

# IMAGINING ECUADORIANS

## Historicizing National Identity in Twentieth-Century Otavalo, Ecuador

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*Abstract: In 1955, a monument to Inca warrior Rumiñahui was erected in Otavalo's central plaza. In this article, I study the ways in which competing imaginings of the Ecuadorian nation have shaped the material and symbolic trajectory of the monument. The monument was the outcome of a struggle for hegemony between nonindigenous elites. The current appropriation of the monument by the local indigenous population, however, is at odds with the ideological purpose for which it was built. The initiative to build the monument emerged from the public sphere—which at that time excluded indigenous peoples—in a context of national debates about the Indian problem. The widespread notion that the indigenous people of Otavalo were exceptional propelled the local nonindigenous elite to debate the Indian problem and shape, in the process, a public sphere. Elucidating the workings of the public sphere in the racialization of indigenous peoples, I aim to contribute to the academic literature about the relationship between Indian and nation in Ecuador. This literature has focused on the role that either the state or the private sphere has played in this racialization and has not paid enough explicit attention to the public sphere.*

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

—*Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, "Gestación de la nacionalidad"*

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

—*Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities*

Rumiñahui was the leader of the 1530s Inca resistance to the Spanish conquest in the northern Andes. In 1955, a statue honoring him as an Ecuadorian national hero was erected in the Plaza Bolívar, Otavalo's urban center. Such commemorative efforts to historicize national identity raise the question of "who imagines

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what and when" (Duara 1996). In this article, I study the ways in which competing imaginings of the Ecuadorian nation have shaped the material and symbolic trajectory of the monument to Rumiñahui. I define imagining the nation as the labor of giving meaning to it, of conceiving its nature, boundaries, origins, and future. I aim to demonstrate, first, that the monument to Rumiñahui was the outcome not only of nation-building efforts but also of a struggle for hegemony between non-indigenous elites, and, second, that the ideological purpose for which the monument was built differs radically from the current ideological appropriation of the monument by the local *indígenas* (indigenous persons).<sup>1</sup> Being that the initiative to build the monument emerged from the public sphere, I also aim to elucidate the workings of the public sphere in the racialization of the *indígenas*.

The construction of the monument to Rumiñahui was a nonindigenous initiative in the context of an ongoing debate about the origins of Ecuadorian nationality: Was the Ecuadorian nation solely the heir of Spain, or did it have its roots in preconquest times? In Latin American countries with significant indigenous populations, national origin and filiation had been inherently intertwined with what was called *el problema del indio* (the Indian problem), the debates about the compatibility of the indio—an objectifying image of the indigenous populations—with nation-states aspiring to be modern (Larson 2004). Considering that the indio was an obstacle for national progress because of his archaism, the nonindigenous debaters asked: Is the indio redeemable? If so, how do we incorporate him into national life?

The scholarly discussion on the relationship between indios and nation in Ecuador has mostly focused on the role that the state has played in their racialization. Andrés Guerrero (2003, 296) argues that for most of republican times the state delegated the administration of the highland *indígenas* to the owners of the haciendas and to petty local functionaries. Under this regime of customary citizenship, "everything having to do with Indian people was decentered toward the limits of the state," ending in the private sphere of the haciendas or in the "hands of the petty functionaries who confused the public with the private." Guerrero emphasizes that it was the exclusion of the *indígenas* from local and state politics that, by opposition, constituted citizenship. Other scholars give the state a more prominent role in the construction of the Indian other. Contingent processes of nation building, labor procurement for public works, and agrarian struggles have impelled the state to intervene not only in the governance of *indígenas* but also in the shaping of the racial-ethnic categories (Clark and Becker 2007; Foote 2006; Prieto 2004).<sup>2</sup> Miller (2006, 212) claims that the "split-focus" of the research, studying either "nationalism as a manifestation of political power, focusing on the state" or "national identity as a cultural community, focusing on society" has obscured the relation between state formation and nation building. All things

1. Considering that processes of social categorization are contextual and relational, I refrain from translating the labels *indio*, *indígena*, and *blanco* (white) into English. In addition, persons may self-identify as members of one category but have another foisted on them. Thus, a *blanco* person in Otavalo may not be identified as a white person in English-speaking countries. I use the analytical term *non-indígena* to refer to persons who self-identify as *blanco* or *mestizo*.

2. The full literature is too extensive to be cited here.

considered, the literature has paid little attention to the workings of the public sphere in processes of racialization.<sup>3</sup>

According to Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere is the realm of social life in which public opinion is formed. Participating in the political public sphere, individuals and groups influence political will and state policy. Habermas (1964, 49) underlines that access to the public sphere “is guaranteed to all citizens,” and that the state is “the executor of the political public sphere,” but “it is not part of it.” Following these ideas, I aim to examine the relationship between the public sphere and the Indian problem in Otavalo. Rather than representative, Otavalo is a privileged site from which to view the Indian problem. As Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999, 12) argues, the indígenas of Otavalo have long held “a special place in the national imagination.” Their “cleanliness,” entrepreneurship, and relative prosperity have set them apart from the wretchedness and backwardness of the stereotypical indio. During the mid-twentieth century, this exceptionality propelled local non-indígenas to debate on the Indian problem and shape, in the process, a public sphere. They analyzed the indigenous ways of being and suggested state policy to cope with the Indian problem, all in the name of the nation but from the perspective of a provincial elite. The analysis of these debates, which they carried out in local magazines, not only enables a more nuanced reading of the construction of national belonging and exclusion but also reveals the ways in which competing elite imaginings of the nation responded dialogically to each other.

#### IMAGINING ECUADORIAN HEROES

On Sunday August 30, 1998, hundreds of indigenous demonstrators occupied the Plaza Bolívar and chanted, “Down with Villareal! Rumiñahui is not moving!” The mayor, Fabián Villareal, wanted to replace the monument to Rumiñahui with one to Simón Bolívar, the hero of the 1820s wars of independence. Mayor Villareal planned to move the former to a new site, the Plaza Rumiñahui, yet to be built at the outskirts of the city (Mora 1998; Guzmán 1998). The monument to Rumiñahui had been erected by the civic organization Asociación 31 de Octubre<sup>4</sup> and an ad hoc military committee. The man behind the effort was a prominent member of the association, the journalist and writer Enrique Garcés. The statue of Bolívar, donated by the government of Venezuela in 1959, was located in the assembly hall of the municipality (Concejo Municipal de Otavalo 1959).

The proposed relocations of the monuments were not merely about having each of the heroes in their corresponding plazas. Sending Rumiñahui to the margins and locating Bolívar at the center was an effort to restore the ethnic civic order (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2007, 360). The mayor was trying to reestablish what

3. Guerrero claims that the “administration of dominated populations” is a “notion of citizenship conceived of as a field of power for social agents in the political public sphere as conceived by Jürgen Habermas” (2003, 275). However, the “immediate and quotidian strategies of power” that are the focus of his analysis belong, as he argues, much more to the private than to the public sphere.

4. The association was named after the date on which Simón Bolívar upgraded the status of Otavalo from village to city in 1829.

Charles Hale, in his study of Ladino responses to Mayan political activism in Guatemala, has called the “separate and unequal” mode of governance. In practice since colonial times, this mode of governance assigned supposed proper public places to indígenas, either restricting their access to some spaces or silencing their existing presence in other spaces. It did so by portraying a “stark, almost unbridgeable chasm” between indigenous and nonindigenous persons, assigning relatively fixed characteristics to each group by means of binary oppositions such as rural/urban, nature/culture, and primitive/civilized (cf. Hale 2006, 79).

The mayor’s intention also echoed the ways in which the Indian problem had constructed indígenas as marginal to the nation. From June 1990, when indígenas irrupted onto the national political arena, staging a massive uprising, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement has challenged not only the proposed solutions to the Indian problem, ranging from exclusion to assimilation, but also its epistemological underpinnings, a way of knowing that constructed indígenas as objects, not subjects, of history. During the 1990s, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement shook “the foundations of the postcolonial nation-state” (Bretón 2003, 220) and constituted one of the strongest indigenous movements in Latin America (Yashar 2005, 85). However, from 2003 onward, the movement has been weakened by government co-option, political fragmentation, and a lack of clear objectives. What lies ahead is unknown, but it is unquestionable that contemporary indigenous activism has deeply transformed Ecuadorian society. Imaginings of Ecuador and what it means to be Ecuadorian cannot exclude the indígenas any longer.

In the 1998 demonstration in Otavalo, indigenous leaders were vocal and assertive. They criticized the mayor and threatened to expand the protest. Indigenous intellectual José Quimbo said, “We are not going to permit the moving of the statue out from this plaza.” He claimed that the mayor did not have a proper idea of the significance of Rumiñahui for Ecuadorian nationality, in contrast to a group of intellectuals from Otavalo, including Enrique Garcés and Gonzalo Rubio Orbe, “who have exalted and defended his name” (Mora 1998). On September 5, the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI) published in the daily *Diario del Norte* a statement claiming that the most recent Ecuadorian Constitution, promulgated in June of the same year, had granted indigenous peoples the rights of self-definition and autonomous use of the symbols of their identity. “Unfortunately,” according to the FICI, “these social, political, and cultural achievements have not been fully understood by some parts of the population, in particular, by the mayor of the canton of Otavalo. He is trying, unilaterally and without consultation, to relocate the monument of Rumiñahui out of the central plaza of the city.” The statement ends in defiance: “We consider the mayor of this city responsible for the consequences that his decision may provoke” (FICI 1998).

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

by the *tenientes políticos*, the civil parish officials (Korovkin 2001, 44). The erection of the statue of Rumiñahui in 1955 did not change the blanco status of the plaza or the discriminatory practices against the indígenas. The apparent contradiction between the glorification of an indigenous historical figure and discrimination against the indígenas was an example of what Cecilia Méndez, in her study of Peruvian creole nationalism, has called “Incas, yes; Indios, no”: the simultaneous exaltation of a glorified indigenous past and repudiation of the indigenous present in the constitution of dominant conceptions of nationality (1996).

The initiative to build the monument to Rumiñahui did not emerge from the state but from the public sphere, which at that time was out of bounds for indígenas. From the outset, they were disenfranchised because literacy was a requirement for voting. It was not only that most indígenas were illiterate, lacking schools in most of their communities, but also that those who learned to read and write tended to become non-indígenas. For non-indígenas, it was inconceivable that the indígenas could contribute to the debates taking place in the public sphere (Clark 1998a, 383). It is highly unlikely that indígenas would have protested against the moving of the statue of Rumiñahui when the separate and unequal mode of governance was still in place, when indígenas had yet to gain a voice in local politics. Mayor Villareal might not have realized that by 1998 this mode of governance had become, in Raymond Williams’s terms, residual (1977, 121–127).<sup>5</sup>

#### SEARCHING FOR NATIONAL ORIGINS: HISPANICISM VERSUS INDIGENISMO

In articulating a notion of Ecuadorian nationality that excluded indigenous peoples, the most prominent thinker was the aristocrat Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, an archeologist, historian, industrialist, and hacendado. In 1946, in a discourse commemorating the fourth centennial of the Episcopate of Quito, he claimed, “Ecuadorian nationality was engendered the day in which Sebastián de Benalcázar, Diego de Almagro, and Pedro de Alvarado, after joining armies and under the leadership of the first, decided to establish definitively Castilian populations in the northern extensions of the Inca Empire” ([1946] 1960, 316). The conquistadors, each leading its own army, had been outrunning each other trying to get their hands on Inca gold. For Jijón, Latin American nations were entirely conquistadors’ affairs: “Hispano-American nations are engendered when, by the work of the conquering drive, a new collective entity is established in American soil” ([1946] 1960, 317).

Jijón was the top contributor to what Ernesto Capello has called “domestic Hispanicism,” an ideological movement by Ecuadorian conservative elites that explicitly eulogized identification with Spain, articulating the idea that tradition and religion had a transformative potential to redeem the Ecuadorian nation. Domestic Hispanicism also denied any indigenous contribution to the constitution of Ecuadorian nationality (2003, 64). Jijón was a key figure in turning domestic Hispanicism into commemorative practice. In 1934, after becoming president

5. See Hale (2006, 82) for an application of Williams’s ideas to the analysis of ethnic relations in Guatemala.

of the city council of the municipality of Quito, he led the efforts to commemorate the fourth centennial of the Hispanic foundation of the city. As part of the celebration, the municipality made six plaques with the names and coats of arms of the 240 Spanish conquistadors who settled in Quito. The plaques were set on the facade of the cathedral, reflecting the ideological identification of Hispanicism with the Catholic Church (Capello 2003, 69–70).

In 1936 and 1938, the municipality published the two volumes of a biography of Benalcázar written by Jijón. In 1942, the municipality established the “Honorable Order of Knights of Quito Sebastián de Benalcázar,” a special award to those citizens that had contributed significantly to the progress of the city. In 1949, the city erected a statue of Benalcázar, which is still standing at the intersection of the Benalcázar and Olmedo Streets. The monument was inaugurated by Gonzalo Zaldumbide, a writer and diplomat who was a prominent Hispanicist. In 1933, he had published an essay entitled *El significado de España en América*. In this essay, Zaldumbide argues that “our America” is a “natural extension of Europe” in the New World (29). He also claims, “All the civilizable human features in the difficult Andean region, and in all the Americas, is the work of Spain or derives from its drive. How much do we owe to Spain!” (27).

Hispanicism was a wider ideological trend across Latin America. After the Spanish-American War in 1898, when Spain lost the colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines, Spanish intellectuals tried to reestablish Spain’s international influence by promoting the existence of a community of nations distinguished by a Spanish spiritual presence. This pan-Hispanicism received particularly strong support from the fascist dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera from 1923 to 1930 (Bustos 2007, 117). As constitutive of domestic Hispanicism, Jijón’s vision of Ecuadorian nationality was a response of the landed oligarchy of the highlands to a series of political challenges and national debates. First, it responded to the liberal drive to modernize the country, after the liberal revolution of 1895 led by José Eloy Alfaro. With the emergence of coastal Ecuador as a world exporter of cacao, the landed elite of the coast demanded a free national labor market, promoting labor mobilization. This was in opposition to the relations of production prevalent in highland haciendas, such as debt servitude, which relied on local subjection.

Jijón’s vision of Ecuadorian nationality also responded to the polemic about the historical authenticity of *La historia del Reino de Quito en la América meridional* (*The History of the Kingdom of Quito*), written by the Jesuit priest Juan de Velasco by the 1780s. Born in Riobamba, de Velasco wrote the narrative in Italy, after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish colonies in 1768. *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* is an account of the development, over five centuries, of a large pre-Columbian state ruled by the royal dynasty of the Scyris. After its publication in three volumes during the 1840s, *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* was enthusiastically adopted by the Ecuadorian state as the master narrative of the origins the nation (Stutzman 1981, 60). From then until the last years of the twentieth century, the narrative was taught in schools to generations of Ecuadorians—who mostly were non-indígenas because the school system did not effectively reach the indigenous populations until the 1970s. Notwithstanding its adoption as official



history, the truthfulness of *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* has been questioned since the 1860s. Critics have indicated that Juan de Velasco wrote the narrative 250 years after the conquest and that no one before him, including the early Spanish chroniclers of the conquest, had written about the Scyris.

As a self-trained archeologist, Jijón wanted to settle the issue for good. He conducted excavations in the areas mentioned by de Velasco; finding no archeological evidence of a centralized kingdom before the Inca expansion, he concluded that the narrative was false (1918, 37). He embarked on a campaign to eliminate it from the school curriculum but encountered strong resistance among patriotic intellectuals (Prieto 2004, 101). Against the widespread notion that colonial exploitation had degenerated the indios, he suggested that there was no higher ground from which they might have fallen. For Jijón, Ecuadorian indios had always been primitive (1918; [1929] 1960, 123). He argued that there was continuity in the fact that indios had been dominated subjects from preconquest times to the present. His perspective that indigenous cultures of Ecuador had little or no worth was consistent with his imagining of the Ecuadorian nation as having solely Hispanic origins.

Jijón's ideas were also at odds with the emergence of *indigenismo* in Ecuador. Indigenismo was an ideological movement among nonindigenous intellectuals that developed in several Latin America countries. Indigenistas promoted the study of indigenous cultures, took the indio as a subject matter in literary and artistic works, advocated the material improvement of indigenous populations, and made recommendations for government policies toward them. Even though they promoted the inclusion of indigenous heritages and histories in definitions of nationality, they were paternalist—self-appointed guardians of indigenous populations—and their solutions to the reputed Indian problem were assimilationist.

One of the main critics of Jijón was Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, the founding father of Ecuadorian indigenismo. In a series of articles published in the newspapers *El Comercio* and *El Día*, he claimed that archaeology in Ecuador was still in its infancy and that more time was needed for further research. Worried about the possibility of erasing *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* from textbooks, Jaramillo claimed that legends and history of primordial times were similar. He argued that legends were more powerful idioms to speak about origins because they were rooted in the sensibility and imagery of the people. This position convinced several thinkers that *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* should not be discarded but that it should be taught as the legend of the primordial times of the nation (Prieto 2004, 105). It did not matter that there was no evidence demonstrating that the narrative was a legend.

In 1922, Jaramillo published *El indio ecuatoriano: Contribución al estudio de la sociología indo-americana*. Jaramillo kept editing the text in subsequent editions, expanding the book until its definitive version in 1954. *El indio ecuatoriano* had a tremendous impact not only on politics, art, and society but also on the imagining of the nation. Jaramillo claimed that the Scyris could not be erased from the memory of Ecuadorians. What is more, he argued that the narrative was the very symbol of Ecuadorian nationality. It might be a legend or fable, but it was the genesis of Ecuadorian nationality. Jaramillo's staunch defense of *The History of the*

*Kingdom of Quito* was linked to his efforts to incorporate the indio into the nation. The indio, he argued, was the basic element of Ecuadorian nationality (1983, 1:70). Jaramillo was influenced by the Mexican Revolution, which he considered as a process of vindication of the Mexican indigenous populations. He also viewed the violence of the Mexican process as what could happen to Ecuador if the Indian problem was not resolved. Proposing land reform, he argued that the worldview supporting the property regime of latifundia, based on large estates, was on its way to extinction (1983, 2:29).

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

In 1918, imprisonment for debts was abolished, condemning *concertaje* to a slow death. However, the lives of indigenous laborers changed little as coerced labor arrangements continued. What changed was the formal definition of the relationship between the hacendado and the indigenous laborers. *Concertaje* turned into *huasipungo*, a relation of production in which labor was exchanged for the usufruct of a small plot of land (Lyons 2006, 60). Whereas Jijón was against the abolition of *concertaje*, Jaramillo denounced its continued existence despite the legal reforms that had banned it. *Huasipungo* relations of production lasted until the land reform of the 1960s.

For Jijón, the modern principles of equality were impossible to implement because the indios could never be like blancos. Mentioning that the conquistadores were of a different race, he argued that the colonial caste system, which was based on human nature, had survived. The indios were integrated into the nation only by Catholicism and the hacienda but not by citizenship. In the chapter "The Gestation of the Nation" in *Política conservadora*, he wrote, "A lack of foresight characterized their race. . . . As an infant, the indio always had needed the *ayllu* [the indigenous community], which was in the hands of the Inca. . . . Would the indio care about his liberty. . . . if the only thing he knew was to be forced to work for someone else's benefit? Thus, for the *concierto* [the indigenous peasant under debt bondage] the hacendado has been and is his . . . new Inca" ([1929] 1960, 123–124). According to Jijón, the hacendado supported the housing, food, clothing, and ritual expenses of the indio, and in exchange, the indio worked "all his life, without paying back his debt, which he was glad to increase even if his grandchildren would have to pay for it. Was not the plebeian indio destined for perpetual labor?" ([1929] 1960, 124).

Contemporary Ecuadorian intellectuals have widely criticized Hispanicism as a feudal cultural expression (see Bustos 2007, 118), but, as it is strongly related to



racial ideologies, it survives. An example is the current Fiestas de Quito, which celebrate the Spanish foundation of Quito with bullfights, raucous celebrations, and people wearing Spanish hats and drinking wine from Spanish wineskins. According to Bustos, "The overflowing Hispanophilia of the contemporary festivity" comes from the cultural assimilation "of the historical matrix of Hispanicist thought, structured between the 1920s and 1950s" (2007, 116).

Imagining the Ecuadorian nation, Jaramillo differed from Jijón on two crucial issues: the capacity of the indios to assimilate into supposedly national culture, and whom or what to blame for their current, miserable condition. For Jijón, the indios could never become blancos nor transform their mentality to participate in blanco culture. He saw the challenge as being "to adapt Western civilization to the mentality of the aborigines and, thus, 'ennoble' their rudimentary culture" (Prieto 2004, 115). In contrast, Jaramillo argued that the indios have always been an "apt human element for cultural realization, as it is proven by the Maya, Aztec, Inca, and Quiteña cultures." He argued that pure indios that "fulfill the cultivation of their intelligence have demonstrated exceptional aptitudes in the sciences, arts, and industries" (1983, 2:175). In contrast to Jijón, who attributed the condition of the indios to their supposed natural character and continuous experience of subjection, Jaramillo put the blame on the concentration of land in the hands of a few hacendados. Thus, the incorporation of indios into "the national active life" required first and foremost giving them land, either in private or communal ownership. Locating the indio at the core of the future of the Ecuadorian nation, Jaramillo claimed, "We need to redeem not only the indio but also the country. That is the question" (1983, 2:99).

It could be argued that Jaramillo defeated Jijón on two accounts. First, even though Jijón was correct about the nonexistence of the Scyris, *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* continued to be taught in schools. Second, Jaramillo's ideas about the incorporation of the indio would later become not only prevalent but also the official ideology of the Ecuadorian state during the 1970s.

#### THE INDIAN PROBLEM IN OTAVALO

The debates about the Indian problem played out differently in Otavalo than in other regional centers. In Otavalo, there was no in situ landowning oligarchy. The few families who owned most of agricultural land in the northern sierras ran their haciendas through administrators and lived comfortably in Quito, the national capital (Marchán Romero, Andrade, and Guevara Valencia 1984). During the mid-twentieth century in Otavalo, most non-indígenas were craftsmen and petty traders—tailors, barbers, shoemakers, and shopkeepers. The elite was mostly a middle class composed of merchants owning retail businesses and a few professionals and educators (Cooper 1965, 15). The first secondary school was founded in 1943, and for all of the twentieth century there was no higher education. Because of this, many well-to-do nonindigenous families sent their children to study in Ibarra, the provincial capital, or in Quito. Reaching adulthood, some of them moved permanently to Quito because in Otavalo respectable jobs were scarce. In Quito, nonindigenous *otavaleños* were stereotypically stigmatized

as *chagras*—an Ecuadorian term that characterizes people as unsophisticated or uncultivated because of their rural and/or provincial origin, derived from the Kichwa *chakra* meaning agricultural field.

In this context, nonindigenous intellectuals developed and promoted an attitude of pride in their birthplace, calling it *otavaleñidad*. In 1923, Fernando Chaves, the writer and school director who coined the term, claimed that *otavaleñidad* was a “localist sense, a fondness for the motherland, a mythology of the place, a devotion for the land” (quoted by H. Jaramillo, XI Seminario de Otavaleñidad, November 9, 2005). Under the rubric of *otavaleñidad*, these writers emphasized the influence of the landscape on their collective character, underlined the significance of Otavalo for Ecuadorian history and nationality, and celebrated their own intellectual and artistic production.

Reflecting their middle-class origins, *otavaleño* nonindigenous intellectuals were collectively more leftist than other regional elites, who were predominantly conservative. Many of them espoused socialism, and they strongly supported the indigenista position in the debates about the Indian problem. As early as 1924, a group of young adults in Otavalo organized the Liga de Cultura (Cultural League) José Vasconcelos. Under the guidance of Fernando Chaves, the Liga Vasconcelos promoted intellectual labor and cultural activities, organizing conferences, courses, workshops, and exhibitions (Jaramillo Cisneros 2005). Their enlightenment came from the ideas and actions of the Mexican philosopher and educator José Vasconcelos, who, after the Mexican Revolution, devised Mexican mestizo nationalism as a state project and initiated a crusade to bring education to the popular classes, including the establishment of schools for indigenous peoples. For *otavaleño* nonindigenous intellectuals, Mexico was becoming modern, effectively dealing with the Indian problem through the incorporation of the indigenous population. According to Fernando Chaves, writing in 1928, “the pioneer of the educational reform, which incorporates the great masses of indios into the nascent [Mexican] culture . . . is José Vasconcelos. . . . The current efforts in various countries to dignify the autochthonous races are rooted in the ideas of the Mexican apostle. This task has yet to begin in Ecuador” (Jaramillo Cisneros 2005, 121). The Liga Vasconcelos had its high point on June 30, 1930, when Vasconcelos visited Otavalo and was honored by the members of the Liga. From then on, the Liga ceased its activities (Pareja 1953).

In Otavalo, the debate on the Indian problem expanded into the written word. Local magazines published from the 1940s to the 1960s, such as *Otavalo Nuca Huasi* (*Our House*) and *Revista Municipal*, contain a great number of articles about the indio and indigenous redemption. Titles include “The Sociability of the Indio,” “The Value of Our Indios,” “Some Psychological Differences between Blanco, Mestizo, and Indigenous Children,” “The Indigenous Race as Economic Factor of the Country,” and “The Indígenas of Otavalo Represent the Most Advanced Groups of Ecuador.” This surge of interest in writing about the indio responded not only to explicit concerns about the quest for progress and the viability of the Ecuadorian nation but also to the writers’ construction of their own identity as supposedly modern, rational individuals in opposition to the indios. In addition, debating profusely on the Indian problem, nonindigenous intellectuals in Otavalo

were early supporters of *mestizaje*. Vis-à-vis the position of conservative thinkers, supporting *mestizaje* was considered a progressive stance.

Non-indígenas derived their knowledge claims from witnessing a few behavioral markers of indígenas, such as their subservient presentation of the self toward non-indígenas, the meagerness of their way of life, and their supposed uncontrolled drunkenness and wild conduct during festivities. Based on these observations, non-indígena intellectuals developed explanatory schemes attributing the backwardness and inchoateness of the Ecuadorian nation to the indio: "The Ecuadorian indio is not incorporated into nationality. He lives apart, without feeling or thinking the Ecuadorian nation. Ecuador has yet to resolve the Indian problem, as Mexico, Colombia, Brazil have done. For this reason, Ecuador still cannot act in terms of nationality" (Barrera 1942, 25).

Some writers argued that the state should intervene to "redeem the rural population," which was in a "deplorable state of social backwardness." Progress required instilling modern values and habits in indigenous minds. "It is necessary to raise the standard of living of the peasants, to inculcate in them a healthy dissatisfaction with the backward conditions of their current life. It is necessary to teach them the aspirations of the civilized man but without dissociating them from the life of rural work" (Chaves 1944, 50). The prerogative of non-indígenas of imagining an improved indio was based on a sense of "cultural infallibility," a certainty that their understandings were correct and morally superior (García 1942, 27), and on a deeply ingrained paternalism, the assumption that they were acting in the indígenas' best interest. Accordingly, many writers referred to indígenas as "*nuestros indios*" (our Indians).

For non-indígenas, indigenous drunkenness and its related economic exploitation epitomized everything that was wrong with the way of life of the indígenas. "On Saturdays and Sundays, the indios gather in the *chicherías* [corn beer joints] . . . and abandon themselves to Bacchus until they turn into brutes. They become the most quarrelsome and detestable beings. In Imbabura and other provinces . . . the commercialization of *chicha* has become the main income of many [nonindigenous] families, some municipalities, and even the treasury" (León 1953, 24). On the other hand, many writers wrote about the indio of Otavalo in relatively positive terms:

The indio of Otavalo . . . is . . . ethnically and aesthetically, the best specimen [*ejemplar*] among the indios existing in South America (Barrera 1942, 25).

Our indio, whose economic prosperity has put him in a position that some blancos would envy, has developed through hard work. He is an active being who works fully conscious of the profits that dedication might bring. For this reason, he has improved his appearance. He is a beautiful and clean specimen who takes good care of his belongings. By tradition, he is an asocial spirit. That is all. He is not a slave of the land. He is its master. (*Revista Municipal* 1945, 55)

The positive characterization of the indio is seriously undermined by the writers' usage of the Spanish word *ejemplar*, which refers to an individual animal or plant used as an example of its species. Notwithstanding this objection, claims of otavaleño exceptionality were common. One of the most prominent intellectuals articulating those claims was the self-trained anthropologist and historian Gon-

zalo Rubio Orbe. A student of Pío Jaramillo, Rubio Orbe became a leading indigenista, directing the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano in Mexico from 1971 to 1977. For Rubio Orbe, not all indígenas in Otavalo were advanced: "Some persons of [the community of] Punyaro have begun to free themselves from the inferiority complex [of the indígenas], especially due to interaction with the blancos. These attitudes, however, are very scarce and do not demonstrate a full overcoming. Despite living next to Otavalo, they have not progressed much in this regard. They differ significantly, for example, from the groups of Peguche, Quinchuquí and Ilumán, where people already have developed their own personality" (1955, 7). Rubio Orbe considered that the indígenas of the latter communities were the "most advanced in the country" because of "social osmosis," a process by which these indígenas had acquired some of the values and habits of the blanco population. Accordingly, these indígenas had self-esteem, initiative, and a jovial and confident disposition. They were sociable and communicative, and they did not let others exploit them. In Rubio Orbe's words, they were "*indios despiertos*," awakened Indians (1953, 44).

Two key historic events deeply influenced the debates about the Indian problem in Ecuador. The first was a border war with Peru in 1941, in which Ecuador lost a claim for 200,000 square kilometers of territory in the Amazonian rain forest. The military defeat meant that Ecuador had to renounce direct access to the Amazon, cutting off the future possibility of using the river for eastward trade. For Ecuadorian intellectual and political elites, anxious about the inchoateness of the Ecuador nation, the loss was traumatic. It deeply affected their debates about the historical identity of the nation. Considering that Ecuador had lost the war because the nation was not fully formed, the government created La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana in 1943 to "strengthen the national soul and clarify the vocation and the destiny of the nation" (Polo Bonilla 2002, 21). In addition, after the war, *The History of the Kingdom of Quito* was consciously reactivated to "avoid the traumatic realization that the Ecuadorian nation may have not existed since the beginning of time" (Ospina 1996, 121).

The second event was the defeat of Nazi Germany and its eugenicist ideologies. After World War II, UNESCO initiated a campaign against race and racism. Arguing that science did not support ideas that mental capacities were determined by race or that racial degeneration was the consequence of hybridization, the campaign claimed that race was not a biological fact but a social myth (UNESCO 1950). After WWII, formal references to indígenas in terms of race, such as "*la raza vencida*" (the defeated race) or "*la raza indígena*" (the indigenous race) fell increasingly into disuse (Prieto 2004, 243; Clark 1998b, 200).

As in Peru, as studied by Marisol de la Cadena (2000), social hierarchies in Ecuador were legitimized and naturalized no longer in terms of racial difference but of cultural difference. Subordinating race to culture—arguing that it is culture that matters as a marker of difference—allowed for both the rebuttal of biological determinism and the continuation of morally conceived colonial taxonomies. Accordingly, when the Ecuadorian government carried out the first national census in November 1950, it explicitly avoided the use of the term *race* as a category of analysis. According to Clark (1998b, 199), "The lack of information about race

can be seen as related to the emerging ideology of *mestizaje*, which argued that through education and the modification of behavior, Ecuadorians would all become alike. In the case of the census, this was manifested in the emphasis on the problem of ‘culture’ rather than race.” In Otavalo, the situation was contradictory. On the one hand, Otavalo had the most advanced *indios* in the country. On the other hand, the large population of *indios* dictated that the area was far behind in the process of *mestizaje* (Zumarraga 1944, 43).

Increasing recognition of the contribution of indigenous peoples to the nation led to inquiry about the indigenous past and present. In August 1966, a group of young nonindigenous intellectuals created the Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología (IOA). None of them had studied anthropology. Influenced by the political effervescence of the 1960s, they realized that “deep knowledge about [national] roots” was lacking (Cisneros 1992, 12). Throughout several decades, the IOA has supported and published very important work in cultural anthropology, ethnohistory, and archeology. In addition, it has continued to promote *otavaleñidad* with conferences and publications.

At the end of 1980s, the IOA became involved in actions that reflect the perseverance of Hispanicism. Since the city of Otavalo was growing considerably, the municipality entrusted the IOA with the naming of new streets. In two new neighborhoods, the IOA decided to use the names of *corregidores*, the colonial judicial and administrative authorities. According to the IOA, these men deserved commemoration because “they stood out for their honest administration, for defending the rights of the natives, or for establishing justice returning [indigenous] land” (Valdospino Rubio 1990, 23). This argumentation raises basic questions about national identity in Ecuador: Can a colonial administrator be judged as honest? Is it not contradictory to glorify both Rumiñahui and Benalcázar as national heroes, who fought against each other? On logical grounds, Hispanicism weakens Ecuadorian national identity on two accounts. First, exalting Spanishness by means of commemorating colonial agents invalidates patriotic claims about Ecuador being a fully independent nation. Second, since not all Ecuadorians can claim Spanish descent, Hispanicism is exclusionary.

#### HONORING RUMIÑAHUI, THE INDIGENOUS WARRIOR

Rumiñahui was turned into a national hero after the 1941 war. In contrast to Juan de Velasco, who had portrayed him as a usurper of the Inca throne, Ecuadorian intellectuals started to view Rumiñahui as a member of the Scyri dynasty who had defended “national” territory. Two prominent non-indígena intellectuals from Otavalo took part in this creation. In 1942, Gonzalo Rubio Orbe wrote a biography of Rumiñahui, arguing that the Inca warrior had established “solid historical bases for our nationality,” defending “the lands of the Kingdom of Quito” with heroism and resolution (Rubio Orbe 1944, 212). In 1953, Enrique Garcés wrote a panegyric and novelistic biography of Rumiñahui. Criticizing the biased perspective of the Spanish chroniclers, Garcés portrayed Rumiñahui as an Ecuadorian patriot. In the preface, he set forth his ideas about Ecuadorian nationality: “We

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

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

The history of the statue of Rumiñahui in Otavalo can be traced back to 1946, when Enrique Garcés proposed to build a monument depicting not Rumiñahui but an anonymous indigenous woman:

I think of an arrogant and sculptural bronze figure reproducing an india otavaleña, with the wonderful attire that only they know how to wear. . . . The india must be young, of impeccable attractive lines, designed if possible with the "sex appeal" that all bodies of beautiful and young females must have. . . . The india will be standing up, facing the sunrise. . . . Her pose must be of offering, her bearing between painful and rebellious. (Garcés 1946, 11)

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

It consists of keeping him as indio but well adapted to modern culture and life. The issue is not to dress him differently or cut his "guando" [the single braid used by males] but to assimilate him into the culture, to create for him another [social] environment for a decent existence. . . . We cannot agree with the loss of his autochthony . . . to be substituted by alien and foreign influences. We should defend the typical, the colors, but with new orientations for hygiene and civilization. (1954, 45)

Garcés argued that the indios did not need to lose their indigenusness, but what he considered of worth in indigenous culture was limited to the colorful and exotic. Among his ideas for the development of tourism in Otavalo was a proposal to have indigenous waitresses wearing their full attire to provide folkloric interest to potential visitors (1954, 43). In addition, his appreciation of the indios did not extend to other, less colorful indios, whose attire reflected their wretchedness.

In opposition to Hispanicism, Garcés claimed that the Ecuadorian nation was the product of not one but two cultures, Spanish and indigenous, and that the time had come to glorify not only the former but also the latter. According to him, the conquest did not supplant indigenous culture: "There was no substitution but enrichment. Those who argue that there was a full displacement of the



autochthonous elements betray the [national] ancestry and betray themselves. Historic denial cannot be followed by ethnic denial. . . . Our sole major Ecuadorian undertaking is a well-defined biological and psychological mestizaje" (1953b, 18).

In July 1953, *Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* published an unsigned article supporting the erection of the monument and explaining its conceptual foundations: "To the illustrious otavaleño public opinion, we set forth the following: Ecuadorian nationality is the product of two cultures, Spanish and indigenous. We have done justice to the former. In fairness, we should exalt and glorify the latter. Otavalo is a pre-eminent indigenous region, owing its fame and a great part of its economy to this condition. So, why we do not recognize this very truth?" (*Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* 1953, 40). According to the article, the idea was to erect an indigenous allegory, a sculpture of an indigenous woman standing on an islet and pouring water from a jar. The woman would represent Mother Earth, the islet would stand for the canton of Otavalo, and the water would point to the importance of this element in the valley. Garcés moved the project forward, consulting with artists, technicians, and bureaucrats. They reached a consensus that the project was "well conceived and convenient for Otavalo." The city council approved unanimously the construction of the sculpture, and the municipality provided funds for the construction of the ornamental base. Even the Asociación de Estudiantes de Otavalo stepped forward and provided a spotlight to illuminate the monument. Notwithstanding this success, the project also raised strong objections. People criticized the intention to put an india in the plaza. The article dismisses such criticism, arguing that it "does not have basis for a rational discussion" (*Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* 1953, 40–41).

Like Rubio Orbe, Garcés considered that indígenas of Otavalo were the most advanced in the country because of their contact with the blanco population. For him, as well as for many of his generation, mestizaje was a work in progress, far from completion. His proposal to form a unified Ecuadorian nation implies that not just any mestizaje was valid but only an enlightened one. On the whole, Garcés's ideas are subject to the criticism that Alan Knight poses to Mexican indigenismo: "It embodied the optimistic belief that acculturation could proceed in a guided, enlightened fashion, such that the positive aspects of Indian culture could be preserved, the negative expunged," but cultures are more than the sums of components, and "elements cannot be removed or added at will" (Knight 1990, 86–87).

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

A year later, the monument was done. *Otavalo Ñuca Huasi* published a drawing of the final monument on its cover and an article by Garcés explaining the motivation for the endeavor:

At the base of the patriotic intention of constructing the monument to Rumiñahui was the exaltation of Indianness, at least to the same levels that history has given to the Spanish conquerors . . . so now, the exalted indigenous contribution, which was admirable, might help to overcome the barbarous prejudices of race and caste. Race has been discredited in the light of science. Caste is an issue of nourishment and economy. In anthropology, the notion of race has been invalid for a while. Those persons who still use the term have fallen behind. They forget that the racist Germans have died following their horrendous doctrine of rabid dogs. (Garcés 1955, 10)

Garcés claimed that a biased history and social prejudice had divided the country into two peoples: blanco and indio. Stating that Mexico had “solved the problem correctly,” he argued that only the vindication of the indio could overcome the social and psychological ills caused by this division (1955, 10).

In 1976, in a posthumous homage to Enrique Garcés in the journal *Sarance*, Fernando Chaves wrote that Garcés’s generation, the group forming the Liga Vasconcelos, was at a crossroads between the “social exclusion” of Hispanicism and the incorporation of the indio into an authentic mestizo nation.

They opted for the indio, at the end of long and harsh debates and not a few hesitations. They were, of course, against the view of their seniors who had eluded, denied, and vilified the indio, after tying and exploiting him. Among them burst the heresy of starting a polemic against the Iberianist position of Gonzalo Zaldumbide, in 1925. They criticized him for his Hispanicism and backward social concepts. In addition, they did not forget to indicate the source of his attitude: privilege and the incomplete grasp of the deep Ecuadorian reality. . . . For them, it was the dark country, smelly and rather rough, that which had to be the foundation for the future construction of a unified nation, resolute and conscious about its goals. (Chaves 1976, 21–22)

In 1956, after the municipality of Otavalo erected the monument to Rumiñahui, indígenas did not identify with it. Individuals interviewed by the author who are now in their seventies and eighties did not know about Rumiñahui. “We did not know our history. At that time, I had never heard anything about Rumiñahui” (J. Lema, interview, July 5, 2008). They remembered that Otavalo was a city with a small population. Other than going to the Saturday feria, which was at the outskirts, indígenas seldom visited urban Otavalo. J. Lema recalled that his peers had told him that “mestizos of that time used to beat the indígenas.” Some indígenas stumbled upon the statue when they went to the Plaza Bolívar as forced laborers.

Gradually, however, the monument did its work. Indígenas increasingly learned about Rumiñahui in schools, as schooling opportunities for them expanded. They thought that the municipality had done a good thing erecting an image of an indígena, but they asked why Rumiñahui looked so different from them, not even wearing a braid (the statue has loose hair, down to the neck). For them, Rumiñahui looked more like a *yumbo*, an inhabitant of the tropical lower lands, stereotypically portrayed as a savage in many traditional dances in Otavalo. One of the elders claimed that indígenas have feelings of identification with Rumiñahui because “he was foresighted in defending our territory” (J. A. Conejo, interview, July 11, 2008). Agreeing with those who demonstrated against the moving of the monument, the elder did not mean national territory but indigenous, prequest



*Figure 1 The monument to Rumiñahui in the Plaza Bolívar, Otavalo, in 2005. Photograph by Sergio Miguel Huarcaya.*

territory. Garcés would be surprised by the way in which the indígenas have defended his statue, but he would be dismayed to find out that it has strengthened indigenous identity not in coalescence with but in opposition to mestizo, supposedly national, identity.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The monument to Rumiñahui, erected in 1955, was a response to the monument to Benalcázar, erected in 1949. As much as it was a nation-building initiative to rally indigenous people into Ecuadorian nationality, the monument to Rumiñahui was the product of the debate between two competing imaginings of the Ecuadorian nation. In Jijón y Caamaño's imagined community, the indígenas could not be citizens. In Garcés's, they could be citizens, but only if they left behind their ways of being. They had to change their subjectivity, though not their attire. Ultimately, the monument to Rumiñahui was geared to promote an enlightened mestizaje. Exposure to national discourses, however, "does not necessarily entail their adoption" (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996, 15). Contemporary indígenas in Otavalo have appropriated the monument to affirm an indigenous identity that rejects the assumption that indígenas have to assimilate into "national" culture to participate in the public sphere and in local and national politics.

In mid-twentieth-century Otavalo, the public sphere was far from the ideal of a space of universal access, but it formed public opinion, shaped local government,

and suggested state policy. The authors who participated in the debate presupposed that their interventions were written in the name of the nation, beyond personal interests and party politics. The public sphere that they created took the Indian problem as a focal point because these authors considered themselves as especially capable of contributing to its solution. They based their claims not only in having firsthand knowledge about the supposedly most advanced indígenas in Ecuador but also in their sense that Otavalo was a player in the construction of the Ecuadorian nation.

The racialization of the indígenas within the private sphere involved coercion in contexts of relationships of dependence. For its part, the state racialized the indígenas with differential policies that were anchored in a supposed correspondence of nonindigenous culture with the nation-state. In the public sphere in Otavalo, processes of racialization worked by naturalizing the exclusion of the indígenas in terms of their supposed incapacity to analyze or interpret their own life conditions. Equating illiteracy with ignorance and indigenous ways of life with backwardness, non-indígenas tacitly assumed that the indígenas did not have anything to say about the Indian problem. This regime of representation put most of the blame for the Indian problem on the indígenas themselves, ideologically concealing the myriad ways in which racial and ethnic discrimination had shaped their lives.

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