Locating the "Indian Problem"

Community, Nationality, and Contradiction in Ecuadorian Indigenous Politics

by
José Antonio Lucero

José Carlos Mariátegui began a justly famous essay by insisting that Peru's "Indian problem" was fundamentally a problem of economics rather than one of politics, law, race, culture, or morality. "The indigenous question arises from our economy. It has its roots in the property regime of land" (Mariátegui, 1979 [1928]: 35). Theorists who argued otherwise, he warned, were "doomed to absolute discredit." Interestingly, the essay that began with a Peruvian economic "problem" closed with a solution that was relevant far beyond Peru and that involved an awareness not only of economics but also of politics, identity, and ideology (1979 [1928]: 45, my emphasis):[1]

> *The solution to the Indian problem must be a social solution. Its makers must be the Indians themselves*. This conceptualization leads us to view the meeting of indigenous congresses as a historic feat. The indigenous congresses, debased in the past years by bureaucratism, do not yet represent a course of action, but their first meetings signaled a route that linked Indians from various regions. *The Indians lack national linkages. Their protests have always been regional*. This has contributed, in large, part to their abatement. A people of four million, *conscious of its size*, never despairs about its future. The same four million, while they remain an inorganic mass, a dispersed crowd, are incapable of deciding their historical direction.

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This lesson has not been lost on contemporary indigenous activists in Ecuador. Far from an "inorganic mass," Ecuadorian indigenous peoples have developed national (and international) linkages in the development of arguably the most powerful indigenous movement in the continent, a movement that has placed collective rights in the constitution and major obstacles in the way of neoliberal economic reform. This article does not attempt to review the important and complex rise of indigenous movements in Ecuador, but it does try to continue the line of inquiry with which Mariátegui concluded. Through a comparison of indigenous "communities" and "nationalities," I hope to contribute to our understanding of the politics of identity and organization in both the abatement and the achievements of indigenous protest in modern Ecuador.

This article compares the ways in which the models and discourses of indigenous "community" and "nationality" have linked Indians to state institutions during two critical moments in the history of state-Indian relations, the late 1930s and the late 1990s. Conceptually, the units of community and nationality represent the two "unifying poles" of contemporary indigenous politics that connect movements to local indigenous spaces (*comunidades*) and aim toward projects of supracommunal indigenous autonomy (*nacionalidades*) (Ibarra, 1999: 83). Historically, the late 1930s and the late 1990s represent two important and contrasting critical junctures in the long and complex history of indigenous-state relations.[2] First, both periods represent political openings during which indigenous people are to some extent incorporated into national politics after significant periods of social unrest. Second, both periods leave clear political and cultural legacies through the rise and institutionalization of particular kinds of hegemonic indigenous collectivities, community in the 1930s and nationality in the 1990s.[3] Third, the two periods involved different types of incorporation, the 1930s incorporation "from above" on corporatist terms set by the state, and the 1990s forced incorporation "from below" with terms coming from new indigenous social movements. The contrasting stories of state-led "community building" and indigenous constructions of "nationalities" help shed light on a central question in the development of national indigenous social movements: how localized and regionalized indigenous populations, over time, converge into a unified, visible, and representable national indigenous political actor (Guerrero, 2000). While exploring the different political outcomes of corporatist communities (in the 1930s) and defiant nationalities (in the 1990s), this comparison also problematizes the neat distinction between resistance and domination. Paradoxically, the unintended consequences of community and nationality formation suggest that military governments can help create spaces for contestation while social movements can reproduce the patterns of

dominant power. The conceptual and historical comparison developed below illustrates how the double-edged terms of politics provide hope in situations of state domination and encourage critical reflection in times of social movement success.

FRAMEWORKS: THEORIES AND HISTORIES OF POLITICS IN FRAGMENTED STATES

Before turning to this comparison, it is worth briefly describing the theoretical understandings that guide this study. Focusing as it does on resistance and domination, it comes as little surprise that it takes a Gramscian view of community building and contention. Gramscian cultural analysis is helpful in illustrating the role that the terms of political discourse play in hegemonic processes of domination and resistance. Rather than drawing on Gramscian-inspired studies far beyond the "linguistic turn," this article (like García's also in this issue) builds on the historically grounded analysis of William Roseberry in examining the hegemonic processes through which "the forms and languages of protest or resistance must adopt the forms and languages of domination in order to be registered or heard" (1996: 81). Instead of viewing indigenous communities and nationalities as either primordial collectivities or ahistorical discursive formations, Roseberry's work leads us to investigate how these units and "the images and the movements they inspire are products and responses to particular forces, structures, and events" (1996: 83). Moreover, by calling attention to the articulation of various political units (communities, nationalities, states), this line of inquiry also helps explain how politics is structured among a "people divided by a history that blends cultural and racial diversity into relationships of unequal power" (Stern, 1992: 2–3).

Although almost all the states of the Americas have formally adopted liberal, representative forms of government that ostensibly connect the "people" to the "state," the uneven political landscapes of actually existing democracies require structures of political representation to connect various kinds of political subjects to various kinds of political communities. The empirical unevenness of representation is especially striking in the context of Andean political histories, in which the transitions from colonial to republican political systems were far from clean breaks. For much of the republican period in Latin America, indigenous people remained neocolonial subjects without citizenship rights. However, they were never beyond the politics of representation, understood as a set of cultural and political processes that make visible, institutionalize, and articulate certain kinds of political subjects and communities.[4] Rather, indigenous peoples were part of hybrid

political systems constituted by democratic and nondemocratic representative institutions. Consequently, rather than privilege liberal, corporatist, or any other model of representation, this article asks more open-ended questions: How were "Indians" spoken for in particular historical circumstances? What ideas, identities, and relationships were constructed and institutionalized, and how did they link political subjects with larger political communities? As we move toward providing an answer to these questions, we should note that political representation starts long before we think about elections or voting; it occurs also in the various ways we order and classify land, territories, and regions. This view of representation, then, comes very close to the concerns of Mariátegui and Gramsci.

First, the histories of indigenous movements, as Mariátegui stressed, are unintelligible apart from the history of land. The most important rural institution of the colonial and republican periods was the hacienda, the large landed estate of the highlands. More than a mode of agricultural production, the hacienda was also a political institution that provided the incipient Ecuadorian state with the answer to a vexing problem: how to keep a colonial political economy functioning in ostensibly republican and liberal times. While the independent, liberal Ecuadorian republic no longer legally recognized "Indians" as a fiscal and legal category (as the colonial state had done), local landed elites along with local church and town officials accepted the tacit invitation of the national state to take charge of the indigenous populations. As Andrés Guerrero (1993; 1994; 2000) has shown, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "ethnic administration" in Ecuador was effectively localized and virtually privatized as hacendados, the church, and other local powers were essentially given charge of "their" Indians. As we will see below, the legislation that recognized the legal standing of indigenous communities in 1937 explicitly left untouched this system of ethnic administration by excluding haciendas and their sizable indigenous labor force from the reach of the Ley de Comunas.

The agrarian reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, however, finally undermined the system of ethnic administration. To claim the benefits of agrarian reform, indigenous people reorganized and legalized their communities through the state. Indeed, while many of the communities organized in the wake of the 1937 law analyzed below, it was during the years of agrarian reform that most communities legally came into existence (Zamosc, 1994: 54). Agrarian reforms helped move the "Indian problem" from the semiprivate sphere of ethnic administration to a national public sphere in which national development plans were debated and nationwide protests were planned. In the 1990s, concern with rural development intensified in the face of neoliberal policies that eliminated subsidies and social spending.

However, concerns over the land were no longer restricted to familiar ones of subsistence and production ("la tierra es de quien la trabaja") but also linked to political questions of the autonomy of indigenous "territories."[5]

Second, as Gramsci knew, regional and other subnational dynamics are crucial in the elaboration of hegemonic and counterhegemonic projects (Gramsci, 1971 [1949]; Roseberry, 1996). The "regional question" in Ecuador has usually been focused on coastal Guayaquil and highland Quito as the respective economic and political poles of national life. For indigenous politics, political centers of gravity are located in the Andean highlands and the Amazonian lowlands. It is important to note that Andean and Amazonian systems of ethnic administration have very distinct histories. The "Indian question" was, for most of the republican period, itself a question of the highlands, where the majority of indigenous people lived in Ecuador. While indigenous "tribes" inhabited the tropical lowlands, until the late twentieth century the dispersed populations were of relatively little concern to national elites. The state began to pay more attention to the Amazon region when the Amazon became a source of important natural resources and the site of border conflicts with neighboring Peru. From these conflicts emerged the now familiar, if misleading, nationalist slogan: "Ecuador is, has been, and will always be an Amazonian country." In the second half of the twentieth century, the state encouraged missionaries to create settlements of Amazonian groups like the Shuar not as *comunas* but as "centers" for taming and civilizing the "savages" and "cannibals" of the Oriente (Karakras, 2001). More will be said about regional differences, but for now it suffices to say that the development of national indigenous social movements involves the construction and negotiation of local, regional, and national indigenous spaces.

COMMUNITIES, CORPORATISM, AND THE LEY DE COMUNAS OF 1937

We begin with the ordering and classifying of Ecuador in the 1930s, because it is at this point that many begin the story of the "return of the Indian" (Albó, 1991) to Ecuadorian politics.[6] Luis Macas, in his presentation to the 1998 Latin American Studies Association meeting, provides a familiar, if not the standard, trajectory for the movement: the contemporary indigenous movement grew steadily from the reconsolidation of indigenous community organizing made possible by the Ley de Comunas of 1937 to supracommunal association in the 1960s and 1970s and then, finally, with the crises of state and economy in the late 1980s and 1990s, to national and international organizational activity and agitation. The historical record is much

more complicated and jagged, varying greatly from place to place (see, e.g., Becker, 1997; 1999; Figueroa, 1996–1997), but Macas's description echoes a common theme of new indigenous representation: there exist local spaces where Indians have long practiced their own ways of life, production, and justice—*sus usos y costumbres*. "Community" retains its privileged position as the building block of the movement in movement discourse. José Maria Cabascango, a contemporary national indigenous leader (quoted in Figueroa, 1996–1997: 209), makes the point:

> The principle of community, of reciprocity, of solidarity that has existed in the community is a fundamental aspect [of the indigenous movement]. That is, in our heads is placed that principle which will not be erased by colonialism, external influences, or the policies of acculturation and integration that the state pursues against the indigenous *pueblos*. We have maintained as a community this organizational strength.

Thus, it is worth asking how this "principle of community" was "placed in" anyone's "head" in the first place. And it is here that 1937 and new efforts to reimagine the place of Indians are crucial. The 1937 Ley de Comunas and accompanying Estatutos Orgánicos were important turning points in the history of state-Indian relations.

In the 1930s, an increasingly autonomous, military-controlled state recognized the need to respond to the growing number of rural conflicts in many highland communities especially in the northern Sierra (Ramón, 1993; Becker, 1997). In addition, an emerging liberal and modernist elite discourse emphasized the need for an internal market and an end to "feudal" economic relations in the countryside. The previous decades had seen the elimination of the *diezmo* (a "tax" that went to the Church) and the formal abolition of the debt-peonage labor system of *concertaje*.[7]

These modernizing discourses sometimes had regional accents. Coastal export-sector elites, already in competition for national political power with the sierra landed class, used the ideas of modernization as a way to challenge the local power base of *serrano* elites. In nineteenth-century Ecuador the emergence of two distinct regional elites—the cacao-exporting oligarchy on the coast and the landed sierra elite—and the competition between them helps explain the push by coastal elites for "progressive" legislation that helped Indians escape the debt-peonage system of the haciendas. Coastal industries were chronically short of labor and saw the weakening of hacienda domination as important to freeing-up Indian labor (see Clark, 1997; Figueroa, 1996–1997). The push to loosen highland control over indigenous labor, combined with the lingering pessimistic images of the "disgraced

Indian race," generated new legislative "protection" for Indians. The Ley de Comunas was itself an expression of such "protective" legislation, but it was hardly a direct attack on haciendas. Rather, it "came to serve as a compromise between the concessions that were still given to large landowners and the project of *indigenistas* who, worried about the experience of the Mexican revolution, saw in the agrarian conditions the ferment of social conflict" (Figueroa, 1996–1997: 198). If we think about representation as the construction of political subjects and their inclusion in political communities, the Ley de Comunas is instructive.

The 1937 law recognized that there existed human settlements (such as *comunidades campesinas*) that were not incorporated into the administrative divisions of the Ecuadorian state or "nationality." Accordingly, with the goal of promoting the "social development of these communities" and recognizing their "rights and obligations," the law created the legal category of *comuna* with which rural communities of 50 people or more could obtain legal recognition (*personería jurídica*). The measure presented the possibility of a new degree of political and economic autonomy for "free" indigenous communities, albeit within an emerging corporatist state structure.[8] The law allowed for comuneros to elect their own local governments (*cabildos*) and to hold property collectively. Comunas were linked institutionally to local and central state structures: they were linked to the local administration of the *parroquia* and *teniente político* but also could appeal directly to the Ministry of Social Welfare for arbitration of conflicts.

In recognizing comunas the state (not surprisingly) did not intend to provide a permanent legal basis for indigenous community building. To the contrary, comunas were simply a way station on the road to a more "rational" form of production, the cooperative. While Article 1 of the Legal Statute of December 1937 recognizes the "right [of] campesino communities to exist and develop socially and economically under the protection of the state," Article 3 of the same statute declares that the government will adopt "the necessary means to transform the communities into cooperatives for production." As one indigenista intellectual and high-ranking bureaucrat made clear at the time, the national project of the Ecuadorian state was to "obtain the kind of Indian that suits us" ("obtener el tipo de indio que nos conviene") (A. M. Paredes, quoted in Guerrero, 1993).[9] Yet, it is remarkable that the forms and language of community were never displaced by the modernizing models of cooperatives. According to 1993 Ministry of Agriculture data, comunas represented 64.2 percent of the local organizations in indigenous areas of highland Ecuador while cooperatives represented 16 percent (Zamosc, 1995: 70).

Even without a strong move toward cooperatives, there were early indications that legal protection of communities might still result in the "kind of Indian" that suited the state and liberal indigenista elites. The most representative voice of Ecuadorian indigenismo was Pío Jaramillo Alvarado (1980 [1922]: 150), who wrote in the 1920s about the virtues of the "free communities" that were the target of the Ley de Comunas:

> The free *comunero* [as opposed to the *indio concertado*] is a good worker, well-fed, dresses neatly [*con aseo*], knows how to defend his rights before the usurpation of neighboring hacendados, recovers abandoned zones of cultivation, utilizes irrigation, constitutes the nucleus of the demand for the agrarian rights of the Indians, and organizes strikes . . . and for all these characteristics the hacendado does not look well upon the comunero and propagates the need to divide the territories that these Indians occupy.

Thus these free spaces had to be protected and perhaps someday, when the semifeudal forces waned, even expanded. In Jaramillo's passage, representative of the Ecuadorian liberal imagination, the "community," free of hacendado domination, is the space in which Indians can be well-fed, clean, productive, rights-bearing, in short, "modern" political subjects.

To conclude this part of our comparative exploration, I would suggest that the elaboration of the Ley de Comunas highlights important aspects of the violent rhythms of domination and resistance in Latin America. First, this legislation reflects a pattern familiar to students of Latin America in which the incorporation of popular sectors follows a period of social unrest. Since Bolívar, liberal Enlightenment ideas of equality and liberty have been injected selectively and cautiously into situations of dramatically unequal power relations. Uprisings and revolutions provoked nightmares in the criollo elite imagination of subaltern sectors waiting like volcanoes to erupt, making even *libertadores* worried about giving the masses too much freedom.[10] This pattern of revolution and conservative liberal state building does not play out only within the boundaries of nation-states. Local elites were (and are) very aware of the dangers "in the neighborhood." The specter of slave revolt in Haiti in 1791 weighed like a nightmare on the conservative criollo revolutionaries who led the Wars of Independence. The bloody decade-long Mexican Revolution and its aftermath informed the thinking of legislators in Ecuador and throughout the Americas in the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the Cuban Revolution in 1959 played an important role in stimulating the waves of agrarian reform in the Andes. As a kind of "safety-valve" system of representation, corporatist arrangements have long been important for the goal of social control.[11] Corporatist structures of

mediation like those created by the Ley de Comunas are a way of quelling dissent and are formed in the context of international events, political economic currents, and shifting constellations of national and local forces.

Second, the Ley de Comunas was not only a response to the conflict on haciendas and events in Mexico but also a projection of certain elite images of the Indian. The protective legislation that began in the 1920s and whose last expression was the law of 1937 had its roots in conservative and liberal thinking. The conservative National Society of Agriculture, while recognizing the need for the development of an internal market, argued that the coercive mechanisms that governed rural relations were necessary because the "Indian did not have the necessary level of morality and culture" to really "participate in his rights and duties." Accordingly, a spokesman for the Society (quoted in Figueroa, 1996–1997: 194) explained in 1918 that "the Indian problem is more than a legal problem, it is a matter of moral and intellectual culture, and we should not fail to improve the legislation, adding whatever is needed. We should educate and enlighten him [the Indian] to the extent appropriate to his current conditions and capabilities." We should not be surprised that the same paternalistic tone is echoed by the 1937 law's opening considerations identifying its goal as the "intellectual, moral, and material improvement" of community members. Moreover, reflecting the belief that landed elites often provided the pedagogical push needed, the law applied only to "free" settlements not linked to repressive (im)moral economies of haciendas.

Finally, it may be helpful to anticipate our jump to the present by taking note that the "community" that is often invoked by contemporary indigenous activists is a very different construct from the legal "community" of the 1930s. It is still shot through with hopes for modernity, but in the language of late-twentieth-century academics and Indian activists "community" is the terrain of tradition and resistance. Authors such as Galo Ramón (1993) and José Sánchez Parga (1992) write of communities in the language of Pierre Clastres, as an example of society against the state, converting what was once a state-sanctioned space for control into sites for the production of alternative logics and practices that go against the grain of dominant Western rationalities (Figueroa, 1996–1997). However, in the legislation of the 1930s, the community was not an Indian political subject or part of a project of resistance but a place—a proper and safe place—for the Indian problem. As Clark suggests (1998: 393), in the Ecuador of the 1930s and 1940s, an autonomous Indian project was "literally unthinkable." This would only become publicly "thinkable, rupturing widespread images of Ecuadorian Indians as passive elements of the nation, in the 1990s."

NATIONALITIES AND CODENPE

I would like to move now to that moment that Clark mentions— the dramatic break with what Guerrero (1994) calls "ventriloquist representation," when Indians, as Mariátegui had insisted, finally speak for "themselves." While indigenous organizing has a long history, it is not until the 1990s that one organization more than any other, the Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador—CONAIE), steps out of the shadows of leftist and Church organizational efforts and speaks as an independent and representative indigenous actor. The CONAIE-led massive marches, blockades, and protests that became known as the June 1990 uprising marked the dramatic return of indigenous people to the national stage of the political scene (see Almeida et al., 1991; 1993; CONAIE, 1998; León, 1994; Zamosc, 1994). Over the span of a decade, CONAIE has become the most important social movement organization in the country. Much of its organizational strength comes from a remarkable accomplishment: the confederation of local, provincial, and regional indigenous organizations of Ecuador's coast, highland, and Amazon regions. Created in 1986 by the union of the two largest indigenous confederations, Ecuador Runacuna Riccharmarishun (The Awakening of the Ecuadorian Indians—ECUARUNARI) in the highlands and the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (the Confederation of Amazonian Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador—CONFENIAE) in the lowland regions, CONAIE marked the national convergence of what were previously parallel regional organizational trajectories. With strong communal, provincial, and regional linkages, CONAIE has the capacity to mobilize its bases as do few other social movement organizations in the country or, arguably, the continent.

It is important to stress that CONAIE is hardly the first national indigenous organization in Ecuador and that other organizations continue to advance different forms of *indianidad*.[12] In this interplay of representations, some ideas win out over others and, occasionally, get institutionalized, and it is here that the hegemony of CONAIE in setting the terms for indigenous representation is most striking.[13] The most important idea advanced and institutionalized by CONAIE is the redefinition of modern indigenous groups as *nacionalidades*. In its very name we find another important sign of Ecuadorian peculiarity. Ecuador is the only country in Latin America in which indigenous organizations have made significant progress in institutionalizing the unit and idea of indigenous "nationality."

Initially, one suspects that this is a concept curiously out of place. Problems of difference in the Americas have usually been described in terms of

race, caste, class, or "culture" (Wade, 1997), rarely in the language of nationalities.[14] On the other side of the Atlantic, nationality has long been a common category. Indigenous leaders acknowledge European influences (Maldonado, 1992; interview, Quito, November 12, 1998; Ampam Karakras, interview, February 12, 1998) but point out that the idea of nationalities was not imposed or uncritically imported but consciously selected (1) to replace several competing home-grown pejorative terms (e.g., *jívaros, colorados, aucas*) and (2) to describe a particular sociopolitical situation (Karakras, 1990: 6):

> In the face of such confusion [over names], we, the Indian organizations, the Indian *pueblos*, want to give ourselves our own names, maintain our identity, our personality. And to the extent that we want to encompass the different Indian pueblos, whatever their particular historical development . . . we have opted for the term of Indian nationalities. This resolution has been carefully considered and obeys no outside influence. Rather, we understand that the category "nationality" expresses the economic, political, cultural, and linguistic aspects of our pueblos; it situates us in national and international life.

This remarkable passage makes clear some of the political and social tasks performed by "nationality." First, the multiplicity of indigenous identities and labels simply would not do for the political task of organizing a national social movement. One term had to be capacious enough to accommodate specific differences and reflect a broader political project. Second, that broader political project explodes the idea of a single homogeneous Ecuadorian nation by proposing that, as in other parts of the world, a state could still be a single state and leave room for different languages, cultures, and economies (see Ibarra, 1999; Sánchez Parga, 1992; Ayala Mora, 1992; Maldonado, 1992; Ramón and Barahona, 1993). Finally, it is worth noting that the "we" that Karakras identifies are the *organizations* and the *pueblos*. Nationality was chosen not to erase previously legitimated ethnic identities (e.g., Kichwa, Shuar) or organizational ones (e.g., ECUARUNARI, the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura) but to create a political and discursive space in which to articulate them.

While Karakras rightly stresses the independence of CONAIE by stating that its decisions "obey no outside influence," this should not be taken to mean that the Ecuadorian ideas of nationality are disconnected from wider international currents. To the contrary, the Ecuadorian usage of nationality can be traced to a rather broad nineteenth-century tradition of thought and experience. In the socialist tradition, Marx and Engels took a rather pessimistic and evolutionary view of the chances of smaller "nationalities" against the

rise of the great nations of Europe. Engels argued that the continued existence of nationalities "represented nothing more than a protest against a great historical driving power" (quoted in Kymlicka, 1995: 70). The concept was also familiar to liberals like John Stuart Mill, who saw nationalities as the product of "collective pride and humiliation." As did Marx and Engels, Mill thought that the weaker nationality (e.g., Basque or Breton) would have to submit to the larger nations (such as Spain and France) of Western civilization rather than "sulk on its own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times."[15] In the twentieth century, socialists and liberals left some of this ethnocentrism behind and used the term to confront the ethnic troubles in Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Spain.

The idea of nationality traveled to Ecuador as part of the international intersection of leftist politics and social science. The spread of the idea in Ecuador reflects the influence of Soviet social scientists (especially Zubritsky and Berjov) on a particular group of politically active Marxist intellectuals including Ileana Almeida, who studied in the Soviet Union (see Almeida, 1979). These intellectuals and their writings influenced the emerging indigenous elite that passed through the Universidad Central and later constituted CONAIE. While indigenous people had previously looked to state categories, "in modern indigenous discourse, there existed a reconstruction of political language nourished by the traditions of the left and the conceptualizations of social science" (Ibarra, 1999: 91). Culminating with Karakras's influential restatement quoted above, nationality became the discursive vehicle for CONAIE's alternative, democratic political project.

The continuing importance of the idea of nationality can be illustrated with a brief examination of the politics of creating the new planning ministry dedicated to indigenous affairs, the Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (the Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador—CODENPE). The history of this institution reflects new priorities in international and national agendas. Internationally, indigenous people were becoming increasingly important to bodies such as the International Labor Organization and the United Nations. The United Nations recognized the continuing importance of indigenous issues to international agendas by moving from the 1993 Year of Indigenous People to the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995–2005 (Brysk, 2000: 130).

This changing international environment had some observable effects on national organizing. The six national indigenous organizations that in 1992 had come together as the Coordinador Agraria (Agrarian Coordinating Body) to oppose attempts to privatize the agrarian sector became the Coordinadora Nacional del Decenio (National Coordinating Body of the

Decade [of Indigenous People]). This change in name also reflected a change in attitude toward some state and international actors. When the Coordinadora del Decenio contacted the World Bank about negotiations that had begun between the bank and the Ecuadorian government over a new indigenous development initiative, an internal bank memo (quoted in Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000: 26) saw this contact as "a landmark" because "indigenous organizations in Ecuador have usually taken a confrontational posture against the government and have also been very critical of the World Bank and other international organizations in the past."

Indigenous organizations, especially CONAIE, had indeed been very critical of the various governmental institutions that since the momentous 1990 uprising had been created to deal with indigenous affairs. In the mid-1990s, both President Sixto Durán Ballén's Secretaría Nacional de Asunto Indígenas y Minoría Etnicas (National Secretariat for Indigenous and Ethnic Minorities Issues—SENAIN) and President Abdalá Bucaram's Ministerio de Desarrollo Étnico (Ministry of Ethnic Development) were heavily criticized by CONAIE for being governmental attempts to divide the movement by co-opting certain sectors. CONAIE and other organizations wanted a more concerted effort to create more inclusive indigenous representation; such an effort came after Bucaram was ousted.

Interim President Fabián Alarcón, through coordination with the six existing national indigenous organizations, the World Bank, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), created by decree the Consejo Nacional de Planificación de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador (the National Ecuadorian Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Planning Council—CONPLADEIN). This new ministry-level agency was meant to be the coordinating body for the Proyecto para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador (the Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples' Development Project—PRODEPINE). The budget of the new indigenous development initiative totaled US$50 million, with US$25 million coming from the World Bank, US$15 million from the IFAD, and US$10 million from the Ecuadorian state and the indigenous communities and organizations. This initiative has been described by World Bank social scientists as a series of "firsts" (Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000: 9):

> The project is the first stand-alone investment operation financed by the World Bank that focuses exclusively on indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities. It is the first time that Ecuador has borrowed resources specifically for investments to benefit its indigenous and Afro-Ecuadoran populations. It is also the first time that indigenous organizations and the Ecuadoran government have joined forces in an effort explicitly based on putting into practice the vision of "development with identity," or "ethnodevelopment."

CONPLADEIN and PRODEPINE, the one a part of Ecuadorian state and the other a "stand-alone" but internationally funded program outside the state, were meant to work together in implementing projects for indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations. CONPLADEIN was structured to give the six national indigenous organizations and the one Afro-Ecuadorian confederation equal representation on its executive council.[16]

As one might guess, CONAIE was not very happy with an arrangement in which it had the same number of votes as the almost defunct communist Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios and the other allegedly "less representative" organizations: "They have imposed the forms of organization that the state accepts. In the case of CONPLADEIN there is no clear political project, and it does not establish clearly the representation of indigenous *pueblos*, rather it convokes national organizations that do not necessarily represent indigenous people" (CONAIE, 1999). This statement reflected a position that was becoming consensus among a group of CONAIE intellectuals: labor-union type organizations were no longer the appropriate model for indigenous political life. As a prominent Amazonian indigenous leader declared, "The final project of indigenous peoples should not be vertical organizations like the existing ones. . . . In the process of consolidating the nations (or nationalities as they are defined in Ecuador), the regional and provincial organizations should disappear" (Viteri, 1999: 93–94).

With CONAIE unhappy and an election on the horizon, the chances of change were high, and things did change. With the election of Jamil Mahuad in 1998, CONAIE managed to negotiate the restructuring of CONPLADEIN. A new presidential decree transformed CONPLADEIN into a new entity, the Consejo para el Desarollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (Council for the Development of Ecuadorian Nationalities and Peoples—CODENPE). CODENPE would be organized not by national confederations but by "nationality" and, in the case of the largest nationality, the Kichwa, by the smaller unit of pueblo.[17] The non-CONAIE organizations found themselves excluded from this new structure.[18] This new structure, said the CONAIE (1998) leadership, would be "a pillar in the process of institutionalizing indigenous representation within the State." But this pillar seems to have been a little shaky. Creating CODENPE's Executive Council of Nationalities—composed of one member of each of the 12 nationalities and 15 pueblos—has proven to be a major problem. To understand why this has been so difficult, it is important to remember that, like the "community" of the 1930s, nationalities and pueblos are not naturally existing units but rather the products of politics.

We might begin by asking some seemingly basic questions. What is a nationality? What is a pueblo? How are they different? When asked these

questions, Ricardo Ulcuango (interview, Quito, July 23, 1999), the president of ECUARUNARI and now vice president of CONAIE, begins with an answer that is similar to my own: "Well, up until now, we are analyzing the situation." He goes on to point to characteristics that others have also mentioned: nationality has its own language, territory, and culture. It is a seemingly neatly bounded cultural container. But things are rarely so neat. As we will recall, it was not so long ago that Ampam Karakras and others could speak of a group's being at once a pueblo and a nationality (see above). Such a conflation seems inconvenient for the new politics of Indian representation. Nationality and pueblo have become more sharply demarcated units as their meanings have been shaped by conflicts that occur along the most familiar axis of Ecuadorian politics: region.

What have become known and naturalized as the three regions of Ecuador—coast, sierra, and Amazon—have over time acquired real political and economic importance. As I have already pointed out, for most of the republican period, politics in Ecuador has pitted coast against sierra. This still remains largely true, as one can observe in everything from news broadcasts (always with Guayaquil *and* Quito anchors) to presidential tickets (Jamil Mahuad was the mayor of highland Quito, and Gustavo Noboa, his vice president and later president, was rector of the Catholic University in coastal Guayaquil). For much of this history, the Amazon was on the margins of political imaginings. In the late twentieth century, however, it began to merit increased national attention. First, border conflicts with Peru made the Amazon a front line that had to be defended. Second, the Amazon represented an "empty" space to which to send colonists (to ease the pressure of agrarian reform). Third, and most important, the Amazon was the source of oil reserves that funded the modernizing initiatives of the military government of the 1970s and continues to be a major part of Ecuador's export-dependent economy. As a site for warfare, colonization, and transnational economic activities, the Amazon remains a strange space in the national imaginary but not so strange for indigenous organizing.

CONAIE leaders have inverted the regional image. For indigenous organizations it is the coast, not the Amazon, that has been marginal. Amazon and sierra are home to the vast majority of indigenous people and have become the "natural" divisions of indigenous politics: the most recurring conflicts at national congresses and assemblies often revolve around the problem of region. Simplifying somewhat, contrasts are easily identifiable. *Serranos*, lowland Indians will say, have been tainted and confused by the Western traditions of Marxism and union-style strikes.[19] *Amazónicos*, respond highland Kichwas, are *gobiernistas* preferring to dialogue with the state and foreign

corporations rather than to take to the streets. CONAIE has had to expend ever-greater energy in overcoming regional tensions.

These regional concerns bear directly on the question of nationalities. The Amazon is home to organizational pioneers such as the Shuar, who began to organize along exclusively ethnic (not peasant) lines before anyone else (in the 1960s). The lowlands are also home to the greatest number of different language groups or nationalities. The sierra is home to the greatest absolute number of indigenous people, but they belong overwhelmingly to the Kichwa nationality. Consequently, using nationality as an organizing principle has different consequences for the three regions in the structuring of the planning ministry, CODENPE. The unit of nationality favors the more diverse Amazon. This did not please the highland indigenous elites, and therefore, "pueblo" underwent redefinition. No longer synonymous with nationality, it came to refer to smaller, place-based collectivities that made up a larger nationality (e.g., Otavalo and Cayambi pueblos are part of the Kichwa nationality). The compromise that emerged in these regional disagreements gave each pueblo (in the sierra) and each nationality (in the Amazon and coastal regions) one vote on the CODENPE Executive Council.

The problem with the compromise is that the organization of the indigenous movement does not reflect the structure of representation being constructed from above by CONAIE elites and the Ecuadorian state. The former director of CONPLADEIN puts the point in no uncertain terms: "Indigenous people are organized not as nationalities or pueblos but as organizations. There exist federation and confederations. The [reformed] constitution recognizes our organizational forms, but there is no structure to the nationality, and this could divide the movement. This is a thesis from the Amazon, not the sierra. In the Amazon the situation is different" (Arturo León, interview, February 7, 1999). So it should be no surprise that the Executive Council of the Nationalities took over a year to be constituted, despite the fact that the executive degree required its constitution in a matter of months. While many indigenous assemblies are seeking to move toward the models of nationality and pueblo, we should recall that this is a move not toward "traditional" organization but rather away from the tradition of provincial representative bodies that had been the unquestioned mode of representation for decades.

A recent PRODEPINE (1998) survey gives another view of the problem of categories. PRODEPINE, the World Bank project created alongside CODENPE, has a short life span (five years) and consequently needs concrete actors on the ground to function. NGOs will no longer do, since the point of this project is to work with indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian groups. Accordingly, it has looked for its own "suitable" Indians and Afro-Ecuadorians through a survey of first-level, second-level, and third-level

organizations.[20] Previously, PRODEPINE operated under the assumption that it could work at the second level with the benefits reverberating up to the provincial level and down to the communities (Germán Muenala, interview, Peguche, July 18, 1999). The survey was intended to test that assumption and determine the level of organizational capability in the countryside. In general terms, PRODEPINE found that this principle was acceptable for the sierra where existing second-level organization had the necessary organizational skill and capacity (though the picture is uneven), but for the Amazon this was simply not possible. Because of demographic distributions, the only scale of organization that made sense was the third-level (provincial) actors. Distances and collective-action problems were too great for the Amazon to have the kind of organizational density that exists in the sierra (see Perrault and Wilson in this volume). But there are some small groups (e.g., the Secoyas, about 70 families) that could not quite fit into the third-level category—that is, they could not be called third-level because their structures did not move from communal to supracommunal to regional. They were so small that they needed only one organization, which for all intents and purposes was the nationality. So PRODEPINE agreed that, despite its preference for working with second-level groups, it would work with these nationalities.

Here it is worth highlighting the difference between CODENPE's view of the "institutionalization of indigenous representation" and PRODEPINE's. CODENPE, then headed by Luis Maldonado, a CONAIE intellectual, used its political clout in entering into an agreement with an incoming president to transform it from a body that represented organizations to one that represented nationalities and pueblos, excluding other organizations and trying to accommodate the regional divisions within CONAIE's social movement networks. PRODEPINE—whose executive director until recently was Segundo Andrango, from the same province as Maldonado but from the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Indígenas y Negras, a non-CONAIE national federation—under the watchful technocratic eyes of the World Bank worked only with organizations that had the capacity to execute programs. Where there was no other option, it worked with nationalities.

As of this writing, PRODEPINE's options continue to narrow. The conflicts between CODENPE and PRODEPINE reached a new stage in 2000, a few months after indigenous organizations and the military ousted President Jamil Mahuad and left in his place Mahuad's vice president, Gustavo Noboa. In the post-Mahuad political environment and after having long complained about the organization-centered logic of PRODEPINE, CODENPE Secretary Luis Maldonado won an authoritative bureaucratic battle that forced PRODEPINE Executive Secretary Andrango out of office and replaced him with Manual Imbaquingo, formerly the second-"highest"-ranking official in

CODENPE and a friend of Maldonado. The CODENPE bulletin *Willak Panka* was quick to quote World Bank program official Martin Van Nieuwkoop as stating that "the World Bank had no objection" to the change (CODENPE, 2000: 1). Thus it seems that nationality and pueblo, with incipient leadership structures, may soon be the units of both CODENPE and PRODEPINE projects. In the struggles over "operationalizing ethnodevelopment" (Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000), the terms of indigenous representation are the products of globalized local interactions: long-standing disputes between former leaders of competing organizations in the same province (Maldonado of CONAIE, Andrango of FENOCIN) are replayed in conflicts between multilateral and national agencies. PRODEPINE and CODENPE become prisms through which international and local forces are refracted.

CONCLUSIONS

Where is Ecuador's "Indian problem"? From this historical comparison it is clear that "the problem" is no longer confined to the spaces of local communities, as state elites thought in the 1930s. More important, the "problem" has "jumped scales" (see Perrault in this issue) and grown into a political project that is remapping the contours of Ecuadorian social and political life. Though occupying changing places in projects of domination and resistance, both community and nationality emerged as products of political struggles between indigenous peoples and states. These struggles were shaped not only by states and Indians, however, but also by the power of regional conflicts, international processes of dependent development, and transnational social scientific debates about the place of indigenous people in a supposedly modernizing continent.

Emerging indigenous elites in contact with such social scientific currents have been able to use "community" as a powerful trope in an "alternative political project" (CONAIE, 1997). In the official language of the movement, community is characterized by "reciprocity, solidarity, and equality" and defined as a "collective socioeconomic and political system in which all its members participate" (CONAIE, 1997: 10–11). Such a description is, of course, too good to be quite true. While not denying the virtues of indigenous moral economies, we should be aware that communities are, like all places, characterized by numerous divisions and asymmetries, many more than the discourse of community suggests. In interviews with leaders of non-CONAIE organizations such as the Cotacachi Union of Peasant Organi-

zations (Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas de Cotacachi—UNORCAC), one is quickly disabused of any utopian communitarian notions. Recalling why he began to work with UNORCAC, its former president was explicit about the class differences in the nearby market town of Otavalo, noting that "there is nothing worse than when one Indian exploits another" (Pedro de la Cruz, interview, Quito, August 8, 1999).

I should be careful here. I do not mean to declare CONAIE's leaders disingenuous utopians or UNORCAC's hardheaded realists. Aside from the problems—methodological and political—of such a comparison, my point is more modest. The "indigenous community" became a subject of representation not through a process of faithfully translating what was really "out there" but rather as a part of a wider set of political and ideological constructions that reflect aspirations as much as experiences (Seitz, 1992). Similarly, "nationality" became a legitimate unit of indigenous politics not because the term accurately reflected a multiethnic and multiorganizational social movement field of actors. Indeed, "nationality" has not been used successfully by indigenous organizations outside Ecuador. Rather, nationality became part of the Ecuadorian language of indigenous contention because indigenous activists were able to insert it into movement, state, and international discourses.

In closing, I would like to make three general points regarding hegemony, political representation, and indigenous activism. First, the hegemony of certain forms and languages in a given field of political action should not obscure the fact that they are deployed in a variety of ways (Lears, 1985). "Community" can thus be at one time the organizing principle of indigenista paternalism and social control and at another time the discursive terrain on which alternative political projects are constructed and legitimated. The idea of "nationality" can emerge as a way to bring together various different indigenous groups but can later change in response to tensions between those same indigenous groups. The language of membership and belonging is also, as Gramsci and Roseberry have suggested, the language of contention.

Second, and in the same vein, we must be aware that social movements not only disrupt previous orders but also reproduce important elements of them. Indians can organize and challenge the nation-state, but they often become politically articulate precisely through *state* categories and processes: they register with the right ministry, in accordance with the appropriate law, and they organize as state elites do through and around "regions" that are naturalized objects of loyalty. Indian activists in Ecuador and beyond have become politically articulate. They have learned the languages of the state, of social science, and of development and are undoubtedly transforming all of them.

But articulateness has its dangers. The anthropologist Ray McDermott (1988: 67) explains:

> What then is articulateness but the right to speak in way that others can hear? It beats muttering, but it threatens us with the danger of total conformity, with the danger of reproduction as a way of life. With great breakthroughs, there are new things said. We must treasure them and emulate them. But if we do not use them to organize new ways of putting our lives together our greatest breakthroughs can easily be erased.

A recent example of these dangers is instructive. When CONAIE joined elements of the military in January 2000 in deposing the neoliberal president Jamil Mahuad, its president declared a great breakthrough as he joined a general and a former Supreme Court justice in a Triumvirate of National Salvation (Collins, 2000; Lucero, 2001). However, the triumvirate lasted less than a day and represented less a breakthrough than a departure from the long and steady organizational work and contestation that had deepened democracy in Ecuador. Rather than contributing to the "alternative politics" that CONAIE has always espoused, the closed-door meetings with colonels marked a return to an all-too-familiar past of elites (from left and right) making decisions without the participation of the popular sectors.

Finally, as students and supporters of indigenous activism, concerned social scientists should not shy away from pointing out the complications and inconsistencies that hide within the projects of community, nationality, or "national salvation." Like all our words, these are, as Bakhtin (1981 [1934–1935]: 294) explained, "overpopulated with the intentions of others." Being aware of the power and knowledge relations that produce these intentions and concepts, as all the contributors to this issue are, makes us sensitive to their limitations and risks. Community and nationality can be used, as McDermott says, to find new ways of putting our lives together, but they can also mask injustices and inequalities. Social scientists can (and should) point out these problems not to undermine indigenous political projects but to contribute to the transformative processes that indigenous people themselves have set in motion.

NOTES

1. All translations from Spanish-language sources are my own.

2. On the methodology of critical junctures see Collier and Collier (1991). For other views of critical junctures in Indian-state relations in Ecuador see Almeida et al. (1993), Andolina (1999), Ayala Mora (1992), Bebbington et al. (1993), Becker (1997), Clark (1997), Guerrero

(1993; 1994), León (1994), Ramón (1993), Sánchez Parga (1992), Yashar (1998), and Zamosc (1994).

3. The units of community and nationality become hegemonic in the sense of being discursive frameworks that are accepted by important elements of both dominant and subaltern sectors (see Roseberry, 1996). Illuminating discussions of local community building and state formation can be found in the essays collected in Joseph and Nugent (1994), especially the chapters on ejidos by Nugent and Alonso and on Chiapas by Rus. See also the article by García in this issue.

4. Most works of political science seem to forget that representation is a term of both politics and culture, of organization and art (but see Pitkin, 1967; 1969; Schwartz, 1988). For more on how the cultural and political dimensions of representation can be brought together see Guerrero (2000), Lucero (2002), and Seitz (1992).

5. We should also note that the very idea of "indigenous territory," which Richard Chase Smith argues first emerged in the UN Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, was first used in the context of ecology. Environmentalists and activists saw the creation and titling of indigenous territories as a way to protect ecosystems, and later indigenous activists saw the potential for creating political spaces. For a discussion of the way in which the idea of territory was diffused throughout Andean and Amazonian indigenous movements see Healy (2001).

6. Of course, many scholars and activists emphasize colonial legacies and continuities, as does Galo Ramón (1993), whose *longue durée* history of indigenous organizing goes from 1540 to 1998. Even in those narratives, however, the 1930s are a critical moment. Others who make the 1930s a landmark if not a starting point include Moreno Yañez and Figueroa (1992), León (1994), Sánchez Parga (1992), and Becker (1997).

7. *Concertaje* was replaced by the *huasipungo* system, wherein indigenous peasants received land and in exchange owed labor and loyalty to the hacendado.

8. The focus on "free communities" meant that the legislation did not apply to haciendas, the other political formation that was a long-standing part of Ecuadorian ethnic administration. It was not until agrarian reform in the 1960s and 1970s greatly diminished the power of hacendados that significant numbers of ex-hacienda huasinpungueros began to organize as comunas.

9. Guerrero suggests that this is only one of several mechanisms, including education and military service, for creating a certain kind of Ecuadorian.

10. Francisco de Miranda declared after the Haitian insurrection of 1791: "Much as I desire the independence and liberty of the New World, I fear anarchy and revolution even more. God forbid that other countries suffer the same fate as Saint-Domingue. . . . Better they should remain another century under the barbarous and senseless oppression of Spain" (quoted in Pagden, 1990: 12).

11. For a useful discussion of corporatism as a structure of representation in Latin America see Chalmers et al. (1997). Examples of these kinds of political arrangement are of course not limited to Latin America.

12. "Classist," "Indianist," religious, and regional indigenous discourses are sometimes pitted against each other and sometimes combined. In the 1940s, under the tutelage of the Communist party, the Federation of Ecuadorian Indians spoke in the name of peasants and Indians but still with a class-heavy discourse. In the 1960s the Shuar, with help from the Catholic Salesian clergy, founded a federation linking various Shuar centers in the Amazon region. In the 1970s, the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinos (National Federation of Peasant Organizations—FENOC) and ECUARUNARI shared the national spotlight when it came to peasant/Indian organizing. And in 1980, only six years before CONAIE was founded, the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangelicos (Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indians—FEINE)

was founded with exceptionally strong support in Chimborazo, the province with the largest indigenous population in the country.

13. "Hegemony" is a term that several informants used to describe the strength of CONAIE, though it took on different hues. For rival organizations, CONAIE had an "exclusionary hegemony" (Pedro de la Cruz, interview, Quito, August 19, 1998). For multilateral development agencies, CONAIE had a "necessary hegemony" (Juan Pablo Pérez, interview, La Paz, Bolivia, November 10, 1999).

14. An exception is reported by Ibarra (1999), who noted that the Peruvian Communist party drew on Stalin to speak of "Quechua and Aymara nationalities."

15. Mill was pessimistic about the prospects of representative government in multinational settings. He shared the idea that dominated the nineteenth century (and has yet to fade away) that homogeneity is an important background condition for democratic governance. See the concluding chapters of his *Considerations on Representative Government* (1993 [1861]). An illustration of the lingering nineteenth-century concern with homogeneity is found in Rustow (1970). Excellent discussions of the need to rethink this and other liberal matters are O'Donnell (1993) and Yashar (1999).

16. The other national indigenous confederations, besides CONAIE, are FEI, FEINE, FENOC, FENOCIN, FENOCIN, and the Federación Nacional de Campesinos Libres del Ecuador (National Federation of Ecuadorian Coastal Peasants–FENACLE).

17. Article 2 of the 1998 Executive Decree recognizes the following nationalities: Shuar, Achuar, Huorani, Siona, Secoya, Cofán, Zaparo, Chachi, Tsa'chila, Epera, Awa, and Quichua (or Kichwa in CONAIE's new spelling). The Kichwa pueblos are identified as the Saraguro, Cañari, Puruhá, Waranka, Panzaleo, Chibuleo, Salasaca, Quitu, Cayambi, Caranqui, Natabuela, Otavalo, Amazonian Kichua, Manta, and Huancavilca.

18. The presidents of the two largest confederations after CONAIE, FENOCIN and FEINE, were allowed to participate in the transitional council as members of the Kichwa nationality, but they both registered their disagreement with the new structure by not attending CODENPE meetings (interviews: Pedro de la Cruz, Quito, August 8, 1999; Marco Murillo, Quito, April 7, 1999).

19. During one CONAIE assembly I attended, an Amazonian leader offhandedly declared that she had a name for "all things incoherent: ECUARUNARI [the highland confederation]."

20. "First-level" being community, "second" was the next supracommunal level and the "third" provincial or regional organizations.

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