement. If it doesn't, especially to the poorest communities of the central Andes, things can get violent, according to him. This is his main fear. Another aspect that seemed to worry him is what he views as the idealization of the indigenous movement. "Of course the leadership loves to be sweet-talked to," he says, "I see this as a threat because there is a general idealization of the Indian, from intellectuals, to some politicians, and even the general public." To idealize and romanticize the Indian and the movement is to A.K. a double-edged sword. It could ultimately serve the purposes of certain sectors of society that want the movement discredited. "The fall is harder, the further up you are," he says. But this fear does not seem to be shared by certain members of the leadership, as he put it. He believes that the movement was not ready to be in the government yet. There is much to be learned, in his view, but the appeal of power is irresistible, and Indians "are humans too." Of course that having won the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not going to translate into an

immediate betterment in the way of life of many poor Indians, but it is important at a symbolic level, according to A.K. “On the one hand, it has enabled the movement to deconstruct certain structures of power, and on the other, it has also helped bring to the surface prevailing notions of racism in the country.”¹²

L.M.T.’s life experience is similar to A. K. in several ways. When we met, she was serving as assistant to Nina Pacari, Secretary of Foreign Affairs. She was also in the process of writing her master’s thesis at FLACSO. She and A.K. are good friends. They are both originally from Otavalo; both attended mestizo schools, and in both cases, the parents emphasized education as a way out of the stigma of Indian identity. When I talked to her, she greeted me as if sitting down with a friend for a much overdue conversation. Again, I felt the easiness I had experienced when talking to A.K. In my view, it is possible that being from Otavalo, and being members of an Indian elite, what Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999) refers to as the “native leisure class” provides these individuals with a sense of self-esteem; a way to carry their “indianness” that I perceived as much less confrontational than the other leaders with whom I spoke.

She referred to the experience of many of her friends and current members of the intellectual leadership of the indigenous movement, who left their Indian identity and moved to urban centers with the certainty that their education and middle class, urban status would be their passport to becoming non-Indians. The results were quite different and eventually they returned to their native Otavalo and fully engaged in ethnic activism.

“Fueron rebotados y es ahí cuando despierta una conciencia profunda de hacer valorar

¹² He was referring to an array of newspaper articles, political cartoons, general comments, and even *cachos* (jokes) with strong racist and sexist undertones that appeared after Nina Pacari was named Secretary of Foreign Affairs by the current administration.

nuestra condición de Indios.”¹³ She reminisced about her school years (mestizo school) and how she was repeatedly told by teachers to not speak Quichua, to speak in “Christian” (comments made by M.S. regarding Christianity and wage labor as the bases that make a good human being come to mind). As A. K. did, L.M.T. also put special emphasis on the appropriation of symbols as an important tactic to confront the dominant population. She recalled how when riding public buses, Indians were made to sit in the back or ride standing-up. With a group of activist friends (A.K among them), they would get on buses and demand to be taken to the furthest point the bus would go and back, sitting wherever they pleased. “It is the little things that strengthen your ethnic consciousness,” she said.

L.M.T. was very involved in the bilingual program (Spanish, Quichua), instituted in the late 70’s. She argues that the biggest success of the program was to turn it into a way to express their identity. “The children did not learn only the 3 Rs, but they learned to tell their stories through the 3 Rs. There is a mistake when we prioritize only academic learning; this is not what it is about. We must learn to read and write our lives according to our realities,” which she stated was the goal of the education program. It was also designed as an intercultural program, intended for Indians and non-Indians alike. Regarding the education program, she stated that it was not intended to be solely for the Indian population but an intercultural one. When the government learned that the program it involved Quichua and Spanish it was immediately relegated as an exclusively Indian program, without making the necessary connections to make it intercultural, a program for all Ecuadorians.

¹³ “They were bounced-back and it was then when a profound consciousness awakened, to make our Indian condition be valued.”

I asked her about spaces of resistance. Her personal experiences have taught her that pain is a space of resistance. “We are Indians of resistance, but now we are also Indians of conscience.” Then she mentioned something that I did not expect from an Indian activist. She moved from resistance to the concept of “runa” (Indian term for human being, used by the white/mestizo culture in a pejorative manner to refer to anything that is not refined). In her view, to be Indian is not only a racialized element that separates one human group from another. “After 500 of breathing the same air,” she said, “surely our D.N.A.’s have adjusted to life here. We are all *runas*, our commitment should be with the future of our country, not with the group we belong to.” Then she pauses for a few seconds and with a bit more somber tone reflects, “of course, this is the ideal situation, reality is not quite this way.” With this, she tells me of a recent experience at the Universidad San Francisco¹⁴, in Quito, where she teaches Quichua. A well-dressed, white lady approached her, and without any second thought asked her if she was a washer woman, and, if that was that case, would be interested in working for her. “I would be glad to,” was L.M.T.’s response, “if you can pay me what the University pays me to be an instructor.” This experience, she reflects, was a reminder of how alive and well racism is in Ecuador, and how essentialist notions of the Indian prevail among the white/mestizo population. Race, in this sense continues to play a crucial role in social structure and representation. Thus, if social actors define an element, such as race, as real, it has real consequences (De la Torre 1996).

L.M.T. refers to a new kind of racism, after the explosion of the indigenous movement, “*un racismo más sutil*” (“a more subtle kind of racism”) prevalent in society,

¹⁴ A private university where mostly upper classes attend.

which is, in her view, as hurtful as the more blatant type of racism that existed before. She is fully aware, that her education (and I would venture to say her status) allows her to deal with and confront situations of racism and discrimination, as the experience she referred to, differently than the more uneducated (poorer?) sector of the Indian population. “These things are still very hurtful for many other *compañeros*,” she acknowledged. This topic, she believes, is something that the movement needs to concentrate on. How to make the Indian appropriate notions, terms, and elements, which were perceived (and remain) as racist, and turn them into something the Indians can be proud of, continues to be a challenge. Language, in her view, is a key element of resistance in achieving this purpose. One important success in appropriating language happened during *el levantamiento del 90*. She recalls how Nina Pacari confronted the president “*sin necesidad de intermediarios, sin necesidad de traductores que le den interpretando el lenguaje, sin necesidad de gente que le pueda decir cuales son sus necesidades. Expresando no solamente el clamor del pueblo indígena, sino de la sociedad en general.*”¹⁵ In L.M.T.’s perspective, this image of an Indian woman eloquently addressing a white president changed the psychic of the entire nation. It produced an ethnic tremor, and a different Indian was introduced. No longer the poor, ignorant Indian, who does not know anything of the white culture, but that of a political actor that had been there all the time, learning, assimilating the white culture to ensure the survival of his/her own. In her view, both cultures (white/mestizo and Indian) have learned from each other, have fed each other notions and ideas, and are a product of 500

¹⁵ “With no need for intermediaries, with no need for translators to interpret her language, with no need for other people to tell her what her needs really are. Expressing not only the claim of the Indian people, but also of the country at large.”

years of living together. Every language tells a story, she believes. There are many languages spoken in this country, all as valid as Spanish, she argues. She believes there is an increasing need to learn more from one another, in order for a true intercultural relation to emerge. Not in confrontation, but in respect. She then points to an interesting concept. Quichua, she says, has been well received internationally. “There is clear interest in our language.” It is here (in Ecuador), she thinks, that people continue to reject it. Nonetheless, in her view, language has played an import role in placing the Indian as agent, and has helped reappropriate terms that before were hurtful. “Now, we can say we are Indians, we are beginning to not feel it as a term of despise anymore, we are Indians.”

Finally, she reflects on the meaning of being an Indian in a globalized context. She believes there is an Indian realm, not necessarily closed to the white/mestizo population, but which, the white/mestizo does not want to see, to accept. It is this realm that has enabled their survival, otherwise, it would have been dispersed in 500 years, and nothing of the Indian would remain. But it prevails and a culture destined to disappear gets stronger. In her view, the Andean, Indian *cosmovisión* has two ways of producing knowledge. One, she explains is the rational, (I was left wondering if she meant western),

de comprensión de los mecanismos y de los hechos. Pero hay otro que es intuitivo, un conocimiento de corazonadas, de sueños. Son nuestras madres quienes nos han dado esto, el contacto con nuestra gente nos ha dado otra dimensión del conocimiento. Este conocimiento que no se piensa con la cabeza, no se razona tanto, se siente más. Para nosotros es vital el conocimiento racional, de cátedras y lecturas, pero hay otro

*conocimiento que está trascendiendo en otra dimensión, en otras esferas. El de nuestros ancestros, nuestra cultura, nuestros yachags.*¹⁶

I left her office reflecting on Chakarabarty and his notion of the public/private identity. The stronger the public, western becomes, the greater the need for the private, the Indian, the non-western. After my conversation with L.M.T., my strong beliefs in the impossibility of the existence of a pure Indian realm, at least momentarily, were put on hold.

My experience when talking to L.U. was quite different; I would even venture to say, almost opposite to my long, relaxed conversation with L.M.T. L.U. is also a female, from Cotopaxi, a more central Andean province. When we met, she was in charge of the *Subsecretaria de Desarrollo Rural* at the *Ministerio de Bienestar Social*. Her mother was the *patrón's* daughter, and the reason why she was so guarded while growing up. Her life experience, and political position is quite different from A.K. and L.M.T. From the beginning of our conversation she seems more confrontational. She informed me that she did not have much time for the interview. (The interview lasted around one half hour. I spent more than 3 hours talking to A.K., and well over 2 hours in my conversation with L.M.T.)

L.U.'s political position appears to be very different from the other leaders with whom I spoke. She perceived the hacienda era as a time of complete slavery for the Indian, and the struggle for the land that, in her view, became the Indian redemptory flag,

¹⁶ "Of understanding mechanisms and facts. But there is another one that is more intuitive, made of gut feelings, of dreams. It is our mothers who have given us this. The contact with our people has provided us with a different dimension of knowledge. A knowledge that is not so much thought of with the head, it is felt more. For us, it is vital to have the knowledge of classes and lectures, but there is a different knowledge that is transcending in another dimension, in another sphere. That of our ancestors, our culture, our wise men."

was also what awakened the Indian. “It is not that the Indian was asleep for 500 years,” she insists, “it is that the hacienda domination was too strong, and Indians could not express themselves under these conditions.” “It is our turn now,” she proclaimed enthusiastically, “if we were capable to paralyze the country, we exist, we are many, and we are not a minority, like the whites portrayed us to be.” She believes that today it is fashionable to call oneself Indian, something that came about with *el levantamiento*, when Indians began to speak and to be heard. “We are Indians and it is our identity the valid one,” she pointed out quite sternly. I tried to ask her about her trajectory in the movement, but she proceeded to inform me of the history of the movement and the different organizations prior to CONAIE. After a few minutes of this recount, she went back to my original question. She explained that she joined the movement after finishing elementary school, moved by poverty and lack of opportunities. As other female members of her *comuna*, she was not expected to continue her education past age 12. As a female in a household of many children, her parents could not afford to send them all to school, so the male siblings had priority to continue their education. “I remember my childhood amidst smiles, poverty, cries, hunger, tenderness, and Quichua.” She left the *comuna* and went to work in construction in a nearby city. After that she worked as a maid and cook for several years in Quito, during which she finished her education. L.U. left behind her Indian apparel, but she confesses, never her mother tongue, Quichua. “*Me di cuenta de que por más que uno no quiera mostrar lo indígena, mi identidad me seguía como sombra.*”¹⁷ She became involved with the M.I.C.C. (*Movimiento Indígena y Campesino de Cotopaxi*) and after many years of struggle and hard work, earned her law

¹⁷ “I realized that even if one tries hard to not show the Indian side, my identity followed my like a shadow.”

degree. She moved on to get a scholarship for a graduate degree at FLACSO and, after graduating, was named the first female Vice-president for the M.I.C.C. She presented me with a gift. A book she co-edited about the M.I.C.C., its history, and its leaders. With this, L.U. ended our conversation. I was left with a feeling that I had not gotten what I needed, or expected. Then again, perhaps this is all she wanted to say to someone (in her eyes) foreign, and representing an American university. In any case, she projected the image of a very strong woman, ahead of her time and, in my view, way ahead of her gender role as an Indian woman from a poor *comuna*. She struck me as a breaker of rules and a fighter.¹⁸

Despite the very different positions of the leaders interviewed, which, to paraphrase Rappaport (1994) could be considered a polyphony of voices inside the movement, the Indian leadership worked in unity, it would seem, during the silent planning of *el levantamiento*. As a homogenous group, inhabitants of an imagined community of Indians, they massively, and with amazing synchronization virtually “took over” the country and paralyzed its economy for many days. Underneath this homogenous image, though, some important differences among nationalities, and even individuals become evident. Within CONAIE, argues Moreno Yáñez (1992) there are several base organizations that participated in *el levantamiento*, but do not agree in many of the positions taken by the top leadership at the national level. Furthermore, some members of the leadership are now being accused of corruption and of pursuing personal gain (Hoy, July 3 2003).

¹⁸ After the break of CONAIE with the government, L.U. publicly apologized to the nation for what in her words was “*hacerles votar por ese animal*.” (“make the people vote for this animal) in reference to the support the indigenous movement gave to the current President. (El Universo, December 15 2003).

The Indian leadership could fall into what Rappaport (2003) calls the “innappropriate other.” A group of highly educated individuals, who call themselves subalterns only to underscore their difference and use their indianness as a political platform. They constantly play the insider/outsider role. Parallel to the “borderline identity”¹⁹ Anzaldua coined to refer to the Mexican population divided by U.S. border, inhabiting two worlds, two languages, never quite at home. In the case of the Indian intellectuals, they openly display what they conceive to be their “true” identity, the Indian, and they stress the fact that they indeed are at home wherever they go. Their identity, in this case, is their home. The intellectual leadership has the presence “of both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider” (Rappaport 2003: 318). They are a continuous reminder of their difference, and at the same time of their equality in their lack of subordination to the dominant. Hence, they hold the advantage of belonging to more than one realm in the social, financial, and, I would venture to say, even ethnic. As opposed to the majority of the population they represent, they do not carry in their bodies the imprint of the Indian. Their image is closer to that of the glorious Incas of the past than to the dirty, poor, illiterate, and rural Indian that still makes up a high percentage of this population in the highlands (Méndez 1996). Hence, as Gayatri Spivak would argue, the subaltern remains silent. The leadership of the movement is hardly a true representative of the subaltern. Due to the leaders’ western tuned discourse, it could be argued that they continue to perform an act of ventriloquism, to recall Guerrero’s term. Though I do not completely disagree with Spivak on this point, limiting this issue solely to sovereignty of discourse minimizes the scope and the transcendence of the indigenous

¹⁹ For an extended explanation of the notion of “borderline identity”, refer to Moraga and Anzaldua (eds.), 2002.

movement, and of how it has forever altered the Indian *imaginado* in the *imageros*' perception in Andean Ecuador.

With my findings at hand, and many questions that refused to find a proper answer in my head, or the texts I had read, I sat down with Fernando García, FLACSO researcher and Director for the Ethnic Studies Masters Program at that institution. He coincided with my view that the indigenous movement was not a phenomenon that suddenly appeared in the *levantamiento*, or shortly before it, but spoke of a process more than just a sequence of events prior to it. He referred to this process using the Quichua word *Pachakutik*, which, he stated, has no exact translation to Spanish, but can be understood to mean the closing of one era and the opening or “rebirth” of another. He explained that this name, given to the Indian founded political party is charged with symbolism (as expressed also by A.K.). García pointed out that the heterogeneity I had found among the leaders interviewed had a lot to do with a difference in the colonizing process. There were different structures of domination in the Coast and the highlands, as well than in the northern vs. central Andes.²⁰ Regarding the notion of language, he believes, as I do, that Spanish, in this case the dominant's language is the only available medium to legitimize the Indians' claims and to add to the ongoing debate. There is no other way. He emphasized though that sovereignty of language is not really the issue, or even heterogeneity of identities, a notion that further intrigued me. García, who has dedicated many years of research to ethnicity and the indigenous movement, believes that Indians have an alternate concept of how development and modernity affects their life

²⁰ Refer to Salomon, 1986.

and identity. To further argue this point, he referred to an ongoing study by one of his graduate students (himself an Indian) on this issue.

Tienen (los Indios) una concepción de la vida como la del tronco de un árbol. Pacha (the Indian notion of land as essential to life, VGT) es el centro del árbol, y los elementos occidentales de desarrollo y modernismo son algo así como insertos en este árbol. Utilizan de la cultural occidental lo que piensan que puede servir y germinar. No desechan todo lo occidental, tampoco utilizan solo lo indígena, y el árbol híbrido sigue creciendo, sin perder la savia. Diferente, pero conservando su esencia.²¹

For the Quichua Indian population, regardless of internal differences, García believes, the end product of this process is “the good life,” but not in a western sense. For them, the good life is a three dimensional process: To have peace with nature, peace with the community, and internal peace. He presented an example of this notion of harmony implied in the good life. Inside Indian *comunas*, the justice system applied is a way to restore this harmony. This is the most important outcome of justice. An individual is punished, there is a ritual involved in the punishing process, he pointed out, but the most important outcome is not the punishment, it is the incorporation of the individual back to the *comuna*, this is their logic, and is quite different from our (western) notion of justice. He added that there has been some political use of this notion by some highland *comunas*. In the highlands, García explained, there were no lynchings as part of the justice system. Lynchings were common in the Amazon region. Now there have been some instances of lynching in the highlands, with claims of traditional Indian application of justice. “It can become a political tool.”

²¹ “They have (the Indians) a concept of what life is, similar to that of a tree trunk. Pacha is the center of this tree, and western elements of development and modernity are something like inserts put in the tree. They use of the western culture what can be used and sprout. They don’t reject everything western, nor do

García believes in an ethnic border that separates the notion of production of knowledge in a western sense, and in an Indian sense. However, he strongly suggests that this border, as I have argued through this study, is not rigid, nor closed and absolute. He attributes that one of the successes of the indigenous movement has to do with the fact that the movement has put forward an ethnic agenda, among other issues, but has distanced itself from leftist organizations. The left, García believes, never quite understood that ethnicity could be such a powerful motivator, since for the left it was always secondary to class issues. The notion of class over ethnicity was an important factor that motivated mestizo leftist leaders to continually speak for the Indians; the left failed to realize that Indians needed no interpreters to express their ethnic related claims. Also as suggested in this study, García pointed out to historical developments as key in the process of appropriation of tactics, discourses, that have aided in the Indian access to spaces of power: Evangelization programs, developmental programs, and migration have been critical factors in strengthening the ethnic agenda. Indians, he explained, became experts in navigating the white/mestizo world. The white/mestizo never achieved that skill with the Indians. Finally he pointed out to an aspect I had overlooked. He is a strong believer that endogamy, within Indian *comunas*, acts as a key feature of ethnic identity. “That a non-Indian woman enters an Indian *comuna* is unthinkable. There is a case of an important leader, well educated and middle class, who married a foreigner. It took him ten years of negotiations with his *comuna* to have her accepted.” He further explained this is in the more rural, closed *comunas*. In more urban spaces, intermarriage is becoming more common. He believes it is a way to maintain the *comuna*’s internal

they use only what is considered indigenous, and this hybrid tree continues to grow without losing its fundamental nature. Different, but maintaining its essence.”

cohesion. I am left thinking how much more research needs to be done. I have only gotten a very small sample of a deep and continuous process.

Conclusions

The homogenous identity of Indians embraced by the movement, despite proving to be a productive political strategy, hides the many heterogeneous identities, as well as class divisions within Indian populations, as among its leaders. The leaders speak as subalterns, but they hardly fit this description, besides their conspicuous attire. They are well educated (many in the U.S. and Europe), are middle class and above, and hold prestigious jobs within the government and in several internationally funded organizations. But, as expressed by the opinions of the leaders presented here, there are clear differences in opinion, political positioning and ways in which the movement should operate. Furthermore, there is a clear fear, as expressed by one of the leaders, that the top leadership is being co-opted by the allure of power. On the other hand, it is also clear that the intellectual leadership has been able, in my view, because of this “new” Indian image, to access political spaces that have transformed the ethnicity of power, and this, I believe, is probably one of the movement’s greatest accomplishments. Indians, represented by their eloquent, educated, “inappropriate others” leaders, have gone from a restricted space of action and resistance, to an open political and strong electorate. The series of ambiguities that have emerged along this process, and that have been presented here, remain a challenge far beyond the scope of this study. However, a question remains. How can a subaltern population be capable of being acknowledged by the dominant, if it is not as a unified, homogenous, threatening group, under one discourse?

More research and how events relating to the indigenous movement as well as to global processes unravel in the next few years will help better address this question

CHAPTER 5 FINAL THOUGHTS, NEW CHALLENGES

I end my study with an overwhelming feeling of “unfinished business.” Perhaps due to the nature of the topics being argued here. Identity, ethnicity, and the discourse surrounding these constructions are indeed works in progress. The only evidence that can be argued is precisely the obvious dynamism and elasticity that characterizes these terms, making them unclosed, borderless, and at many times ambiguous analytical tools. And indeed, it is the notion of fluidity as key in ethnic identity construction what has been pointed out throughout this study. I have focused on the discursive frameworks that informed the construction of an Indian identity in Andean Ecuador, during the last few decades, from an alternate perspective; from a position that comes from shifting centers a bit, in order to allow the subaltern emerge as the subject of his/her own history. I have argued for a prevailing subaltern presence, which continually proposes and constructs alternate identities to the ones being imposed (or are attempted to be imposed) by the dominant population; a subaltern that responds and resists, while at the same time reaffirms his/her subordinate status and difference vis-à-vis the dominant population, as a space of resistance. It is the undemocratic nature of this dialogue that stands as a continual source for resistance and contestation, to recall Chakrabarty. I have argued for the presence of an Indian subaltern who has influenced the dominant’s decision-making process, not as the a-political native who existed outside of history, as the Indian had been historically constructed by the white *imaginero*; but rather as an active agent of the many local histories, memories, and plurality of relations that in fact write history.

In this study I have analyzed hacienda politics, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the many aspects surrounding the *patrón-peón* relationship, characterized by its unequal yet symbiotic nature. It is within this give-and-take, inherent to every relation of power, in which a subaltern as subject can emerge. The Indians, during the hacienda era, as argued in this study, were engaged in a relationship of resistance, contestation, and reaffirmation with the *patrón*. Through an array of practices, perceived, or imagined as I propose, by the white landowner as belonging to the native, millenarian, and unchanging realm of the Indian identity, the *peones* continually and simultaneously resisted the identity being imposed on them, while reaffirmed their condition of subordination. Moreover, the *patrón-peón* relationship is now understood as one of a paternalistic nature on the *patrón's* side, much more than one of exploitation and brutality. Indians working in the hacienda, as argued by the new historiography, were better off than free Indians. In this study, I have not argued against the existence of brutality and oppression during the hacienda regime. What I have suggested is that if we focus solely on the oppressive side of the relationship, the current ethnic movement in which the subaltern emerges as an active political agent with clear awareness of his/her condition as citizen, would be almost impossible to understand.

This study has analyzed some aspects that help understand Indian practices as being more of a political nature than has been accepted by the dominant elite who systematically rejected Indian actions as apolitical, uncivilized, and ignorant, in their construction of the Indian “other” as discourse. The hacienda *peones* continually engaged in practices such as petty theft, symbolic rituals, and even gossip about the *patrón*, which went unchecked by the white landowner as anything more than the

behavior of a different and distant culture. I have argued that these practices far from belonging to the behavior of a millenarian, unchanging, and backward Indian, were in fact politically motivated, and influenced outcomes that, in many cases, favored the subalterns' agenda. Moreover, these practices allowed the Indian to construct an alternate identity for him/herself, a meeting point where the "us" met the "they" in a give-and-take nature of hacienda politics. It is this area where identities meet, clash, resist, and dialogue with the *patrón*, in a fluid and elastic process of negotiation and resistance; of recognition and reaffirmation; and of contestation and proposal of alternate identities. Though hacienda politics lacked an organization outside the hacienda borders, the resistance practices in which *peones* were involved, hints to an Indian identity with a degree of political awareness, with notions of organizational practices and negotiating techniques. These aspects would continue to become more sophisticated during the following decades, with increased organizational ability, elaborate demands for land, sovereignty, and representation, and profound political awareness. All these characteristics are part of the new Indian identity that emerged during the last decade, but that need to be understood from an alternate historical perspective that, as argued here, points to a subaltern engaged in resistance and politics during, and even before the hacienda era.

The discourse proposed by the Indian subaltern had a definite impact in the result of the land reform process of the 60's. The discourse put forward by the government and the elite pointed to the modernization of the agrarian sector as the reason behind this reform. I have argued for the presence of a subaltern discourse that had much to do with why and how the Agrarian Reform law was instituted. Massive land sieges, Indian

mobilizations that counted in the thousands, and a pervasive fear by many landowners of an imminent “threat from below” influenced the outcome of this process. Many *hacendados* distributed the land among the *huasipungueros* years before the law was even enacted. These events contradict the notion of a monolithic, vertical discourse of modernization as the sole reason behind the Agrarian Reform Law. Moreover, it points to a pervasive subaltern presence that stand against the dominant discourse of the hacienda time in which the *hacendados* had all the power and could manipulate, exploit, and impose their views on the Indians at will. Even if the land reform did not alter much land tenure, as part of the unequal weight in the expected outcome of the dialogue between the dominant and the subaltern, it did point out, as I argue, to a pervasive subaltern discourse that contested and resisted the dominant’s discourse, problematizing the notion that the government position went unchallenged. While the Agrarian Reform process did not alter land tenure distribution, it did alter the relations of production in the Ecuadorian highlands, which in turn enabled the emergence of a hybrid ethnic identity. Many of the landless Indians forced to migrate to urban centers, far from becoming assimilated to the white/mestizo culture, created a whole new way to define being Indian. A more urban-attuned Indian, better equipped to navigate the mestizo system, but with a reinforced sense of ethnicity emerged, much to the dismay of the integrationist efforts of the state. The Indian subaltern defined being modern in a manner that challenged the prevailing dichotomized notion of the elites, as argued in this study. The Indians proved that one could be modern and non-white; rural and urban; and become wealthy while remaining Indian. The urban self financially supported the rural, while the latter provided a sense of belonging and security to the former. All these notions were necessarily

exclusionary of each other within the elite's ethnocentric, enlightenment- fashioned discursive framework. However, the new hybrid ethnic identity, as I propose, does not emerge without its share of ambiguities and gray areas. A sector of this wealthy, modern new Indian, influenced by western binary conceptions of modernity, views the more rural sector of the populations, those who don't migrate and remain rural, as being uncivilized and backward. At the same time, the new Indian continues to stress their ethnicity, however defined, underscoring the dynamism of its definition and the fluidity of its conception.

The emergence of a Protestant identity in the Ecuadorian highlands, as well as the *desarrollista* programs that were implemented during the mid decades of the twentieth century, proved to be, once again, tools of ethnic resurgence and reaffirmation. I argue that the Andean Mission albeit it failed in its agenda, provided training of Indian leaders who would later emerge as key actors in the current indigenous movement. Likewise, the conversion of Indians in the region of Chimborazo to Protestantism, proved to be a powerful source of a new sense of ethnic identity. Indians found a whole new way to express their identity and raise their voice that albeit within a Protestant context, was very much an Indian voice, with a strengthened notion of ethnicity.

This new way of being Indian, which stands at the heart of the current movement, has nonetheless produced ambiguities that, as I propose, stand as challenges that will have to be dealt with by the intellectual leadership of the current movement. Although the notion of a homogenized Indian identity has proven beneficial as a political platform that has helped position the Indian at the center of the Ecuadorian political arena, underneath this "generic, homogenous Indian" many heterogeneous identities indeed

emerge. Thus, while the intellectual leadership of the movement has successfully created a political discourse of a unified Indian identity, issues of class, regions, and even prejudice among the different nationalities emerge, as presented in the interviews with key intellectuals of the movement. While some of the leaders point to a more open dialogue among Ecuadorians in the search for an intercultural nation, others view the top leadership of the movement as getting co-opted by the alluring notion of power, and a more personal agenda in mind. The result of the ongoing debate, as I point out, would emerge with the unfolding of events during the next few years.

However, if the colonizer and the colonized interpenetrated each other's notions and beliefs, in the unequal dialogue of domination and resistance, as I have argued throughout this study, how can the subaltern not be influenced by the notion of hegemony as a source of strength? After all, it is this very notion that stands at the heart of the construction of an "imagined" mestizo nation-state. The indigenous movement of Ecuador would have never been able to achieve the undisputable space of power in the political arena of the country it has achieved, within a heterogeneous ethnic identity. So, although the value of recognizing heterogeneities in the history writing process must be acknowledged, it is the political power of an "imagined" unified Indian what makes it possible.

The *levantamiento* of June 1990, within the alternate context analyzed in this study is part of a process in the ongoing dialogue of negotiation of identities. It represented the "coming out" of the Indian population into national politics, though, as argued, the subaltern influenced political processes and was an actor in the decision making process all along. The *levantamiento* legitimized, in the eyes of the white

imaginero the Indian political actor, and positioned the subaltern in the public, visible, and until then white official political arena.

I cannot end this study without pointing to the many limitations of this project. Perhaps due to my own subjectivities, product of my construction of self who must have an image of the “other” on which to reflect, I, as an Ecuadorian woman, member of the elite, have entered this project as an *imaginero*. I am the result of allegiances to class and ethnic identities, and therefore perceive and look at the Indian subaltern from a predefined perspective. Thus, this makes me an active agent of the undemocratic dialogue between dominant and dominated in which the results are, to a degree, predetermined. The generic, homogenous Indian image that has been used as a successful political tool by the intellectual leaders of the indigenous movement has remained vivid in my imagination for many years, with little room for the heterogeneities it entails, and the fractions inherent to every identity. Identities are constructions that make them by nature porous, elastic, and fluid. They respond to social, political, and historic conjunctures, and yet it has taken, in my case, years of study to begin to perceive the Indian identity in this light, and not as fixed and static. I leave this study, as a scholar, with the uncomfortable feeling that I have only gotten a small glimpse into a profound and ongoing process, and as a human being, with the certainty that in order to deconstruct discourses and images, one must necessarily deconstruct parts of the self as well. Therefore, I cannot leave this project since I have become a part of it. This, then, is not an end, only a pause.

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