

Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians Facing the Twenty-First Century

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Facing the Twenty-First Century

Edited by

Marc Becker

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-ECUADORIANS FACING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

MARC BECKER

Ecuador provides a fascinating case study for understanding the construction and emergence of race and ethnic identities. Its history, culture, and politics have become a common topic of debate for the section on Ethnicity, Race, and Indigenous Peoples (ERIP) within the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). ERIP, together with the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (CILAS) at the University of California, San Diego and the *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* (LACES) journal, organized the Second Conference on Ethnicity, Race, and Indigenous People from November 3-5, 2011 at the University of California, San Diego. The event was part of a commitment to periodically organize an international conference following the establishment of ERIP and the launching of the journal LACES in 2006.

The conference covered topics related to all aspects of ethnicity, race relations, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and other ethnic and racial groups in Latin America and the Caribbean. Presenters discussed issues of immigration, *indigenismo*, racism and anti-racism, along with new forms of literature, film, dance, and music of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples across the continent. Following the tradition of the larger LASA meetings, this conference conveyed a large diversity of perspectives, disciplines and issues reflecting the richness and complexities of the social processes that encompass the Americas.

The papers collected in this volume on Indigenous peoples and African descendants in Ecuador, as well as those from a companion volume on race and ethnicity in Latin America, draw on the strengths of the ideas presented at the conference. The volumes include contributions from junior, marginal, and lesser-known scholars in the field, including those

who have not previously had the opportunity to address an English-speaking audience. While themes of ethnic identities, indigeneity, and race relations are commonly examined in our respective disciplines, it is less common to bring together essays with scholars from such a broad variety of disciplines. The first volume draws on a wide range of studies from across Latin America, including the examination of ethnohistory, the environment, and culture. This volume focuses on Ecuador, and provides an opportunity to explore indigeneity in comparative perspective with the rest of the region, as well as to highlight historically important but understudied Afro-Ecuadorian perspectives.

This volume begins with three studies that examine constructions of indigeneity in Ecuador from various perspectives and through distinctive lenses. It opens with an innovative case study from Ecuador's capital city of Quito in which anthropologist Kathleen Fine-Dare interrogates the transculturative praxis of ethnogenesis. She argues that *indigenismo*, like any "-ism," involves the theorization of a segment of reality such that action can be taken towards, on behalf of, or even in spite of it. Because a presumed state of affairs is looked into from the outside, or is organized in a conscious manner so that lived experience becomes doctrinal, "isms" are often viewed as unauthentic, transitory, or otherwise unsatisfactory approximations of reality. However derogatory the connotations of many "isms" may be, they nevertheless often serve to make visible unsatisfactory situations that would otherwise remain hidden. For example, "socialism" makes evident many underlying structural arrangements that contribute to human relational atomism and the unequal distribution of resources. "Feminism" has drawn attention to the "otherness" of femaleness and the symbolic and economic consequences of the often hidden half. Likewise, *indigenismo* has drawn attention to the historical, economic, symbolic, and lived realities of Indigenous peoples and collectives for a wide variety of purposes ranging from romantic-literary-apologetic to territorial-cultural and human rights-restorative.

From Fine-Dare's study of *indigenismo*, we turn to geologist Víctor Hugo Jijón's examination of Ecuadorian Indigenous movements and the challenges that Indigenous peoples, as well as all of Ecuadorian society, face in attempting to implement the advances codified in the new 2008 constitution. A particular challenge is to enforce the individual and collective rights that the constitution grants to Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and coastal peasants (*montubios*) in terms of two new paradigms: the plurinational state and the *Sumak Kawsay* or the good life. This expectation has two complementary main avenues of realization: structuring intercultural territorial circumscriptions where self-government

on behalf of Indigenous peoples and nationalities is exercised, and the mainstreaming of plurinationality so that public policies for Indigenous peoples are formulated and implemented in all state bodies. Jijón argues that this process demands a truly participative corresponding legislation, a deep reconfiguration of the state-owned institutions, and an organizational strengthening of civil society.

Political scientist Manuela Picq examines the leadership that Indigenous women have provided to political resistance in Ecuador. Manuela León held a position of political and military leadership while coordinating an uprising in the nineteenth century. Women led important uprisings in Cayambe in the 1920s and were founders of the first Indigenous federation in 1944. These women are lasting symbols of resistance against colonization, and echo the agency of many more who also held positions of political leadership. They were feared for their military tactics and cold-bloodedness, blacklisted, and persecuted by state authorities. Icons of insubordination, these women reveal the roles of many others who consistently fought oppression. These leaders should not be understood as historical exceptions, but rather as proof of a solid legacy of political agency among Indigenous women that persists until the present. Picq also makes salient the limits of their participation in contemporary Ecuadorian politics. In analyzing the relative absence of women after the Indigenous movement was institutionalized in the mid-1990s, she examines why political mainstreaming has pushed women out of leadership positions and silenced their voices.

The contributions of Afro-Ecuadorians have been marginalized in academic studies, and two studies in the second section of this book help close that gap. Historian Cristina Echeverri Pineda examines the ethnic representation of Afro-descendant populations in the 2008 Ecuadorian and 2009 Bolivian constitutions. These constitutional processes have deepened the dynamics of public recognition of these countries' cultural and ethnic diversity, and have called the dominant model of cultural and ethnic national homogeneity into question by breaking the old unitary paradigm and declaring these countries as plurinational and intercultural states. These constitutions have acknowledged the presence of the Afro-descendant populations and contribute to their visibility. However, recognition of Afro-descendant populations has differed from the treatment received by the Indigenous populations, who have been the main and more explicit focus of the allocation of new rights. This, in turn, has generated new cultural homogenization processes on new societal groups. This chapter proposes an initial approach to the way in which the Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions recognized the cultural difference of Afro-

descendants in contrast to that of the Indigenous groups, as well as the implications of plurinationality for Afro-Ecuadorians and Afro-Bolivians.

Anthropologist Linda Jean Hall argues that Afro-Ecuadorians will only achieve social, political, and economic equality in Ecuador's current political environment if they are cognizant of the constitutionally guaranteed entitlements of affirmative action and reparations. Affirmative action for Afro-Ecuadorians confronts discriminatory practices and disparities in education, housing, and employment. Reparations are compensatory social and economic strategies that the state can employ to make amends for racist based insults and injuries to Afro-Ecuadorians. The failure to utilize these collective rights results in a dual response that favors the continued marginalization of Blacks in Ecuador. First, leaders of the country's Afro-descendent sector begin to believe that they are now closer to the ear of political power. In response to the acceptance of these provisions as a part of the law of the land, leadership responds by relaxing their demands for tangible change. Second, feeling less threatened and more in control of civil activism, the government constructs obstacles in the form of social policies and procedures that prevent direct access to administrative power. Hall contends that awareness of this dynamic will enable civic activism and foster effective collaborative efforts to assure that Afro-Ecuadorians assume a more active role in policy-making decisions of the country.

The third section of this book examines serious environmental issues facing Ecuador. Ecuador grows more roses than any other country in the world, and sociologist Rachel Soper studies Indigenous community organizations in the flower export industry. Pedro Moncayo, a county in the northern highlands of Ecuador, has recently been awarded the title of *Capital Mundial de la Rosa*, World Capital of the Rose. Flower export production began in Ecuador in the mid-1980s during a period of neoliberal economic reform. Since then, flowers—with roses as the most popular variety—have become the nation's fourth largest export, alongside petroleum, bananas, and shrimp. As petroleum is extracted from the Amazon, and bananas and shrimp are farmed on the coast, flowers are the top export industry in the highland region. This chapter explores the tension between employment generation and environmental impacts on human health and natural resources. After introducing the dynamic of opposing industry and community norms with regard to individual productivity and global competitiveness versus collective responsibility and respect for nature, Soper addresses the question of how Indigenous community organizations have responded to the flower export industry.

Historian Kenneth Ralph Kincaid chronicles the introduction and expansion of eucalyptus trees in northern Ecuador and examines the

relationship of these trees to land tenure struggles in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For native Andean communities, the introduction of this exotic species changed their relationship with local ecologies as eucalyptus groves drove out native flora and violated Indigenous principles of sacred space as these trees altered revered visual alignments. Moreover, in the 1960s, hacienda owners used eucalyptus trees to sidestep land reform legislation by planting fast-growing eucalypts on their estates in order to demonstrate land use. As Kincaid illustrates, an understanding of these conflicts from an Indigenous perspective sheds light on the limits of progress as understood by the state and mainstream Ecuadorian society.

The final section of this book turns to issues of religion and culture. We begin with anthropologist Carmen Martínez's study of the meaning of "Indigenous" within Inculturation Theology in Ecuador. According to Andrew Orta's definition, the theology of "Inculturation" is part of a trend within the Catholic Church to codify and reinforce Indigenous religiosity as part of the Church's broader effort to embrace "local theologies" and "inculturate" itself within specific cultural contexts. After centuries of preaching that Indigenous peoples turn away from their traditional cultural practices to embrace Christianity, many Catholic missionaries now insist that Indigenous ways were Christian all along: Indigenous people must become more "Indian" and return to the ways of their ancestors that missionaries see as local cultural expressions of Christian values. "Inculturation" theology follows on the heels of Liberation Theology, which proposed that Christians were called upon to correct the sinful social injustices of poverty and oppression, and that tended to downplay ethnic distinctions and emphasized instead the homogenizing identity of "the poor." Martínez explores the indigenist project of Inculturation theology in Ecuador based on field and archival research in the highland and Amazonian missions of the Salesian Order. She asks whether Inculturation is an altogether different project from Liberation Theology, and whether the turn towards multiculturalism in the Catholic Church is comparable to the turn from class politics and an emphasis on redistribution to the politics of recognition. Is Inculturation, like "neoliberal multiculturalism," a form of symbolic recognition that distracts Indigenous peoples from more substantial struggles and coopts them for the church and/or the state? And, last but not least, Martínez analyzes Indigenous critiques to the indigenist project of Inculturation.

In his contribution, anthropologist Juan Illicachi examines power relations and struggles within Indigenous churches and organizations. In the late twentieth century, activists organized the Confederation of Evangelical Indigenous Peoples, Organizations, Communities, and Churches

of Chimborazo (CONPOCIIIECH) that followed the line of evangelical Protestants, and the Confederation of the Indigenous Movement of Chimborazo (COMICH) favored by the progressive Catholic Church in Riobamba. Illicachi contrasts Protestant and Catholic Indigenous churches, as well as their convergence in the exercise of power and authority. He examines strategies that could generate cohesion between COMICH and CONPOCIIIECH, and asks why the two organizations sometimes cooperate with each other, and at other points come into conflict. Illicachi employs the concept of power as theorized by Michel Foucault to analyze the relationships and power struggles among Catholic and Protestant Indigenous churches. This implies not reducing power relations to a simple opposition between rulers and the ruled.

Indigenous music in Ecuador is often associated with Otavalo folkloric ensembles and the traditional music of Indigenous festivities such as Inti Raymi and Corpus Christi. Indigenous peoples in Ecuador, however, are not only involved in folkloric and traditional music. In fact, a large part of their musical life falls under the popular music realm. This includes a commercial and mass-mediated type of Indigenous popular music that the elites pejoratively call *chichera* music. Ethnomusicologist Ketty Wong explores the ethnic, racial, and class tensions associated with the musical production of Ángel Guaraca (b. 1975), a charismatic Indigenous singer and songwriter from the province of Chimborazo who has a large following among Indigenous peoples and lower-class mestizos. His work has been innovative in his rendition of Indigenous song-dance genres, particularly the *sanjuanito* and the *yumbo*, whose lyrics address sentiments of Indigenous pride and the experiences of Ecuadorian migrants in the diaspora.

The essays in this volume break from the common tropes and themes that scholars typically employ in their studies of race and ethnicity in Ecuador. In examining Afro-Ecuadorians and Indigenous peoples through the lens of politics, culture, religion, gender, and environmental concerns, we come to a better understanding of the problems and promises facing this country.

CHAPTER TWO

(NEO)*INDIGENISMO*
AND THE TRANSCULTURATIVE
PRAXIS OF ETHNOGENESIS:
A CASE STUDY FROM URBAN ECUADOR

KATHLEEN S. FINE-DARE

Introduction

Indigenism (*indigenismo* in Spanish), like any “-ism,” involves the theorization of a segment of reality such that action can be taken towards, on behalf of, or even in spite of it. Because a presumed state of affairs is looked into from the outside, or is organized in a conscious manner so that lived experience becomes doctrinal, “isms” are often viewed as unauthentic, transitory, or otherwise unsatisfactory approximations of reality.¹ However derogatory the connotations of many “isms” may be, they nevertheless often serve to make visible unsatisfactory situations that would otherwise remain hidden. For example, “socialism” makes evident many underlying structural arrangements that contribute to human relational atomism and the unequal distribution of resources. “Feminism” has drawn attention to the “otherness” of femaleness and the symbolic and economic consequences of the often hidden half. Likewise, “indigenism” has drawn attention to the historical, economic, symbolic, and lived realities of Indigenous persons and collectives for a wide variety of purposes ranging from romantic-literary-apologetic to territorial-cultural and human rights-restorative.

What would the world look like if we all lived more like “Indians?” some indigenists have asked, while others prefer to know when Indigenous

¹ MyWord.info defines an “ism” as “a word ending that indicates action, manner, condition, beliefs or prejudice” (http://myword.info/definition.php?id=ism_1-a) [accessed Jan. 25, 2013].

territories and rights to self-determination will be restored. These questions beg this one: What do “Indians” themselves think and want, and why should any voices other than their own be listened to at all? To answer this, the following must be addressed: Just who *is* an Indigenous person, in what times and places, and according to what authorities? Can there be Indigenous discourse and practice that comes equally from Indigenous, non-Indigenous, or “mixed” quarters? Can discourses about indigeneity be used to pit peoples against one another? Are the historical, anthropological, literary, sociological, artistic, and political forms of *indigenismo* just ongoing forms of colonialist discourse that fuel hidden, ongoing forms of repression and increasingly sophisticated structural racism? Can indigenist discourses and practices also be produced and performed by those seeking to create new forms of largely transculturative² indigeneity in collaboration, through alliance formation, and in cities as well as in the “peasant” and “subsistence” contexts long thought to be the domain of “true” indigeneity? And, finally, should we take care that our focus on “discourse” and “performance” not preclude taking a close look at just who is financially underwriting the documents, performances, museum exhibits, and other “tangible” and “intangible” expressions of indigenism in this era of NGO- and governmental support for “lite,” unthreatening expressions of multiculturalism that not only serve to reduce potential conflict but also look attractive to tourists (see Dombrowski 2004)?

In this brief work I answer “yes” to most of the above questions by focusing on a case study of what can be called “indigenist” practices carried out by people who have in the past been labeled as “mestizo” or “cholo” in Quito, Ecuador’s capital city. While this process is incomplete, with nearly as many drawbacks as successes, I argue that the process has

² Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz has most famously employed the term “transculturation” to describe “the real history of Cuba” which has been that of “intermeshed” transcultural encounters between Caribbean Indigenous, African, Indian, Jewish, and a host of other peoples. For Ortiz (2003[1947], 17-18), transculturation is a more “fitting” term than acculturation to describe culture change as it involves not only deculturation or loss, but also “the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena” or “neoculturation.” Luis Morato-Lara defines literary transculturation as “the changes, exchanges, cultural incorporations and rejections of those nationalities that share a territorial space.” For Morato-Lara (1997, 65, 68), what is most valuable about Ortiz’ work was his notion that rather than accept reality passively, transcultural actors “see and interpret universal reality from the starting point of their own cultural conception, which is a transculturated version of Western and Indigenous knowledge and traditions” (translation mine).

great value and that now would be a poor time to try to quell it by arguing that today's indigenist discourses are either inauthentic or just an extension of the kinds of neo-indigenism that may have de-romanticized the early twentieth century "Indianist" version of "*indigenismo*," but also have de-centered the Indian by turning indigeneity into a socio-political category useful for critiques of capitalism, Marxism, and even environmentalism. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore this thoroughly, I suggest that it may be time to center our understandings of Indigenous experience on the very place where it has been marginalized: the city.

Indigeneity and the Hummingbird Collective

In late June of 2011 I was interviewing a couple I'll call Valentina and Miguel as we headed towards their home in Colinas del Norte, a neighborhood on the far northwest edge of Quito. As the three of us walked the several blocks from the bus stop on our way to their newly built home where they live with their three children, Miguel stopped and pointed down the street. "See that corner there? Everyone knows that if you go beyond that point you could get killed. Some places here are really dangerous." Like other neighborhoods on the north side of town, Colinas is becoming home to growing numbers of immigrants from Colombia, Haiti, and other parts of Ecuador, some of whom are known to be involved in drug trafficking.³

Before we entered the gate into their little garden, Miguel gave me a quick geographic sweep of the area, starting with the *Tayta* (spiritual father, Mount Casitagua) that once provided opportunities to play and explore when he was a child, down to the entire north end of Quito, which spilled out below us in shades of white and gray. Miguel pointed to sites where condominiums covered old springs, to the neighborhood where *yumbo* dancers performed near the soccer stadium, and to one of the few places where a sacred waterfall still existed, protected by a private citizen. Indoors, Valentina made lunch while we talked, covering subjects ranging from her origins in Cotopaxi province to the influence Miguel's grandmother, a *curandera* (healer), had played in his life.

Just as the interview was winding down, Miguel made an extraordinary point. We had been talking about conflict in the Kitu Kara organization, which serves as a body linking a congeries of urban and rural communities

³ Their teenage son was robbed at knifepoint a few months after this interview, just a block from their home.

in the Quito Basin both to the government via CODENPE⁴ and somewhat indirectly to the political party Pachakutik, particularly during election time. “Look,” he said, leaning towards me, “here’s something I’ve figured out”:

There are three lines in the thinking of Kitu Kara members. The first is that we’re all connected to the Inkas and that Quito is part of Tawantinsuyu [the Inka empire]. The second is that only some people, some surnames, in this area can be legitimate members of Kitu Kara. The Simbaña, for instance, claim more legitimacy and more rights to speak for the *pueblo*. The third line is an intercultural one. It’s about forming relationships, being open, working together. But there are conflicts, especially over the [speaking] Kichwa thing, so we don’t have meetings very often.

As I rode home on the bus, I thought about Miguel’s typology, which outlined three distinct if overlapping accounts of indigeneity. They reminded me of layers of power reflected in a photo I had taken in 1981 in Zámiza, an Indigenous *pueblo* just west of Quito, of dancers who carried three signs of layered authority: the helmet of the Spanish soldier, the *vara* (authority staff) of the colonized ethnic polity, and the flag of the nation state of Ecuador (Figure 1).

⁴ CODENPE is the Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador. An Ecuadorian Executive Decree No. 386 published on December 11, 1998 and reformulated on June 13, 2005 created it. Its website, www.codenpe.gob.ec, describes the organization as a “participatory and decentralized organism.” When the website was consulted in late 2011 it listed fourteen nationalities (Amazonian Kichwa, Awa’, Chachi, Épera, Tsa’chila, Andoa, Shiwiar, Huaorani, Siona, Cofán, Secoya, Shuar, Zápara and Achuar) and eighteen pueblos with a fifteenth, highland Kichwa nation (Pasto, Otavalo, Natabuela, Karanki, Kayambi, Saraguro, Palta, Kañari, Kisapincha, Tomabela, Salasaca, Chibuleo, Waranka, Panzaleo, Puruhá, Manta, Huancavilca, and the “Nación Originaria Kitu Kara”). When the site was consulted on July 30, 2012, the original fourteen nationalities were still listed, but now only sixteen “pueblos” appeared (Tomabela, Karanki, Natabuela, Otavalo, Kayambi, Chibuleo, Kisapincha, Panzaleo, Kitu Kara, Salasaca, Waranka, Puruhá, Pasto, Kañari, Saraguro, and Palta). Manta and Huancavilca had been removed. The goals of CODENPE range from monitoring cultural promotion policies to reducing extreme poverty and universalizing primary education. It also states that a major goal is to “considerably improve the life of “tugurios,” or slum-dwellers. See Cervone (2009) for more information about the history, organization, and functioning of CODENPE. Also see Viatori (2009, 103-105), and Posern-Zieliński (2008).



Figure 1: *Zámbiza Capitanes*, 1981. Photo by K. Fine-Dare.

Miguel's analysis, however, was a bit different. The first, a historical/symbolic account of continuing Inka hegemony, echoed the work conducted by some middle-class Ecuadorians who were practically obsessed with the Inkas, spending their time trying to find evidence of a deeper presence of Tawantinsuyu through architecture or other signs. One investigator was searching for a Yumbada⁵ that could correspond to Cuntisuyo (the roughly southwest quarter of Tawantinsuyu), thereby filling in the remaining piece of the *chakana*, or Inkaic cosmogram, whose other corners were covered by Yumbadas that took place in Cotacollao

⁵ The Yumbada is a dance complex involving the representation of lowland Indigenous persons who wear feathers, seed ornaments, and sometimes capes made of gourds stitched together. The dance takes place at distinct times of the year primarily throughout the Quito Basin, although it appears sporadically in other zones of Ecuador, such as Cotopaxi province. Near extinction in the 1990s, the dance complex is now promoted on Ecuadorian television, in tourist marketing, and by the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Quito. It has recently been identified by the Kitu Kara organization as an "ancestral ritual" alongside "Coya Raymi" (late September), and "Inti Raymi" (late June). See Fine-Dare (2007) and Salomon (1981).

(northwest), San Isidro del Inka (northeast), and La Magdalena/Chibuleo (southeast) (Borja n.d.; Williams 2007). When I told this to Miguel, himself a Yumbada dancer in Cotocollao, he nodded his head. “This is what I’m talking about. There are a lot of people looking for these signs,” he said, “but what do they mean to *us*?”

The second view regarding Kitu Kara membership is historical in a different sense. The emphasis on the greater legitimacy of some families over others in leading the organization may reflect pre-contact Indigenous hierarchy and the ways that the influence of local ethnic lords continued well into the colonial era and perhaps beyond. Maybe, I thought, the bitterness expressed by a family I had interviewed with one of these “legit” surnames over what they saw as the coopting of the Yumbada of Cotocollao was connected to this legacy. To Miguel, both of whose surnames are of Spanish origin, this view was exclusionary and even elitist. “A few families want to gain control of the organization,” he said, “which gets in the way of our working together.”

The third line, the one Miguel called “intercultural,” seemed to reflect a trope that went beyond ethnic legitimacy and even Ecuadorian nationality. Identity in this line is linked to, but not defined by, language or genetics. It seems to have more to do with action and with the relationships and sociality made in the course of working towards common ends. From this perspective, to be Kitu Kara means to be something that defies the scoffing of some middle-class Ecuadorians who shake their heads whenever I talk about what is going on in the northwest barrios. “They are just putting on a show,” they say. “There is no legitimacy to their claims to be Indian. They are trying to connect themselves to archaeological sites inappropriately, and they are being sucked in and duped by New Agers. They are mestizos, not Indians. They don’t even speak Kichwa. And what in the world, anyway, is the “Pueblo Kitu Kara”?”

This skepticism doesn’t trouble Miguel, who has heard it many times before, as often from within the Kitu Kara organization as from outside of it. The internal critique claims that most of the so-called “urban Kitu Kara” people are migrants from Cotopaxi province, the birthplace of the Indigenous-surnamed Valentina. Even Miguel’s own relatives and neighbors have given him grief when he has gone around collecting old stories. “Some of them called me a *hippie*,” he laughs. “They didn’t trust me at all, even though they knew my family.”

But to him, being Kitu Kara does not mean tracing an Inka legacy or proving one is a legitimate Indian descended from one of the traditional ethnic polities. Mostly it means to dance with purpose—“*con intención*”—and to engage in a practice called “*corazonar*,” or to act from the heart.

While an Ecuadorian anthropologist who has worked with the Kitu Kara emphasizes “decolonization” in his book on the subject (Guerrero 2010, 38), Miguel gives it a less historicized connotation. “We want to be recognized for who we are by our actions, by what’s in our hearts” he explained. “Being Indigenous is just *part* of who I am. It guides me, but it is not all that I am or who I will be.” For Miguel, in other words, to be Kitu Kara means not to “be” at all; it means to think, do, and act. It is inclusive, it looks for partnerships, it engages with outsiders in ways that one could scarcely say involve exploitation. It also may involve rethinking the concepts of *indigenismo* and perhaps even indigeneity itself.

***Indigenismo* in Ecuador**

For the past two decades there has been an explosion in social scientific studies regarding the nature and meaning of “indigeneity.” The spread and intensification of global neoliberalism in the 1990s combined with the many Columbian quincennial observances and the development of documents associated with a transnational Indigenous peoples’ movement, culminating in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, have raised new questions regarding the relationships of Indigenous persons, identities, and discourses to state power, global economic exchanges, and a new internationalism (Viatori 2009, 80-81). Today, who is an Indian, where, why, and with what aims serve as central questions motivating the works of dozens of scholars. The linked question: Who *speaks* for Indians? rounds out latter day academic *indigenismo* (e.g., Lucero 2006).

Despite this growing corpus of documents, “there have been few studies made of the concrete daily dynamics of *indigenismo*, even though the discipline of anthropology prides itself on its ethnographic approach to everyday phenomena” (Saldivar 2011, 68). In this piece I address this deficit by examining the experiences of some families who sometime during the last decade formed the Hummingbird—“Kinde” in Kichwa—Collective, located in northwest Quito, Ecuador. This work is part of a larger project, the goals of which are: 1) to address the uses of concepts of indigeneity as they relate to Kinde members who descend from former *huasipungueros* or indentured hacienda servants and still retain some of the property received following the 1964 agrarian reform;⁶ 2) to examine

⁶ Before 1964 the main form of land tenure in Ecuador was the large hacienda. Labor for these haciendas came from a variety of sources, but most notable was the unsalaried residential labor force known as *huasipungueros*. Other types of labor

the relationship between class, ethnicity, sociality, and “*ciudadinidad*” (León 2010) in Quito; 3) to illustrate the convergence of a variety of forces, including that of state-generated *indigenismo*, global tourism, documentary filmmaking, resistance to the Catholic Church, social networking, and other factors in the lives and projects of the collective and some of the conflicts that have emerged; and 4) to compare the experiences of Andean and North American Native peoples regarding twenty-first century changes to the concept of *indigenismo* as well as the role of anthropological thought and practice in both propping up and undercutting ideas of indigeneity that may or may not be relevant or of use to peoples both Indigenous and otherwise. While I touch on some of these issues in this piece, I concentrate on the Kinde collective’s experiences relating indigeneity to life in Quito’s capital city (see Figure 2).

In Ecuador, pro-Indian viewpoints that fed into the Liberal Revolution of 1895 created alliances between radical liberals and Indigenous leaders against mestizo and white urban intellectuals in both the highlands and the coast. Although, as Shannon Mattiace (2007, 200) notes in an interesting article that compares the forms that *indigenismo* historically took in Ecuador to those found in Mexico,⁷ the rhetoric was “steeped in paternalism,” emphasizing the goal of full citizenship for all inhabitants of Ecuador (see Chávez 1993[1943] and Jaramillo 1993[1943]).⁸ But as the state was actually weaker than the landholders, church, and others who held power over Indigenous persons, indigenist discourse was diffused throughout many more arenas than the state and its policies until the implementation of the 1998 Constitution, which “defined the Ecuadorian

were *partidarios*, *arrendatarios*, *desmonteros*, *arrimados*, and *aparceros*, none of whom owned any piece of the property on which they worked (Nieto Cabrera n.d., 1).

⁷ According to Munro Edmonson (1959, 127), Alfonso Caso’s approach to “the Indian problem” was acculturative, nationalistic, and dedicated to the idea that “folk art needs to be protected against undesirable commercial and tourist influences.” Indigenismo should not be a romantic or egalitarian liberal project, but instead seek equality “just between equals” (Caso 1958, 102, quoted in Edmonson 1959, 127). Equality must be sought via “the transformation of [the Indians’] culture, changing the archaic, deficient—and in many cases harmful—aspects of this culture into aspects more useful for individual and community life.” The ultimate goal: “An indigenist policy means, in sum, transforming three million individuals who live within the national territory and are theoretically considered Mexican into three million Mexicans who really contribute to their own progress and to the progress of Mexico” (1958, 50, quoted in Edmonson 1959, 127).

⁸ For a discussion of the *costumbrismo* tradition connected to Ecuadorian *indigenismo*, see Oña (2004).



Figure 2: Indians from Quito, Ecuador, 1868 (www.loc.gov) | 1 photographic print | LOT 4831, vol. 1, no. 46 [P&P] | LC-USZ62-78963 (b&w film copy neg.).
Courtesy Library of Congress.

state as ‘pluricultural and multiethnic’” (Mattiace 2007, 203). A few pages earlier, Mattiace summarizes key comparative elements:

In the 1980s and 1990s, differences between Indigenous policy in Ecuador and Mexico rested less on the relative strength of the state and its ability to penetrate the countryside and more on the strength of independent Indian organizations. Today, Indian organizations in Mexico and Ecuador frame their demands for land, autonomy, and rights as “equality in difference.” This mix of demands—for equal rights and for rights to difference—is not new. What is new, in terms of Indigenous demand making, is that Indian organizations are proposing alternative models to the classic model of the nation-state, forcing states to rethink the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples. Support for these alternative nation-building models is coming from outside as well as from within: from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating on the regional and international levels, from intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and from internationally based foundations (Mattiace 2007, 197).

Despite these different histories, which resulted in different types of indigenist policy in the respective states, a type of convergence has occurred that signals the return to what might be called an “Americanist indigenism” influenced by global forces similar to the early days of the nineteenth century when the International Congress of Americanists and other organizations looked to both North and South American expressions of Indigenous culture to form general contrastive ideas to counter European dominance (Fine-Dare and Rubenstein 2009, xiii-xv). One of the biggest changes from the 1980s to the present has been the shift from ethnic identity in general and indigeneity in particular, passing from what Hernán Ibarra (2003, 1) calls a state of negativity and stigmatization to one that is more positive as identity has been collectively positioned in the middle of demands directed mainly to the State. Another key difference is that global conversations regarding indigeneity are initiated and carried out by Indigenous peoples themselves, who exchange ideas regarding differences and similarities at international meetings such as the Águila and Cóndor (Sánchez Palma and Prado 2011), or in the UN Permanent Forum (2013).

A central, if not primary, frustration of Indigenous people anywhere in the world is that they are often asked to make a choice between retaining their cultural values and characteristics and achieving access to justice and resources. This, in fact, is the dilemma facing all persons within liberal regimes, where the principle of equality is often reduced to that of sameness, while ironically claiming to prioritize the atomistic individual

above the collective. Amalia Pallares (2007, 147) discusses this dilemma for Ecuadorian Indigenous peoples by characterizing it as a request that Indigenous culture be separated from its producers. *Indigenismo* as a philosophy or cultural trope in Ecuador has thus taken very different if overlapping forms over the years, which can be characterized as political, cultural, material, and what I see as a convergence of all three taking place today. In ridiculous shorthand, Ecuadorian political *indigenismo* concentrates on the liberal project of finding ways to include Indigenous peoples into the nation state while, in a fashion similar to that of Mexico, finding ways to identify the nation state with unique characteristics drawn selectively from Indigenous culture. Cultural *indigenismo* emphasizes not only the pre-Columbian past, but also the rights of Indigenous populations to express and learn their art forms, unique beliefs and practices, and especially their languages in forms appropriate to their epistemological frameworks and social organization. The right to exercise Indigenous forms of justice is included here, which dovetails with political *indigenismo* and links to material *indigenismo*, or the expression of rights to fair wages, full access to the justice system, demarcated territories, and natural resources.

Urban Indigeneity and the Hummingbird Collective

An important but sometimes overlooked factor complicating considerations of just who can claim to be an Indian and what rights they have is where they live. In the case of Indigenous urbanites, the issue is not only that related to laws allowing the creation and retention of communal lands, but also to the widespread idea that to “be Indian” means to live in rural areas. Residing in the city connotes migration and/or a loss of Indigenous identity and cultural repertoire; in other words, it means for some to be a “cholo” who has walked away from legitimacy grounded in a rural-based collective (see Albro 2010 for an excellent study of the dilemmas of urban indigeneity in Bolivia).

As the economic and communication bases of both rural and urban areas change as a result of greater ease of transportation and a greater dissemination of information (Swanson 2010), it may be time to rethink the “rural-urban continuum.” William Waters (2007, 138) states the following in his study of the aftermath of agrarian reform to communities outside of Salcedo, Cotopaxi Province, Ecuador: “The very meaning of rurality is ... open to new interpretations involving complex links between different sectors of society and the economy” (see Vicenti Carpio [2011] for a similar discussion regarding Indigenous residents of Albuquerque,

New Mexico). It is not enough, however, to rethink Tönnies; a serious material consideration must be addressed: How do Indigenous peoples who live in cities without access to communal lands claim collective rights granted to Indigenous peoples under the Ecuadorian Constitution?

One local strategy that is laying the groundwork for making claims to water and other resource and territorial rights is under construction by La Corporación Kinde—the Hummingbird Collective (“the Kindes”)—centered primarily in at least five houses built on property acquired by ex-*huasipungueros* following the 1964 Agrarian Reform. The activities of this urban *ayllu*, or extended family, demonstrate, I believe, the transformed, globalized, and even coopted version of twenty-first century *indigenismo* in Ecuador. The Kindes assert both material and cultural goals in seeking recognition, access to resources, and pluriculturalism if not plurinationality and transculturalism. Their work not only calls into question understandings of indigeneity based on ethnic boundaries situated in rural areas, but also distinctions made between ruralness and urbanity, class and culture. Ironically, the experiences of residents of the capital city of Ecuador that serves as the seat of national government and CONAIE, the Indigenous federation, reflects their *distance* from both state power and national Indigenous political recognition. The Kindes seek to close this gap through a variety of interconnected means briefly outlined below.

First, the Kinde group engages with government resources—primarily via the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Quito—through writing grants to support educational programs, semi-private ritual activities, and widely advertised public performances of dance genres, music, sanctioned graffiti, museum exhibits, photographic displays, and the reading of brief reports. In order to provide authentic experiences to the public and to internally recuperate threatened cultural practices, this work has involved conducting interviews, oral histories, and workshops for several years as part of the cultural center they created in one of their family’s houses.

Members of the collective have been actively collaborating with municipal employees (e.g., an engineer who has been working with them on their greenhouse irrigation system, and the Director of the Municipality of Quito’s Cotocollao Cultural Development Center, who authorized an exposition of costumes and photos), and anthropologists. As one of the anthropologists, I am involved in complex ways as the Municipality sees me as a connection with not only the Kinde group but also the Yumbada of Cotocollao. The other anthropologist most involved teaches in an applied anthropology program at a Quito university and supervises students who conduct field research in *barrios* such as San Enrique de Velasco and

make short documentary films about them. This anthropologist has also written a song about what it means to be Kitu Kara that he has taught to Kinde elementary school children and performed with them on stage when they conducted end-of-year ceremonies in the university auditorium.

This leads to a second, although now substantially transformed, key part of the Kinde Cultural Center. El Mensajero del Saber (“wisdom messenger”—a term for the hummingbird, or *kinti/kinde* in Kichwa) was an alternative or experimental elementary school centered around ideas similar to those found in the Indigenous Amawtay Wasi University (2013), but which the collective came up with on its own. They called their educational program Indigenous and “intercultural,” but resisted following strict guidelines set up by the bicultural/intercultural educational office, DINEIB, saying that they should be able to define indigeneity in their own way. Two key components of this self definition are 1) appropriate and sustainable organic gardening in the city (they have two organic greenhouses on one of the family’s property and sell produce at the local farmer’s market set up by the municipality on Friday mornings); and 2) freedom for all people, including and especially children, from domestic violence (Taller Cultural Kinde 2007).

Although the school ran for four years, it ultimately had to change gears, as the Ministry of Education would not give them permission to operate officially because they met almost none of the basic guidelines. While many of the parents enrolled their children in other schools so that they could receive their elementary diplomas, others stayed at Mensajero del Saber, which operated during its final year as a “distance education” wing of the long-standing bilingual education school located in the south end of Quito, Tránsito Amaguaña. The school has now been transformed into an after-school program for children and an adult cultural education center for residents coming from a variety of social classes in the neighborhood. The information presented in “Casa Kinde” workshops and public “*conversatorios*” derive from oral histories and other sources of information regarding the prehistory, history, and contemporary life for residents of northwest Quito. Visiting friends, relatives, and other cultural centers in the Quito area is a particularly important activity for purposes of self-education and idea exchanges (for instance, regarding the meaning of *sumak kawsay*, instantiated in the Ecuadorian Constitution and glossed as “el buen vivir,” or “the good life”), with trips to local communities such as Alaspungo, Uyachul, Catzuqui de Velasco, Santa Anita, Santa Isabel, Parcayacu, Pomasqui, Romicucho, Kisapincha, Karapungo, Calderón, and Llano Chico, with more distant forays to communities in provinces such as Imbabura, Pastaza, and Sucumbíos growing in frequency.

Another important dimension to the collective's discourse and activities, particularly for those who also participate in the Cotocollao Yumbada, is their disagreement with and even opposition to the Catholic Church. In their view, by heightening its rhetoric against "pagan folklore" over the past decade, the Church has lessened its cooperation with and tolerance for spiritual and cultural diversity and demonstrated how out of touch it is with its potential constituents in the twenty-first century. This contributed, for example, to the Kinde members incorporating alternative spiritual practices into a Catholic mass held during the 2012 festival celebrating San Juan (St. John the Baptist) presided over by a French priest sympathetic to interculturalism and Indigenous practices who was contracted especially for the occasion.

To achieve their goals of alternative spirituality that disconnect newly inscribed indigeneity from the historical hacienda/Catholic repressive machinery, some of the activities of the Kinde group have cautiously incorporated some pan-spiritual or what might be called "New Age" rhetoric and goals into their activities. As their familiarity with the Kichwa language and practices increases, however, they have abandoned some less "Andean" rhetorical notions and practices. For instance, the Kinde members along with others who dance with the Cotocollao Yumbada have not returned to the archaeological site of Tulipe during the spring solstice, something that the Municipality once advertised prominently to tourists. Now that the site has been "opened" in an Andean spiritual way, the Yumbada dance leader says that there is no longer any need to dance at Tulipe, tourists or no tourists. In addition, the Kindes are involved in organized public activities ranging from occupying one of the two hills located in central Quito—the "female" Itchimbía—in order to effect political change through dance,⁹ to hiking up the Pichincha volcano to conduct ceremonies and assert ownership of a water source they believe is at risk of being completely lost to them. They couch these activities in terms of Andean concepts such as *ayni* and *minka*, adding "*corazonar*" (linked to and partly derived from *shungu*, or heart-soul in Kichwa) to the

⁹ The public was invited to "*corazonar*" in 2012 at Itchimbía according to an announcement posted on the social networking site, Hotlist: "Urgidos por la necesidad de aportar—sin cálculo—desde lo que somos y hacemos a la construcción del Ecuador del presente-futuro, te invitamos a Corazonar en el Yata Pajtá de Itchimbía, durante la próxima Luna Creciente (26 de julio al 2 de agosto del 2012)" (<http://www.hotlist.com/e/Corazonar-en-el-Yata-Pajt%C3%A1-de-Itchimb%C3%ADa-@-Parque-Itchimb%C3%ADa-Quito-Quito-Ecuador/412741702104844> [no longer available online as of Jan. 25, 2013]).

mix (see Wutich 2011 regarding the “moral economy of water” in urban Bolivia).

As part of its integrated stand in support of gender equity and against domestic/intimate violence, the Kinde Corporation has a “no alcohol” (except for fermented corn beer called *chicha*, that is very female labor intensive to produce—see Figure 3) preference that is forwarded with great sensitivity towards elders and others who they know would find it very difficult to completely leave alcohol behind, particularly during times of festival. Their approach is one of example, stated publicly for reasons of health, but more privately for reasons of doing battle with the image of the “drunken festival Indian” still persistent throughout Latin America. Nevertheless, what must seem like a Protestant-influenced, puritanical rejection of distilled alcoholic beverages must seem like an affront to what it means to worship, to hope, and to celebrate for many residents.



Figure 3: Festival sponsor’s sister making *chicha de jora* (sprouted corn flour beer) for the San Juan festival, 2012. Photo by K. Fine-Dare.

Some Kinde members are aware of the contradictions that emerge from embracing what many see as non-Indigenous, “Western” (if Asian-influenced) spiritual values while consciously doing battle with *blanqueamiento*, or “whitening,” which has acculturative as well as socioeconomic connotations (see Whitten 2003). To many of the “original” residents of this neighborhood (*gente originario*), the basis of their identity lies in the devotion to Catholic saints, the predominance of masculinity throughout all domains of existence, and working hard so that their children might be educated and find meaningful if not lucrative professions. As prayer to, feeding of, and dancing for the saints is a sine qua non of worldly as well as spiritual success, advocating abandonment of such in the name of “indigeneity” or even “*sumak kawsay*” may well feel like they are moving backwards.

Finally, various members of the collective communicate their views to others by means of public graffiti and murals, and of social networking media, including email, text messaging, Facebook, and YouTube. Some of these messages are transmitted via a local organization known as the “Red Colectivo de Cotocollao” (Cotocollao Collective Network), whose active members include two women who have migrated to Ecuador from Spain.

While the Kindes maintain a connection to the Kitu Kara Consejo, or governing body, they remain skeptical and cautious regarding that organization’s ability to achieve goals important for, especially, those members who reside in Quito (see Fine-Dare 2010; Gómez 2007a, 2007b). In short, the Kinde collective engages with a wide variety of outsiders to achieve goals related to recognition, cultural recuperation, community health and welfare, water rights claims, and protest against what they see as ancestral territory being usurped by state and private building projects that have torn out much of the surrounding forest supposedly protected by the city. While indigeneity is central to these goals, it is less in the sense of asserting personal or even collective “identity” as it is creating and “exercising” Indigenous forms of sociality, organization, and symbolic claim-making to territory. These activities may be more in line with the goals of the National Federation of Indigenous, Peasant, and Black Organizations (FENOCIN) than they are with those of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities in Ecuador (CONAIE) because of the greater inclusion, if understated, of the roles of class and what I call “transculturative acculturation,” but at this point I have not heard anyone speak of such an ideological affinity. As indigeneity remains central to the discourse of the Kinde collective, a look at the relationship of non members to the collective might still be understood within the framework of class-inflected twenty-first century *indigenismo* (see Egberg 2011). In the end, the main project seems to be how to de-link *indigenismo* from

racial/racist lumping ideologies as it is connected more strongly to ethnogenesis and cultural recuperation.

Reflections upon *neoindigenismo*

For many scholars of the Americanist tradition, speaking up with authority on indigeneity has become a necessary professional task that is nonetheless fraught with the risk of opening oneself to criticisms both logico-historical and moral-ethical (see Beteille 1998 and Cruikshank 2004). Anthropologists who evince positions of advocacy for Indigenous rights are sometimes accused of paternalistically and authoritatively forcing individuals with complex histories into an identity location they might rather not assume. Some Ecuadorian archaeologists are especially skeptical and dismissive of claims to indigeneity on the part of both anthropologists and their subjects that try to establish such without lines of evidence going back to material prehistoric evidence and residence in rural communities that still speak Indigenous languages. In a kind of reverse ventriloquism, critics put other motives into the actions of their colleagues and position themselves as truer defenders of those people who have had unwanted identities foisted on them.

In the title to this chapter I place (neo) in parentheses to signal that many of the characteristics that have been identified as a new form of classic indigenism have really nothing new about them conceptually, but rather reflect the ways the category has broadened to include many others who engage in the process. One characteristic of neoindigenism as defined by researchers is that of “cultural cannibalism,” whereby cultural practices and objects are eaten up by the developmental projects of late capitalism, including tourism, national branding, and justification schemes for getting large grants and reporting their success (Bretón 2007). To say that culture is cannibalized is to imply that this has been against the knowledge or will of its producers and that a new form of savagery has been unleashed. The critiques of this type of cynical indigenism connect to those of social and educational multiculturalism as well as political pluriculturalism, which are seen as asymmetrical projects that superficially acknowledge and engage with ethnic entities while selectively displaying, using, and consuming certain aspects expeditiously.

Díaz-Polanco and Swarthout (1987, 88) have articulated another interpretation of neo-indigenism as something promoted by North American institutions such as the Indian Law Resource Center “in response to a tendency on the part of Latin American ethnic movements to ally

themselves with revolutionary forces.”¹⁰ This type of neoindigenism identifies Indigenous peoples as part of separate, Fourth World struggles for “self-determination,” ones that should be suspicious of alliances with workers’ parties, revolutionary movements, and any coalitions not specifically “Indian.” While this raises a can of worms largely outside the scope of this chapter, it is in my opinion a valid issue that needs to be revisited.¹¹

The whole question of forming alliances, whether those are with revolutionary movements, anthropologists, or other “friends of the Indian,” must be viewed in terms of very different and complex historical and national contexts. At any rate, the issue demands consideration of the role of anthropologists in contemporary indigenist movements. Does forming alliances with non-Indians in seeking redress of environmental, labor, and other “material” concerns mean a de-centering of culture in the political arena? As Lêda Martins (2009, 249) asks, based on her work with the Indigenous Macuxi of Brazil, who are often labeled as “deculturated” *cabocos* or *caboclos*: “If Indigenous politics decenters culture, how would anthropology redefine Indians as subjects? What is the place for anthropologists in North America, in this new scenario of regional politics?” Furthermore, if “self-determination” becomes a key defining term for any claims to indigeneity, what does that mean for Indigenous peoples who live in the city and who participate in groups of association rather than “pueblos”? To speak of urban indigeneity means necessarily to talk about non-essentialized identities, multiple alliances, and other forms of border-crossing sociality that render any kind of “*indigenismo*” a process rather than a policy.

Conclusion: Re-Indigenismo?

Indigenism developed as a response to the racial lumping of broad and diverse categories of people for purposes of economic gain and social control under conditions of foreign empire building that had labor and resource extraction and later colonization as central goals. In the Americas diverse peoples were categorized as “Indian” and denigrated as sub-humans who lived outside of urban and urbane places where processes of

¹⁰ See also Gnerre and Bottasso (1986) for an excellent analysis of the connections between *indigenismo* and the Indigenous political movement in Ecuador.

¹¹ For instance, the Native American and Indigenous Studies program at the college where I work insists that one of the central educational and political goals of the program is that of promoting “self-determination” for tribal peoples throughout the world.