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Plurinationality:  
A Revolutionary Myth for Ecuador's Indigenous Movement

A thesis submitted to  
the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of  
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by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that the indigenous movement's demand that Ecuador be recognized as a plurinational state represents a revolutionary myth. Ecuador's indigenous movement emerged during the June 1990 *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* (Uprising of the Sun Festival) to become one of the region's strongest social movements. Plurinationality, a central demand of the indigenous movement, means the recognition through the state of the cultural, social, political, and economic diversity of the nationalities within Ecuador. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Peruvian marxist José Carlos Mariátegui borrowed the idea of the myth from French social critic Georges Sorel and proposed the myth of a socialist revolution. Using the concept of the revolutionary myth this thesis argues that plurinationality requires the politicization of the constructed identity of indigenous nationalities, influences the structure of the indigenous organization CONAIE, and informs the political-economic transformation of Ecuador initiated by the indigenous movement.

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## Acronyms

CONAIE – Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)

CONAICE – *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Costa del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Coast of Ecuador)

CONFENIAE – *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon)

ECUARUNARI – *Ecuador Runacunapac Richarimui*

FENOCI- *Federación Ecuatoriana Nacional de Campesinos y Indígenas* (National Ecuadorian Federation of Peasants and Indigenous)

FENOCIN – *Federación Ecuatoriana Nacional de Campesinos, Indígenas, y Negros*

FEI – *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (National Ecuadorian Federation of Peasants, Indigenous and Blacks)

FEINE – *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangelicas* (Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indigenous)

FOIN - *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de Napo* (Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Napo)

OPIP – *Organización del Pueblos Indígenas del Pastaza* (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza)

MUPP-NP – *Movimiento Unido Plurinacional Pachakutik – Nuevo Pais* (Unified Plurinational Movement Pachakutik – New Country)

PCE – *Partido Comunista del Ecuador* (Communist Party of Ecuador)

PSE – *Partido Socialista del Ecuador* (Socialist Party of Ecuador)

PSP – *Partido Socialista del Peru* (Socialist Party of Peru)

## Political Map of Ecuador



Figure 1.1 – Political Map of Ecuador (Source: <http://www.vmapas.com/Americas/Ecuador/maps-en.html>)

## Map of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

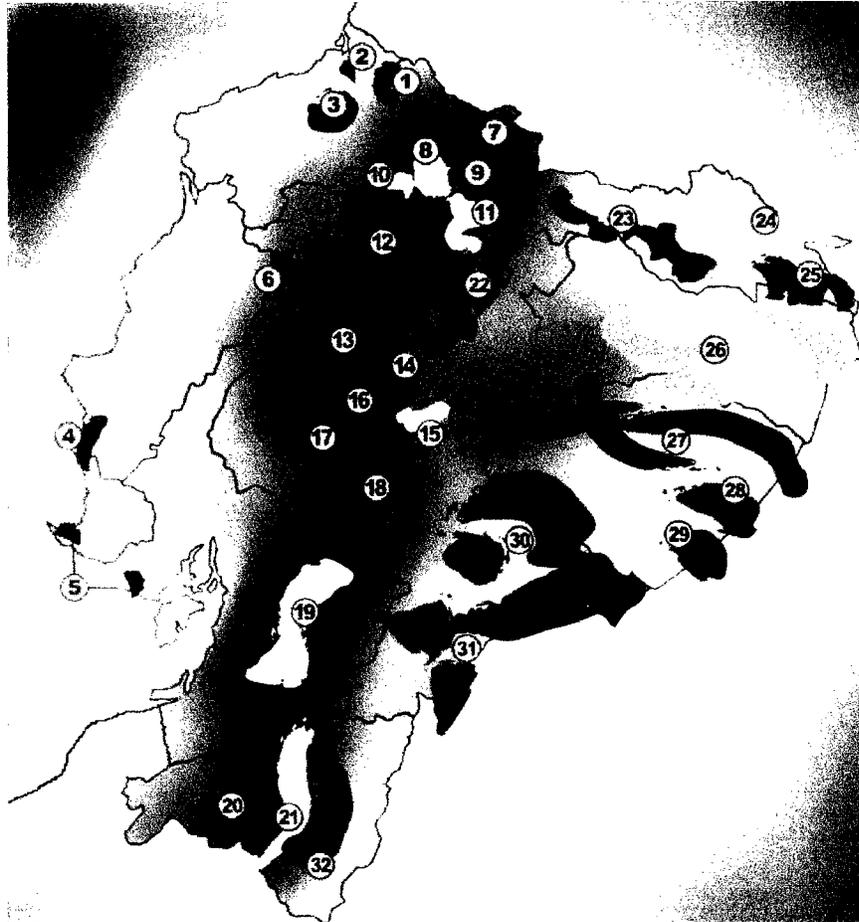


Figure 1.2 – Map of Indigenous Nationalities (source: Los Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador, CONAIE 2008)

- |                          |                                     |   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Nationality Awa       | 13. Pueblo Panzaleo                 | 24. Nationality Siona                   |
| 2. Nationality Épera     | 14. Pueblo Salasaka                 | 25. Nationality Secoya                  |
| 3. Nationality Chachi    | 15. Pueblo Kisapincha               | 26. Nationality Wuoarani<br>(Huoarani)  |
| 4. Pueblo Manta          | 16. Pueblo Chibuleo                 | 27. Nationality Zápara                  |
| 5. Pueblo Wankavilka     | 17. Pueblo Waranka                  | 28. Nationality Shiwiar                 |
| 6. Nationality Tsa'Chila | 18. Pueblo Puruhá                   | 29. Nationality Andoa                   |
| 7. Pueblo Pasto          | 19. Pueblo Kañari                   | 30. Nationality Ashuar                  |
| 8. Pueblo Otavalo        | 20. Pueblo Palta                    | 31. Nationality Shuar                   |
| 9. Pueblo Natabuela      | 21. Pueblo Saraguro                 | 32. Pueblo Amazonian<br>Kichwa Saraguro |
| 10. Pueblo Karanki       | 22. Nationality<br>Amazonian Kichwa |   |
| 11. Pueblo Kayambi       | 23. Nationality Cofán               |   |
| 12. Pueblo Kitukara      |                                     |   |

## Chapter One: Introduction

Above the Andean city of Otavalo, Ecuador, a diminutive tree is perched on a cleared hill top. *El Lechero*, “the Milking Tree” as it is known locally, is believed to be many hundreds of years old and was given its name for the milky white sap. Local indigenous people, Otavalo *pueblo* of the Kichwa nationality, also known the tree as *yayitu taitiku*, “little grandfather”. Within view of *El Lechero* are the dramatically rising volcanos of Northern Ecuador: Cayambe to the south, Imbabura to the east, Cotacachi to the northwest, Yana Allpa and Fuya Fuya to the southwest; towering over fertile valleys and the indigenous-*mestizos* villages and towns below. For the Kichwa Otavaleños of the area, *El Lechero* sits at the centre of a figurative map of their cosmovision (Wibbelsman 2005a; Wibbelsman 2009).

Ritual tradition is to make offerings and prayers through *El Lechero*. Offerings and prayer are accompanied by music and dance. Dancers stomp their bare feet, in a rhythmic circle around *El Lechero* to announce to the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) that “we are here”. The interaction with and around the old tree reminds the people of the impermanence of human life in comparison to the *Pachamama* and other beings in nature.<sup>1</sup> *El Lechero* is an expression of a myth and interpretation that gives meaning to the distinct indigenous world-view.

Myths are often seen as part of tradition, non-modern stories, that while appreciated are often treated as irrational interpretations or fantastical stories of reality, at times associated with untruthful narratives. In a modern western society, myths are

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<sup>1</sup>These views were expressed to me by a stranger when I visited *El Lechero* in June, 2009.

associated with fables, which are used to teach lessons to children. The use of myth in teaching children implies that the myth's creative expression is a less complex and more entertaining form of 'the truth' that is un-adult.<sup>2</sup> An adult 'truth' is perceived to be clear, unadorned, rational and universal. In short, truth in modern western society is scientific; hence the study of human societies in western universities is not called social mythology, but rather *social science*. Non-'modern' societies, where the presence of alternative myths is observed, are often labelled 'traditional'. Tradition suggests a strong connection to the past, which is against the modern imperative of progress.

Myth thus stands in the contemporary modern western perspective as a communicative concept antithetical to accepted methods of describing reality. Myths, however, should not be thought of as untruthful fantasies or childlike moral stories. They can and do perform an important role beyond the more conventional understanding of myth. This paper advocates rethinking the role of myth within society, specifically the potential role myths play for significant social movements engaged in the transformation of societies. Inspired by three thinkers on revolution from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, French Georges Sorel, Italian Antonio Gramsci, and Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, this paper (re)constructs the idea of a revolutionary myth. A revolutionary myth is an idea that necessitates the reinterpretation of the hegemonic or dominant social and material conditions within society and inspires a unified collective into action.

The concept of the revolutionary myth is applied to the central demand of

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<sup>2</sup>Religious world-views, particularly Christian, are rarely referred to as 'myth' in the west, except in a derogatory manner, despite sharing many similarities to mythic stories used in children's stories.

Ecuador's significant indigenous movement: that Ecuador be recognized as a plurinational state. The central research question of this thesis is why and how was plurinationality a central demand of Ecuador's indigenous movement? In answering these questions, I argue that plurinationality has acted as a revolutionary myth for the Ecuador's indigenous movement. The idea of plurinationality informs the contemporary indigenous movement in terms of its goals and organization, inspiring and creating the conditions for a cohesive Ecuadorian indigenous movement from a diversity of indigenous nationalities. Recognizing plurinationality within Ecuador also requires the radical transformation of the Ecuadorian political-economy, thus challenging the dominant social and material relations within Ecuadorian society.

In the past twenty years, Ecuador has experienced the dramatic emergence of a significant indigenous movement. The first prominent action of the contemporary indigenous movement was a *levantamiento* - "uprising" - in June, 1990. The first *levantamiento*, recognized by Luis Macas, a former President of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE) as the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* (the Uprising of the Sun Festival), has been widely regarded as one of the most significant mobilizations of indigenous political action in Ecuador and in the Americas.<sup>3</sup> More than 40 000 indigenous participants blocked highways, occupied urban centres and rural farms, and protested government policy at all scales from the local to the state. From that action forward, the

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<sup>3</sup>*Inti Raymi* is a syncretic Andean indigenous festival that occurs in June around the solstice and several Catholic feast days. In Ecuador, the feast day of *San Juan* (Saint John) on June 22<sup>nd</sup> is one of the important days of celebration. Communities celebrate Inti Raymi with large community dances, presented in costume and with distinctive Andean music.

indigenous movement has been a consistent participant both inside and outside the formalized institutions of the political-economy of Ecuador.

The central demand of the indigenous movement that Ecuador be constitutionally recognized as a 'plurinational state' was introduced by CONAIE following the 1990 *levantamiento* as part of the list of 16 points. In an interview in 1993, Luis Macas indicated the relationship between the demand for plurinationality and the political-economic restitution of the indigenous people from the consequences of colonialism:

We say that plurinationality is the recognition of the coexisting cultural diversity in our country: the indigenous peoples, the *mestizos*, the blacks, etc. But I believe that there is also an important component, it is that these peoples, the particularities of the peoples, of the nationalities, must enjoy an autonomy and must be self-governing... In other words, it is to recover the traditional, authentic, forms of how we produce and how we politically organize (1993:123, my translation).

The indigenous movement has asserted that there are 14 distinct indigenous nationalities within Ecuador. Nationalities, while emerging from historical indigenous populations, are relatively recent politically constructed identities used by the indigenous movement to challenge the contemporary notion of an Ecuadorian nation-state. The nationalities represent the diversity within the indigenous population, and are constituted by, in abstract terms, a distinct language, territory, history, and cosmovision (interview with Atik Kurikamak, Quito, 1, July, 2009). Plurinationality is the recognition of the existence, and the right to continued existence, of each of these distinct nationalities within the state:

What we are asking for is the recognition of what we are. Our single state is divided amongst many people. We are not homogenous, we are not monolithic, we are not a single culture in our country (Luis Macas 1993:118, my translation).

The contemporary conceptualization of a plurinational state has developed from the

moment it was thrust onto the political imagination of Ecuador by the indigenous movement during the *levantamiento*. This paper uses the idea of the revolutionary myth to describe the initial meaning and function of plurinationality for Ecuador's indigenous movement.

Estimating the size of Ecuador's indigenous population is highly contentious and complex. Indigenous people compose 7 percent to 15 or 20 percent depending on the study, of Ecuador's 12 million people.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Ecuadorians, particularly urban populations, self-identify as *mestizo*, mixed indigenous-European heritage. Ecuador's indigenous movement recognizes thirteen nationalities, each with their own distinct culture, language and history; from the coast: Awá, Epera, Tsa'chila, and Chachi; from the Andes: the Kichwa; from the Amazon: Achuar, A'i-Cofán (Cofán), Secoya, Shiwiar, Shuar, Siona, Huaorani, Zápara, and Amazonian Kichwa. Afro-Ecuadorian populations are also increasingly being recognized within the framework of distinct nationalities. The Andean Kichwa is the largest nationality and is further divided into thirteen *pueblos*, based upon community, provincial and historical differences: Karanki, Natabuela, Otavalo, Kayambi, Kitu-Kara, Panzaleo, Chibuleo, Kichwa del Tungurahua, Salasaka, Puruhá, Waranka, Kañari, and Saraguro (Segovia 2005).<sup>5</sup> Kichwa populations of migrant workers have also organized in coastal cities and from plantations. The diversity within the indigenous population of Ecuador makes the unity of an indigenous movement within

4 See Zamosc (2004) for discussion on the problems of estimating the indigenous population. The discrepancies in the estimates indicate the multitude of forces and circumstances that help to give meaning to particular identities for mestizo-indigenous people in Ecuador.

5 *Pueblo* is a category used within Ecuador to subdivide the Kichwa nationality. *Pueblos* are differentiated by variations in dialect, their particular textiles and clothing, community-based political boundaries, economic practices, and other historical reasons. *Pueblo* is used in this paper to refer to the *pueblos* of the Kichwa nationality, more general references to *pueblo(s) indígena(s)* is translated to indigenous people(s).

Ecuador particularly interesting and noteworthy. Further, the challenge of estimating the indigenous population in Ecuador is emblematic of the complex and multi-layered identities through which people are capable of articulating themselves politically. Context therefore becomes very important in understanding how and why particular identities emerge and are used in contestation by activists in the indigenous movement of Ecuador.

Researchers have used social movement theory to compare Ecuador's indigenous movement to other Latin American countries with similarly significant and diverse indigenous populations to understand why a unified indigenous movement formed in Ecuador. A prominent study by Deborah Yashar (2005) used a variation of the political opportunity structure version of social movement theory. Briefly, Yashar used the categories of capacity, opportunity, and motivation to compare indigenous movements in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The emergence of an national indigenous movement in Ecuador was the result, according to Yashar, of the organizational capacity of indigenous community-based and regional organizations created during the 1970s that began to cooperate nationally during the 1980s, as well as the political opportunities for participation created by neoliberal political shifts in the 1980s. The shift to a neoliberal citizenship regime, Yashar argues, also created the motivation for indigenous mobilization because it affected what Yashar identifies as the "relative autonomy" experienced by indigenous communities previous to the neoliberal period.

Yashar's approach provides a perspective on the relationship of formal political institutions to the formation of indigenous movements. This form of analysis illuminates several of the important pragmatic requirements for the formation of a social movement,

particularly the emphasis given to organizational capacity of emerging indigenous groups and political openings created by liberal-democratic shifts in Andean countries. However, the analysis does not describe the emergence and function of fundamental concepts within the indigenous movement, such as the political identity of nationalities and the political project of plurinationality. Without understanding these concepts in the context of Ecuador, it is difficult to describe how the indigenous organizations were able to construct a mutually comprehended political project, which has been crucial in the creation and maintenance of a unified indigenous movement. Furthermore, the transformation of the Ecuadorian political-economy demanded by the indigenous movement cannot be understood solely through the notion of “relative autonomy”. As will be described in Chapter Three, the historical relationship between indigenous people and the Ecuadorian state since colonization has many important and ongoing consequences that create significant contemporary differences within the indigenous population across spacial and social dimensions. Autonomy is an important but limited concept to describe the complex historical relationship between indigenous people and the state and thus the political goals and strategies of the contemporary indigenous movement. To better understand the political-economic transformation of Ecuador demanded by the indigenous movement, it is important to understand how indigenous self-identification as nationalities has emerged and been used politically as part of creating a plurinational state.

Indigenous nationalities, according Blanca Chancoso,, are recognized by “all their elements, such as our language, our customs, our culture, our history and our wisdom” (1993:136, my translation). The use of the concept of nationalities to identify indigenous

people suggests a deeper and historic identity than a culture, but also a political and spatial meaning not conveyed by ethnicity. Nationality was a conscious political identity constructed by the indigenous movement as part of a political project to transform Ecuador's political-economy.<sup>6</sup> Centuries of colonialism and its lasting consequences have led to deep structural inequality, racism, and the subordination of indigenous knowledges and practices within Ecuador (Lucero 2008; Segovia 2005). Luis Macas wrote in December 1990:

Against this historic situation and structural exploitation and subordination, the indigenous peoples have responded with different forms of resistance: rebellions mobilizations, uprising and fundamentally with the organization and unity of our people. We have responded with the strongest affirmation ... as our own forms consciousness and resistance against the domination (1992:22, my translation).

For the indigenous movement, the political objective of gaining recognition of plurinationality is the transformation of the Ecuadorian state and society. As a new concept created by the indigenous movement, plurinationality creates a re-interpretation of the social and material relations, particularly but not exclusively for indigenous people, within the state. For the concept of plurinationality to gain recognition within the discourse of the hegemonic society, dramatic action from a cohesive indigenous movement was needed in the form of the *levantamientos*. A transformative idea and action are central concepts of the revolutionary myth.

The concept of the revolutionary myth used by this thesis is inspired by the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui's vision of the revolutionary in *The Man and Myth*:

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<sup>6</sup> The map of indigenous nationalities (figure 1.2) at the beginning of this thesis reflects the territorialization by CONAIE of indigenous nationalities. The creation of this map is at its heart a political action by the indigenous movement to visually demonstrate the spaces and thus legitimate the idea of indigenous nationalities within Ecuador.

The revolutionaries' power is not their science; it is in their faith, their passion, their will. It is a religious, mystical, spiritual power. It is the power of myth ... Religious motives have been displaced from the heavens to earth. They are not divine; they are human, social (1996[1925a]:145).

Writing from the Peruvian context in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, José Carlos Mariátegui proposed a socialist revolution composed of the Peruvian urban proletariat and indigenous peasants as a myth capable of inspiring a transformative force. Mariátegui developed his idea of the revolutionary myth from Georges Sorel, who initially wrote about the myth of the general strike and its role in a proletarian revolution. Sorel also inspired the Italian Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci believed that Sorel's myth of the general strike was too spontaneous to provide the sustained conviction to transform society in revolution. In place of Sorel's general strike, Gramsci proposed a vanguard political party, which he called the “Modern Prince”. Ideas from these three theorists and their respective myths are used to construct a theoretical concept of the revolutionary myth. The myth is explored through how it creates a politicized identity, how myth proposes a counter-hegemonic interpretation of social relations, how myth and the organization of a movement are related, and how the myth is dependent upon action.

These constituent concepts of the myth are then applied to the indigenous movement in Ecuador and its demand for recognition of a plurinational state. I argue that the indigenous movement constructed the political identity of indigenous nationalities and has used them to undermine the project of constructing a hegemonic unitary *mestizo* nation-state in Ecuador. In turn, the important indigenous movement organization CONAIE and its constituent organizations have used nationalities within their structures, bringing to life the myth of plurinationality through their organizational structures and

behaviours. The myth of plurinationality became revolutionary when it was combined with the dramatic *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi*. The opening possibilities today for the indigenous movement to reconstitute the historical trajectory of Ecuadorian political-economy is described through the Kichwa indigenous concept of the *Pachakutik* – which signals a spatial-temporal return and vindication of the indigenous people.

Three theorists who have used the concept of the myth in relation to revolution, Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci and José Carlos Mariátegui, are discussed in this thesis. First, Georges Sorel (1845-1922), who is a controversial political and social theorist, serves as the origin of the concept of the revolutionary myth.<sup>7</sup> Sorel only began to publish in 1889 at the age of 45, following a career as civil engineer in the government. His most important text, *Reflections on Violence* (first published in 1906 and again in 1908 with the important introductory letter to Daniel Halevy), is cited as an influential text by a diverse group of theorists, from Italian fascists to radical and anarchist-syndicalists. Sorel is referred to by Edward Shils in his introduction to *Reflections on Violence* as a theorist concerned first and foremost with the decadence of bourgeois society (Shils 2004:17). As a result, Sorel moved through conservative monarchist, marxist revolutionary, and anarchist-syndicalist circles throughout his intellectual career, depending on whoever he perceived capable of resuscitating the 'spirit' of society against 'decadent' liberal individualism.

*Reflections on Violence* is Sorel's most marxist-inspired text. He believed that the consciousness of urban workers, inspired through the myth of a general strike, would be

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<sup>7</sup>Isaiah Berlin wrote in 1971 that Sorel was, “unclassified; claimed and repudiated both by the right and left” (quoted in Vincent 1990:239)

able to awaken the revolutionary spirit of all classes and rupture and transform French society from the malaise of decadence. The failure of workers to create revolution in France during the 1910s turned Sorel towards conservative circles against the liberal decadence of French Republican democracy. However, by his death in 1922, Sorel was once again inspired by marxist revolutionary ideas through the words and action of Vladimir Lenin and the Russian Revolution (Vincent 1990; Shils 2004).

*Reflections on Violence* also influenced the thought of the more well-known and influential Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Gramsci was born and raised in Sardinia. He later moved to Turin in northern Italy in 1911 for university, where he came into contact with the urban proletarian movement. Gramsci's marxist ideas emerged as an unorthodox combination of rural and urban proletariat experiences, inspired by the revolutionary spirit of the Russian Revolution and the ideas of Vladimir Lenin. Gramsci was also an active political organizer, participating in the creation of the Italian Communist Party in 1921, becoming its leader from 1924 till 1926. In 1926 Gramsci was arrested and imprisoned in 1928, following a show trial, for communist activities and plotting the death of Mussolini. Gramsci was released from prison to a clinic in 1935 because of his worsening health. He ultimately died on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1937. While in prison, Gramsci wrote his most influential thoughts. They were later definitely collected and translated into English in 1971 as *The Prison Notebooks*.

Amongst Gramsci's most important contributions are his discussions on hegemony, civil society, and the organic intellectual. His theorization of the Italian reality and the role of a communist party provides an important reinterpretation of the ideas of

Lenin to the context of western European political-economy. In his description of a vanguard party, Gramsci used Sorel's myth to recreate Machiavelli's *The Prince*. *The Prince* is interpreted by Gramsci as an emotive expression, based upon a lucid analysis of the Italian reality, for the transformative unification of the Italian States. From his analysis, Gramsci proposes a new myth for his contemporary period: the revolutionary party, which he names the “Modern Prince”.

Finally, the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930), while relatively unknown in English, is regarded as one of the most important Latin American marxists and the first major theorist to apply a Latin American perspective to Marxism (Liss 1984:129). Mariátegui is affectionately known amongst many of South America's critical thinkers as the *Amauta* (the “wise teacher” in Kichwa), after the seminal critical publication founded by Mariátegui in 1926.<sup>8</sup> His *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (first printed as a collection in 1928) is considered a landmark Marxist analysis of the Peruvian political-economy. Mariátegui was born on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1894 in Moquegua, Peru, a small provincial southern provincial capital, and raised by in a working-class household by his single-mother. He began a career at the Lima paper *La Prensa*, working his way up to writing on high society, and the literary and arts scene in Lima for *La Prensa* and later *Colónida*. His writings first in *El Tiempo* in 1916 and later in a political paper he founded in 1919 with César Falcón, *La Razon*, became increasingly political, inspired more by his life-perspective on the world than any political ideology.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Mariátegui declared in the first issue that “we will study all the great movements of political, artistic, literary, and scientific renovation. All that is human is ours” (quoted in Vanden, 1986:39).

<sup>9</sup>It is not clear exactly when José Carlos Mariátegui became aware of the works of Karl Marx and other communist theories, but even in this early period it is believed that Mariátegui had knowledge of Marx and critical theory though he was not a committed marxist.

Mariátegui's political writings within Peru's increasingly destabilized political context began to draw the attention of the military government of Augusto Leguía.

Mariátegui was forced into exile in Europe in October, 1919 by the Augusto Leguía government. Mariátegui first went to Paris, later to northern Italy, where he encountered the contemporaries of Antonio Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group.<sup>10</sup> While in Italy, Mariátegui was also exposed to the ideas of Georges Sorel, which would later have a profound impact on Mariátegui's interpretation of the socialist revolution. The period of exile in Europe is considered to be the foundation of Mariátegui's increasingly theoretically marxist perspective, where he was able to connect his political convictions with active marxist ideas he found amongst the radical, socialist, and communist movements of France and Italy.

Upon returning to Peru in 1923, Mariátegui turned to more overtly political writing and actions. Upon returning he was invited to lecture at the Universidad Popular González Prada by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, beginning his turn towards intellectual thought. In 1928, he was a central figure in the creation of *Partido Socialista del Peru* (Socialist Party of Peru, PSP). This political activity was supported by his intellectual marxist contributions in *Amauta*. The PSP participated in the May 1929 Constituent Congress of the Latin American Trade Union Conference, in Montevideo and the June 1929 First Latin American Communist Conference, Buenos Aires. Mariátegui was unable to attend either conference, though his writings featured prominently in debate, as his

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<sup>10</sup>Whether or not Mariátegui had direct contact with Gramsci is not clear, though there is evidence that he knew of his Italian counterpart's work in *Ordine Nuovo* and he also attended the Congress of Livorno when the Italian Communist Party was created (Quijano, 1981:44)

health had deteriorated. Mariátegui was constantly afflicted since birth with health problems, including a leg crippled in childhood. By 1924, Mariátegui had lost his right leg to amputation and was in a wheelchair. Several imprisonments by the Peruvian government had made his health condition worse. Mariátegui was imprisoned first in 1924 and later in 1927 by the Leguía government. In prison, Mariátegui developed a severe infection and was released as the result of international pressure from intellectuals across the continent. As Mariátegui planned to leave Peru in early 1930, he became severely ill and died at the age of 35 on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1930 (Pearlman 1996)

Mariátegui left a wealth of intellectual ideas despite his early death, the most important contribution being a heterodox marxist perspective that focused on interpreting reality in order to inspire revolutionary action. Mariátegui believed that a myth of the socialist revolution, contextualized in the national reality of Peru, was needed to inspire an active consciousness. In the *Seven Essays*, Mariátegui (2006) develops a historical materialist interpretation of the problems within Peru, particularly the inequality and poverty of the significant indigenous population, at the time nearly four-fifths of Peru's population. From this analysis, Mariátegui proposed the myth of a socialist revolution that links the revolutionary consciousness of the urban worker-proletariat with the revolutionary potential of Peru's indigenous population.

The thesis is divided into three sections. The first section develops the idea of the revolutionary myth from the major texts of Sorel, Gramsci and Mariátegui. The similarities and differences between the three theorists' approaches are used to develop the concept of the revolutionary myth through discussions on their ideas on political

identity, hegemony, political organization, and action. Contemporary Latin American decolonialist theory based on works by Enrique Dussel (2006; 2009), Arturo Escobar (2007), Walter Dignolo (2005), Anibal Quijano (2000; 2007) and Catherine Walsh (2009) is used to describe the theoretical context of Coloniality, which materially and epistemologically frames the relationship between the indigenous people and the Ecuadorian state since initial colonization in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The second section covers the historical dimensions of Ecuador's contemporary indigenous movement. Mariátegui wrote in the 1928 *Anniversary and Balance Sheet* of the publication *Amauta*, that “the perfect, absolute, abstract idea, indifferent to facts, to moving, changing reality, is worthless; what is useful is the germinal, concrete, dialectical, operative idea, rich in potential and capable of movement” (1996[1928]:88). Reality establishes the context of the myth. While the concept of plurinationality is active in the present, it responds to an Ecuadorian context of coloniality constructed over five hundred years. A long history of the relationship between the indigenous population and the Ecuadorian state contextualizes the myth of plurinationality. The myth of plurinationality is important and meaningful *because* it emerges from and responds to the historical context of being indigenous in Ecuador.

The historical dimensions of the relationship between the indigenous people and the state are separated into the regional histories of the Andes and the Amazon. The geographic distinction is used to describe the different experiences of indigenous people in the Andes and the Amazon in regards to colonization. These differences are important influences upon the construction of plurinationality as an idea that bridges diverse

experiences of indigenous populations in Ecuador. From the diversity of indigenous experiences, emerges a diversity of indigenous 'nationalities' and the importance for the indigenous movement that the state recognizes the multiple meanings of territory and autonomy for indigenous people. Ideas of territory and autonomy are constructed by the indigenous movement as responses to the long history and consequences of colonialism.

The third section describes the idea of plurinationality as a revolutionary myth. The categories of the myth developed in chapter two are applied to plurinationality to develop important aspects of the indigenous movement's organization, action and proposal for transformation in Ecuador. The creation of indigenous nationalities as political identities to be expressed through a demand for a plurinational state is a foundation for the organization of the indigenous movement, particularly the largest umbrella indigenous organization, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE). Created in 1986, CONAIE has since become one of Ecuador's most important and influential civil society groups, representing and co-ordinating the regional organizations the Andean ECUARUNARI, the Amazonian CONFENIAE, and the coastal COICE, as well as their constituent sub-regional and local organizations. CONAIE came to prominence for their role in co-ordinating the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi*, as well as providing and negotiating the overarching demands of the indigenous movement. Without the disruptive action of the *Levantamiento* in 1990, plurinationality could not have performed as a revolutionary myth.

The thesis concludes by reflecting upon the transformative impact of the initial

demand expressed in 1990 for a plurinational state and the indigenous movement upon Ecuador. The challenges and opportunities that have resulted for indigenous people as a result of the movement provide open questions for the future of historical dimensions of Coloniality in the Ecuadorian context.

The research of this thesis is predominately based upon academic sources on the Ecuadorian indigenous movement. The majority of these sources are western English-writing academics from a diversity of fields including anthropology, geography, history, political-science, and sociology. Research was drawn, whenever possible, from Ecuadorian researchers writing in Spanish, including analysis of media documents from the early 1990s. More limited research was done using second-hand interviews and documents from indigenous movement leaders and intellectuals, as well as primary documents from indigenous movement organizations written in Spanish. Field research based in Ecuador was conducted from mid-May till mid-July, 2009. A few formal interviews with members of various levels of the indigenous movement in the Andes were conducted. The formal interviews, along with informal discussions with indigenous and non-indigenous Ecuadorians and participation in the July, 2009 *Encuentro de Jóvenes Indígenas del Ecuador* organized by CONAIE, for the most part provided a background context on the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, rather than applied research.

I use contemporary spelling used by CONAIE of indigenous words, particularly in Kichwa, and names of nationalities. Generally, I have used the phrase “indigenous people” to refer collectively to people who claim both cultural and hereditary connections to pre-Colonization populations. Nationalities and *pueblos* are used to identify indigenous

groups based upon identities constructed by the indigenous movement. The term *indio* is used to refer to the colonial and republican constructed identity for the indigenous population of Ecuador, particularly the highland Andean population that spoke Kichwa. Ecuador's dominant hegemonic society is referred to as a white-*mestizo* society, recognizing the significant limitation of assuming a homogenous social and economic reality that does not exist in reality, particularly for Ecuador's *mestizo* population. Many *mestizos* face the same daily problems as indigenous people, including racism, exclusion, inequality, discrimination of other forms, and poverty. Beyond the scope of this paper are other politicized identities including Ecuador's important afro-Ecuadorian population and non-European immigrant communities. For a discussion of the intercultural situation of Ecuador see Walsh (2009).

The indigenous movement in Ecuador is composed of a complex multi-scalar network of organizations, associations, comunas, political parties and activists. This paper attempts to provide some insights into the complexity of the indigenous movement and the intra-relationship, and at times competition, between the diversity of collectivities within the indigenous movement. The dominant focus of this thesis is on CONAIE, its constituent organizations and communities, as well as the historical relationship between leftist political parties and organizations and the indigenous movement. The focus on CONAIE and its history is relevant because their activist-intellectuals have been the strongest advocates for a plurinational state and represent the largest constituency of the indigenous movement at a state-scale. The evangelical FEINE and the peasant-oriented FENOCIN represent at times competing interests and diverge from a shared position with

CONAIE. As in all social contexts, the indigenous movement is fraught with politics. Further, as this thesis focuses on the transformation of the state, it generally presents the indigenous movement's actions in broad strokes at a state-scale. This is not done to negate the important observation that activists at the local scale have their own goals, intentions, aspirations, and actions, which become part of the broader indigenous movement in Ecuador. The multi-scalar relations within the indigenous movement can be seen in Perreault (2003) and Colloredo-Mansfield (2009), amongst others. Plurinationality, while containing distinct interpretations at the local-scale, which in turn influences its construction at the state-scale, is part of a transformative political project that is meant to have consequences throughout Ecuador's political-economy. The analysis in this thesis, however, predominately focuses on the meaning of plurinationality and action of the indigenous movement at the state scale.

## **Chapter Two: Revolutionary Myth**

This chapter develops the concept of the revolutionary myth from the myths proposed by Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci, and José Carlos Mariátegui. Sorel's myth of the general strike provided an inspiration for both Gramsci's myth of the revolutionary political party and Mariátegui's socialist revolution. From these three myths, this chapter discusses how a revolutionary myth creates politicized identities, constructs a counter-hegemonic interpretation of underlying material conditions that give rise to social relationships, instructs important conditions onto the pragmatic organization of the movement, and requires dramatic action. The revolutionary myth is an idea or concept that inspires a collective action and creates the possibility of significantly re-interpreting hegemonic or dominant social and material relationships. As an idea, a revolutionary myth does not represent an ideology, though it may be dependent upon or give support to an ideology, as it does not represent a systematic way of thinking about all social relations.

The historical materialist approach to constructing the context of a revolutionary myth is put into tension with a decolonialist critique of a Modern and Eurocentric rationality. Decolonialists argue that marxism remains embedded within Modernity, thus does not lead to the liberation of alternative ways of being. The possibility of interpreting the flexibility within marxism as proposed by Mariátegui presents an opportunity for my approach to work within this tension. Challenging Modern rationality serves both to describe the historical context of colonialism, as well as highlight how a revolutionary myth operates outside of hegemonic rationality to offer an alternative and transformative rationality.

### **Revolutionizing Myth**

Georges Sorel, critical of the political direction of France in the beginning of the 20th century, proposed the 'general strike' as a myth capable of creating a moment of significant social transformation. An important component of Sorel's analysis is his observation that Marx failed to predict the absorption of the working class into the political system of the core capitalist states. As a result, the cleavage between the material interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Sorel believed, would be delayed or fail to emerge. Sorel proposed a myth to radicalize the proletariat that would translate their experience of the material-social relations into an inspired, creative, and revolutionary spirit (Laclau 1989:75).

Sorel thought it was important to consider the psychological experience, or “the inner depths of the mind and what happens there during a creative moment,” of the proletariat revolutionary (1961:47). Revolution, for Sorel, could not depend on the mechanical movement of history towards class conflict. A proletariat consciousness would not develop solely from the worker's rationality but also required an emotional experience. The material conditions of production for Sorel are obscure, not easily identified except in theory, and therefore not necessarily expressed as a unifying identity for the working class (1961:148). Rather Sorel believed that the working class could only fully develop a proletarian consciousness, as a psychological state, through a dramatic political action that created a shared psychological experience.

Sorel believed that social forces, in particular parliamentary socialists, acted to prevent the dramatic action necessary for a proletarian revolution. Middle-class

politicians and philosophers used the discourse of socialism to assume a ventriloquist voice on behalf of workers. Parliamentary socialists co-opted socialist discourse in order to negotiate proletarian demands (1961:120-121).<sup>11</sup> Parliamentary socialists through their participation in the bourgeois political process became embedded into the decadent middle-class society. Marginal solutions that targeted individuals and isolated problems became preferred to the radical transformations proposed by a proletarian revolution. Marxist discourse was used to promote an image to the upper classes of legitimate representation of the workers; and to the working class, the sincerity and commitment of the parliamentary socialist to the class-war (1961:64-68;120). The negotiation of class interests diminished the proletarian consciousness and created a malaise of spirit. To combat the influence of the parliamentarian socialist Sorel believed that a myth needed to be proposed that brought together the working class in action against the bourgeoisie.

Against the utopian futures proposed by the parliamentary socialists, the proletariat would be inspired by the myth to creatively consider their immediate material realities. By acting from a myth, the proletariat “[is] no longer compelled to argue learnedly about the future;...not obliged to indulge in lofty reflections...; [the proletariat is] not on the plane of theories, [they] can remain on the level of observable facts” (1961:127). The myth is not intended to describe all of the processes or experiences within a revolutionary action. Rather, the myth's value as an intellectual focus is that it

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<sup>11</sup> Sorel's critique echoes Engels and Marx's criticism of non-proletarian socialisms, particularly the socialistic bourgeoisie, which expressed socialist values through “mere figure of speech” (1971:104) and the utopian socialists. As utopians did not consider the necessity of a revolutionary proletariat, in a utopia future “every member of society, even that of the most favoured” (Engels and Marx 1971:105) is elevated while inequality remains unaddressed. A utopia becomes about gradual progress and development, uninterrupted by revolutionary forces that would create new historical potentials.

draws attention to the idea(s) that arise from the participants' experiences, which in turn is (are) used to create unity within a collectivity.

The formation of a proletarian movement in Sorel's observation is not 'natural' or a necessary result of capitalist contradictions; the proletariat has to be created through action. While the proletariat can be theoretically described through the working class's relationship to capital, the proletariat must create a practical expression of itself to begin a socialist revolution. In *Reflections on Violence*, the act of a general strike would awaken the shared experience of the working class. For Sorel the general strike is necessary for turning the theoretical description of the working class into a politicized identity.

As Sorel observed with the proletarian identity, there is no necessary explanation for the politicization of an identity. This is not to suggest that an identity does not exist, either by theoretical observation or by its shared conditions (language, ethnicity, interest, etc.) before the construction of a myth. A myth encourages the transformation of an abstractly described group into an actively expressed identity. For example, it is possible to abstractly describe different groups of indigenous people, but it is through the active expression of indigenous nationalities through the demand for plurinational recognition that these identities become politically recognized. Reflexively, the myth that shapes and expresses the action of contestation, also gives meaning to the identity of the social movement. Action in the general strike eliminates the ambiguities and difficulties of determining the proletariat. The action inspired by the myth gives 'heroic' meaning and a form of collective consciousness to the worker: "Even if the only result of the idea of the general strike was to make the Socialist conception more heroic, it should on that account

alone be looked upon as having an incalculable value” (1961:139). Foreshadowing Mariátegui, Sorel indicates that the importance of myth suggests that a collective 'spirit' is crucial to the consciousness of the identity.

Sorel was aware of the limitations of conventional understandings of the word 'myth':

some told me that myths were only suitable to a primitive state of society, others imagined that I thought the modern world might be moved by [religious illusions]... . But there has been a worse misunderstanding... it has been asserted that my theory of myths was only ... a falsification of the real opinions of the revolutionaries (1961:43).

By interpreting complex material conditions through a myth, the nuances of individual experiences are given less recognition. Sorel is not concerned with explaining all aspects of revolutionary action. Myth, rather, is about discovering the 'spirit' that animates a collective action interested in transformation. The difficulty in explaining the animating ability of myth is contradicted by the impossibility of denying its importance (Sorel 1961:44). Sorel differentiates his position from the totalizing intellectual by stating his interest in the 'conviction' rather than the 'certitude' of the revolutionary (1961:45). While the intellectual attempts to construct a theory of social conditions through rational explanation, the actual action of a revolution is the conviction of its participants. Surrendering some of the perceived credibility of a social scientist by rejecting certitude and totalizing frameworks, Sorel, like Gramsci and Mariátegui, is interested in the convictions of the activist. Sorel provocatively states that participants in a “great social movement” imagine myth by “[picturing] their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph” (1961:41-42).

An important contradiction emerges from a rejection of certitude in favour of

conviction. While Sorel is not interested necessarily in the 'elements' or particularities that constitute everything within a social movement, he is concerned about a different form of totality. When approaching the inspiration of a social movement the 'group of images' constituting the myth must be taken as a whole (Sorel 1961:42). By emphasizing a 'whole' myth rather than constituent elements, Sorel replaces an analysis which attempts to construct the totality through rational certitude with conviction that manifests itself as holistic: "A myth cannot be refuted, since it is, at bottom identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement; and it is, in consequence, unanalysable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical descriptions" (1961:50). Totality in this form exists within the collective action rather than in the attempt to explain in totality the social movement. The myth is brought into being as a unitary faith rather than a unitary truth. In the moment of action, the myth is expressed as irrefutable. Inevitably, the myth ceases to be revolutionary when it no longer inspires the conviction of a group to act and becomes refuted or broken into constituent parts in the process of negotiation.

Sorel is focused on the immediate psychological experience of revolt. This is demonstrated by his preferred myth of the general strike, which is a relatively spontaneous and short action. Sorel's greater interest, however, is the revolutionary transformation of society. While a general strike does result in a brief rupture of society inevitably dominant social practices have repeatedly proven to be very resilient and capable of reabsorbing dissenting political opinions and identities. Gramsci's analysis of hegemony and civil society challenges the capacity of Sorel's myth of the general strike to

lead to a proletarian revolution and indicates the importance of being able to sustain a revolutionary myth for a longer period of time.

### **Counter-Hegemony**

Gramsci, in a similar vein to Sorel, attempts to understand how a proletarian revolution has not occurred in advanced capitalist economies in western Europe. Rather than emphasizing the role of parliamentary socialists, Gramsci argues that the integration of civil society into the western European state was crucial to the stability of the state in the face of class conflict. To challenge the embedded capitalist state, Gramsci proposes a myth capable of inspiring proletarian participation over a longer period of time, the political party.

The strength of the relationship between civil society and the state is based upon the ability of the superstructure to 'rationally' describe the underlying contradictions of the social relations of production (Gramsci 1971:366). Rationality in this context describes the broad acceptance within civil society of the rule and description of social processes. This 'historic bloc' is constituted not only by the coercive power of the political state but the consent given within civil society. Sorel's loathed parliamentary socialists could have a role in gaining the consent of the working class within civil society, but Gramsci alludes to the other organs that influence public opinion and construct consent within civil society (1971:80f, see also Gramsci's discussion of hegemony in *The Prince*: 169-70).

In response to revolutionary marxism's difficulty in challenging the consent of civil society, Laclau argues that Gramsci proposes the opposite solution from Sorel:

Sorel ... proposed a pristine proletarian identity. ... Where Sorel saw all participation within the political system as a loss of identity, Gramsci conceived of hegemonic articulations as a process of creating identities (1989:75).

While Sorel recommends an absolute rejection of the political system, Gramsci notes that revolutionary action must interact with the political system. By focusing on the necessity for the proletariat to reject the 'bourgeois' political system, Sorel limits the myth of the general strike to a very particular moment: the moment of rejection. Gramsci is concerned that Sorel “leaves the collective will in the primitive and elementary phase of its mere formation, by differentiation” (1971:128). The spontaneity of Sorel's 'general strike' therefore does not provide a long term political project of transformation, limiting its revolutionary potential.

In place of a general strike, Gramsci proposes the myth of the “political party”. The revolutionary party is the “Modern Prince”, which comes from a re-interpretative synthesis through Croce, Lenin, and Sorel of Machiavelli's *The Prince*: “[*The Prince*] is not a systematic treatment, but a 'live' work, in which political ideology and political science are fused in the dramatic form of a 'myth'. ... [Machiavelli's method] stimulates the artistic imagination of those who have to be convinced, and gives political passions a more concrete form” (1971:125). Ideology is important to constructing a rationality from observation; bridging the ideology and observation is an art of narration and story telling in the form of myth. To break through the hegemonic rationality, myth does interpret observations according to the hegemonic rationality. A successful myth must convincingly introduce a new 'ideology' – way of perceiving/rationalizing observation – through a dramatic and passionate appeal.

The relationship between the material conditions and the myth is at times very ambiguous for both Sorel and Gramsci. While material conditions do not mechanically determine social conflict and thus revolution, there is a necessary relationship between the two. Gramsci comments that Sorel's myth is “a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorising, but rather by a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people” (1971:126). Similar to the proletariat in Sorel's general strike, the theoretician could construct a revolutionary political party. Its mere description in theoretical terms, however, is insufficient and therefore require an active “phantasy” to bring its constituent members together.

Machiavelli's *The Prince* is an example of how the relationship between material conditions and myth functions. The majority of the book is dedicated to providing a rational description of the skills and talents needed by a virtuous Prince, who is transformed in concluding chapter into a historic actor. The mythic Prince of the final chapter is created to lead the 'Italian' from foreign oppression: “one should not let this opportunity pass, for Italy, after so much time, to see her redeemer. ... Then may your illustrious house take up this task with the spirit and the hope in which just enterprises are taken up” (Machiavelli 1998:105). For Gramsci, *The Prince* provides a method for constructing the new political party. The Modern Prince is a liberating myth, created from the theoretical marxist observations of material life, and inspires a collective conscious action against the material and ideational domination of the bourgeoisie.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Gramsci states “Machiavelli merges with the people, becomes the people; not, however, some 'generic' people, but the people whom he, Machiavelli, has convinced by the preceding argument – the people whose consciousness and whose expression he becomes and feels himself to be, with whom he feels identified. The entire 'logical' argument now appears as nothing other than self-reflection on the part of the people – and inner reasoning working out in the popular consciousness, whose conclusion is a cry of passionate

Creating the Prince as myth is a demonstration of what Gramsci refers to as marxism's "passage from utopia to science and from science to action" (1971:381). The concept of praxis explains the broader implications of an action inspired by myth. Gramsci's philosophy of praxis makes a dialectical connection between idealism and materialism:

It is surprising that there has been no proper affirmation and development of the connection between the idealist assertion of the reality of the world as a creation of the human spirit and the affirmation made by the philosophy of praxis of the historicity and transience of ideologies on the grounds that ideologies are the expressions of the structure and are modified by modifications of the structure (Gramsci, 1971:442).

Hegemony within a historic bloc is both constructed and resisted between this dialectic. The non-coercive stability of hegemony is dependent upon consent to a 'rational' description of the underlying structure, the "idealist assertion of the reality". Resistance and transformation occur as counter-hegemonic actions that disrupts this rationality. Myth provides a compelling and novel "expression of the structure" which is dramatically different from the hegemonic rationality. One important expression is the politicization of specific identities within civil society. While subaltern identities<sup>13</sup> are informed by the coercion of the state, they are also informed by their consent to the hegemonic rationality. Counter-hegemonic resistance emerges when a non-hegemonic identity is collectively politicized through action and provides a non-hegemonic description ('rationality') to the underlying structure.

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urgency" (1971:126-27).

<sup>13</sup>Subaltern identities are described by Gramsci (1971:52-55). Importantly, Gramsci states that subaltern identities are intertwined with the history of the civil society, thus "subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only 'permanent' victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately" (1871:55).

Following Sorel, Gramsci maintains myth as a rejection of a particular 'bourgeois' (Sorel) or 'hegemonic' (Gramsci) rationality, but he does not limit this rejection to only the political system. As a consequence, a counter-hegemonic myth can be understood to exist more broadly within civil society and not only as a spontaneous negation of political society. Gramsci implies that what is necessary is a sustained and transformative myth. The organization of the constituents of the myth into a political party makes it necessary to consider how the myth relates to the social organization of the myth.

### **Organization and Myth**

Large-scale mobilizations of people require a complex and sustained capacity to organize. The organization of a movement can be described by identifying civil society institutions, communication networks, the number of participants and other quantifiable characteristics. Organizational behaviour however is also reflective of the overarching imaginary, that helps to create the coherence of the movement. The abstract concept of the myth must represent itself not only as a discursive construction, but also be reflected in the constitution of the mobilization. The organization of a revolutionary movement is therefore deeply intertwined with the meaning and significance of the myth itself. Each of the myths presented by Sorel, Gramsci and Mariátegui demonstrate this point, as each identifies a myth that is descriptive of an organizational moment: a 'general strike', a 'political party', and a 'socialist revolution'. Mariátegui's vision for the socialist revolution reveals important considerations, not realized by Sorel or Gramsci, for the constitution of a myth-inspired revolution in the context of Latin America.

Inspired by his encounters with socialists and radical liberals in France and Italy

while in exile from 1919 till 1923, José Carlos Mariátegui incorporated their ideas into the Peruvian context. On the periphery of global and industrialized capitalism, Mariátegui's ability to describe the Peruvian reality within orthodox marxist terms faced significant challenges. In Peru, there was not a large urbanized and industrial working class. Much of Peruvian society at the time was engaged in what mechanical marxists would describe as 'pre-capitalist' feudalist production. Distinct from both Sorel and Gramsci, Mariátegui was forced to consider a context where a socialist revolution could not depend on awakening the consciousness of urban workers.

There are similarities between Peru and the Italian 'Southern Question' addressed by Gramsci. Considering how the predominately rural and peasant-like southern population could be allied to the northern urban unionized proletariat, Gramsci proposes that the Modern Prince be organised along Jacobin principles – the unification of urban and rural interests (Gramsci 1971:74). Intellectual leadership ultimately rested upon the urban proletariat as Gramsci believed that the peasantry could not develop its own organic intellectuals.<sup>14</sup> In Peru there was not a significant working class that could be characterized as a nascent industrialized proletariat. Mariátegui realized that without a strong foundation of an urbanized proletariat, a novel mutually supportive relationship between urban *mestizo* workers and rural indigenous communities was necessary for the

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<sup>14</sup>Gramsci wrote: “it is to be noted that the mass of the peasantry although it performs an essential function in the world of production, does not elaborate its own 'organic' intellectuals, nor does it 'assimilate' any stratum of 'traditional' intellectuals” (1971:6). In his *Notes on Italian History* Gramsci notes: “one may say that, given the dispersal and the isolation of the rural population and hence the difficulty of welding it into solid organizations, it is best to start the movement from the intellectual groups; however, in general, it is the dialectical relation between the two actions which has to be kept in mind. ... the existence even of only a skeleton [peasant] organization is of immense usefulness, both as a selective mechanism, and for controlling the intellectual groups and preventing caste interests from transporting them imperceptibly onto different ground” (1971:75).

socialist revolution.

Part of Mariátegui's revolutionary project required the (re)vindication of the “*indio*” as a revolutionary subject. Mariátegui fought against the characterization of the “*indio*” as a morally and culturally underdeveloped subject. Rather than focus on the morality or culture of the indigenous population, Mariátegui turned to a description of the Peruvian political-economy as the source of social and material inequality of the indigenous people. Gramsci achieved a similar conclusion in his response to the Southern Question: “the North concretely was an 'octopus' which enriched itself at the expense of the South, and that its economic-industrial increment was in direct proportion to the impoverishment of the economy and the agriculture of the South” (1971:71). Mariátegui however does not become trapped within Gramsci's dependence on the organic intellectuals of the proletariat to lead the revolution. Instead, Mariátegui makes a mythic appeal to the communitarian organization of the indigenous peoples to construction the foundation for his socialist revolution.

In his most important collected work, *Seven Essays of Interpretation of the Peruvian Reality*, Mariátegui laid the foundation for a new, contextually specific, revolutionary myth. Reflecting elements that Gramsci observed in *The Prince*, Mariátegui provided a 'scientific' description of the underlying material contradictions of the Peruvian political-economy. Central to Mariátegui's work was his concern with the 'Indian Problem'. Solutions to the 'Indian Problem' proposed by liberals often focused on the failure of social and formal education to provide the indigenous population with the necessary ambition and skills to economically succeed. In other words, it was thought that

to solve the 'Indian Problem' the *indio* needed to be assimilated into a Europeanized *mestizo* population. In this argument's extreme form, the historically underdeveloped social structures and a backwards culture resulted in the depravity of the indigenous peoples.

Mariátegui places the “unilateral and exclusive” solutions to the 'Indian Problem’ proposed by the elites into six categories: “administrative, judicial, ethnic, moral, educational, and ecclesiastic” (2006:36). In all cases, these 'solutions' require a reformation of the indigenous person/community through an imposition by the state. As is the case with many modernist civilizing projects, Mariátegui observed that the liberal approaches did not propose a reciprocal 'development' of the state as a result of its interaction with the indigenous subject. It was only the *indio* that needed to be reformed by these processes. Further, these categories give no recognition of the historical material conditions of poverty and exploitation. Each solution assumes that poverty is created by the deficiency of social organization and education (both secular and religious) of the indigenous population. While the indigenous body became nominally 'equal' to the white-*mestizo* body in capability, indigenous knowledge required a modernization to be considered 'equal'.

Contrary to this modernist-liberal approach, Mariátegui (2006) provides a materialist response to the 'Indian Problem'. As a consequence, Mariátegui shifts the 'problem' from the indigenous population as an object requiring state intervention to the structure of the Peruvian political-economy. Mariátegui lays a foundation for his materialist shift by reconstructing the historical development of the Peruvian political-

economy from the initial Spanish colonization through to independence and the creation of white-*mestizo* republic. Early processes of colonization in Peru systematically and violent destroyed the structures of the productive agricultural economy of the Tawantinsuyu<sup>15</sup> including the institutions that created hegemony of the rationality of the Incan political-economy, the palaces – political authority – and religious temples – moral authority (Mariátegui 2006:15). Ecclesiastical and military powers were used to forcibly incorporate the labour of the indigenous population into a Europeanized feudal economy. Landowning white elite established large feudal rural estates, the *latifundia*. Civil war between the *criollo* (naturalized) elites and the Spanish crown did not fundamentally disrupt the structure of the political-economy of Peru. Maintaining the historical materialist narrative, Mariátegui argues that the war for Peruvian independence was profoundly influenced by the emergence of globalized Anglo-American capitalism: “to western capitalism [the independent countries] began to send the products from the ground and underground. And western capitalism began to send fabrics, machines, and thousands of industrial products” (2006:18-19, my translation). From this perspective, the philosophical ideas of the liberal republic are a dialectical consequence of the material production in the Peruvian context.

Following independence, rural elites maintained the feudal economy and indigenous workers continued as a subservient peasant class to provide labour for the agricultural economy. From this materialist perspective, the poverty and the political

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15 Tawantinsuyu is the Kichwa name for the Inca Empire, meaning The Four Unified Regions. In Kichwa Tawantin means group of four and Suyu means region. The Inca Empire created in the century before European colonization had been divided into four provinces, which were governed from the central capital of Cuzco.

exclusion of the indigenous population are explained not by any racial or cultural deficiencies of the *indio*, but rather by the colonial economic structure. Secondly, the liberal interpretation of the “Indian Problem” prevalent amongst the Peruvian elites during the beginning of the 20th century is interpreted to emerge from the material conditions of production. Mariátegui argued that “the concept of the problem of the *indio* as a problem of education does not appear to be supported by any strict and autonomous pedagogical criteria. ... The social-economic environment inexorably conditions the work of the teacher” (2006:38, my translation). From a critique of the historical structure of Peru's rural economy, Mariátegui observed that the vast inequality of land distribution concentrated in the hands of a small group of landholding elites (“*gamonales*”) was the underlying cause of what was described as the “Indian Problem”. The promises of education were false-rhetorical flourishes of the economic elites: “School and teacher are irremissibly condemned to be corrupted beneath the pressure of the feudal context, which cannot be reconciled with the most fundamental progressive and evolutionist conceptions” (2006:39, my translation). In constructing a historical-material description of the social, political, and economic inequality experienced by the indigenous population, Mariátegui is providing a redemptive argument for the indigenous peoples of Peru that does not condemn their race, culture or traditions.

Beyond this materialist analysis there is an important 'interpretative' element through these essays which provides the foundation for a myth. Outside the boundaries of European history in the Americas, Mariátegui constructs a mythic interpretation of the Inca political-economy. Mariátegui writes in the introduction of the first essay, *Schema of*

*Economic Evolution*: “The Empire radically ignored the problem of Malthus. The collectivist organization governed by the Inca weakened the individualist impulse of the Indians. ... They fruitfully employed collective work and the common effort for social ends” (2006:15, my translation). Collectivist tendencies within the Inca Empire and indigenous cultures inspired Mariátegui to inscribe a “communist” past to the indigenous cultures. In his prologue to Luis E. Valcárcel's *Tempest in the Andes*,<sup>16</sup> and included as a footnote in the essay *The Problem of the Indian*, Mariátegui argues that this past is the foundation of contemporary indigenous socialism:

Why should the Incan people, who constructed the most developed and harmonious communist system, be the only group insensitive to the world's emotions? The close relationship between the indigenous movement and the world's revolutionary movements is too obvious to document (1996[1927a]:81).

The continuous organization of indigenous Andean communities along the principle of the *ayllu* (land held collectively by a group of related families, Mariátegui refers to its contemporary form as “Indian 'communities'”) was central to Mariátegui's understanding of the maintenance of a distinct indigenous identity.<sup>17</sup> Of particular interest is Mariátegui's recognition that the *ayllu* continued to change in history:

The defence of the indigenous 'community' does not rest upon abstract

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<sup>16</sup>Valcárcel's work had a profound impact upon Mariátegui, who was unable to directly experience life in rural indigenous Peru since he was confined to urban areas by complications of his health (Becker 2006:468). Valcárcel was an early Peruvian *indigenista* living in Andean Cuzco, who saw education as a means for developing indigenous peoples' self-representation and autonomy rather than their integration into a Spanish state (García 2005:78). Valcárcel influenced Mariátegui's perspective that the indigenous population had a revolutionary potential from their continued historical understanding of communal property. Promoting the mythic and religious language, Mariátegui refers to Valcárcel as a 'prophet' of the formation of a reinvigorated indigenous movement (1996[1928b]:80).

<sup>17</sup>Communism is an emancipating and liberating idea for Mariátegui: “The Indian, in spite of one hundred years of laws of the republican regime, has not become individualist. And this is not because he has resisted progress, as is claimed by the simplistic interests of his detractors. Rather, it is because the individualism of the feudal regime does not have the necessary conditions to assert and develop itself. Whereas, communism has continued to be the only defence of the Indian” (2006:75).

principles of justice nor on traditionalist sentiments, but on the concrete and practical reasons of a social and economic order. The communal property of Peru does not represent a primitive economy that is to be progressively replaced by an economy funded upon individual property (Mariátegui 2006:76, my translation).

The social practices of indigenous peoples for Mariátegui were not static and unresponsive to historical movements, nor did they represent a “primitive economy”. His perspective challenges the modern linear and individualist perspective on economic development. Michael Löwy (1998:84) argues that Mariátegui built his argument on a “concrete dialectic between the present, the past, and the future” and avoided both a unilinear idea of progress, as well as a 'romantic' call for a return to the past.

Whether or not Mariátegui's provided a truthful “communist” interpretation of the social-economic relations of the Tawantinsuyu<sup>18</sup> is secondary to its performative use in myth. A radically new myth particular to the Peruvian context<sup>19</sup> is being proposed by Mariátegui. In his summation of the Indian Problem written for the *Congreso Constituyente de la Conferación Sindical Latinoamericana* (Constituent Congress of the Latin American Trade Union Confederation) in 1929, Mariátegui concluded:

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<sup>18</sup>In an important and significant footnote to the essay, *The Problem of Land*, Mariátegui notes: “The modern communism is distinct from the Incan communism. This is the first thing that is necessary to learn and understand for the researcher exploring the Tawantinsuyu. Each communism is a product of different human experiences. They came about in distinct historical epochs. They constitute the elaboration of dissimilar civilizations. [The communism of the] Inca was of an agrarian civilization. That of Marx and Sorel was of an industrial civilization. ... In our epoch, autocracy and communism are incompatible, but this was not the case in primitive societies. Today there is a new order that cannot be renounced ... the contemporary socialism – other epochs have their own forms of socialism that history gives different names – [and] is the antithesis of liberalism; but is born from its bowels and nurtured by its experiences. It is not to disdain, mock, or vilify the intellectual achievements of liberalism, rather its limitations (2006:91-3, my translation; also quoted in Löwy 1998:84).

<sup>19</sup>Mariátegui's marxism recognizes nationalism as a mode of revolution: “The idea of the nation, as an internationalist has said, in the incarnation of the spirit of freedom in certain historical periods” (1996[1925b]:71). Contextualizing revolution in the nation however does not supersede internationalism: “The Latin American revolution will be nothing more or nothing less than a stage, a phase of the world revolution” (1996[1928a]:88-9).

[The labour of organising with indigenous communities] will be difficult in all regards, but its progress will fundamentally depend on the ability of those elements that carry it out and on their precise and concrete appreciation of the objective conditions of the indigenous question. The problem is not racial, but social and economic; but race has a role in it and in the methods of confronting it. ... only militants coming from the indigenous milieu can gain an effective and immediate influence over their comrades. ... once the Indians have made the socialist ideal their own, they will serve it with a discipline, tenacity, and strength that few proletarians from other milieus will be able to surpass (1996[1929]:108).

Mariátegui's argument to (re)vindicate indigenous people was two-fold. First, he argued that indigenous people understood the materialist ideas of the socialist revolution and had an equal stake in a revolutionary transformation. Secondly, Mariátegui believed indigenous people would provide their own intellectuals in the socialist revolution.

Devising the constituents of the socialist revolution beyond an urban proletariat in the Peruvian and Latin American context required a mythic conceptualization of the socialist revolution that brought together distinct identities. In large part, Mariátegui was engaged in combating an entrenched racism held by the urban *mestizo* workers against the indigenous population (Chavarría 1979:150). Confined to urban life by physical circumstances, Mariátegui focused his efforts on articulating to urban workers the revolutionary potential of the indigenous peoples, not simply as a mass to be led, but as partners with a different but equal appreciation of what was to be gained through revolution. His Peruvian context led Mariátegui to propose a socially heterogeneous myth, when both Sorel and Gramsci depended upon a unitary proletariat. For Mariátegui, a relationship of solidarity could be forged between the proletariat and the indigenous subjects through the mythic construction of the socialist revolution.

While Mariátegui was making a particular argument against dominant white-

*mestizo* and bourgeois interpretations of the 'Indian Problem', he was also engaged in debate with marxists and the Comintern in Latin America on how to engage with racialized exploitation (Chavarría 1979:158). Mariátegui developed his marxist views in relative autonomy from formalized institutions, while his European encounters were with activist-intellectuals. As a result, Mariátegui was a late-comer to the formalized politics of the Comintern. Latin America itself only was only recognized by the Soviet Union as an opening front against capitalism during the Sixth Congress in 1928, which led to the *Congreso Constituyente de la Conferación Sindical Latinoamericana* in Uruguay and the *Primera Conferencia Comunista Latinoamericana* (First Latin American Communist Conference) in Buenos Aires, in 1929. The Peruvian delegates of the PSP clashed with the Argentine organizers and other Communists who had close connections to Comintern communism over Mariátegui's interpretation of Lenin and his argument concerning the distinct Peruvian reality (and subsequently all contextually distinct realities) in the international struggle (Becker 2006:457-8). Becker (2006:469) argues that his break with the Comintern's position on an indigenous republic is a reflection of Mariátegui's understanding of the constitution of Peruvian identity. Mariátegui believed that a socialist revolution in Peru necessitated the recognition of the country's indigenous population:

No one who sees the content and essence of things can be surprised by the confluence or amalgamation of *indigenismo* and socialism. Socialism orders and defines the vindication of the masses, of the working class. And in Peru the masses – the working class – are four-fifths indigenous. Thus our socialism ... [must declare its] solidarity with the native people... [In] this vanguard . . . there exists absolutely nothing of an 'exotic nationalism'; it is nothing but a 'Peruvian nationalism' (Mariátegui *Ideología y Política*, quoted in Chavarría 1979:153).

These debates in the 1920s and 1930s about the relationship between indigenous people

and the working class occurred often in the absence of indigenous voices (Becker 2006:470-3). Leftist activists in the Andean countries, and particularly in Ecuador, did during this same time develop ties and acted increasingly in solidarity with indigenous activists in rural areas. The presence of this debate however underlines the reality that while some leftists attempted to understand indigenous perspectives within their contemporary contexts, others either essentialized or completely rejected indigenous identity as a distinct and important identity.

Mariátegui also expresses a pragmatic concern in effectively organizing the urban proletariat. Mariátegui uses spiritual and mythic discourse to inspire creativity and unity in his efforts to organize the urban labour movement. In his *Message to the Workers Congress* (1927), an opening address to the second Lima Workers Congress, Mariátegui states:

Our programmatic debate therefore, should not lose itself in theoretical digressions. Union organization has no need of etiquettes, but of spirit. ... along with a realistic sense of history, it is necessary to give the proletarian vanguard a heroic will to create and accomplish. ... A proletariat with no greater ideals than a shorter working day and a few cents more in wages will never be capable of a great historical enterprise. And this is why we must elevate ourselves above a vulgar positivism of the belly and above negative, destructive, and nihilist sentiments and interests. *The revolutionary spirit is a constructive spirit* (my italics, 1996[1927a]:78-9).

Sorel also made the connection between the emotional experience and the creative psychological state within transformative contestation: “at such moments, we are dominated by an overwhelming emotion; but everybody now recognizes that movement is the essence of emotional life, and it is, then, in terms of movement that we must speak of creative consciousness” (1961:48). Besides directly referencing Sorel's efforts to

“regenerate the revolutionary spirit” in his message, Mariátegui also draws upon the notion of a Sorelian myth in constructing a unitary proletarian identity through action. Within the proto-syndicalist formation, where sectarian interests can become petty and fractious to a weakly constituted workers union, Mariátegui was arguing that a psychological state, or 'heroic will', is necessary to create the concrete organization of a union. The appeal to a heroic 'constructive spirit' rhetorically embellishes the historic struggle of the proletariat and attempts to give a meaning beyond the short term interests of the worker – a central feature of the revolutionary myth.

In contrast to Gramsci, Mariátegui recognized the potential role of 'organic intellectuals' emerging from indigenous peoples. Mariátegui's interpretation of the “Indian Problem” went beyond a strict materialist analysis to propose a socialist revolution that requires the vindication of the creative potential of a revolutionary indigenous identity. Mariátegui's approach towards the socialist revolution did not subordinate the role of the peasant masses, as in Gramsci's Jacobin political party, nor advocate the creation of an independent Andean indigenous republic proposed by the Comintern. Mariátegui constructed a new myth from a historical-materialist description of Peru's economic evolution and from an interpretation of the communitarian values of the indigenous people. A socialist revolution in the Peruvian reality could not ignore either the historical relationship between European and indigenous peoples, and thus advocate a separate indigenous republic, nor the global structure of the capitalist economy and the international communist struggle. As a consequence Mariátegui proposed, particularly to the *mestizo* working classes with whom he had contact, a “heroic socialist creation” with

its own language.

### **Action and Violence within the Revolutionary Myth**

Revolution is not an abstract intellectual exercise, but a lived action. A revolutionary myth has a necessary relationship to action. Sorel's general strike describes a spontaneous action; Gramsci's Modern Prince describes organizational and counter-hegemonic activity; and Mariátegui's socialist revolution describes a sustained transformative action. The form of the action is an important consideration when describing a revolutionary myth. Sorel's use of violence in his general strike raises an important concern about the consequences of a revolutionary myth in action. Sorel believed that violence was a necessary expression of a collective's absolute conviction to the myth. Without an ethical position or grounding in a class analysis, the amoral conviction of the myth has been used by left and right sorelians<sup>20</sup> to justify dramatic violence, including the political ideas of Italian fascism and Benito Mussolini.<sup>21</sup>

Gramsci provides the clearest description of how the myth can become self-referential through its construction of success: “The Modern Prince, as it develops, revolutionizes the whole system of intellectual and moral relations, as useful or harmful, as virtuous or as wicked, only in so far as it has its point of reference the Modern Prince itself, and helps to strengthen or to oppose it” (Gramsci 1971:133). The concept of the myth itself is amoral and thus does not provide reference points, beyond providing the

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<sup>20</sup>For a further development of the ideas of 'left' and 'right' sorelians, rather than of Sorel himself, see Kaplan (1986) and Roth (1979).

<sup>21</sup>Sorel's private letters to both Croce and Delesalle both demonstrate his dislike of the direction of Mussolini's Italian fascism (Meisel 1950). However, he did publicly write of the “political genius” of Mussolini and compared the Italian fascist to the leadership of Lenin (quoted in Meisel 1950:24), though this did not necessarily demonstrate an affinity to Italian fascism when contrasted to the overtly favourable description of Lenin's revolution.

imperative of 'success'. Each theorist of the revolutionary myth presented however advocates his myth within a historical context. Each theorist, to varying degrees, appealed to a historical materialist analysis to contextualize and provide an ethical foundation for the myth.

Nevertheless, Sorel's advocacy of proletarian violence as part of the general strike is not congruent with Ecuador's indigenous movement's commitment to non-violence. The indigenous movement's *levantamientos* during the 1990s, while dramatic actions, were carried out with the principles of non-violence. Sorel's purpose of violence must be deconstructed, so that the proper relationship between myth and action can be understood.

Sorel's defence of proletarian violence, in one sense, is a recognition of the possible consequences of a revolutionary myth and the coercive and violent reaction. Sorel, however, also inscribes a moral position to the use of proletarian violence. Violence polarizes society and distinguishes the proletariat from the interests of the decadent middle class, including the parliamentary socialists. Proletarian violence thus is understood as part of Sorel's preoccupation to "guarantee the uncontaminated unity of the working class," which is fundamentally important in his interpretation for the historical rupture of the socialist revolution (Estebanez 1979: 128). The fear of violence for Sorel is the consequence of bourgeois legal structures and the social attachment of the middle-class to a comfortable, but degenerate, decadent life-style (Sorel 1961:180; 191-2). Proletarian violence is fully autonomous and without compromise and therefore is interpreted as a historic and totalizing rejection of bourgeois society; a voluntary

expression of the full sincerity of a worker's conviction to revolution. Violence for the proletariat is given a moral imperative by Sorel (Estebanez 1979:115-7).

It important to note that Mariátegui does not draw upon Sorel's description of violence<sup>22</sup> – and focuses almost entirely on myth, spirit and the voluntarism of a socialist revolution in Sorel. Aware of the emergent consequences of Italian fascism, Mariátegui does however recognize the dangers that arise from the rhetorical flourishes of 'spirit' and 'heroic action' within the myth. In his 1925 article for *Mundial, Two Conceptions of Life*, Mariátegui (1996[1925c]) identifies bolshevism and its bourgeois-decadent response, fascism, as two responses to a malaise of spirit created by an ideal to “live gently”.

Mariátegui recognizes that both propose to “live dangerously”: “Life, more than thought, now wishes to be action, that is, struggle” (Mariátegui 1996[1925c]:141). Spirit emerges in conjunction with a bold action that breaks the malaise of a perceived “gentle” life.

Such an action does not necessarily need to be violent, but it does require risk, strong emotion, and a bold expression of determination. Ultimately, Sorel's proletarian violence is about rupturing social relations and creating the emotional connection within the proletariat. While violence is not necessary for the myth, the revolutionary myth should create a strong shared emotional experience through action amongst the participants.

### **Myth and Decolonizing Rationality**

Transitioning from an abstract discussion of the revolutionary myth to its application to

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<sup>22</sup>One significant reason for Mariátegui's diminished conversation with violence maybe the documented experience of the first World War: “Almost anxiously, almost impatiently, they demanded war. War did not seem a tragedy, a cataclysm, but a sport, a stimulant, a spectacle. ... but the war did not correspond to this frivolous and stupid prediction. War did not wish to be so mediocre. Paris felt the claw of this martial drama in its gut. Europe, burned and lacerated, shed its mentality and psychology” (1996[1925c]:140). Though in the same article Mariátegui does juxtapose bolshevik violence against fascist violence, as a “warlike and mythic spirit”.

plurinationality requires a framework through which the context of plurinationality as a revolutionary myth can be understood. While the historical materialist approach provides a lens for Sorel, Gramsci, and Mariátegui in the formation of their revolutionary myths, it is insufficient to understand the transformation proposed by Ecuador's indigenous movement and the plurinational state. Decolonialist theorists have argued that marxism does not provide an emancipatory perspective on reality as it has been created within a modernist narrative. Further, indigenous people in the Americas do not conform to strict marxist class identities. The history of colonialism has not only resulted in the material relations of exploitation but a suppression of alternative ways of being and knowing. A central argument proposed by Latin American decolonialist perspectives is that western epistemology has been imposed on indigenous knowledges and that this creates a necessity to consider the epistemological liberation, as well as a material emancipation, from the ongoing suppression and exploitation as the result of colonialism. From a critique of eurocentric and modern rationality, I argue that a revolutionary myth, particularly in the context of Ecuador, must provide the dual dynamic of liberation and emancipation to be transformative.

Decolonialists, such as Escobar (2007) and Mignolo (2007), present arguments against marxism as a potentially decolonizing theory. Escobar (2007:180) states that like Christianity and liberalism, marxism is a modernist narrative based on a linear view of history. Mignolo argues that a marxist revolution leads to emancipation within Modernity but not to liberation from Coloniality (2007:455). Marxism does not challenge the totalizing universality of Modernity; rather it reinforces the idea that a particular

European knowledge can be universalized following the predetermined path of economic progress.

It is relevant, however, to invert Mignolo's relationship between emancipation and liberation. As the subjugation of alternative knowledges required the material domination of early European colonization, the emancipation from material domination may suggest an equal liberation of 'thought' through the process or as a consequence of emancipation. Active participants create new forms of knowledge in the process of engaging in their own emancipation. Emancipation from material domination in the same moment creates liberating potential for the (re)production of alternative knowledges. Mignolo selectively defines 'marxism' as a rigid and spatially defined Eurocentric form of knowledge while claiming non-European self-identified marxists, such as the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, as decolonialist precursors. Mariátegui's variation in marxism is attributed by Mignolo to "the fracture of marxism in its encounter with colonial legacies in the Andes," thus resulting in its decolonialist character. Mignolo is suggesting that marxism is a rigid analytic form that requires a 'fracture' in order to respond to its spatial context. It also plausible, however, to argue that Mariátegui's work demonstrates marxism's malleability and flexibility in its application in the struggle against capitalism, imperialism, and/or colonial domination. Through a dynamic relationship with its social context, marxism can create its own liberating knowledges. Mariátegui writes:

Socialism, although born in Europe as was capitalism, is neither specifically nor particularly European. ... Indo-America, in this world order, can and must have its own individuality and style, but not its own culture or particular destiny. ... We certainly do not wish socialism in America to be a copy and imitation. It must be a heroic creation. We must

give life to an Indo-American socialism reflecting our own reality and in our own language (1996 [1928]:89).

Here, Mariátegui is self-identifying himself as an Indo-American, recognizing and (re)constructing importance of indigenous peoples in the formation of his distinct perspective. There is a important tension within marxism between the specific material context of the struggle and the universality of a collective response to the consequences of globalizing capitalism. Within this tension lies a potential flexibility for marxism. Nevertheless, the decolonialist critique of marxism indicates a larger concern about the way in which knowledge is reproduced through western concepts of rationality and progress.

A decolonialist perspective challenges the hegemony of a Eurocentric (re)production of knowledge and social relations, known as Modernity. Modernity has its own rationality – way of interpreting and seeing the world, and its material existence – which it defines as *the* rationality. Modernity defines itself as a universal and progressive rationality.<sup>23</sup> Mignolo identifies the relationship between rationality and Modernity as a 'Totality', “that negates, excludes, occludes the difference and the possibilities of other totalities” (2007:451). Enrique Dussel (2006) argues that the dominance of European 'rational' knowledge, which he labels eurocentrism, is interrelated with the emergence of European capitalism and the material and human exploitation of the process of colonization, particularly in the Americas and Africa. Modernity, spatially centred in Europe and to include North America, cannot be fully understood without considering how Modernity has been constituted and experienced in the colonized world – what is

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<sup>23</sup>Unless stated, rationality in this section refers to a modern, Eurocentric rationality.

referred to as Coloniality (Escobar 2007:185).

Accompanying the material processes of colonization, Coloniality emerged as the flip side of Modernity, first through the domination by European knowledge by physical force and exclusive access to the reproduction of knowledge. Later, the hegemony of Coloniality was broadened by the selective co-optation of local individuals into the systems of power and knowledge reproduction. Finally, a globalized hegemony of European knowledge and culture as the epitome of 'Modern', and subsequently 'developed', was established through the inclusive “seduction of power”, similar to the role of consent in Gramsci's hegemony (Quijano 2007:169). The formal-political decolonization did not end the consequences of Coloniality. Modernity remains a hegemonic project of knowledge (re)production that privileges Europeanized rationality. The goal of a decolonial project according to Mignolo is, “the re-construction and the restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages performed by the Totality depicted under the names of Modernity and rationality” (Mignolo 2007:451).

Coloniality, and the suppression of non-European knowledges, were inscribed on to the bodies of the colonized. Quijano argues that the emergence of Modernity required the cartesian separation of the “reason/subject”, which produced knowledge, from the “body/nature,” which produced experience. The colonized 'other', incapable of reason, were constructed as closer to 'nature' and thus established as only bodies and objects for study, exploitation, and domination. In turn, this separated these people from the European subject who was capable of establishing the duality of reason and body. The

“knowledge” of the colonized body was considered to be “irrational” as it was produced not by reason and a thinking subject, but from bodily experience (Quijano 2000:555; Quijano 2007:177).

Mignolo (2007:451) argues that Modernity has a universalizing inclination that can be described as a Totality of rationality and Modernity. For Escobar, Modernity is part of a totalizing project in an ongoing process to become universal, but is unable to achieve universality (Escobar 2007:183). Within contemporary time-space of Modernity alternative ways of knowing continue to exist, while being constantly 'subalternized' (Escobar 2007:183). Rationality and Modernity therefore are an expression of a progressive motion towards absolute dominance in the future. In the present, Modernity and rationality exist as hegemonic forces on the ways of knowing. Subaltern epistemologies are continually suppressed but are not eliminated, creating the possibility for a resurgence in alternative knowledges.

It is important to question whether a Eurocentric rationality is in reality a totality or if it depends upon the perception of totality. Rationality provides argumentative weight to decision-making processes, which often include a multitude of non-rational influences. Gramsci's concept of 'common sense', which he describes in a rudimentary form as “traditional conception of the world,” usefully complements this discussion (1971:197). By 'traditional' Gramsci is referring to the socially internal “uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world” (Hoare and Smith in Gramsci 1971:322). Enrique Dussel reflects on how the particularly European idea of rationality became hegemonic:

It is valid to characterize the domination of European philosophy as hegemonic because it imposed its sway on the *philosophical communities* that had been colonized or reduced to its periphery (not my emphasis, 2009:508).

Dussel refers to as Eurocentrism's "universality claim of a particular philosophy" (2009:509). He earlier labelled this claim as the "Myth of Modernity" (2006:496). It has become the traditional assumption that 'good' decisions have been made rationally because they are believed to be 'better'. A convincing non-rational argument or decision made within the tradition of European thinking does not necessarily lead to a counter-hegemonic challenge to Eurocentric rationality because it is not perceived to be non-rational. We are not asked to question the foundation of this tradition because we rarely encounter radical alternatives to Eurocentric rationality; thus popular ideas and decisions are considered to be 'rational', whether or not such ideas follow the scientific-rational method of knowledge production. The myth and idea of a Eurocentric rationality, rather than the actual practice of rational thought, is an important component in hegemony/totality of Modern epistemological approaches.

Decolonialist theory's reductionist challenge to a unitary Eurocentric and hegemonic 'rationality' can lead to the assumption that decolonial theory is arguing for the elimination of Modernity/rationality, as well its benefits. One defence, provided by Quijano (2007:177) and Walsh (2009) is to turn towards an 'intercultural' approach, which challenges the epistemological hegemony rather than the existence of Modernity and creates opportunities for other knowledges to exist without suppression and exclusion. Walsh defines interculturality as "the complete cultural relations, negotiations, and interchanges, that looks toward the development of an interaction between persons,

knowledges, practices, logics, rationalities, and principles of culturally different lives” (Walsh 2009:31, my translation).

An intercultural approach was part of a group discussion that I attended on intercultural healthcare at an indigenous youth conference organised by CONAIE in June 2009. A female member of the Shuar community, rejecting the notion that an intercultural healthcare approach was anti-European, explained that what was at stake was the possibility to choose and promote traditional indigenous practices alongside, in conjunction with, and at times in replacement of modern healthcare. For example, she described child-birth at the hospital in modern healthcare as being an isolating experience when compared to the traditional-communal child-birth experience of the Shuar, which occurred in the home. What was not questioned were the advancements in sterilization, drugs, and other potentially useful discoveries which accompany modern medicine, but rather the *experience* of child-birth. The relational processes which are important in creating meaning, and that are distinct for different communities, are centrally important to the creation of knowledge and therefore to power relations.. An intercultural approach means respecting the possibility of differences in practices/understandings and the ability for different cultures to make choices about the way their knowledges and practices interact with others.

Before the problematic of rationality was framed within the forms of 'Coloniality', José Carlos Mariátegui argued that this expansion of western rationality had taken on a bourgeois form. In 1925, Mariátegui wrote in his article *Man and Myth*:

The experience of rationalism has had the paradoxical effect of leading

humanity to the disconsolate conviction that reason can offer no way forward. Rationalism has only served to discredit reason. ... For some time now, Western man has raised reason and science to the place of the old gods. But neither reason nor science can be myth. ... Reason itself has been charged with demonstrating to humanity that it is not enough, that only myth possesses the precious virtue of satisfying its deepest self (1996[1925a]:142).

Rationality has limited the meaning of 'myth' and thus the 'soul' of society through its abuse of rationality. Mariátegui's religious language may be interpreted as his 'romantic' form of socialist marxism (Löwy 1998; 2008). Löwy argues that Mariátegui's "dialectic between materialism and idealism (the latter identified with ethics and religion) is one of the most original themes in his thought" (Löwy 2008:77). For Löwy, "what attracts Mariátegui to ... the enchanted soul, mysticism, and agony, the risky struggle for supreme values, a heroic quest for sense— [is] something ultimately quite different from institutional religion, with its dogmas and clergy" (Löwy 2008:74). Mariátegui's use of religious language reveals an interest in the emotional experience and expression of a transformative action. That is not to suggest, however, that practical considerations should not have an impact upon the collective capacity for transformative action; rather that there must be a dialectic between an emotional experience and practicality of transformative action. Mariátegui's idea of the revolutionary myth provides a potential resolution of this dialectic.

Argentine-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel (2009) presents an alternative conception of this dynamic relationship between myth and rationality. Myth plays a fundamental role in all rationalities, European and non-European alike, as 'symbolic enunciations' of rational explanations of core and universal philosophical problems, such

as questions concerning being and nature (Dussel 2009:500-502). For Dussel, mythical narratives have an element of the 'universal' as they often speak to circumstances that are commonly repeated (Dussel 2009:501). In recognizing the diversity of mythical rationalities, including the European as one of many traditions, Dussel's ultimate goal is the creation of what he refers to as the “trans-modern pluriverse (other than universal, and not postmodern)” for philosophy (Dussel 2009:514). The making of a pluriverse is a project for 'critical' and 'creative' philosophers from a diversity of cultural backgrounds, capable of non-dogmatically engaging within and outside of their own respective philosophical traditions to create new interrelated responses to the 'universal questions' of philosophy.

Recognizing the use of myth challenges Eurocentric rationality and provides a new opportunity to explore how concepts or ideas are part of creating an emotional experience for activists. The decolonial project also provides a frame of reference for contextualizing the transformation offered by the revolutionary myth in the context of Ecuador. The goal of enacting plurinationality as a revolutionary myth is both the material emancipation and epistemological liberation of the indigenous people and knowledge. The result would be a historic transformation of the political-economy of Ecuador, not just for the indigenous people but for the collective society.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter constructs the idea of a revolutionary myth from the myths proposed by Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci and José Carlos Mariátegui. Revolutionary myths have been presented as an idea or concept which challenges the hegemonic or dominant

rationality of social and material relations by inspiring a collective to action. A revolutionary myth is capable of bringing a constructed identity into political reality through action. Action does not necessarily require violence, but does need to create a significant social rupture to inspire a spirit of solidarity amongst the participants and signal to hegemonic ideas the presence of an alternative reality, to be considered revolutionary. Pragmatically, to carry-out such an action a movement must be organized. The organization of a revolutionary movement, however is not simply pragmatic, but also contains important references to the revolutionary myth.

While the organization of the worker-proletariat is important for Sorel's myth of the general strike, it is a spontaneous and contained action. A broader and sustained myth is necessary for the form of transformation demanded by movements such as Ecuador's indigenous movement. Gramsci proposed a political party, which is capable of providing a counter-hegemonic force within civil and political society. His more nuanced recognition of the function of consent in the formation of a hegemonic historic bloc leads to a myth that requires a sustained relationship between members of the proletariat. Hegemony is useful for understanding the political project to construct a nation within Ecuador. As will be described, this project began with a white-*criollo* identity in the creation of the Ecuadorian state, to the exclusion of the indigenous population. Since, the national project has become defined by *mestizo* identity, which has been argued to be more inclusive, though the strong rejection of this project by the indigenous movement raises questions of new forms of political and social exclusion. As both projects have attempted to establish a hegemony through a unitary national identity, they have excluded

the diversity of alternative identities with the state of Ecuador. The indigenous movement has asserted against the dominant trend towards a unitary nation-state that Ecuador recognize and incorporate a plurinational state.

Unlike Gramsci's myth of the political party, which is dependent upon a singular identity of the proletariat, the revolutionary myth of plurinationality indicates a unity through diversity. Mariátegui's myth of the socialist revolution was dependent upon heterogenous membership, similar in content to Ecuador's indigenous movement. Mariátegui introduces a new form of pragmatism to the revolutionary myth. His construction of the socialist revolution responds to the Peruvian context by bringing together the urban-proletariat with indigenous people through a creative interpretation of shared socialist values. This innovation to the revolutionary myth demonstrates how the myth can be used to create bonds of solidarity within a political project of disparate groups. In Ecuador, the myth of plurinationality accomplishes this by constructing indigenous nationalities brought together in the struggle for a plurinational state.

In the context of Ecuador, decolonialist theory provides an important perspective upon the political-economic development that led to current context of the indigenous movement. The material exploitation and suppression of alternative knowledges that led to the formation of Modernity/Coloniality highlights the necessary conditions for emancipation/liberation in a decolonial project, particularly the necessity to challenge the totalizing Eurocentric rationality. Gramsci proposed the Modern Prince as an “operative awareness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama” (1971:130). Even when focusing on the (re)production of knowledge and alternative

rationalities, the material conditions cannot be historically or contextually forgotten. Both historical-materialist and decolonialist approaches, in tension with each other, influence how the historical context of Ecuador's indigenous movement is established in the following chapter.

Mariátegui's re-imagination of the Peruvian reality through his historical-materialist approach provides a contrasting methodology on how to establish the revolutionary myth's context. Mariátegui in *Seven Interpretative Essays on the Peruvian* provides a materialist analysis for the "Indian Problem" based upon a long history of colonial and republican material exploitation and exclusion of the indigenous populations. His analysis also incorporates creativity in establishing his myth. By reconstructing the historical foundations of a pre-colonial indigenous communism, Mariátegui is planting a seed for the complementary relationship between proletarian and indigenous modes of production. Therefore for Mariátegui, placing the myth in contemporary reality requires both elements of a long history materialist analysis and creative re-interpretation. The creative interpretation of reality within the concept of plurinationality should also be recognized. While the idea of a nationality appeals to a long historical identity, the specific category of indigenous nationalities is a recent construction. Indigenous nationalities have been created by the indigenous activists to re-interpret the historical past. I now turn to the historical dimensions of the relationship between indigenous people and the state in Ecuador.

### **Chapter Three: Historical Dimensions of Ecuador's Indigenous Movement**

Following from José Carlos Mariátegui's description of the historical context of Peru, this section provides a long historical perspective on the social and material relations between the indigenous population and the Ecuadorian state from colonization. The myth of the socialist revolution presented by Mariátegui is dependent upon his description of the historical development of the peripheral capitalist economy in Peru, the exploitation of indigenous labour, and the colonial suppression of pre-conquest indigenous social and material relations. Similarly, the historical dimensions of the state-indigenous relationship in Ecuador serve as an important foundation for the revolutionary myth of plurinationality.

Both the content and significance of a myth is informed by the historical context. Mariátegui argued that a “truth is valid only for an era ... [but also that] every era wishes its own sense of the world” (1996[1925a]:144). While activists exist within a historical context, an era with its own truth, this does not limit their capacity to create a new history: “[Socialism] must be a heroic creation... reflecting our own reality and in our own language”(Mariátegui 1996[1925a]:144). Similarly, Gramsci argued that:

the affirmation that the philosophy is a new, independent and original conception, even though it is also a moment of world historical development, is an affirmation of the independence and originality of a new culture in incubation... what exists at any given time is a variable combination of old and new (1971:391).

The dialectic relationship between history and creation, old and new, informs the content of the revolutionary myth.

In Ecuador, the relationship between the state and indigenous populations was laid by the early processes of colonization. Regional differences in Ecuador is one important factor in the experience of colonization and the subsequent development of a white-*mestizo* state in Ecuador. This paper separates the historical dimensions of the Coastal and Andean regions from the Amazonian region. José Antonio Lucero describes that:

For most of the republic period [the Indian Question was] a question of the highlands ... while so-called tribes inhabited the tropical lowlands, until the late twentieth century these dispersed indigenous populations were seen as beyond the imaginary of the nation-state (2008:51).

Indigenous cultural and ethnic differences also make this distinction valid. The indigenous population of the Andean region is dominated by indigenous people who speak various dialects of the Kichwa language. The linguistic diversity indicates the politicization of the concept of nationality as these populations are recognized within the indigenous movement as part of the Kichwa nationality. The Kichwa nationality is subdivided into thirteen *pueblos*, which represent the historical, linguistic, and political differences within the Kichwa nationality. The presence of *pueblos* within the Kichwa nationality reflects the contested nature of establishing a contemporary Kichwa nationality based upon language which side-steps the historical, economic, and social diversity of the Andean indigenous population. In the Amazon, the contemporary indigenous population is divided into eight nationalities. Historically, the population was linguistically and culturally more diverse.

The coastal region represents a third important region in Ecuador. Contemporary indigenous populations, distinct from the Kichwa nationality, of Awá, Chachi, Epera and Tsa'chilas, as well as Afro-Ecuadorian populations in the northeast and Chota Valley

continue to live in this region. Migrant Andean Kichwa populations make up a significant percentage of the indigenous population in the coastal region. Migrant indigenous and *mestizo* labour from the Andes began to arrive in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the historical economic connections between the Andes and the coastal region, this paper presents these regions together.

Important to the revolutionary myth of plurinationality is the formation of the political project to construct a distinct Ecuadorian national identity. This national identity for a significant period of Ecuadorian history was clearly exclusionary and racist against the indigenous population, thus creating distinctions between citizens and *indios*. More recently attempts to create a *mestizo* nation-state in Ecuador have been presented as inclusive, though this claim is strongly contested by the indigenous movement advocating for a plurinational state. This transition from the exclusionary to assimilationist national project occurred during the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hegemony is a useful concept in understanding these projects. While an Ecuadorian national identity has never achieved hegemony in Gramscian terms, as dissent and contestation against the national project, from different populations within Ecuador throughout the country's history, has prevented true consent from forming within civil society, it has nevertheless been a dominant project of elites. The construction and attempts to gain legitimacy for a national identity in Ecuador are related to the historical changes of the Ecuadorian political-economy.

In the Andes, relational tensions of indigenous and class identities are deeply related through Coloniality. Following from the economic structure of the Andean colonial economy, early forms of the Ecuadorian nation attempted to differentiate

*criollo-mestizo* citizen from the indigenous population. Class-distinctions between indigenous labour and non-indigenous labour were important causes for this bifurcation. As economic priorities changed and resistance made this distinction untenable, new methods of incorporating the indigenous population emerged. By the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, constructing a *mestizo* national identity became the dominant project of elites. The social and material relationships between class and identity form the Andean context for the creation of the myth of plurinationality, as it responds to the exploitation and exclusion of indigenous people through this history.

The development of class based peasant organizations from the 1930s onwards is another important historical dimension of the Andean indigenous movement. Organizations like the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI) are important precursors to contemporary indigenous organizations CONAIE and ECUARUNARI. The content and methods of earlier peasant-based struggles have significant influence on the contemporary indigenous movement. The transition from class-based organizations to overtly indigenous organizations began in the 1970s and was an important moment for the formation of the indigenous movement in Ecuador.

The focus on the Amazonian region highlights the historical origins of the diversity of indigenous people within the contemporary indigenous movement. While indigenous people in the Amazon have had continuous contact since colonization with the colonial and Ecuadorian state, their experience has varied greatly from the Andean indigenous people. Indigenous people in the Amazon have been able to maintain a greater level of territorial autonomy, which has only more recently seen dramatic incursions by

the state most importantly as a result of oil exploration and land reforms beginning in the 1960s. The contemporary exploitation of indigenous territory, rather than labour, by the state has created distinct demands from the Amazonian indigenous organizations.

Creating a unified indigenous movement across the regional differences has been one of the important accomplishments of Ecuador's indigenous movement. Similar to Mariátegui's construction of the myth of the socialist revolution in the Peruvian context, providing the historical dimensions of the indigenous diversity informs the myth of plurinationality. Plurinationality is later argued to be an important part of the indigenous movement's ability to bridge these differences. Thus the content of plurinationality, as well as its significance, is informed by the historical differences of the Andean and Amazonian indigenous people.

### **Historical Dimensions in the Ecuadorian Andes**

#### **Colonization to Republic (1533-1820)**

Formal colonization of the present-day Ecuador began following the conquest of the Tawantinsuyu in 1533 by Spanish conquistadores. During the period of European colonization of the northern Andes from 1532 to 1820, Becker (2008:3;196f4) identifies seventy uprisings against European domination. Rumiñahui, a noble from the northern Andes (present-day Ecuador), led the first indigenous rebellion against the Spaniards after Atahualpa's death at the hands of Francisco Pizarro. The Spanish conquistadores, while violently suppressing active resistance during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, established themselves on top of the existing structures of tribute and organized community labour.<sup>24</sup> In 1563, the

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<sup>24</sup>Colonial hegemony was established through coercive and violent methods, which contributed to the reduction of the indigenous population from 1.5 million at contact to about 217 200 by 1600 in the

*Real Audiencia de Quito* (the Royal Audience in Quito) was established to manage the political and military administration in the northern Andes, which became a base of agricultural and textile production (Garcés Dávila 1992:50). The colonial economy grew out from its exploitation of the surplus production of indigenous communities through the collection of tribute and the exploitation of labour through the *mita* (obligatory labour service), which had been an economic practice of the Inca.

The tribute provided the colonial economy with income, linked the indigenous communities to the colonial state, organized the production of the agricultural economy to the demands of the colonial state, and created the possibilities for the ideological domination of the indigenous populations (Garcés Dávila 1992:51). Indigenous community leaders known as *caciques* (hereditary heads of a familial community)<sup>25</sup>, became important intermediaries between the indigenous population and the colonial state, as they maintained a position through the collection of tribute. As the tribute became an important source of revenue for the colonial state, the category of 'community' took on a colonial meaning and the individual of "indian tributary" was created and counted.

Indians were also required to pay tribute to the Catholic Church, known as a *diezmo*. The *diezmo* continued into the liberal republic beyond the colonial tribute and was also used by the church within early colonization of the Amazon (Baud 207:75; Garcés Dávila 1992:56). In a similar Peruvian context, Jacobsen argues that the use of the

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*Audiencia de Quito* (Newson 2003:194).

<sup>25</sup>Also known as a *kuraka*, the Kichwa word for 'elder' and used by Jacobsen in the context of indigenous communities in Peru (1993).

*diezmo* and tribute informally incorporated the indigenous peasantry into the colonial economy. The majority of peasants were left “in their own agrarian society” (Jacobsen 1993:90-91). More direct forms of exploitation were experienced by a minority of labourers, who were incorporated into the feudal *haciendas* of elite European landowners,<sup>26</sup> as bonded labourers, and the mines, where indigenous workers were exploited “until death” (Garcés Dávila 1992:51).

Despite being created through processes of colonial domination, the *encomienda* did allow indigenous communities a level of self-representation when mediating conflict with the colonial state. Colonial bureaucracy developed to facilitate this mediation. The dependency upon the payment of tribute meant that the state had an interest in maintaining labouring indigenous communities, which prevented absolute access to indigenous labour for the *hacienda* and mine owners. As a consequence, a scale of political interaction at the community level was an important dynamic for Andean indigenous people. There was also a basis for elite competition in terms of labour access and thus defining the elite relation to the *indio*. Both of these consequences have continued to be a part of the political-economy of the post-colonial Republics.

Landowning elites made up an important subsection of the colonial elites. While the *hacienda* incorporated a minority of the labour in the beginning, it increasingly became a significant part of the colonial economy. By 1805, records of the *Audiencia del Quito* recorded that 46 percent of Indians were tied to a *hacienda*, while 54 percent were

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<sup>26</sup>Korovkin (2000:6-7) describes the basic function of an Ecuadorian *hacienda*. Peasants tied to a *hacienda* would receive a small plot of land (a *huasipungo*) within the *hacienda*, firewood, water, and access to pasture land all for subsistence in return for six days of labour.

'libre' (Williams 2003:706f33). The period leading up to the Ecuadorian *criollo* war of independence from Spain was marked by a “consolidation of landed wealth” into the hands of a small group of elites, at the expense of indigenous communities' land (Lane 2003:87). The extent of the consolidation of land into *criollo* haciendas varied regionally but came to represent the majority of productive agricultural land in the Andean highlands of Ecuador. The majority of the rural indigenous peasant labour, however, continued to work in indigenous communities. The continued existence of indigenous communities preserved the independent development of indigenous communal values, such as the *ayllu*, observed later by *indigenistas* such as Mariátegui.

By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, protests and uprisings by indigenous peasants shifted from rejecting the processes of European colonization to contesting the form of consolidation of the colonial political-economy – particularly focused on abuses of the tribute-paying communities by local administrators and the church (Becker 2008a:3-4). Contestation in the Andean Spanish colonies emerged once again during the 18<sup>th</sup> century culminating in the 1780 Túpac Amaru Rebellion in the southern Andes (Jacobsen 1993:45). Local violent protests did take place in the northern Andes – most notably a violent Kichwa peasant protest in 1777 in Otavalo against the census and related efforts to turn community lands over to haciendas (Becker 2008a:4; Korovkin 2000:6). The lack of participation, however, of the northern Andean indigenous people in rebellions led by Túpac Amaru and later Túpac Katari constructed an image of the passive Ecuadorian *indio*. Nevertheless, the white elites throughout the Spanish colonies became increasingly nervous of the indigenous *caciques*. In the subsequent wars of independence led by

white-*criollos* against the European Bourbon state, indigenous communities remained crucial to the taxation structure of the state, while the representation through indigenous *caciques* diminished.

### **Early Republic (1820-1857)**

Ecuador gained independence from the Spanish Crown in 1822 as part of Gran Colombia and was separated into an independent republic in 1830. *Criollos* discursively founded the new Republics in Spanish America upon the liberal ideas of the French and North American revolutions. In contradiction to the liberal ideals of the new republics, the distinct category of the *indio* remained an important component of the early political-economy. Liberal notions of a nation-state created from equal individual citizens clashed with the differentiated *indio* and the necessary recognition of indigenous communities, which remained as an important source of income and labour through tribute and the *mita*. Between 28 and 35 percent of the government's revenue came from an annual 3 peso tribute paid by every *indio* male (Sattar 2007:25). Aleezé Sattar describes the new republic as a “bifurcated state” because of the distinction between the *criollo-mestizo* 'citizen' and the indigenous *indio*. While the white-*criollo* lived as a citizen of a liberal republic, the *indio* was part of a separate tribute-paying republic, mediated by indigenous *caciques*, the local *cabildo*, and intermediary state-bureaucrats (Sattar 2007:23-25). Focusing on the status of the indigenous population, Guerrero (2003:290) argues that the indigenous subject became identified by the state through a contradictory threefold matrix of 'Ecuadorian', 'tributary populations' and as 'miserable persons'. The latter status identified the state as a paternalist protector of the *indio*. The 'liberation heroes' of the

independence was recognized from the beginning the contradictory nature of the newly formed bifurcated republics. Simón Bolívar attempted to abolish the tribute system in an effort to dissolve a collective *indio* identity and replace it with the individual citizenship, but ultimately his efforts failed (Sattar 2007:24). From an economic perspective, these efforts were impossible for the *criollo* republics to accomplish without a fundamental reorganization of the taxation system.

Attempts to change the relationship between the state and the *indio* were met with strong resistance by *mestizo* populations. Coloniality, according to decolonialists, was the result of the colonial economy's dependency upon the racial categorization of labour, and the suppression of alternative non-European knowledges. The strict racial categories of the Bourbon colonial states that differentiated the population into categories of *negro*, *indio*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, *criollo*, etc. were important for the function of the economy but they also produced social relations. Guerrero (2003:282) argues that *mestizos* were driven by the fear that the state was incorporating them back into the category of *indio*. Rural *mestizos* in Ecuador, in many ways a lower-class population<sup>27</sup>, initiated the young republic's first significant uprising in 1843.

President Juan José Flores, recognizing the contradiction created between a tax-paying *indio* and the non-paying *mestizos*, as well as the financial burden of the Republic, proposed to reform the tax and tribute system by either repealing the tribute system and replacing it with a proportional tax or extending the tribute tax to the white-*mestizo* population (Guerrero 2003:277). Rather than being perceived as an expansion of equal

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<sup>27</sup>*Mestizos* included the urban-poor and small landowning peasants, as well as the poorly paid managers of the *hacienda*.

citizenship, rural *mestizos* feared the reforms would lead to their reincorporation into the racial category of *indio* (Guerrero 2003:284). As the hacienda system was expanded and demanded more labour, the *mestizos'* rejection of the state's attempt to reform the citizenship also reflected fears that they would be incorporated into the system of labour tied to the hacienda. The uprising of the rural *mestizo* population was able to halt the president's efforts and delay reforms of the taxation and tribute system until 1857.

Indigenous knowledges – understood here through political and economic social organization – were not incorporated into the *criollo* ideas of the state, which turned towards liberal revolutionary ideals to articulate their political-economic difference from the Spanish Crown. Nevertheless, the republican state maintained at a local level, though increasingly marginalized, the political-economic organization of indigenous communities, mediated by indigenous leaders and a low-level bureaucracy. In Peru, Mariátegui was able to observe the distinctly indigenous *ayllu*, which continued into the 1920s to develop despite its suppression and exclusion as an alternative productive basis of the community. Nevertheless, discrimination and racial exploitation led many *mestizos* to reject indigenous identifiers such as language, cultural practices and symbols to avoid being counted as part of the tribute-paying population. This period illuminates many of the continuities of the contradictions of the Ecuadorian state: efforts to 'recognize' the indigenous population through liberal citizenship remains a project tied to the political-economic interests of the elite; 'equality' is understood differently by groups within an economically and, as a consequence of the identities created for the colonial economy, racially stratified political-economy and resistance and challenges to contextual moments

cannot be understood without considering the oscillations of Coloniality in Ecuador's long history.

### **Liberalizing the Republic (1857-1925)**

The end of the tribute system in 1857 began a new phase of the state-indigenous relations in the Andes. Passed under the government of President José María Urbina (1851-59), who is identified as a liberal president, the 1857 law, which ended the tribute collection stated: "In the Republic the tax known as the personal contribution of Indians is abolished, and *individuals of this class are now equal to the rest of Ecuadorians in terms of obligations and rights imposed and granted by fundamental charter*" (my emphasis, quoted in Sattar 2007:35). Sattar (2007:34-5) identifies two reasons behind the elimination of the tribute: first, on ideological levels the colonial-liberal contradictions became difficult to legally sustain. Second and more significantly, the coastal economy expanded from emerging cacao exports and provided the government with a new source of tax revenue.

Reforms to the tax law were received by isolated protests by indigenous communities. According to Sattar (2007:35-6), resistance to the elimination the tribute emerged "over the loss of [the *indio's*] former exemptions and privileges." Changes included expanded tax regimes on consumption, state rather than locally organized taxation and labour obligations, and the increased vulnerability of the community and communal land.<sup>28</sup> The theoretical equalization of citizenship eliminated the legally bifurcated state identified by Sattar, while concealing the vast inequality created through

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<sup>28</sup>In other cases, peasants believing that their economic and political rights were truly equalized began leaving their *haciendas* in large numbers.

the colonial processes of racializing the labour force (Sattar 2007:35). Guerrero (2003) argues that as a result of the elimination of the tribute system, the *indio* was made invisible to the state. Following 1857 an 'archival amnesia', a phrase Guerrero (2003:293) uses to refer to the absence of mention of 'indigenous' or '*indio*' from the official documents such as the census, spread over the records of the national-state. However, rather than eliminating the *indio*, the 'recognition' of the racial categories was decentralized and rescaled to the local *hacienda*-owners and the records of municipal bureaucracies.

While the state's revenue concerns were mitigated by the dramatic rise of the cacao-export of coastal plantations, landowners in the sierra also had a decreasing interest in maintaining the formal recognition of the *indio*. During the tribute period, landlords were responsible for paying the tribute of the indigenous workers<sup>29</sup> who were tied to the *hacienda*. By eliminating the tribute system, the landlord was no longer responsible for organizing the tribute of indigenous *huasipungueros* on behalf of the state. Guerrero argues that "the central state delegated to the private sphere, at the confines of the public-state sphere, the codification of labor relations between citizens and natives", thus decentralizing and rescaling the racial construction of the Indian (2003:291).

Conflicts between elite groups, interacting at multiple scales of governance within Ecuador, continued to (re)construct the category of the *indio* in their efforts to gain political power. Paternalist rhetoric of a 'miserable *indio*' who was to be protected by the state became a terrain of contestation for elite groups. The rural indigenous population

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<sup>29</sup>Also known as *huasipungueros* after the *huasipungo*, a small plot of land owned by the *hacienda* which was worked on by the indigenous peasant for personal consumption.

was separated into two categories: the *huasipungueros*, tied to a *hacienda*, and the *indigenas libres* (free *indios*) or *comuneros*. Liberal state discourse shifted in relation to the free *indio*, arguing that progress towards equal citizenship would begin to resolve the “superficial and eminently solvable” problems that separated the *indio* from the white-*mestizo* citizen (Williams 2003:706).<sup>30</sup> The situation for the *huasipungueros* however was perceived differently by the liberal government. President Urquina developed a liberal-paternalist discourse that sought to ‘protect’ the docile and servent *indio* from the excessive abuses of the landowning class. In particular, the Urvinista political project targeted the *concertaje*<sup>31</sup> that tied the indigenous labour to the hacienda. Article 51 of the *Ley de Indigenas* stated:

Indigenous *conciertos* who are attached to agricultural or manufacturing estates cannot be obliged to pay off their debts with labor, and, paying what they owe, they may depart from service prior to the liquidation [of accounts] which will take place in the presence of a *Teniente parroquial*, if the *indigena* so demands (quoted in Williams 2003:707f37).

It is interesting to note that while the liberal politics such as the Urvinista project attempted to formally eliminate the *indio*, a more direct relationship developed to the individual indigenous peasant. For Williams, the Urvinista project represents a short-lived moment of expansive liberalism that left concrete consequences that were adopted by the following conservative project of constructing the ‘nation’. Most importantly, the

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30One such shift towards ‘equality’ that was part of the 1854 *Ley de Indigenas* was the mandate to parcel the communal property of *comuneros* in an effort to create individual private property, that would encourage individualism, productivity, and as a result democratic participation (Williams 2003:706). The push towards individual private property however was not as comparatively aggressive as in other former Spanish colonies where indigenous communities still held property communally. Williams (2003:706-7) argues that while the opportunity to privatize communal property was created, the Urquina legislation also included a provision that recognized the right to hold property communally and to recognize the local authority of indigenous leaders.

31The *concertaje* tied indigenous labour to the hacienda through debt servitude and was comparable to the slavery of African descendents on the Ecuadorian coastal plantations.

legitimacy of both the liberal or conservative elites governments depended upon employing a populist and paternalist discourse in relation to the indigenous population (Williams 2003:732).

Representation of the '*indio*' was transformed to what Guerrero (1997) identifies as 'representative ventriloquism' and 'trans-writing'. Representation of the indigenous subject to the state, either by official state 'protectors' or by interactions with *caciques*, was replaced at a local level by *tinterillos* and *pendolistas*. Essentially local scribes, *tinterillos* were *mestizos* who acted as intermediaries between the *criollo* state and indigenous communities. The voice of the indigenous subject articulating complaints and demands against landlords and local officials within the state was translated into the written legal and Spanish voice of the *tinterillos*, who had working knowledge of the Republican legal structures (Baud 2007:81). In a broader context this local trans-writing reflected a much wider 'ventriloquism' of the indigenous subject. As the state was not capable nor interested in understanding the indigenous voices, viewing the *indio* at best as a child on the developmental path to liberal citizenship, the indigenous population needed to be represented by ventriloquists, or people who could speak on their behalf. Guerrero describes the act of ventriloquism:

The ventriloquist is a social intermediary that knows the semantics that can be put into the mouth of the indigenous, that knows the content, the range and the tone that the liberal state wants and is able to pick up. The ventriloquist knows the circuits of power of the bureaucracy... . He does not translate or transcribe. The ventriloquist presents a trans-scriptural act: he pursues a strategy of representation" (Guerrero 1994:242 translated in Lucero 2008:59).

Controlling the voice of the indigenous subject became an important political

battleground for competing elites. The constructed paternalist identity of the 'miserable *indio*', who was incapable of self-realizing their equal legal rights, could not 'speak' with their own voice and thus found representation either in the transcribed voice of the *tinterillo* or the voices of white elites.

Williams provides a contrasting argument, stating that “Indians could and did translate legal rights into power in their relations with *hacendados*, maximizing their mobility within the system and even exiting servitude altogether” (2003:712). For Williams, the liberal project did not distinguish itself from a shared construction of the “Indian as a passive, childlike member of a society who required tutelage” (2003:727). The oscillation between liberal and conservative elites maintained this paternalist discourse, and it was in part reworked by local political actions of indigenous peasants contesting either new state projects or abuses of landlords.

The paternalist discourse served an important function in the conservative administration of President Gabriel García Moreno (1859-1865; 1869-1875). Erin O'Connor (2007:57) identifies the dual construction of the indigenous man as a 'helpless child' and an 'undeserving patriarch' as concepts that made the Ecuadorian state cohesive despite its contradictions. In the eyes of the government of García Moreno, supported by conservative landowners and the Catholic Church, the labour of the *indio* was idle and lazy. In a message to congress, García Moreno remarked:

It is not, therefore, strange that ignorance and lack of honour are so frequently transmitted like a fatal inheritance, which perpetuates the lazy idleness with which we justly find fault, and as a result of which the indigenous race, especially in the interior provinces, continues to be wretched, depraved, and miserable (quoted in O'Connor 2007:65).

The spatialization of the “Indian Problem” provides the clearest indication of the imagination of the elite. The *indio* who is closest to the centre of political and economic control is less 'wretched, depraved, and miserable'. 'Ignorance' and a 'lack of honour' were 'transmitted', or rather taught, at a greater degree when indigenous people were distant from the state. The implication being that the state needed to become the capable teacher, closer to the *indio*. O'Connor argues that this construction of the *indio* “placed indigenous peoples in the childlike role of needing guidance and protection as they advanced toward true civilization” (2007:65).

On the other side of this child-like construction of the *indio* was the 'undeserving patriarch' – which attributed the brutality and violent behaviour of the indigenous man to drunkenness and an incapability of accepting responsibility. The *indio's* economic and political distinction from the white and civilized Ecuadorian – marked by stark inequality – was explained and legitimized not through descriptions of an unequal 'body', but instead through a description of the child-like character or conversely the barbarity of the *indio's* learned culture. The conclusion being the *indio* could be 'taught' to be civilized, and that the best teachers during García Moreno's administration were the *hacienda* owners and the Catholic Church.

Liberal administrations, following this period, constructed their discourse as the anti-thesis to this version of conservative paternalism, a liberal paternalism. Liberal President Eloy Alfaro (1885-1901; 1906-1911) was brought to power through a liberal revolution against the conservative elites in 1895. Much of Alfaro's army was constituted from the black and mulatto population on the coast and indigenous and *mestizo* peasants

in the Andes (Foote 2006:265-6). Under President Eloy Alfaro liberal notions of the citizenship were promoted – challenging both the conservative church and the landowning elites. The Alfarista government in 1899 attempted once again to expand regulation of the *concertaje*. The law intending to challenge the abuses of the landlord read in its considerations: “*The constitution obliges the public powers to protect the Indian race in order to improve its social situation ... [and] prohibits slavery (esclavitud) in the territory of the republic*” (my emphasis, quoted in Baud 2007:79). Underlying the discursive shift in the paternalism was a liberal modernization of the economy, which required the movement of labour to coastal plantations owned by liberal elites and a reorganization of the state (Clark 2007:91).

It is important to note that elite constructions of the *indio* were never formed without a relational response, and manipulation, by the indigenous population. As successive Liberal governments engaged in strategies to reorganize Ecuador's political-economy to free up hacienda-based labour for their plantations on the coast (Clark, 2005:54-56), new forms of local political contestation by indigenous actors influenced the reworking of existing Liberal discourses. In particular, A. Kim Clark (2007:93-97) notes the ability of indigenous communities in the highlands to cogently engage in acts of contestation for better working conditions, to limit the abuses of local officials, and create wider spaces for local cultural participation through appeals to the Liberal discourses that cast the indigenous person as timid and ignorant. In this context, the active participation of the black and indigenous population in the 1895 liberal revolution can be understood to have a significant impact upon the liberal paternalism. Promises of improved living and

working conditions were necessary for their participation in the revolution (Baud 2007:84). To maintain a coherency of the liberal ideals and state within the highly unequal and racialized society, a level of legitimacy in the paternalist discourse needed to be gained with the consent<sup>32</sup> of the indigenous population.

The oscillations of early liberal-entrenchment of the state present the most compelling examples of the expansion of Coloniality. Representation, both politically and economically, of the indigenous population was rescaled by the state and elites to the individual and the local. During the formal colonial period a role for indigenous representation through the community – and the state recognition of the indigenous principles behind the community – was maintained because of the tribute system. Liberal ideology and practices shifted the scaling of representation to the indigenous individual, removing the state's legal identity of the *indio* while deploying paternalist rhetoric to give coherence to the contradictions of individual 'equality'. Guerrero's terms of 'representative ventriloquism' and 'trans-writing' allude to the individualization of the 'voice' of indigenous people within the formation of the republican state (Lucero 2008). Indigenous contestation, filtered through a ventriloquist voice, focused on manipulating local liberal and conservative paternalist discourses. As a result of the entrenchment of Coloniality within the Republican state, many of the material and social relations between indigenous people in the Andes and the state originate from this period.

### **Ending the Hacienda (1925 -1973)**

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<sup>32</sup>Referring to a Gramscian sense of hegemony, requiring both consent and coercion. Consent does not mean an absolute consent, but rather is relative. The hegemony of liberal discourse requires consent from below in the context of the indigenous population's relative position to a colonial state, where power is distributed unequally along both class and ethnic distinctions.

Through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the rural Andean political-economy was transformed in part by the significant rise in peasant-based organizing. On a structural level, this period was also marked by the decline and elimination of the hacienda, a modernization of the coastal agricultural production, and a growth of urban areas. These structural changes were the result of many factors including the ongoing competition of elites, evolving political ideologies governing the state, the influence of global markets, and contestation from below. The focus was class-based organizing, including the creation of organizations like the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians, FEI), within the rural Andes as they represent an important organizational foundation for the development of a national indigenous movement. The FEI challenged the elite mediation of rural issues as it was a “representative organization that was not muffled by state corporatism, or hacienda hegemony” (Lucero 2008:97). Urban white-*mestizo* Communist Party organizers helped to bring together local rural unions based on individual *haciendas* in the formation of the FEI, providing new modes of representation of the Andean indigenous population.

Interpreting the role of the FEI in relation to the indigenous population, Lucero points to two different positions. On the one hand, Guerrero believed that the FEI maintained the role of the ventriloquist: “[the FEI was] an organism of mediation, of expression, and translation (a political ventriloquist) of social subjects, the Indians, who lacked recognition (legally and legitimately), and therefore, discursive recognition and direct access to the political system” (1993:102, my translation). On the other hand, Becker challenges contemporary interpretations of the organization of the FEI, arguing

that the alliance of urban leftists and indigenous peasants through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrated strategic organization. Comparing the FEI to the contemporary CONAIE, Becker states that, “recognizing this external support does not deny indigenous agency, nor does it negate the validity of either the FEI or CONAIE, but rather points to the importance of allies in realizing organizational objectives” (2008:191). Uncovering the history of the FEI and the relationship of urban leftists to rural Andean indigenous activism, Becker contends that by identifying socialists during this period as adopting the 'ventriloquist voice' undermines the working relationship between these groups.

Using the 1930 *Primer Congreso de Organizaciones Campesinas* (First Congress of Peasant Organizations), brought together by urban leftists and indigenous activists, as an example, Becker argues that “indications are that the Indians and urban socialists worked together as equals for a successful meeting. Indians would not have flooded to a meeting in which they had no ownership or vested interest” (2008:57). Over-representing the role of urban socialists in the emergence of peasant organizations during this period, either as the ventriloquist voice of rural activism or as the illegitimate instigators of protests and strikes, which was claimed by the dominant newspapers of the time, may in turn conceal the day-to-day efforts of indigenous people to challenge and end the hacienda.

The 1920s began a protracted period of tumult in rural Ecuador. Rural activism during the so-called Liberal Revolution (1895-1925) focused upon the abuses of local officials and landowners, with activists drawing upon the rhetoric of the liberal government and existing laws (Clark 2007:97). A global collapse in the price of cacao,

following the First World War, and a wave of disease affecting the crop in the mid 1920s, created economic conditions for significant urban dissent. In 1925, the liberal period ended in the *Juliana Revolución*. Responding to the banking corruption of coastal liberal elites, military officers, supported by the urban working and middle class, as well as the elites based in the highlands, but not the rural predominately indigenous labouring populations, overthrew the government and established an urban middle-class populist government (North, 2004:189). From the inclusion of the urban working class, there was an increased awareness of class issues within the policies of the military dictatorships that followed. There was an attempt to address the “social question”- the poor living and working conditions, the negative impacts of a cacao crisis in the 1920s, as well as the continued political exclusion and economic exploitation of the indigenous population. The political coalitions that were created, however, were lead by populist leaders and continued to remain elite-dominated. As a result, greater access to formal political participation for the excluded classes, including the indigenous population, was not given (North, 2004:188).

The *Revolución Juliana* did create political space in the urban centres for the formation of stronger leftist parties. The *Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Socialist Party, PSE) was founded on May 16, 1926, led by one of Ecuador's most important marxist intellectuals, Ricardo Paredes.<sup>33</sup> At the founding congress, the party unanimously adopted the proposal of indigenous leader Jesús Gualavisí to salute “all

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33Becker (2004; 2006; 2008b) compares the role of Paredes in Ecuador to José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru. Paredes was a medical doctor and was brought into direct contact with indigenous communities. Becker (2008b) argues, “Whereas Mariátegui critiqued his Peruvian reality from an intellectual perspective, Paredes approached Ecuador as a political grassroots organizer.”

peasants [*campesinos*] in the Republic, indicating to them that the Party would work intensely' on their behalf' (Becker 2008a:17). The PSE joined the Comintern in 1929, and was renamed the *Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Communist Party, PCE) in 1931.

The class-based rhetoric of 'peasants' rather than 'indigenous' or *indio* may indicate a further Europeanization of political contestation within Ecuador. However, as Striffler (2004) points out in the context of Ecuador's early 20<sup>th</sup> century plantations, the peasant and agricultural worker did not conform to strict orthodox interpretations of the marxist proletariat. The class-based identification was a local innovation of socialist thought, as it was in other parts of the world without large industrialized work-forces. In the formation of Ecuador's political-economy, the *indio* was constructed in part as a class-based identity of the colonial system and used both by the hacienda and plantation for labour exploitation.

The relationship between sections of the urban left and the rural indigenous population highlights the potential flexibility of marxist ideas highlighted in chapter two. While not all Ecuadorian marxists shared the position of urban activists like Paredes, the adaptation of a class-based materialist analysis led to important transformations in the content and subsequently the strength of rural struggles. Becker interprets the period between the 1920s and the mid-1940s as a period of explosive rural contestation. Identifying the indigenous content of these struggles, Becker (2008a:51) notes that while "an indigenous movement's ethnic component was undeniable it was its class components that lent strength and cohesion to the struggle". Through the class-based identity,

indigenous activists were able to step outside of the constructed *indio* and directly challenge the political-economy of the state, unmediated by the paternalist rhetoric used by elites.<sup>34</sup>

Urban and rural labour contestation, particularly in the form of strikes and land occupations, and the fear of a wider-spread rural revolution led to several reforms. Legal and institutional reforms initiated by populist military governments targeted labour issues: reforms to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (1926), a social security system in 1937, the Labour Code of 1938, and importantly the *Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunas (Ley de Comunas)* of 1937 (Hurtado, 1980:231). The 1937 law established rural *comunidades*, which became a small political unit within Ecuador where property was held collectively, and provided a legal category from which “free” indigenous people in rural communities could be recognized by the state in a corporatist structure. The *Ley de Comunas* reflected the state's interpretation of 'traditional' indigenous communal organization, as well as a projection of its desired *indio* (Sánchez-Parga 2007:22; Lucero 2008:71). In a *comuna*, the rural indigenous population could be organized into a political structure that (re)introduced the 'Indian Problem', from the private hacienda, into the public politics of the state (Lucero 2008:73). *Comuneros* elected their own officials but were linked directly to the Ministry of Social Welfare and the state (Lucero 2008:70). Lucero argues that the *comuna* and the idea of traditional indigenous community have been fused within the indigenous movement as a foundation for material organization and as a political ideology. The importance of the *comuna* in indigenous political contestation

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<sup>34</sup>Rural appeals to paternalist rhetoric did not stop. For example, Clark (2007:97-103) describes the manipulation of paternalistic discourses in letters describing landlord abuses to the military dictator President Velasco Ibarra, referring to him as “*nuestro papacito*” (our father).

grew much later from the 1960s onwards, as a space of indigenous autonomy and governance (Korovkin 2001).

In the rural Andes the organization of local unions of *huasipungeros* became a regional movement in 1944, when indigenous peasant activists and urban leftists together formed the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios*. An earlier attempt 1931 in Cayambe to form such an organization had been prevented by the government, as thousands of rural activists converged on the town.<sup>35</sup> Instability within the elites and the May 1944 revolution that brought the populist caudillo, José María Velasco Ibarra, to the presidency for the second of five times, created the necessary political space. At the first Congress in Quito in 1944, the four goals of the FEI were stated:

- a. Realize the economic emancipation of Ecuadorian Indians.
  - b. Raise their cultural and moral level, conserving the good of their customs and institutions.
  - c. Contribute to the realization of national unity.
  - d. Establish links of solidarity with all Indians of the Americas.
- (FEI 1944, my translation)

Communist Party leadership had been instrumental in the formation of the FEI, however important indigenous leaders like Jesús Gualavisí, Dolores Cacuango, Agustín Vega and Ambrosio Lasso, were central organizers behind the FEI.<sup>36</sup> Becker argues that

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<sup>35</sup>The *Primer Congreso de Organizaciones Campesinas* was organized in Cayambe, which had become a hot-bed of hacienda strikes and peasant organizing (see Becker 1998). Delegates came from communities throughout the rural highland and coastal regions, with two thousand arriving a week before the organized event was to start. Socialists arriving from the city and indigenous activists were arrested by the government, charged with “disturbing the public order and committing acts of violence” (Becker 2008a:57). Becker argues that the role of urban socialists was highlighted by the press of the day to minimize the role of indigenous activists: “Racial stereotypes led the press to stress the actions of urban leftists, while making the actions of the indigenous activists invisible. A lasting legacy of the press reports is a warped understanding of the role of communists in Ecuador’s modern indigenous movements” (Becker 2008a:58). For a picture of the relationship between indigenous activists and urban socialists in Cayambe between 1926 and 1944 see Becker (2004).

<sup>36</sup>Many of these leaders had a longer relationship with urban socialists, Gualavisí, an organizer from Cayambe, had been a part of the founding of the PSE, Cacuango was also a central committee member of

“to say that the FEI was a project of non-indigenous significantly ignores the important work of these important indigenous leaders” (2007a:139, my translation). The FEI has been constructed retrospectively as a proxy of the Communist Party of Ecuador, and echoing Guerrero's (1997) presentation of the FEI, as representing indigenous people through a ventriloquist-like class identity. The foundation of the FEI's organizational capacity, however, was its ability to connect tens of thousands of rural indigenous peasants through their constituent local unions. The FEI was the prototype of the layered structure of local, regional, and national organizations, with elastic inter-relations, that have since become a hallmark of Ecuador's indigenous movement. Unlike the relationship that existed between indigenous people and the state and landlords, voluntarism and solidarity were central characteristics of indigenous activists' relationship to local unions and the FEI. Local affiliates autonomously organized members and the FEI was dependent upon their ability to communicate and mobilize locally, similar to the indigenous movement today.<sup>37</sup>

A clearer example of ventriloquism can be seen during the discussions of the 1944 Constituent Assembly, formed after the 1944 May Revolution. The absence of indigenous voices in the Constituent Assembly reflected the ongoing political isolation and expectation for paternalist representation of the indigenous population. Literacy requirements for suffrage and citizenship, which continued to be endorsed by liberals and sections of the urban left, were used to informally exclude indigenous people from

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the PCE, Vega was a leader of Tigua cooperative and Lasso was the leader of a peasant union in Galte (Becker 2007a:139).

<sup>37</sup>The FEI was not the only organization attempting to coordinate local actions in the highlands. Central unions, the state, and Catholic church also formed their own structures during the period from 1930-1970s (see: Ibarra 1992:87-91).

political power. In their place, the Communist Party leader Ricardo Paredes, linked to the FEI, represented indigenous voices. Paredes lamented that the ideal of citizenship excluded indigenous leaders, such as Dolores Cacuango, and fought against the constructed identity of the Ecuadorian indigenous population. Paredes however was unable to counteract the exclusion of indigenous voices and the ongoing state-construction of the inadequate 'Indian' (Becker 2007b). The brief window of broader constitutional debate was ultimately halted. President Velasco Ibarra declared himself dictator in 1946 and reverted back to the 1906 constitution. The Constituent Assembly process demonstrated the limitations of the solidarity of urban leftists, who were only capable of speaking on behalf of indigenous activists.

Unable to achieve an indigenous representation within the state, rural unrest continued, organized both locally and with national coordination by organizations like the FEI. Protests, strikes, and land occupations began to have significant influence on the structure of the Ecuadorian political economy.<sup>38</sup> By the 1960s, populist military regimes initiated significant land reforms ultimately resulting in the demise of the hacienda by 1973. Contrasting explanations are provided for the changes to the political economy of Ecuador during this period. On the one hand, a sector of the elite was interested in ending the hacienda to provide labour and productive innovation to new agricultural sectors (see Barsky 1988). On the other hand, the influence of rural contestation also made the continued exploitation under the *hacienda* untenable (see Guerrero 1983; Velasco 1983).

From these distinct positions, Becker concludes that, "In the face of pressures from

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<sup>38</sup>For actions organized by or with the FEI during the 1960s see Becker (2008a:122-143). Fearing that the example of the Cuban revolution would spread, these rural actions had a greater impact upon the elites and drew international attention through the US Alliance for Progress (Becker 2008a:128; Waters 2007:128).

below, members of the Ecuadorian elite began to advocate for change in the country's land tenure patterns to prevent class struggle and to terminate obsolete institutions that were seen as impeding the modernization of the country”(2008a:129).<sup>39</sup>

The first land reform law in 1964 made peasants legal owners of their *huasipungos*, the small plots of land belonging to the *hacienda* that they had worked on for subsistence (Zamosc, 1994:42). As a result of the focus on small land holdings of the *huasipungos*, the land reforms of 1964 were not significant in their transfer of land to the peasant class. The government of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara (1972-76) followed the 1960s reforms with a more substantial land reform law in 1973.<sup>40</sup> The law stated that 80 percent of the former *haciendas* had to be in use according to specific technical standards that encouraged the technological improvement of the agricultural sector and that any under-utilized land would be expropriated and redistributed by the state (Korovkin, 2003:133). In total, between the period of 1954 and 1982 one quarter of the large *haciendas* were redistributed (Zamosc, 1994:42).

Following the first 1964 land reform, communities in the highlands increasingly redefined themselves as *comunas* according to the 1937 *Ley de Comunas*. For example, in the Chimborazo region more than 100 *comunas* were created during from 1964 to 1970, compared to 156 *comunas* in the previous quarter century (Korovkin 2003:131). During the 1960s and 1970s government expenditures also increased, supported by new

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<sup>39</sup>Waters (2007:124-129) provides an overview of explanations for the changes to the Ecuadorian political economy beginning in the 1950s.

<sup>40</sup>Rodríguez Lara's presidency tended towards populist support to maintain legitimacy in his military government. Traditional elites in both the coastal and highland regions distrusted the Lara government and his statist policies. Mounting challenges forced the resignation of several reformist ministers and finally Lara himself in 1976 (North, 2004:195).

taxes and the growth in the exports of bananas and oil. More funding was provided for schools, access to clinics, and other services in the rural areas (Yashar 2005:95). Regional differences meant that some communities were able to produce surpluses or support short falls with occasional wage labour and migration to the urban areas. For many peasants, however they often received small plots in poor condition (Zamosc 1994:43; Waters 2007).

Besides the FEI, the creation of rural unions was supported by national umbrella organizations such as the *Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador* (CTE, Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers) and the *Confederación Ecuatoriana de Obreros Católicos* (CEDOC, Ecuadorian Confederation of Catholic Workers)<sup>41</sup>, as well as autonomous local organizing (Ibarra 1992:88-9). CEDOC's peasant wing, representing rural indigenous workers, the *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (FENOC, National Federation of Peasant Organizations) was founded in 1968.<sup>42</sup> The numerous acronyms of Ecuadorian rural civil society represent the complex landscape during the period between 1944 and 1973, as competing elite and activist interests and divergent local demands drew indigenous peasants into various organizations.

The consequences of the land reforms in 1964 and 1973 highlight the limitations of the FEI and the organizational identity of the rural peasant. While class-based

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41CEDOC was founded in 1938 by the Catholic Church and Conservative Party to counter-act socialist and communist influence in the unionization movement. The organization changed its name in 1957, 1965, and lastly in 1972, it is now known as the *Central Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas* (Ecuadorian Central of Classist Organizations).

42While initially tied to conservative elements of the Catholic Church, the FENOC became increasingly radical as class interests became more dominant in the organization. Strikes, lawsuits and land occupations became strategies of FENOC by the mid-1970s and the recognition of the indigenous identity within the organization expanded. By 1988 the organization was renamed the *Federación de Organizaciones Campesinas-Indígenas* (FENOC-I) (see Becker 2008a:157-9).

organizing had played a central role in the demise of the *hacienda*, following the reforms the FEI was unable to adapt to the emerging relationships between new modes of production, which were increasingly urbanized, and the use of land, the state, and rural populations. New organizations emerged to represent the views of rural Andean indigenous populations, in many cases with a stronger emphasis on indigenous identity as their organizational foundation. Nevertheless, the class-based organization of this period encouraged rural indigenous populations to engage in direct contestation with the state.

Luis Macas, former President of CONAIE, has given recognition to this relationship:

[The historical relationship between class and indigeniety is] a fact that was marked by the constant presence of first indigenous organization the 'mother FEI', as the elders call it to this day in the northern sierra. We want to do justice to the heroic struggles of our leaders that came from the legacy of the protective mother Cacungo Dolores, who in many struggles was an ally with an Ecuadorian left that strove to understand the indigenous reality (2009:82, my translation).

The relationship between leftists and indigenous peasants provided an organizational foundation for the indigenous movement. The underlying material conditions that rural-peasant organizations contested were also transformed in relation to their activism. As these conditions challenged the limited identity of the peasant, indigenous activists in the Sierra developed new politicized identities.

### **Towards an Indigenous Movement (1973-1980s)**

By the 1970s, the class-based identity indigenous peasant began to wane as a meaningful category of representation with the transformation of the political economy. Most significantly, the ongoing racial discrimination against indigenous people, created by centuries of colonial structures, as well as new challenges to the (re)production of

indigenous culture and language in an increasingly urbanized political-economy, increased the importance of ethnic-based approaches to organization. The class-analysis of organizations like the FEI continued to influence the central demands of the new emergent indigenous organizations of the 1970s, but increasing were combined with demands linked to indigenous identity. One of the most important organizations to emerge from this period was the *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui* (Kichwa for “to awaken the Ecuadorian Indians, ECUARUNARI). The connection made by activists in this period between indigeneity and earlier class struggles is an important foundation for the creation of plurinationality. Plurinationality reflects indigenous demands to transform the state both in terms of recognition for indigenous social-political identities, as well as addressing material inequality, which has resulted from the history of colonialism.

Created in June, 1972 from thirteen predominately highland organizations, ECUARUNARI was an explicitly indigenous organization created to represent Kichwa-speaking people.<sup>43</sup> Initially the organization was heavily supported by progressive wings of the Catholic Church as an alternative to the PCE supported FEI and FENOC, which at the time had connections to conservatives and Christian Democrats. These organizations, while generally represented ideologically different constituencies, collaborated in mobilizations during the 1970s, including massive protests in 1972 that led to the 1973 land reform of the Lara Rodriguez administration (Becker 2008a:162-4). Nevertheless, what distinguished ECUARUNARI from other highland organizations was, that while it sought alliances and solidarity with outside organizations, it explicitly rejected the

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<sup>43</sup>Over 200 representatives came from indigenous-peasant organizations, cooperatives and communities from the provinces of Imbabura, Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Bolívar, Chimborazo and Cañar. They met in the comuna Tepeyac, Chimborazo (CONAIE 1988:121-2).

influence of outsiders: “The movement will be driven from the bases. No person, institution or money from outside will participate, with the intent to manipulate, within the movement” (CONAIE 1988:122, my translation).

ECUARUNARI followed the organizational structure of the earlier forms of the FEI.<sup>44</sup> ECUARUNARI acted as a coordinator of community-based organizations that were pivotal for mobilization and providing direction on the organizations objectives. While ECUARUNARI had begun to develop its own increasingly indigenous intellectual leadership, many of the local activists in parts of the Andean highlands were experienced members of previous FEI mobilizations.<sup>45</sup> This continuity provided both ECUARUNARI with capable activists at the local level, as well as maintained a continuity with earlier struggles.

Class-based issues remained a central concern of ECUARUNARI, underlining the interrelationship of material exploitation with the suppression of indigenous cultures and languages. By the later part of the 1970s, the failure of the land reforms to properly address the material inequality in rural Ecuador, particularly affecting indigenous people and communities, became apparent. Rural strikes once again followed a classist approach. ECUARUNARI, following a 1977 peasant strike, in their 1978 congress defined themselves as:

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<sup>44</sup>Increasingly by the 1970s the leadership of the FEI had been centralized and influenced by the interests of the PCE.

<sup>45</sup>Arguing that early support from the Catholics influenced by liberation theology was necessary, Cañari activist and early ECUARUNARI member Antonio Quinde stated: “We indigenous peoples did not know anything about administering an organization. In this area we were blind because we had not even participated in the FEI” (quoted in Becker 2008a:159). The indigenous, rather than class-based, character of ECUARUNARI expanded the constituency of the membership of the mobilization.

A national peasant and Indigenous organization that searches for total and radical change in the current situation of marginalized, oppressed, and exploited peoples. ...[And as] an inter-imperialist organization that struggles for a definitive liberation of our country for a society without exploitation [and] for the unity of indigenous peoples and all exploited sectors of the country (quoted in Becker 2008a:161).

ECUARUNARI, highlighting the duality of Coloniality in Ecuador of material exploitation and the suppression of alternative ways of being, has continually oscillated between emphasizing class and ethnicity in their approach.

At the first congress of ECUARUNARI, it was debated whether the organization would represent “indian and non-indian sectors” or “just indians”; it was decided that the organization would be “defined as an *indigenous* organization, with the principal objective to raise the consciousness within the indigenous population, in order to achieve social, economic and political recuperation” (CONAIE 1988:122, my translation). The indigenous composition of ECUARUNARI did not necessarily represent an immediate interest in ethnic demands, but laid the foundation for an expansion of political and economic interests of the organization. By the 1979 congress of ECUARUNARI, indigenous rights issues began to play a more prominent role in the objectives of the activists. Alongside ongoing demands for the collective peasant ownership of land, further land reforms, and increased peasant control over state agricultural funding, ECUARUNARI resolved:

- To demand bilingual education in the different languages that exist in the country.
- To defend the cultural value and protect the artistic expressions of our peoples.
- To demand for the definitive break with and expulsion of foreign religious institutions and sects.
- To defend the territory of our peoples.

(CONAIE 1988:126, my translation)

The content of these demands reflects the transition of the indigenous movement to connect material inequality to other dimensions of indigenous exclusion and suppression within the state. As a result, demands for bilingual education, protection of culture, defence against foreign religious organizations, and the inclusion of territory would later become contained within the demand for plurinational recognition.

By the 1981 Congress, more concrete proposals for the provision of bilingual education emerged, including the indigenous participation and control over programs. The indigenous identity of ECUARUNARI also broadened the solidarity of the highland activists to include support for the “respect and legalization of the indigenous nationalities of the Amazon” (CONAIE 1988:129, my translation). In the Andes, a vision of indigenous autonomy was also emerging. ECUARUNARI demanded, “the liberty of associative and communal organization, elimination of the judicial and bureaucratic obstacles of the state and the respect of the autonomy of indigenous organizations” (CONAIE 1988:129, my translation). Autonomy was understood through the perspective of political and organizational spaces for self-representation. Recalling Guerrero's presentation of “ventriloquist representation”, the demand for autonomy in the Andes for the emergent indigenous-based organizations best reflects a demand for self-representation in their own voices.

The transition towards indigenous-based organizations brought forward the possibility for indigenous self representation. The class-based demands of earlier organizations did not disappear, nor were the experiences of mobilizations such as the FEI

unimportant. However, the purely indigenous membership and leadership of ECUARUNARI eventually led to a transformation of the content of demands to include an interest in indigenous cultural, linguistic, and territorial concerns. Addressing racial discrimination regained prominence in the demands to overcome economic exploitation. In the Andean highlands, demands for recognition of indigenous dignity and rights were combined with the material-based demands of earlier class conflicts to redefine the transformative potential of the indigenous mobilizations. Territory, autonomy and indigenous nationalities became important concepts, constructed by indigenous intellectual leadership, through which mutual political and social goals could be understood across regional, cultural and historical differences in Ecuador's indigenous population.

This chapter now turns to the Amazonian region to describe the distinct historical dimensions that influenced the formation of an indigenous movement in that region of Ecuador. Understanding the differences between the Andean and Amazonian historical experiences of the indigenous population is important for the context of how plurinationality emerges as a revolutionary myth that mobilizes indigenous people across the regional differences. Differences in material experiences and interpretations of cultural identity and territorial autonomy necessitated the need to construct a political identity of indigenous nationalities that could express the diversity, while at the same time encourage the unity of the indigenous movement. Plurinationality has become the myth which links the struggles of Andean and Amazonian indigenous people in Ecuador.

### **Historical Dimensions in the Ecuadorian Amazon**

The Amazonian region begins as the Andes descend into the forests of the Amazon. The region is dominated by the dense Amazonian forest. Rivers, beginning on the slopes of the Andes, turn into the large tributaries of the Amazon River. For centuries, the rivers have been the foundation of communication, trade, migration, and community for the people who live in the Amazon. In the contemporary indigenous movement, the Amazon is represented by nine nationalities: the A'í Cofán, Secoya, Siona, Huaorani, Shiwiar, Zápara, Achuar, Shuar, and Amazonian Kichwa (Segovia 2005:260-264). Each nationality has a different historical foundation, which is difficult to linearly trace. Much of the literature on the historical dimensions of the Amazonian relies on second-hand representations of indigenous people made by European missionaries and traders. Some of the indigenous nationalities emerge in part through these historical representations, as well as the transformation of indigenous identity through the formation of communities created around missions and trading-towns. Other nationalities, such as the Huaorani, may have emerged from 'historical isolation' and 'cultural continuity', and are not well traced through European documentation (Rival 2002:43).

The first important difference between the sierra and the Amazon is the greater cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity within the indigenous population. Each nationality has experienced the processes of colonization differently, dependent upon their spatial proximity to the expanding colonial state. Also, the cultural, linguistic and historical differences present new challenges within the intra-indigenous movement politics. The second difference is the forms of contact and interaction between the indigenous people and the colonizing state. This section breaks the historical dimensions

of the indigenous people of the Ecuadorian Amazon into two periods. One period begins with contact with Europeans in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. This period is characterized by strong and violent indigenous resistance to colonizing efforts by important sections of the indigenous population. Continuous contact between indigenous people and the colonial and later republican states, however, was maintained by increasing numbers of European missionaries, adventurers, small merchants and traders, and later the rubber industry and expanding cattle ranching. This period ended in the 1960s when hydrocarbon extraction expanded in the Amazon and land reforms in the Andes encouraged colonists to expand cattle ranching further into the Amazon. The way indigenous people lived and interacted with the state was transformed and a different concept of communal autonomy developed within indigenous organizations.

### **Early Colonization 1533-1950**

Following the conquest of the Tawantinsuyu in the Andes, European colonizers began exploring into the Amazon. European diseases had already spread through indigenous trading networks, greatly diminishing the population of the indigenous peoples living in the Amazon. Early waves of European colonizers however were resisted by many of the indigenous populations, including the Jumandi revolt. Acts of violent resistance and the inability of colonizers to fully adapt their practices to the environment of the Amazon meant that during the period between contact and the mid-twentieth century, indigenous populations were able to maintain significant territorial autonomy despite aggressive incursions by slave-traders and rubber traders. Indigenous territorial autonomy, however, was never isolated from a relationship with the colonial or republican state. The state was

continuously interested in expanding into the Amazon, and missionaries, traders, and explorers established the foundations of the colonial relationship to the Amazonian indigenous populations. Contemporary indigenous nationalities reconstruct territorial-based identities that emerge from the spatial relationships created during the period of early colonization.

European expansion into the Amazon followed quickly after the colonial domination of the Andean region. Searching for new sources of resources, importantly gold, and new sources of tribute Spanish colonial leaders believed it possible to militarily conquer the Amazon. Exploration and European expansion into the Amazon began between 1538 and 1542. Unable to find any gold, facing difficulties of the climate, encountering violent resistance by local indigenous people and suffering from a lack of supplies the mission ended in failure. A second phase to secure the Amazonian territory for the Spanish Crown began in 1556. Following a less conflictual route, Spanish colonizers were able to establish small towns within the Amazon and began constructing relationships with indigenous leaders. From these towns, the colonial governors increasingly demanded indigenous community leaders to provide tribute. A people known to Europeans as the *Quijos*, in part, led by an indigenous *cacique* Jumandi revolted against the colonial incursion in 1578. Several of the colonial towns were destroyed, but ultimately the rebellion was defeated. The result however was a rupture between the leadership of indigenous communities and expanding European colonization. Unable to rely on many indigenous *caciques* to organize the tribute, colonization into the Amazon was slowed (Ruiz Mantilla 1992).

The most intensive colonization of the indigenous populations in the Amazon during the earlier period of colonization was done by Catholic missionaries. Similar to the Andean experience, the Church was able to exploit indigenous populations through the tithes known as the *diezmo*. To manage the indigenous populations and provide services, missionaries centralized larger populations into communities. For example, the Secoya and Siona nationalities, living in the northern areas of the Ecuadorian Amazon, first came into contact with Europeans in the late 1500s. They were given the name “*encabellado*” by Europeans because of their customary long hair (Vickers 2003:47). By the 1700s, Jesuit missionaries attempted to create *reducciones* (mission villages) by bringing together more smaller villages. Nearly 20 *reducciones* were formed during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by Jesuit missionaries along the Napo and Aguarico rivers (Vickers 2003:51). The missions often did not have the planned successes, as the *reducciones* ignored the political and cultural relationships between villages (Vickers 2003:49). Communities were formed from the paternal line and lived in long houses. These practices were ignored by the *reducciones*, which lead to conflict. The *encabellado* villages also feared the diseases brought by the missionaries (Vickers 2003:51).

Slave traders and explorers after this period predominated contact with the people of the lower Napo and Aguarico rivers. Conflict between indigenous groups increased with the arrival of slave-trades and merchants. Captured prisoners from rival groups were exchanged with European traders for metal tools and other manufactured goods (Rival 2002:32-3). By the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, contact with indigenous people along the rivers of the North Amazonian region was also maintained through small time trading of

manufactured items for hammocks and forest products produced by indigenous communities (Vickers 2003:51-2). Increasing numbers of white and *mestizo patrones* also began to arrive from the Andes to trade material goods for indentured labour. Indigenous labour was used to collect forest products and to clear and cultivate land. Sections of the indigenous population were drawn into a form of indebted peonage similar to the haciendas but on a smaller scale (Vickers 2003:52).

The rubber trade was another source of European-indigenous contact in the Amazon during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rubber trees were not as dense in the Ecuadorian Amazon and the trade was not as lucrative as other regions of the Amazon, nevertheless small-time traders searched along the major rivers for trees to tap. European contact penetrated further into Amazonian regions following the rubber trade, and would have great impact on some of the indigenous groups. For example, Rival notes that one group, the Zaparos, “virtually [vanished] from the ethnic map” as a result of a radical transformation of their social and cultural identity during the rubber boom (2002:35). Epidemics, slave-trading, and forced migration of labourers depopulated many parts of the Amazon associated with the rubber trade, leaving territorial space for groups that did not have much contact with Europeans, such as the Huaorani.

Indigenous contact with the Europeans in the Amazon often resulted in one of two paths: violent resistance to territorial incursions and the formation of isolated communities with informally recognized territorial space; while those attached to rubber traders as labourers often converted to Christianity and migrated to emerging towns (Rival 2002:36-37). The colonizing process in the Amazon categorized the indigenous

population based upon these paths as either a “tame” or a “wild” Indian. The “tame” Indian acted as a cultural mediator between the colonizing state and the “wild” Indian. While these categories were fluid in reality, Juliet Erazo (2007:181) argues that they have continued to be influential into the contemporary period in defining the way in which the state forms relationships with indigenous groups in the Amazon.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the government began expanding the role of evangelizing missionaries and created new indigenous communities around missions, which included schools and hospitals. The missions, by this period created by both Catholic orders and evangelical missionaries, took on an important role for mediating between the state and indigenous people.<sup>46</sup> For example, the Salesian order established missions in Méndez and Macas, in the south-central Amazon, between 1914 and 1924 in the territory of the Shuar. When the government of Velasco Ibarra created a ‘reserve’ from the territory of the Shuar in 1935, control over the space and the habitants within the reserve was given to the Salesians (Rubenstein 2005:31). Efforts to convert the Shuar, and other indigenous people, to Catholicism were seen as integral to modernizing the indigenous population and bringing them closer to the ideal of citizenship. Schools in the missions provided both the Christian moral education, as well as encouraged the literacy of the Spanish language. Nevertheless, rather than assimilating indigenous people into European practices, the missions often provided syncretic opportunities for indigenous people to (re)create their religious, cultural, and linguistic identities. As sites of education

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46 Missions varied greatly, dependent upon the Catholic order or Evangelical sect. Salesians were seen as more modern and interested in educational reforms, where as Dominicans and Franciscans were predominately concerned with administration of the missions and were less interested in transforming indigenous traditions. Evangelicals were particularly interested in bilingual education, and established important linguistic centres to study indigenous languages (Erazo 2007:186-7).

missions struggled to adapt to indigenous cultural and social practices. Missionaries in some cases learnt the local indigenous language. In the process missions also became important places for transforming indigenous languages into written languages, creating the potential for the re-emergence of indigenous bilingual education later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rubenstein 2005; Erazo 2007).

Repeating earlier patterns of the “tame” and “wild” Indian, those who moved to the missions, while subordinated to the evangelizing agents of the state, also gained access to the political-economy of the Ecuadorian State. The access to the state enabled many of these communities to develop leadership and representation within the indigenous movement. Boundaries around the spaces of indigenous communities were important. For “tame” indigenous communities, boundaries became important for defining the spatial control of the missions. “Wild” indigenous communities perceived territorial boundaries as protection from the continued encroachment of non-indigenous colonizers, as well as from other hostile indigenous communities. The importance of establishing and gaining state recognition of these boundaries, as well as expanding political and social control within these territorial spaces, increased as new motivations for the colonization of the Amazon emerged in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Erazo 2007).

### **Late Colonization 1960-1990**

Colonization of the Amazon began to take a different form during the 1960s. Expanded oil exploration brought new prospectors to the region. The transformation of the Ecuadorian economy to oil-exportation in the 1970s created vast environmental destruction in the region and forced modern ideas of industrial development into the

region. Earlier haphazard migration of non-indigenous populations from the Andean region transformed into a legalized state policy during the land reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, as the government treated the slopes of the Andes as low-density areas for cultivation and cattle grazing. Both of these trends increased the direct contact between Amazonian indigenous people and the state. Missions became one site of increased resistance, from which emerged many of the regions well-organized indigenous groups. Amazonian indigenous organizations at the local level began contesting for greater recognition of their autonomy. From local activism, emerged three important sub-regional organizations: *Federación Shuar* (Shuar Federation), *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de Napo* (Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo, FOIN) and *Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza* (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza, OPIP). Despite having different experiences each of these groups advocated territorial autonomy for the communities they represented. Territorial autonomy became a central issue of the regional umbrella group the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENIAE) when it was formed in 1980.

Two events that occurred very close together precipitated a rapid increase in the colonization of the Amazon: the discovery of oil and state-led land reforms in the 1960s. Land reforms initiated in the 1960s were presented as targeting highland haciendas and to encourage labour migration to coastal plantations (Korovkin, 2003:133). The land reforms also impacted the Amazonian region, particularly indigenous communities located closer to the sierra that had more frequent interactions with the state. The lands

that the indigenous peoples of the Amazon claimed as their territory and used for hunting, fishing, and small scale horticulture were deemed available for high intensity agriculture and were claimed by the government for distribution to colonists (Perreault 2003a:104). At the same time, the discovery of oil within the Amazon brought with it the infrastructure necessary for extracting the oil - most importantly roads. The construction of roads further facilitated the colonization of the Amazon, opening up access to areas that had up to this point remained relatively unchallenged territories of indigenous peoples. Along with the oil companies came pioneer settlements, logging operations, and agribusiness, all of whom under the land reform laws claimed ownership over unused land (Vickers 2003:55). The amount of land distributed by the state in the Amazon during the period from 1964-1985 was over 2 500 00 hectares, compared to the 766 000 hectares distributed in the highlands. This land redistribution brought 55 000 new families into the region (Yashar 2005:113). The colonization program favoured large landowners who established cattle ranches and export-oriented plantations.

Foreign oil companies began to arrive in large numbers after 1967, when production began on Texaco-Gulf's first major well in the northern Amazon. Other multinational corporations sought concessions in the region and by 1970, 30 concessions had been given to oil companies. Significant infrastructure construction, including a 503km pipeline and roads connecting Lago Agrio, the central town for the oil extraction in the north, to the Andes transformed the northern Amazon (Valdivia 2008:460). Since then, poorly regulated extraction has left behind environmental devastation. During a period from 1962 till the 1990s, Texaco, the largest of the multinational oil companies

operating in the region, had a reported loss of 16.8 million gallons of oil in 30 major spills and when it stopped its operations in the country had left behind 600 open pits of toxic waste (Kimerling 2006). The environmental problems of the oil exploration and extraction have directly affected the indigenous communities in the Amazon, causing health problems and damaging the habitats of animals and causing severe pollution in the rivers (Sawyer 2004).

Both the oil exploration and the increased colonization by colonists were factors that caused indigenous groups to adapt. In the case of agrarian reforms, while the legal reforms were used by colonists to gain title to land, they were also increasingly used by indigenous communities to secure control of their territory. Many communities turned towards agricultural production and small-scale cattle ranching to gain the legal recognition of ownership. Agrarian reforms were also accompanied by government subsidies, low-interest loans, and technical assistance to encourage the modernization of agricultural production throughout the country. As subsidies were removed from cattle-ranching during the 1980s, indigenous communities and colonists switched production to cash crops such as sugar cane, naranjilla, and cotton. For indigenous communities this economic activity, in particular the switch to cash crops, integrated their members further into the market economy of the Ecuadorian state and increased their day-to-day dealings with *white-mestizo* society (Perreault 2003; Rudel et. al. 2003). Recognition of their spatial control, which was threatened by encroachment from colonists, was a dominant motivation for indigenous communities to change their agricultural practices.

For the Shuar and Kichwa communities, acquiring land titles also encouraged the

formation of community-based associations. Missionaries provided important technical leadership and support to navigate the legal structures of the state, and turn communities created around missions into recognized *comunas*, using the political unit created for the rural indigenous context. Salesian missionaries in the 1960s began to advise Shuar communities in the Shuar Reserve to organize themselves around *centros*, modelled on earlier mission but with a political purpose of organizing and mobilizing the community. *Centros* were linked through associations that represented local indigenous interests against non-indigenous colonists. From a 1964 meeting, representatives of the *centros* and associations created the *Federación Shuar*, a significant and early indigenous federation in Ecuador. The *Federación Shuar* quickly assumed many of the political functions within the Shuar Reserve previously held by the missions, including management of land titles in the reserve and working with the state to provide education within Shuar communities (Rubenstein 2001).

One of the consequences of the *Federación Shuar's* new role was how they created their legitimacy for political representation. The *Federación Shuar* articulated their objective as “the self-determination of the Shuar in a new pluralist concept of the Ecuadorian state” (quoted in Leon 1992:391). As the *Federación Shuar* expanded its relationship with the state, assuming new responsibilities, it promoted itself as the legitimate representative of a culturally and linguistically distinct group within the Ecuadorian state. Rubenstein argues that a paradoxical consequence of colonization of the Amazonian region is both the hardening of bounded territorial claims made by the *Federación Shuar*, while at the same time becoming increasingly a part of Ecuadorian

society (2001:264). These paradoxical processes are repeated in other areas of Ecuador as the constructed concept of the 'nationality' (described in Chapter Four) is used to legitimate the representation of indigenous people by indigenous organizations within a transformed state.

Two other sub-regional Amazonian organizations of note are FOIN and OPIP. FOIN was created by Amazonian Kichwa communities in Napo Province in 1973. Initially, Amazonian Kichwa workers were encouraged by Josephine missionaries during the 1960s to form local-union affiliates to the Christian-labour organization, CEDOC. Using the *Federación Shuar* as an example, labour organizing turned increasingly towards protecting land. Leaders of local organizations came together to form a federation of peasant organizations, which in 1973 transformed into the overtly indigenous *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo*. Class-based solidarity did not disappear within the organization and important relationships were kept with CEDOC and FENOC. Activists sought, however, to differentiate their demands from the encroachment of *mestizo* colonists. Emphasizing a Kichwa indigenous identity became an important political statement. Similar to the *Federación Shuar*, FOIN provided aid to legalize indigenous land claims and to assert the civil rights of indigenous people (Erazo 2007:190-1; Perreault 2001).

In the Province of Pastaza, Amazonian Kichwa, Achuar and Schiwiar community organizations were brought together to form OPIP in 1979. The first significant difference of OPIP from the earlier formed *Federación Shuar* and FOIN was that organizers relied on the organizational skills of previous indigenous organizations and not the missions or

class-organizations. Second, OPIP moved away from advocating the use of agrarian reform laws to secure land titles. Instead OPIP advocated, based upon a historical construction of indigenous identity, for the right to indigenous territorial space. The re-orientation of the discourse towards territory beyond land used by the community has been a distinct spatial perspective of Amazonian groups (Yashar 2005:128).

In August 1980, 75 delegates from the *Federación Shuar*, FOIN, and OPIP, as well as from the *Asociación Independiente del Pueblo Shuar Ecuatoriano* (Independent Association of the Ecuadorian Shuar People), and *Jatun Comuna Aguarico* met to create the first regional indigenous federation, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENIAE). The goal of the organization was:

To seek unity of the peoples of the Amazon, as the most effective way to fight as a unified and coordinated front for our ancestral rights: to land, culture and political space within the country; issues critical to our survival as a people (CONAIE 1989:51, my translation).

The recognition of indigenous nationalities, rather than indigenous organizations, as constituting CONFENIAE is a significant discursive sign of the changing indigenous movement. At the heart of the idea of Amazonian indigenous nationalities was the connection between culture, language, and territory: “All of our objectives are imposed, as a people cannot exist without culture, a people without territory cannot live, and a people without a language that is part of their culture, is not a people” (CONAIE 1989:51, my translation).

Territorial autonomy became an important demand of the indigenous organizations

in the Amazon. Territory expanded the spatial control of a community beyond the land that was used for agriculture and cattle herding. Based upon a historical claim, the right to territory was also connected to the reproduction of indigenous culture and a distinct identity, the indigenous nationalities. For communities facing oil-companies, the demand for territorial recognition was also crucial for securing community rights over natural resources and the environment affected by oil extraction. Amazonian groups asserting the right to indigenous territories became a contentious issue for the state following the country-wide protests organized by the indigenous movement in 1990, to be discussed later.

### **Conclusion**

The historical dimensions of the social and material relationships between indigenous people and the Ecuadorian state provides the context from which plurinationality emerges as a concept. It is therefore the historical context which informs the context of plurinationality, as well as the situation that creation and use of the revolutionary myth of plurinationality attempts to transform. The dominant political project to create an Ecuadorian nation-state is rooted in the colonial structure, which began with the material exploitation and social-political exclusion of the indigenous population. The creation of an indigenous-class in the Andes from the category of the *indio*, which was used both to extract wealth from indigenous communities and tie indigenous labour to the *hacienda*, has continued to have social and material consequences for the indigenous population of Ecuador. Class-based struggles during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in part, led to a transformation of the political-economic project of Ecuadorian elites and as a result the content of the idea

of an Ecuadorian nation, which has become defined as a *mestizo* nation. This transition, more closely examined in the following chapter, has been part of an ongoing process to establish a hegemony within a social context defined by social and material inequality. The class-based struggles, led by organizations in the Andes like the FEI, challenged the state and prevented the formation of hegemony. In turn, these organizations themselves were transformed by indigenous activists in the 1970s to reflect a renewed interest in articulating indigenous cultural and territorial identities. The class-based organizations also have provided important experience and knowledge to the formation of contemporary and more overtly indigenous organizations.

In the Amazon, the material exploitation by the state is better understood by examining territorial rather than labour exploitation, which began in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The discovery of oil and the expansion of agricultural production as the result of land reforms in the 1960s and 1970s led to new dynamics which gave rise to a different conception of indigenous territorial autonomy in the Amazon. Prior to the 1970s in the Amazon, contact between indigenous communities and Europeans, *mestizos*, and the state was more varied. Whereas some indigenous communities have had constant contact with the Ecuadorian state, particularly through missionaries, other communities have not and have remained relatively isolated. These different experiences have only increased the diversity of interests and demands of indigenous people in the Amazon.

Diversity, in terms not only of language and culture, but also of history, experience, and interests, within Ecuador's indigenous population informs the meaning and importance of the constructed identities of indigenous nationalities, as well as the

concept of plurinationality itself. The formation of indigenous organizations in the Amazon during the 1970s, with the help of missionaries, helped to develop the strategies, practices, and issues within the indigenous movement. In order to bridge the organizational differences of the Amazonian and Andean groups, a new conceptual basis of unity was needed that represented the diversity of the indigenous movement. This basis was the revolutionary myth of plurinationality. I now turn directly to the concept of plurinationality through the lens of a revolutionary myth.

#### **Chapter Four: Plurinationality as a Revolutionary Myth**

This chapter interprets the indigenous movement's demand for a plurinational state through the lens of a revolutionary myth. Drawing from the theoretical (re)construction of the myth in the writing of Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci, and José Carlos Mariátegui in Chapter Two, I argue that several components of a revolutionary myth can be identified within the concept of plurinationality and its relationship to Ecuador's indigenous movement. This chapter building on the historical dimensions of Ecuador, argues that the construction of first a *criollo* and later *mestizo* nation-state was a hegemonic project of elites that excluded the diversity of indigenous people. Plurinationality acts as a counter-hegemonic rationality by proposing recognition of the political-economic differences of indigenous nationalities. Similar to Sorel's argument that the proletariat cannot simply be theoretically constructed, but needs to be brought into reality, the indigenous movement first constructed the identity of indigenous nationalities and then brought them into political reality. The indigenous movement accomplished this through their organizational structure as well as the dramatic *levantamiento* in 1990 and the *Caminata* (long walk) in 1992. Discussion of CONAIE, the largest and most important organization in the indigenous movement, draws upon Sorel's evocation of worker's organizations in the general strike, Gramsci's long-term proposal of the political party, and Mariátegui's creative heterogenous organization his myth of a socialist revolution. This section concludes with the action of the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* and a brief mention of the *Caminata*. These moments represent the revolutionary myth's necessary action.

### **Nationality and hegemony of the “nation”**

Ecuadorian state formation has been driven by the hegemonic construction towards a unitary nation-state. Ecuador’s indigenous movement has created new political identities to challenge a unitary nation within the state. The Lucero argues that the “indigenous people [of the Andes] have elaborated and/or defended specific units of utopia for their own projects: *comunidad*, *ayllu*, *capitanías*, *pueblo*, and *nacionalidad*. These were imagined communities ... [and] were historical interpretations and sociocultural inventions” (Lucero 2008:177). From a brief analysis of the idea of a ‘nation-state’ in Ecuador, this section argues that the concept of plurinationality has been constructed by the indigenous movement to challenge the unitary nation project of the state, its central counter-hegemonic aspect as a revolutionary myth.

Gramsci identified civil society as a crucial battleground for the proletariat, as it is civil society that gives consent and legitimacy to the rationality that describes the material structures. Movements engaged in an action of praxis seek to construct new counter-hegemonic rationalities and destabilize the consent and legitimacy given by civil society to the existing social relations. In a similar vein, decolonialists argue that Modernity attempts to construct its legitimacy by advancing universal claims, while suppressing alternative world views or rationalities, which exist in a state of coloniality. The decolonial project is therefore concerned with promoting alternative rationalities, while negating the universal claims made by Modernity.

The attempt to establish the hegemony of the nation-state has been a an elite political project in Ecuador. Anderson (2006:4) describes the nation as an “imagined

community” filled with emotional legitimacy. In Gramscian terms, establishing the nation can be seen as part of gaining the consent of civil society. For the creation of a nation-state, and a deeply held collective sense of nationalism, there needs to be broad support for the rationality that constructs the image of the nation. In Ecuador, the necessity to construct a nation-state began in earnest following the wars of independence. Particularly after the dissolution of Gran Colombia, it became necessary for elites to construct an Ecuadorian identity that was differentiated both from Spain and the other former colonies. Elites began constructing a political identity of the *criollo* liberal citizen from the former colonial administrative units (Anderson 2006).

In this context, the existence of the *indio* became a complex contradiction to the idea of a national citizen. As described in Chapter Three, elites were not interested in eliminating the economic functions of the *indio* and thus sought to maintain the political-economic differentiations. For Conservatives, the *indio* was portrayed as unclean and uncivilized, and therefore unable to contribute to the construction of a national identity (Williams 2007). Indigenous people were further excluded from participation in the imaginary of the nation by the absence of their own voices. As noted by Guerrero, indigenous people interacted with the state through a various forms of “ventriloquist voices” (Guerrero 1994; 2003). The separation and exclusion of the indigenous people through the construction and exploitation of the *indio* also created a distinction between the *mestizo* from the indigenous population. A *mestizo* was considered closer to the national image and was able to contribute as a citizen, yet they did not conform completely to the *criollo* (white-European) national identity.

Indigenista attempts to resolve the “Indian Problem” in the early 20th century that sought to “educate” the *indio* to become civilized were part of the project of constructing a national identity. While these indigenistas recognized the material inequality of the society, they did not counter-act the hegemonic rationality that privileged those who conformed to white-*criollo* national identity. Rather their proposals, while slightly modifying the image of the accepted citizen, conformed to the project of the unitary nation-state.

Despite the changes to the political-economy of Ecuador, particularly in the Andes, the project to construct a hegemonic and unitary nation-state has remained. The content of the ‘nation’ however has increasingly changed towards a *mestizo* nation in Ecuador. Erika Silva, writing on the ‘national culture’ in 1989, stated:

The *mestizo*, a man who belongs to two cultures, expresses best the split within the Ecuadorian nation; it is this man that ‘feels’ and ‘lives’ the tearing in the absence of a [national] identity, of an identity that would unify the distinct components of the nation.... Through the expression of this ambiguous situation, intellectuals became aware of the existence of a “new nation”: the *mestizo* nation, and of a new culture: the *mestizo* culture; which are the fruit of the fusion of two antecedents, but as a result, original and autonomous of both (quoted in Walsh 2009:35, my translation).

The significant concern with a unitary nation, whether it is based upon a *criollo* or *mestizo* identity, is how it has and continues to be created. In the context of coloniality, there is amnesia of the colonial history that informs the political and material exclusion and exploitation of people not included within the ‘nation’ and creates inequality within the ‘nation’. The unitary nation also suppresses the alternative forms of political and social organizations held by indigenous and afroecuadorian people.

These concerns follow from Sanjinés' critique of Anderson's imagined community: "contrary to the concept of imagined community... [of] complete citizens ... [the nation is composed at the exclusion of a] half-formed citizenry, poor and weak...[that was] subjugated and dependent" (2007:301). Against the historical exclusion of indigenous people from the project of a unitary nation-state, the indigenous movement of Ecuador has proposed an alternative rationality of what composes the state. Instead of constructing and recognizing only one nation, the indigenous movement demands that existing indigenous nationalities be recognized and considered equal to the dominant *mestizo* nation within the state of Ecuador. For the indigenous movement to make this demand however, they first needed to construct their own meaning for the concept of 'nationality' and bring indigenous nationalities into political reality.

### **Indigenous Nationality as a Political Identity**

For Sorel, it was the myth of the general strike that would encourage the abstract identity of the proletariat to emerge in action as a realized political force. The distinction between an abstract definition of a collective identity and the active expression of that identity made by Sorel is an important source of inspiration when approaching the notion of 'nationality' within the context of Ecuador and the indigenous movement. Alberto Andrango, a former leader of FENOCÍ, in a February 1993 interview with Susana Montalvo, differentiated nationality from ethnicity arguing that:

Ethnicity refers to a small group of indigenous people that shares the same culture, the same language, the same form of living. Nationality, on the other hand, describes a group of people that has a territory and, yes of course, the same language and culture. ... We indigenous people are a nationality because we belong to the same culture, because we have the same form of living and our own forms of administrating (1993:156, my

translation).

The demand for a plurinational constitution of Ecuador means the recognition of distinct cultures, languages, and, more problematically, the recognition and enabling of alternative “forms of living” and “forms of administrating” of collective communities recognized as nationalities. This conception confronts the historical construction of the “Ecuadorian” as resulting from the exclusion of indigenous ways of being and governing. An abstract description of nationality, however, was insufficient for making it a realized political identity. This section describes the emergence of nationality in leftist political discourse during the first half of the twentieth century. Towards the 1980s the concept of nationality was adopted by organizations in the indigenous movement to offer a new articulation of the political identity of the indigenous people of Ecuador.

The origin of the word nationality within the indigenous movement is linked to the relationship between leftist intellectuals and indigenous peasant activists between the 1930s and 70s (see Becker 2008b). Throughout Latin America in the 1930s and into the 1940s, Communist parties that followed the Comintern were influenced by Soviet notions of national-republics and proposed a pan-Andean indigenous Republic (see Becker 2006). The idea of an independent indigenous Republic never fully caught hold within leftist parties and allied peasant based organizations in Ecuador but nevertheless has influenced their discourse. The extent to which indigenous people were broadly described during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as distinct nationalities, as a result of the unrecognized racial bifurcation of citizenship of the post-colonial republics, is not clear. In the case of leftist parties and organizations in Ecuador, however, the description of indigenous nationalities

was often used to affirm the positive differentiation of indigenous claims upon society and the state.

Early uses of the word '*nacionalidades*', or nationalities, to describe collective indigenous peoples can be seen in the 1930s by indigenous and *indigenista* activists from communist and class-based organizations. In the March 17<sup>th</sup> 1936 (Año 1 Num. 8) issue of the indigenous-communist paper, *Ñucanchic Allpa* (a Kichwa title for *Nuestra Tierra* or Our Land, a bilingual Kichwa and Spanish paper), the *Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas* (Conference of Indigenous Leaders) published a 17-point list of demands entitled: "*Para Unir y Organizar a los indios para la defensa de sus intereses de clase y como nacionalidades oprimidas*" (To unify and to organize the Indians for the defence of their class interests and as oppressed nationalities). The list was predominately focused on issues of peasant classes including low wages, lack of access to materials, and abuses of hacienda owners. Another important mention in the article is the explicit racial-solidarity extended to "*negros, mestizos y mulatos*" of "*todos los campesinos*" (all of the peasants) (Nuestra Tierra 1936). During the constitutional debates of 1944, Ricardo Paredes, representing the PSE and speaking on behalf of excluded indigenous voices, argued that the constitution must recognize indigenous peoples as separate nationalities because of their distinct histories, languages, territories and cultural institutions (Becker 2008a:171). While salient and useful in discourse, the concept of indigenous nationalities did not translate into an organizational identity. In the Andes, from the 1930s till the 1970s the class identity of the peasant dominated political organizing by indigenous activists. In the Amazon, activists often focused upon organizing their local communities.

Nationalities emerged as regional organizations turned towards more overtly cultural and ethnic-based identities in their effort to construct legitimacy. There are two convergent reasons why the indigenous movement began to use the concept of 'nationality' to describe indigenous people. On the one hand, a few leftist intellectuals began to move away from the rural class identity of the 'peasant' as it diminished in its capacity to describe rural agricultural production. In the place of 'peasant', they increasingly used nationalities to describe collective indigenous communities. Becker argues that the term 'nationality' re-emerged from the Marxist intellectual tradition established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, stating that "indigenous leaders did not reclaim this identity on their own but rather it was a contribution from Marxist intellectuals" (Becker 2008a:172).

Even if the term of nationality initially came from Marxist intellectuals, the concept was transformed in the hands of the activist-intellectuals of the indigenous movement. José Antonio Lucero (2008a:113) argues that, "indigenous activists in Ecuador have taken a term from the lexicon of Marxist and European thought and Indianized it." Ecuadorian Marxist intellectual Ileana Almeida, returning from education in the Soviet Union, used the word 'nationalities' in articles published in 1979 to describe the Kichwa nationality in the Andes. Almeida wrote in *La Cuestión India en el Ecuador*, that "apart from the Ecuadorian national community, there exist other communities whose national processes are lagging behind, but nevertheless have different historical, cultural, linguistic, economic, and territorial characteristics. These communities are the Indian peoples, best described as nationalities" (quoted in Segovia 2005:202, my translation).

Almeida's perspective influenced a new generation of indigenous intellectual leadership that was studying at the Universidad Central in Quito (Lucero 2003:34). The characteristics of Almeida's nationalities can be seen reflected in the description of a nationality provided by Blanca Chancoso, a leader within the Andean ECUARUNARI, in an interview with Susana Montalvo in March 1993:

Nationality, for us ... is much more complete, it recognizes the person as a living being. We have characteristics and elements that we identify as nationalities. ... These elements are our language, our customs, our culture, our history, and also our wisdoms (1993:136-7, my translation).

Leftist organizations also returned to using nationalities in their expressions of solidarity with the emerging indigenous movement (Becker 2008a:171-2). For example, in 1985, the *Partido Socialista del Ecuador*, working with CONAIE, proposed the Law of Indigenous Nationalities to Congress to advance the formal recognition of indigenous people's distinct ethnicities and cultures within Ecuador.

On the other hand, the formation of regional confederations of community-based indigenous organizations, especially in the Amazon, used the idea of nationalities to articulate the horizontal equality of constituent organizations. Indigenous intellectual leadership in the Amazon was the first to seize the term nationality within its organizational structure. The creation of CONFENIAE in 1980 followed the First Regional Conference of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, which brought together many of the community based organizations under one umbrella regional organization. The declaration coming from the regional conference stated CONFENIAE's purpose was to "defend and value the cultures of Indigenous nationalities in the Ecuadorian Amazon" (Becker 2008a:172). The concept of nationalities in the

Amazon served a practical function to bring together disparate local-community based organizations. The content of nationality could be used by indigenous groups of various sizes and territorial claims, each who had a different history of interaction with the state. As direct contact with the state, multinational corporations, missionaries, traders and immigrants expanded from the 1960s onwards, more capable organizations were developed to represent the communities and defend territorial claims. First, communities with shared languages and cultural histories began to form subregional organizations and these subregional organizations were differentiated by distinct language families. As alliances grew between these groups, a discourse formed around 'nationalities' rather than 'organizations' to establish historical representation and permanence, as well as to express a strong territorial claim.

The discourse of nationality was adopted by Andean indigenous activists for similar reasons. Andean activists were coming together not as representatives of their respective organizations, but within a much more discursively inclusive category: '*nacionalidades y pueblos*'. By 1988, nationalities had become a central organizational identity within the indigenous movement across Ecuador. With an emerging political identity of indigenous nationalities, the concept of plurinationality began to become realized in the structures of the emerging regional and country-wide organizations of the indigenous movement. Marc Becker notes that, "The call to recognize Ecuador's plurinational character became CONAIE's key and most contentious demand. ... The success of CONAIE in this project was not so much because 'nationalities' reflected reality but because they were able to mobilize around this discourse" (Becker,

2008a:173). Lucero argues that the concept of nationalities did “not reflect what was ‘really’ there’ but helped produce a political subject and project that previously had not existed” (2008:114). In 1988, CONAIE responded to the proposal for the Law of Indigenous Nationalities with the radical statement that Ecuador was a plurinational state and required the recognition of the distinct “territoriality, organization, education, culture, medicine, and judicial systems” of the indigenous nationalities (Becker 2008a:172). By the 1980s the use of nationalities had transformed into an identity that not only represented the abstract ethnicity, but the political and economic aspirations of indigenous activists.

The constructed identities of the nationalities became used politically by the indigenous movement. Lautaro Ojeda Segovia describes the importance of the concept of nationality for the indigenous movement:

the new category of nationalities, is without doubt, a subversive challenge that radically questions the fundamental basics of the “Ecuadorian nationality” because it changes the terms of the debate that have been encased in the discussion of the relationship between ‘class’ and ‘ethnicity’ (Segovia 2005:201).

Indigenous intellectuals such as Luis Macas and Blanca Chancoso of ECUARUNARI, took ownership over the concept and were able to construct the term as a political identity separate from the outsider-political traditions. Indigenous intellectual Ampam Karakras writes:

In the face of such confusion [over names], we, the Indian organizations, the Indian pueblos, want to give ourselves our own names, maintain our identity, our personality. . . we have opted for the term of Indian nationalities. This resolution has been carefully considered and obeys no outside influence (quoted in Lucero 2003:33)

By articulating their own category of identification playing with but distinct from the eurocentric “nation”, indigenous intellectual-activists have been able to exercise a level of control over the use and meaning of 'nationality'. This reflects an important component of the myth: to create a challenge to the hegemonic or dominating ideas of society. The composition of the '*indio*' part of the attempt to establish the hegemony of the Republican state. As the Ecuadorian state evolved, this category was meant to be dissolved into a new *mestizo* citizen in the project to construct hegemony. Constructing the indigenous nationality as an identity negated this project by forcing a recognition of the permanence of the diversity or plurality of the indigenous populations. Nationalities became an important identity within the organizational structure of CONAIE as a result of the politicization.

### **CONAIE: Organizational Representation of Plurinationality**

Plurinationality is represented within the organizational structures of the indigenous movement. The *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE) is the largest national-scale indigenous organization and has been central in promoting the category of indigenous nationality as political identity. CONAIE is constituted from three regional second-tier organizations, CONFENIAE, ECUARUNARI, and more recently the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Costa del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Coast of Ecuador, CONAICE). Each regional organization is connected to a third tier of provincial and community level organizations, which constitute the grassroots of the indigenous movement.

CONAIE is not the only national-scale indigenous organization. Alongside CONAIE there is the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos* (FEINE, Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indigenous), which represents indigenous communities and local organizations affiliated with evangelical Christianity, and the *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras* (FENOCIN, National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations), the successor to FENOC that maintains connections to its class-based peasant-oriented identification.<sup>47</sup> This complex picture of multi-scalar and diversely representative organizations reflects the underlying internal politics of the indigenous movement. The analysis is focused on CONAIE because it best represents the application of organizing through plurinationality and politically advancing the identity of 'nationality'. CONAIE is the largest and most influential of the indigenous movement organizations and its constituent base has consistently been successfully mobilized to fight for demands from indigenous communities.

A revolutionary myth is rooted in the form of organization of a social movement. Sorel believed that the general strike must maintain the organizational ethic of the syndicalists: “it would be better for [syndicalism] to remain content for a time with weak and chaotic organizations rather than ... copy the political forms of the middle class” (Sorel 1961:178). For Sorel, the organizational ethic of the workers is an important distinction between the emerging proletariat and the middle-class. Second, by maintaining

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<sup>47</sup>Both FEINE (see Andolina 2008:153-174) and FENOCIN have more recently y distanced themselves from articulations of indigenous nationalities, in part to maintain their own distinct political identities as indigenous evangelicals and indigenous peasants as fundamental organizational identities. Demonstrating the complexity of the politics within the indigenous movement, negotiating these identities is also important in defining an organization's relationship to the government (see above citations).

distinct organizational practices the general strike would remain under the control of the proletariat. Gramsci attempts to move beyond the spontaneity of a general strike to propose a political party as his myth. Gramsci (1971:133) believed the so-called 'modern Prince' would be the "proclaimer and organizer of an intellectual and moral reform." Through its own development and constitution, the socialist revolutionary party would provide a revolutionary model for society. In other words, a revolutionary myth that challenges the dominant social, political, and economic relations is also the point of reference for the organization of the revolutionary movement. Both Sorel and Gramsci's myth however are dependent upon a unitary constituent base - a strictly defined proletariat. Mariátegui proposed his heterogenous socialist revolution, composed of urban workers and indigenous peasants. While Sorel and Gramsci provided more direct references to the organizational structures of the workers and of a political party, it is Mariátegui who used the myth to creatively interpret the necessary conditions of social movement organization. The imaginary construction of indigenous socialism, from Mariátegui's conception of the indigenous *ayllu*, becomes the basis of the relationship between urban unionized workers and rural communitarian peasants against the capitalist class.

CONAIE relates to all three of these theorists perspectives in different ways. Sorel's assertion that the workers needed to promote their distinct organizational structures is demonstrated by the indigenous movement's promotion of indigenous cultural, social and political practices as distinct from the white-*mestizo* society. CONAIE, like Gramsci's political party, maintains a more complex and organized

structure. Finally, the use of a plurality of nationalities, creatively constructed to cross-interests and contexts, is best reflected by Mariátegui's myth of a socialist revolution.

These ideas are described through three points of how the organization of the indigenous movement is related to the revolutionary myth of plurinationality. First, the political-identity of the nationality emerges alongside the formation of CONAIE and the creation of a myth of plurinationality. Second, the capacity of CONAIE to pragmatically motivate local activists to participate in large-scale actions reflects the ability to connect a hegemonic conflict with local material demands. Third, the practices of decision making within the indigenous movement continue the historical process of indigenous differentiation from the hegemonic society, helping to deepen the identification of 'indigenous nationalities' distinct from other collective identities in Ecuador.

CONAIE was created in 1986 by the leadership of CONFENIAE and ECUARUNARI, with representation of activists from coastal communities, to act as a national umbrella co-ordinator of the indigenous movement. CONAIE came from the earlier *Consejo de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONACNIE), which was first organized in 1980. CONACNIE was meant to overcome the difficulties of mutually comprehending the regional differences of CONFENIAE and ECUARUNARI:

The request for a coordinator was necessary to overcome the existing differences within the different indigenous organizations. At the same time, it was indispensable to unify the double-dimension of our fight: class and ethnicity (CONAIE 1988:149, my translation).

CONACNIE as a co-ordinating council was unable to overcome the difficulties faced by a

national indigenous movement and a new organization, embedded within the idea of a plurinational indigenous movement, was created at the *Primer Congreso de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* in November 1986. CONAIE was formed from ten nationalities, which CONAIE claimed represented 4 million indigenous people in Ecuador. A long history of struggle symbolically culminated in the plurinational unification of the indigenous movement:

Since the first moments of facing the Spanish, the indigenous have created diverse forms of resistance and struggle, many of them that have gone unrecognized or been poorly interpreted. From this long process ... we have assumed a platform from which we are able to struggle and better defend our legitimate rights (CONAIE 1988:152; my translation)

Nationalities have been used as the symbolic foundation of CONAIE to convey a unity in differences:

The indigenous nationalities, through our organizations and leaders, demand the recognition of our rights that have for a long time been ignored and violated by the state and the dominant society (CONAIE 1988:149, my translation).

Strategically referencing indigenous nationalities, rather than class or religious affiliations as the foundation of CONAIE has enabled indigenous 'organic intellectuals' to emerge in leadership positions. The leadership is expected to synthesize overarching demands into a mutually comprehensive political strategy. Thus while CONAIE has maintained a concern for class-based material interests, it has expanded beyond the confines of class.

In addition to intellectual leadership, grassroots activism is a crucial component of the indigenous movement. Mobilization requires CONAIE to be capable of not only coordinating diverse communities, but of responding to material demands and conditions at the community level. CONAIE articulates broad regional demands, particularly related to

regional development and government institutions, through the use of nationalities and *pueblos*. At the same time, second and third level – regional and sub-regional – organizations connect CONAIE to communities (Macas 1993; Almeida and Arrobo Rodas 2005). Country-wide actions must have meaning at the local scale for community activists. CONAIE is composed of three second-tier organizations that represent the coastal, Andean and Amazonian nationalities and organizations. Second-tier organizations are in turn composed of third-tier local and sub-regional organizations, which are responsible for articulating community issues as well as building activist support for state-wide campaigns.

Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009) argues that a greater focus needs to be on the local experiences of activists in the actions of Ecuador's indigenous movement. Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:89) contends that the success of the indigenous movement in Ecuador is that, "differences and inequalities are not erased but organized ... they depend not only on the prior existence of community institutions, but the constant leadership of residents to engage and legitimize the purpose at hand within the sphere of community politics." Part of the success of CONAIE is that it orients local issues towards national political goals by advocating 'autonomy' of communities and the decentralization of political power. Plurinationality is connected to the goal of autonomy and self-governance of local communities through the construction of the nationality. Nationality expresses a relationship of a collective people, defined through language, culture, and history, to a spatial dimension.

A plurinational state does not require that each nationality have absolute

sovereignty within a demarcated territorial space, but does require that the state recognize the negotiated boundaries of the autonomy and self-governance within a nationality's space – often understood in the practice of indigenous politics as the community. Using the community of Mondayacu, a Kichwa community located between the Andean and Amazonian regions, as an example, Thomas Perreault (2003:98) contends that these practices are part of a spatialized politics practiced by the indigenous movement.<sup>48</sup>

CONAIE leadership has to maintain a continuous relationship with communities.<sup>49</sup> Leadership presents itself as subservient to the community. While attending community meetings, leadership is expected to perform the role of the listener. During the *Encuentro de Jovenes Indigenas*, which I attended in June 2009, this practice was evidenced by the presence of the current CONAIE President, Marlon Santí. Santí represented a constant silent – and listening – presence during two days of events, as indigenous youth provided their own perspective on the meaning and practical significance of plurinationality, interculturality, and territory. For CONAIE's leadership, legitimacy is founded upon their ability to interpret commands flowing from the activists at the grassroots. National leadership is a complementary action to local activism. During an indigenous

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48Perreault (2003:105-6) describes the practical implications of community politicization for indigenous organizations across various scales: “Organizing activities in Mondayacu, together with the legalization of land claims, helped consolidate the community spatially and fix its presence in the physical and institutional landscapes. This in turn strengthened [the local organization's] position as a member of FOIN and therefore as a political and social actor in the Alto Napo, providing community residents with a channel ...through which to voice their concerns. Moreover, community formation and the legal recognition of the community's land claims allowed ATIAM to establish formal organizational relationships with, for example, the provincial bilingual intercultural education agency and state and international rural development programs.”

49“Leadership” may not be an accurate description of the role of CONAIE and regional organizations, as it suggests a hierarchical relationship that inadequately describes the indigenous movement in Ecuador. Colloredo-Mansfeld (2009:179) argues, “local organizations and national groups work in parallel as sites of authority, decision making, and information.”

mobilization in 2006 against the US-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement, Colloredo-Mansfeld observed that, “the core tasks of national-groups – coordinating, representing, and negotiating – complement the direct action of communities and vice versa” (2009:201). Promoting the acceptance and use of distinct indigenous nationalities is important for creating the legitimacy, from which CONAIE is able to interact and co-ordinate a diversity of communities.

One method CONAIE uses to maintain a distinct indigenous representation is by following a practice of consensus. According to Atik Kurikamak, a legal professional for CONAIE, consensus is the foundation of CONAIE’s decision making process:

The methodology or the process is to dialogue. The technique or agreed upon method is consensus, fundamentally consensus, and when we are unable to reach a consensus, because the first basis of decision making is to reach consensus, we do turn to formal democracy, the process of voting (personal interview 2009, my translation)

By identifying voting as ‘formal democracy’ Kurikamak is signalling the *indigenous* foundation of dialogue and consensus, separated from the ‘formalized’ processes of the state. As processes of political decision making are included as part of the content that differentiates nationalities, the emphasis on dialogue and consensus is also used to signal the distinction of indigenous nationalities from the European and *mestizo* nationalities in Ecuador. Kurikamak’s concession that formal democracy is used when consensus becomes unlikely indicates the intercultural point of contact between indigenous and non-indigenous forms of political organization.

Plurinationality acts as a bridge between the constructed nationality and the indigenous movement by providing an overarching narrative that gives meaning and

function to the movement. CONAIE promotes each nationality as a distinct organizational identity, in which the concrete material demands of the community can be transformed into abstract political identities. Nationality is used to make the connection between local activists and their representation by CONAIE at the national level. Plurinationality gives coherence to the diversity, across local and regional spaces, of the indigenous movement represented by CONAIE. In turn, the coherence of an indigenous movement is employed by CONAIE to mobilize large-scale actions when combined with the myth of plurinationality provide a transformative moment that challenges the hegemonic construction of the state.

### **Levantamiento as Action and the Myth of Plurinationality**

The mythic idea of a plurinational state, constituted by nationalities, was brought into a real confrontation with the state and the hegemonic idea of the *mestizo* nation through the action of indigenous *levantamientos* that defined the political participation of Ecuador's indigenous social movement during the 1990s. Mariátegui (1996[1925e]:147) writes that, “Action arises from negations and affirmations. The new generation of our America, as throughout the world, is above all a generation that shouts out its faith, that sings its hope.” The connection between action and faith is central to Mariátegui's notion of the myth. In his essay against the perceived social desire “to live gently”, Mariátegui believed that “life, more than thought, now wishes to be action, that is, struggle. Modern humanity has need of faith. And the only faith that can fill its deepest self is a combative faith” (1996[1925c]:141-2). It is the dialectic between the faith in an idea, the myth, and action that brings forth a significant moment of confrontation both materially and ideationally: a

counter-hegemonic revolution. The first *levantamiento* of June 1990, the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi*, introduced plurinationality into the wider political-economy.

The *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* was the first in a series of indigenous protests that occurred in Ecuador during the 1990s and has had significant impact politically and socially in Ecuador. The *levantamiento* demonstrated historically for the first time Ecuador's indigenous movement's capacity to organize on a mass country-wide scale and has since become a focal point for discussions of successive indigenous movement 'awakenings' throughout the hemisphere. According to Macas: "Since the *levantamiento del "Inti Raymi"*, we have been witnesses to the political transformation made by the indigenous movement that has meant a profound transformation of Ecuador" (2000 *np*).

The relationship between the 'action' of the *levantamiento* of 1990 and the myth of plurinationality illuminates the ways in which the idea of a 'plurinational Ecuador' challenged the hegemonic perception of Ecuador as a progressively unitary nation-state. This example of indigenous peoples representing themselves as distinct nationalities, demanding political, economic and social recognition, has since disrupted the potential of the hegemonic to maintain the imaginary of a progressively unitary nation-state.

The *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* began with a "*toma de la iglesia*", as two hundred activists from rural highland communities occupied the Church of Santo Domingo in Quito on 28 of May 1990. Rural indigenous farmers converged upon the church and disrupted the urban space of Quito, demanding the resolution of seventy-two ongoing land disputes (Becker 2008:177). Before the occupation, CONAIE had brought

together indigenous representatives from several of the indigenous nationalities at the Fifth Assembly in April 1990 to discuss several issues indigenous communities had with the Ecuadorian government. An immediate concern of CONAIE was the disintegrating dialogue with President Borja. Indigenous leaders had felt that rural peasant-indigenous populations were increasingly being managed by the Borja government by “reducing the indigenous problem to a cultural matter,” which was to be managed by government bureaucrats in the newly created *Dirección Nacional de Educación Indígena* (National Office of Indigenous Education) (Macas 1992:28).

Following the occupation of the Church of Santo Domingo, protest spread, other sectors of civil society were mobilized, and land-occupations and rural strikes occurred within the Andean region (Macas 1992). CONAIE activists had been planning a larger mobilization at the April assembly. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990, the pressure of rural indigenous communities against the political direction of the state exploded – CONAIE declared a nationwide levantamiento, with critical participation by a wide representation of local and regional indigenous, rural peasant, and urban workers groups. The levantamiento lasted till June 6<sup>th</sup> and was ended through mediation between the government and indigenous national organizations. More than 40 000 indigenous protestors participated in six provinces, blocking the major roads of the Ecuadorian Sierra, bringing large parts of the Ecuadorian economy to a standstill (Segovia 2005:186).

The indigenous movement issued their demands in a list of sixteen points:

#### The 16 Points

1. Declaration of Ecuador as a “plurinational state.”
2. Grants of land and legalization of territories for the nationalities.

3. Solutions to the problems of water and irrigation.
  4. Absolution of debts to FODERUMA and the National Development Bank.
  5. Freezing of consumer prices.
  6. Conclusion of priority projects in the communities.
  7. Non-payment of rural land taxes.
  8. Expulsion of the Summer Language Institute, in accordance with the 1981 decree.
  9. Free importation and exportation of commercial and artisan products for CONAIE members.
  10. Control, protection, and development of archeological sites under the supervision of CONAIE.
  11. Legal recognition and funding by the state of Indigenous medicine.
  12. Cancellation of decrees that created parallel institutions to local governments.
  13. Immediate granting of budgeted funds for Indigenous nationalities.
  14. Permanent funding of bilingual education.
  15. Real respect for the rights of the child, without demagoguery.
  16. The fixing of fair prices for farm products and free access to markets.
- Translated by Marc Becker, Originally Published "*Gobierno contestó punto por punto los pedidos indígenas*", Hoy (Quito), 29 June 1990, 5A.<sup>50</sup>

Material demands were a central motivation for the indigenous protest, evidenced by land occupations, the reaction to seventy-two land disputes, and several of the sixteen points. The centrality of land in the material demands of the indigenous movement highlights the continuity to the earlier peasant contestation. The demand for recognition of a plurinational state is linked to these material demands, similar to how the decolonial project describes the link between the material exploitation to the epistemological exclusion of the colonized subject. Luis Macas, at the time President of CONAIE, wrote in December 1990 following the levantamiento that, “the right to land and territoriality [for indigenous people] is historic, there is nothing new. In reality this is our principle demand. ... We believe that there cannot be a solution to the indigenous problem if the problem of land is not resolved: the most essential for us is the recuperation of land”

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<sup>50</sup> Available online at [http://www.yachana.org/earchivo/conaic/hoy\\_en.php](http://www.yachana.org/earchivo/conaic/hoy_en.php). Accessed last 10 July 2010.

(1992:24, my translation).

Land has been a central focal point linking indigenous activists across regions.

Following the Fifth Congress of CONAIE in April 25-28, 1990, land was a central feature of the resolutions leading to the levantamiento:

The Indigenous People of Ecuador have realized that there exists no other path in the fight to obtain what we have historically belonged to us: land. ... We understand clearly the fight for our Pachamama is for the source of our community, of the life and culture of all our people. We should never think of dividing our mother land...(quoted in Ruiz M. 1992:480-1, my translation).

Land has different significance for each of Ecuador's indigenous nationalities. As described in Chapter 3, land for Andean indigenous communities is experienced through the historical relationship to the hacienda and agricultural production. Amazonian nationalities, on the other hand, tend to see the conflict over land as the struggle for autonomous territory. Space thus has been historically related to production for the Andes and as territorial sovereignty in the Amazon (Lucero 2007:105). Macas' perspective emphasizes an Andean conceptualization of land, which was also predominant in the first indigenous levantamiento in June 1990. Macas' use of the term the "indigenous problem" recalls the "Indian problem" and José Carlos Mariátegui's (2006:35-43) transformation of the "Problem of the Indian" into the "Problem of Land". Material inequality in the Andes has emerged as a result of the exploitation of indigenous labour and colonial and republican consolidation of productive land in the hands of a few *criollo* haciendas, justified by the construction of an inferior '*indio*'. Macas has thus argued that "If we were in reality a single nation, we would not have had the problems in the different processes of development of the people of Ecuador" (my translation 1993:118). The affirmation of

the dignity and recognition of indigenous nationalities in this context is also a claim for the cessation of material forms of exploitation and exclusion.

In the Amazon, the relationship between plurinationality and land is different than in the Andes. The significant expansion of the state into the Amazon from the periods of the initial oil boom in the 1960s and land reforms of the 1970s into the present resulted in a different spatial imagination on the part of Amazonian nationalities. Territorial control is presented as the foundation for autonomous cultural and social (re)production. In an 1998 interview, the leader of the *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de Napo* (FOIN) stated that:

For us, the term, the concept 'territory' is good, to manage our resources. This is what we want – a territory to manage as a people with our own identity. Within our territory. But this is not to say that we want to be another state. Within our territory, we want for our culture to strengthen according to our indigenous world view (Perreault 2001:384).

Perreault (2001:394) argues that the “discourse of plurinationality” is part of a strategy of indigenous activists to link “ideas of nationality, territory, culture, and political autonomy.” The politicization of indigenous 'nationality' through a demand for a plurinational state for Amazonian indigenous people is rooted in the constructed imaginary of land as a 'territory' for cultural and social (re)production.

This vision of territory, which refers to a particular form of ownership and function of land, as central to the culture of the indigenous nationalities of the Amazon was also a feature of the 1990 levantamiento. While the first levantamiento was predominately focused in the Andean region and the Andean indigenous populations were dominant participants, Amazonian groups did organize local marches and road blocks.

Participation of Amazonian indigenous people in the levantamiento faced several problems. For example, Lucy Luiz M. (1992:482) notes that northern indigenous groups representing the Secoya and Cofanes had difficulty coordinating their participation in the levantamiento. High levels of militarization in the area and the limited time to contact remote communities were two cited difficulties faced by Amazonian groups in the heart of Ecuador's northern petroleum region. Nevertheless, between 200 and 300 indigenous people participated in protests in the major town of Lago Agrio. In the central Amazonian provinces, important organizations like the *Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza* (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza, OPIP) did not immediately support the levantamiento, joining the protests in the last few days. The lower levels of participation in the central region exposed the importance of subregional organizations in the coordination of local activists.

The goals of the levantamiento did, however, resonate with several of the demands of indigenous organizations in the Amazon. Following the negotiated resolution of the levantamiento, OPIP seized the opportunity to release on August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1990 what is known as the "Document of Pastaza". Emerging from the context of the Amazon, the list of demands focused on the autonomy and self-determination of indigenous communities in their 'territory', including respecting the right of indigenous communities to make decisions about the extraction of petroleum within their territories (see Ruiz M. 1992:486-9; Segovia 2005:186-8). The document drew a strong rebuke from Ecuador's President, Rodrigo Borja (1988-1992):

The document presented by CONAIE is unacceptable because it rips apart

the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador and entails the dismemberment of the country. It is unconstitutional because it plans the separation of practically the whole of the province of Pastaza (90% of the territory of the province) from the Republic of Ecuador. It would give exclusive right to the indigenous people to make decisions about the exploitation of the resources above and below ground in their territory. It would mean the withdrawal of the Armed Forces, the self-determination, the autonomy, the self-government of their territory and the suppression of the state's political administration within the indigenous territories (quoted in Segovia 2005:187, my translation)<sup>51</sup>

President Borja translated the recognition of indigenous nationalities within the state of Ecuador and the right of indigenous people to self-determination and autonomy in their territory into the dissolution of the Ecuadorian state, famously claiming it would lead to the creation of a “parallel state”. Importantly, President Borja expanded the context of the “Document of Pastaza” from its regional context of the Amazon to be representative of the whole indigenous movement. The reaction by the government to the “Document of Pastaza” would frame the context of the debate on plurinationality and force the indigenous movement to articulate to Ecuadorian, particularly the urban *mestizo* middle-class, society the movement's respect for a unitary Ecuadorian state, founded upon the idea of a plurinational state.

President Borja's strong attack of the “Document of Pastaza”, however, did not prevent the indigenous movement's continued articulation of plurinationality and, specifically in the context of Amazonian nationalities, territorial autonomy. In April of 1992, 2000 Amazonian indigenous people marched from the city of Puyo in the central Amazon to the capital Quito. The action popularly known as the *Caminata* (Long Walk) was supported by CONAIE and organized by OPIP and CONFENIAE (Sawyer 1997).

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<sup>51</sup>OPIP authored the Document of Pastaza, President Borja interpreted it as a declaration from CONAIE.

Marchers arrived to the Plaza San Blas, where the leader of the 1579 Amazonian rebellion, Jumandi was condemned to death. Sawyer (1997:66) notes the indigenous movement's conscious construction of historical continuity of the 1992 Caminata to the 500-year struggle for "Indian dignity and political autonomy." On their arrival at the old colonial centre of Quito, the 100 indigenous leaders entered the Presidential Palace and presented the government with a list of four historical proposals for the future:

1. Establishment of permanent territorial rights for indigenous people;
  2. Derivation of rights to wealth from territorial commerce, including subsurface exploitation;
  3. Final resolution of 117 specific conflicts registered by indigenous people over land rights;
  4. A national constitutional reform to make Ecuador a plurinational state.
- (from Whitten E. Jr. et. al. 1997:360)

These demands echoed the language and goals of the 1990 "Document of Pastaza".

President's Borja's reaction in 1992 was subdued and conciliatory in comparison to his comments following the 1990 levantamiento. As the marchers camped in a central park of the city, drawing thousands more supporters, the Borja administration prepared a response to the demands of the indigenous movement.

Central to the negotiation was the petroleum extraction that continued to have dramatically negative affects upon indigenous communities and the habitats of the Amazon. Indigenous communities had developed strategic alliances with international environmentalist NGOs to promote their demands against the Ecuadorian state. This strategic alliance, however, opened a discursive avenue for the Borja government to avoid the formalization of indigenous nationalities (Sawyer 1997). Conforming to the international environmental movement's conceptions of indigenous stewardship,<sup>52</sup> 55% of

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<sup>52</sup>Indigenous people, particularly in Ecuador's Amazon, have in some cases been given, adopted and

the territorial demands of the Caminata, or 1,115,175 hectares, were transferred into indigenous-community titles as part of environmentalist strategy of the government.

Interpreting the indigenous claims through the discourse of environmentalism, the territorial claims based upon traditional land use patterns and cultural meaning were ignored. In their place the government “allotted communal land titles to 19 seemingly arbitrarily chosen blocks that bore no resemblance to any lived territorial divisions on the ground” (Sawyer 1997:72). As a result, Sawyer (1997) notes that the government refused to empower indigenous nationalities as political units and avoided the demand for plurinational recognition in the constitution. Sawyer (1997:72) concluded that:

The state “scientifically” dehumanized Amazonian worlds, in which rivers, ridges, groves, and forests embrace histories, mythologies, and rights, and replaced them with fixed geometric shapes devoid of any sense of place. The titled blocks did not correspond to the spatial delineation of indigenous authority structures, practiced patterns of land use, or historical understandings of indigenous national identity. According to many indigenous leaders, they are chaotic overlays on the rainforest ultimately aimed at destroying indigenous national integrity and eroding the deeply embedded cultural practice of living in a landscape.

Crucially, the Caminata was also unable to secure rights for communities to the subterranean resources, which includes hydrocarbons. The ongoing conflict over the recognition of plurinationality, however, highlights the connection for the indigenous populations between the discursive power affect on imaginary of Ecuador and its material representation within the 'land' – territorial space – of the Amazonian nationalities.

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adapted an identity of indigenous peoples as environmental stewards. This interpretation of indigeneity appeals to an international movement of environmentalist NGOs and offers political opportunities, such as funding, international solidarity and exposure to campaigns and causes of local indigenous communities. Not all indigenous people in the Amazon choose to adopt and adapt this international identity. Rather than interpreting Amazonian indigenous culture inherently reflecting the political goals of an international environmental movement, indigeneity in the Amazon must be understood as an identity constructed within the context of political negotiation across multiple scales (see: Rival 1997; Rudel et. al. 2002; Valdavia 2005).

In the case of the Amazon, Lucy Ruiz M. argues that “the notions of *territoriality* and of *nationality* emerge from the Amazonian indigenous people to amplify and improve the process of creating a unified national indigenous movement” (author’s emphasis, Ruiz M. 1992:476, my translation). Plurinationality in the context of the levantamientos and indigenous protests serves as an important bridge that links the causes of indigenous activists in the Amazon and the Andes despite their differing material demands. As described in Chapter Three, the identity of class did not resonate with the experiences of Amazonian indigenous people. Nationality emerged, alongside the demand for a plurinational state in the levantamiento, as an identity that could be mutually understood by indigenous activists in the Amazon and Andes while articulating their different material demands.

Despite being included in the list of 16 points following the 1990 levantamiento, plurinationality did not immediately have the influence that was demonstrated by President Borja's response. Ana Karina López, an Ecuadorian journalist, observed that in contrast to the demands for land rights: “The rest [of the demands of the indigenous movement], such as recognizing plurinationality in the first article of the constitution, were somewhat ‘philosophical ideas’ (as much for the journalists as public opinion) that would not have the same feared impact as the occupation of land and farms by Indians” (1993:27, my translation). When plurinationality was acknowledged, it was treated as an idea without much content, “that was illusory and utopian, and treated as a ‘poetic accompaniment’ to the action of the levantamiento” (Lopez 1993:26, my translation). The hegemonic rationality of the nation-state was initially disconnected, and therefore

protected, from the material claims made by the indigenous movement. For a revolutionary moment to occur, the myth must not only bring forward a material challenge but also directly challenge the ideational foundation, the rationality, of the hegemonic society.

As the connections between indigenous demands for a plurinational state and material claims to land were realized, a counter-movement emerged, attacking the idea of a plurinational state. Indicative of the spontaneous impact the indigenous movement had with its first levantamiento, dominant political and economic elites were caught off guard by the scope of the protests. Sources of hegemonic consciousness, such as the major newspapers, became aware after the fact of the indigenous movement's capacity for organizing and slowly began to interrogate its significance. Plurinationality, was soon recognized as a crucial ideological component of the indigenous movement. Further, and more profoundly, the reaction and debate in the press to the demand to recognize indigenous nationalities in the constitution highlights the perceived threat to the hegemonic view of a unitary Ecuadorian nation. Following from the idea of a revolutionary myth, the dialectical relationship between the action of the levantamiento and the counter-hegemonic challenge presented by the emergent identity of the indigenous nationalities combined to challenge the rational foundation of the progressive Ecuadorian nation-state. By August 1990 journalists and social commentators began to comment on the meaning and significance of plurinationality in the indigenous movement's vision for Ecuador.

Both López (1993) and Tomaselli (1998) provide analysis of the discourse of print

media within the emergent debate on the significance for Ecuador of a demand for plurinational recognition. The representation of indigenous people in the press is both indicative of the ongoing marginalization of the contemporary indigenous movement, as well as the impact the demand for plurinationality made upon the construction of the Ecuadorian state in the imaginary of the country. A significant number of articles written on the levantamiento and the indigenous movement drew upon historical constructions of the “*indio*”. Tomaselli (1998) found that 55% of the articles portrayed “*el indio malo*” (the bad Indian), 21% used notions of “*el indio tonto*” (the stupid Indian), while 8% portrayed an image of “*el indio feo*” (the ugly Indian). The most common representation that Tomaselli identified, that of the “*indio malo*”, presented the indigenous movement and activists as being an unruly disruption of the urban white-*mestizo* life. Articles that presented the “*indio feo*” drew upon the colonial memory of the underdeveloped body, mind, culture and particularly morality of the colonized subject.

Analysis of the demand for plurinationality also at times drew upon these representations. For example, an article printed in *El Comercio* on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1990 mixes the stereotypical ‘*indio tonto*’ with an attack on the idea of plurinationality:

[the demand for] territories for the indigenous nationalities’ refers to the Amazonian Region. ... I noticed that this word [nationalities] should be understood [as] “tribe”, because in this country there is not more than one nationality, that of the Ecuadorian, and it is not going away. ... It is Ecuadorian Nation that provides a solution for our situation (quoted in Tomaselli 1998:45, my translation)

Here indigenous ‘nationalities’ were questioned as a nonsensical invention of the indigenous movement that should be understood as composed ‘tribes’; the central point being a re-emphasis on the necessity of recognizing a unitary and progressive

'Ecuadorian' nation.

Essays printed in the major newspapers moved beyond interpreting plurinationality as being an 'illusory and utopian' demand of the indigenous movement. The demand for recognition of the plurinational composition of Ecuador led many to interrogate the structural and social challenges necessary. López (1993:48-50) provides several relevant conclusions from her analysis of articles in major newspapers. First and foremost, that while most newspapers moved to accept the idea of a pluricultural and multi-ethnic country, the notion that Ecuador should become a plurinational state was highly unpopular and reflected fears of separation. Secondly, recognizing plurinationality was seen as contrary to the progressive project of creating a *mestizo* national identity and thus the formation of national unity. For example, for some the 'Indian problem' was created by a lack of modernity within indigenous populations.

Santiago Jervis wrote for the *El Telégrafo* on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1990, that the "The Indian, like every Ecuadorian in a modern state, has the right to many opportunities, will cease to be Indian and become fully Ecuadorian, as many others of the same origins have, without distinction of ethnicity, or phobia, prejudice or utopia" (quoted in López 1993:37, my translation). This argument follows the hegemonic ideal of the "*mestizo*" to resolve a bifurcation of identity by replacing the "Indian" with the "Ecuadorian", and follows from the rationality that a unitary nation-state represents a progressive solution to social and economic inequalities.

More extreme positions revealed the overt racism of the white-*mestizo* society

against 'the Indian' and perpetuated the paternalist discourses that occurred in previous debates on the "Indian Problem." For example, Luis Andrade Reimers wrote in *El Comercio* on 12 August, 1990 that:

The more that is given to the Indians, the more they demand. 35 years after the effective land reforms, when they were made the owners of the land on which they lived, it could be said and proven that our indigenous people do not know how to take advantage of what is given. It is therefore essential to devise an effective support plan that takes into account the root of their idiosyncrasies (quoted in López 1993:35, my translation)

Underlying this was a more abstract concern about the meaning of an Ecuadorian 'nation' and the position of indigenous people within that imaginary. Tomaselli argues that the hegemonic policy of the 1980s was to bring the Indian into the white world through an evolutionary process: "they respected [the differences of the Indian] only if they became a part of the national society; in other words, they were permitted to be Indians only on condition that they integrated into a unitary Ecuadorian nationality" (1998:31, my translation). The 'pluricultural' policies of the 1980s adapted indigenous symbols and languages for assimilationist efforts.

As a result, openings to the state through citizenship were made available for indigenous people in return for acceptance of a hegemonic national identity. Plurinationality, expressed through the 1990 *levantamiento*, acted as a rupture with the progressive incorporation of the Indian into the hegemonic Ecuadorian nation. The consequence was an unsettling of the state project of a unitary national identity and created a strong backlash against indigenous peoples in some sectors. Racist discourses used previously to describe the *indio* resurfaced. The idea of plurinationality combined with the coordinated *levantamiento*, however, enabled indigenous activists to present

themselves as a recognized and legitimized political force in the country.

Not all newspaper articles provided a negative portrayal of the indigenous movement, or of the recognition of Ecuador as a plurinational state. For example, in an article titled “Nation and State” (published August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1990 in *El Expreso*), Alejandro Román Armendáriz wrote:

There is nothing strange that the indigenous nations aspire to negotiate a treaty for relations and support with the Ecuadorian State, which they belong to. The recognition of the indigenous nations within the Ecuadorian State does not lead to the formation of independent states, the restriction of the sovereignty of the State, the formation of a government or parallel state, the dismemberment of the territorial integrity, nor the subtraction of constitutional order. On the contrary, it affirms the national unity on the foundation for recognition of a multi-national reality different from what is currently believed (quoted in López 1993:36, my translation).

The emergent debate on plurinationality gave space for indigenous activist intellectuals, as well as *mestizo* intellectuals in solidarity, to voice indigenous concerns. Undeniably, the indigenous movement emerged from the levantamiento as a political force that had to be recognized, even if their constructed political identity of nationality remained highly controversial. Atik Kurikamak, an indigenous lawyer for CONAIE, reflecting on the impact over the past 20 years of indigenous movement activism on the society's perspective of indigenous people, stated that:

There is still a lot to do, to change the society, especially the elite. The elite that have political-economic control have not been affected much. But a large part of the *mestizo*-society, the populations that are also poor, who are also economically and politically excluded, it is clear are they are in agreement with [the indigenous movement] (interview with Kurikamak 1 July 2009, Quito, my translation).

Understanding the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* as the necessary active

component of the revolutionary myth of plurinationality contradicts an important observation made by Sorel. Sorel believed that violence inspired the absolute rupture of the proletariat from the false-socialists and the hegemonic bourgeois state, and was necessary in the ethic of the worker's general strike. In contrast, indigenous *levantamientos* in Ecuador have been relatively non-violent. Following the 1990 *Levantamiento*, Ileana Almeida observed that "the *levantamiento* was definitely an act of rebellion, but never reached the level of violence that it has been attributed with since." (1992:294, my translation). Conversely, Segovia (2005:188, my translation) remarked that "the *levantamiento* did not conclude in a massacre, like those that occurred at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This *levantamiento* put onto the table the political issue of plurinationality." Indicative of the remarkable political environment of Ecuador, where significant political change has rarely resulted in wide-spread violence, the *levantamiento* of 1990, despite its size, resulted in only one death. In the context of Ecuador, the myth did not need acts of violence to inspire indigenous activists. The scope and depth of the *levantamiento* was significant enough to cause a rupture in functioning of the political-economy of Ecuador. Subsequent country-wide *levantamientos* in 1992, 1994, and 1999 demonstrated the ongoing connection between indigenous activists that was witnessed in 1990.<sup>53</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Using the framework of the revolutionary myth, adapted from the writing of Sorel,

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<sup>53</sup> Descriptions and consequences of the subsequent *levantamientos* during the 1990s can be read in: Segovia (2005:189-198), Whitten Jr. et. al. (1997), Zamosc (2007). More recent *levantamientos* have occurred in 2000 (Beck and Mijeski 2001; Lucero 2001; Walsh 2001), 2001 (Chiriboga 2001), 2006 (Collredo-Mansfeld 2009) and recently in 2008 and 2009. The most recent *levantamientos* have focused on the Correa government's Mining Law and Law of Water (Moore 2009; Zibechi 2009).

Gramsci, and Mariátegui to analyze plurinationality reveals several important points in relation to the indigenous movement in Ecuador during the period of its emergence in the 1990s. First, the myth of plurinationality challenged the existing hegemonic project to construct a unitary nation-state founded upon the created identity of the '*mestizo*'. The dominant imaginary of the 'nation' has evolved from a white-*criollo*, European-inspired, citizen to a proclaimed hybrid *mestizo*. Plurinationality challenges the hegemonic rationality of a progressively unitary *mestizo* nation-state by affirming the diversity of nationalities in the constitution of the state and, importantly, asserts the right of indigenous people to exist as distinct and autonomous nationalities, equal to all other Ecuadorian nationalities

Secondly, plurinationality helped to transform the identity of indigenous nationality from an abstract theoretical construct into active political identity. Nationalities have become represented within the organization the indigenous movement through CONAIE, ECUARUNARI, CONFENIAE, and sub-regional and local organizations. Each nationality has its own historical context and political concerns, based upon the experiences at a local level. The indigenous movement uses the idea of a plurinationality to bring the diverse perspectives of indigenous people, specifically on land, territory, and autonomy, into a cohesive and co-ordinated movement.

Third, Action is a crucial component of a myth and also encourages the politicization of theoretical identities. In the case of Ecuador's indigenous movement, the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* in 1990 and the *Caminata* in 1992 served as two important actions that transformed plurinationality from a utopian idea into an active and

revolutionary myth. Through the action of protest, the indigenous movement's demand for a plurinational state had to be addressed, even if it was only to offer negation by the dominant press. By adopting political-identity of distinct nationalities, with their own claims to self-determination, autonomy, self-government, territory, and rights to language, culture, and history, the indigenous activists asserted a conviction to follow a different path, rupturing the historical narrative of a progressively unitary nation within the state of Ecuador.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

The dramatic introduction of an indigenous movement in 1990 created a new political actor in Ecuador. The subsequent two decades have been marked by periods of significant indigenous mobilizations, participation in the deposing of three presidents, successful protests against a free trade agreement with the United States, the creation of an indigenous-based political party (MUPP-NP), and two revisions of the constitution (1998 and 2008). The latest version of the constitution recognizes Ecuador as a Plurinational and Intercultural State. José Antonio Lucero (2008) describes the actions of Ecuador's indigenous movement as “struggles of voice” in a political-economic context that has historically limited the possibilities for indigenous people to influence and create their own paths of transformation.

Highlighting the continuity of historic struggles, indigenous groups throughout the hemisphere in the approach to the 500th anniversary in 1992 of Columbus' arrival to the Americas, and the beginning of the colonization of the Americas, organized massive and symbolic protests. Already in 1988, anthropologist Lynn Meisch (1992:55) observed on the walls of Quito graffiti proclaiming “500 años de resistencia” (500 years of resistance). Ecuador's indigenous movement itself began building towards the quincentenary and the preparatory organizing was crucial in the communication of the 1990 levantamiento. The symbolic reference to Columbus by the indigenous movement, rather than Francisco Pizarro's conquest of the Inca in 1533 constructs a hemispheric and historic movement against colonialism.

In this period, the indigenous people of the Andes proclaimed that they were engaged in a *pachakutik* that would bring a period of historical injustice and struggle of indigenous people to a conclusion. Luis Macas argued that the *levantamiento* was part of a long historical fight that began with colonization: “the *levantamiento* was a historic action through which we demonstrated our dignity, our strength and unity, as descendents of Túpac Amaru, Rumiñahui, Túpac Katari, Daquilema, Ambrosio Lasso, Dolores Cacuango and other heroes that have left their teachings and examples of struggle” (1992:20, my translation).

This thesis has argued that plurinationality combined with the action of the *Levantamiento del Inti Raymi* in June 1990 provided the indigenous movement with a revolutionary myth. A revolutionary myth is an idea or concept that inspires a creative and collective confrontation to the hegemonic or dominant social and material relationships within a society. The idea of a revolutionary myth is inspired by the myths proposed by Georges Sorel, Antonio Gramsci, and José Carlos Mariátegui. The general strike proposed by Sorel emphasized the importance of constructing a politicized identity from which becomes the basis of the collective action within the myth. Gramsci's critique of the spontaneity of Sorel's general strike led Gramsci's more sustained and organized version of the myth, the socialist political party. Gramsci's methodology, adopted from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, provides important insights on the dialectical links between historical context and the creation of the myth. Mariátegui provides a similar methodology in his examination of the Peruvian reality. Mariátegui's observations of the Peruvian context provides an important innovation to the concept of the myth. Unable to

create a unitary proletarian identity for his myth of the socialist revolution, Mariátegui set out to construct through his myth a revolutionary relationship between urban proletariat and indigenous peasants. By identifying communal characteristics in contemporary indigenous social organization, the legacy of what Mariátegui labelled as the authoritarian communism of the Inca, Mariátegui proposed indigenous peasants as capable of comprehending the goal and significance of a socialist revolution. From Mariátegui, the notion that the myth can and should bridge a diversity of political identities is gained.

In the marxist tradition of Gramsci and Mariátegui, history and time are important concepts for revolution. Revolution gives movement to the historical stages of production. Decolonial theorists highlight a tension in the marxist movement of history as marxism can be perceived to provide a unilinear progression to history. Decolonialists argue that the multitude of suppressed and excluded historical paths, such as the experiences and perspectives of indigenous peoples, need to be recognized. The influence of European rationality emphasizes specific versions of the truth and attempts to prevent the imagination and realization of new alternative realities. Alternative and decolonized rationalities do not become counter-hegemonic, thus revolutionary, without a myth because they are not actively confrontational.<sup>54</sup> A revolutionary myth transforms the hegemonic or dominant rationality by invoking a confrontation and presenting a new way of interpreting social and material relationships.

A myth proposes a new rationality, but it carries forward parts from the historical

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<sup>54</sup>The (re)production of alternatives does not necessarily have to exist as 'counter-hegemonic' and it is not my intention to argue that alternatives only exist to be 'counter-hegemonic'. I believe it is important to make a distinction between alternatives that enter into an active confrontation from those which do not and I am particularly interested in what brings an alternative into an active confrontation.

context from which it emerged. The paradox of a revolutionary myth is that it is always contextual, despite its consequence of revolutionizing and reconstituting its context – the past, present and progressive future – a new. Thus the creation of the myth of plurinationality, and the organization of the indigenous movement, is dependent upon its context. The myth of plurinationality has had to respond to the material and social consequences of the class-based construction of the *indio*, which was important for earlier colonial production and resulted in the exploitation and exclusion of indigenous people from the state. The transition to a *mestizo* national project has resulted in an attempt to 'forget' the foundations of inequality, which continue to impact the economic and social status of indigenous people in Ecuador.

Historical amnesia is a condition of coloniality. The colonial history of Modernity is obscured and forgotten by modern rationality. As a result, Modernity asserts itself as the universal, developed, civil and rational epitome against other alternative rationalities, particularly colonized knowledges. The directly coercive and violent means of colonization resulted in the suppression of alternative knowledge (re)production of the colonized peoples. A myth capable of (re)creating a historical memory of colonization gives rise to the social recognition of existing and potential alternatives (Dussel 2006; Quijano 2007).

Among the indigenous peoples of the Andean region, the concept of the *pachakutik* parallels myth's relationship to history and time. The *pachakutik* is an idea that emerged from the peoples of the southern Tawantinsuyu and has in recent years been embraced by the Kichwa peoples of the Ecuadorian Andes, most notably as part of the

name of the political party of the indigenous movement, *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik – Nuevo Pais* (Movement of Unity and Plurinationality Pachakutik – New Country, MUPP) (Becker 2008:166). *Pachakuti* can be broken into its root words *pacha*, meaning time or epoch as well as land and earth, and *kuti*, meaning a return as well as (cultural) rebirth (Perreault 2001:409).

*Pachakuti* is a spatial metaphor that links time through history to the experienced reality. A *pachakutik* represents “the Andean notion of a turning point of cosmic dimensions and the beginning of a new era through which what was below would be on top and vice versa” (Jacobsen 1993:340). Normal E. Whitten in the preface to *Millennial Ecuador*, likens the concept of *pachakuti* in Ecuador to “the return of space-time (chronotope) of a healthy past to that of a healthy future. ... a future-oriented imaginary filled in the present with the plans, dreams, and actions of peoples who imbue perceived reality with transformative hope” (2003:x-xi). *Pachakuti* is similar to the dialectic in historical materialism. Each epoch ends with a cataclysmic (revolutionary) rupture of history that completely reorders any linear idea of progress within the epoch, creating a 'restitution' of the past (Estermann and Pena 1997:28). An important difference in the imagination of the Andean and the dominant marxist perspectives is that there is not a notion of linear progress of subsequent epochs towards an 'end stage'. Each epoch is internally cyclical.

The notion that there are people who are 'below', or in the logic of Modernity stuck in the past, and are those who are 'above' is also used by the Uruguayan writer and social critic Eduardo Galeano in his book *Upside Down*: “the upside-down world rewards

in reverse: it scorns honesty, punishes work, prizes lack of scruples, and feeds cannibalism. Its professors slander nature: injustice, they say, is a law of nature” (2000:5). The project of the *pachakutik* is to turn the world 'right-side up' in principles, ideas, and space. The metaphorical act of righting the world will transform the rationality and fundamental relationships with society.<sup>55</sup> *Pachakuti* works as a myth to assert a (re)creation of a different way of being and knowing, and is a useful example of the temporal (as well as spatial) significance of the transformative myth in the South American context. What is now perceived to be “old” (traditional and stuck in the past) becomes “new”, and an alternative time that remembers colonization and recognizes the experiences, influences, and importantly the existence of other histories is (re)constructed.

For Catherine Walsh, plurinationality broke the historical path created from the republican period and provided an opportunity to construct new alternatives:

In this moment there was not a lot of clarity about the approach of a plurinational state. For the dominant sectors, it was a radical ethnic proposition for division. Nevertheless, it put into question the character and imaginary established during the republican period, which demonstrated permanence of the roots and manifestations of colonization. The indigenous movement, opened a new period in the history of the country, from which point forward, the indigenous movement as a protagonist and socio-political actor could not be negated (Walsh 2009:99, my translation).

As the indigenous movement and constituent organizations and communities continued their political actions through the 1990s and first decade of the new millennium, the myth

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<sup>55</sup>Quoting the Uruguayan painter Joaquín Torres-García, who turned the world 'right side up' simply by painting South America on top, Galeano concludes: “Our north is south. ... To go north, our ships go down, not up.' If the world is upside down the way it is now, wouldn't we have to turn it over to stand up straight?” (Galeano 2001:337)

of plurinationality has gained increasing clarity in terms of the specific demands articulated by indigenous people.

The concept of plurinationality has transformed from a revolutionary myth into a pragmatic list of demands that conform to the new rationality of a state composed of a diversity of nationalities. Atik Kurikamak argues that this new phase provides significant challenges for the indigenous movement: “But now... the greatest challenge [for the indigenous movement] is to create and apply the laws that truly realizes a plurinational and intercultural state, and we have a lot to do” (interview 1 July 2009, my translation). In large part, the *Encuentro de Jovenes Indigenas* in July 2009 was dedicated to developing concrete ideas on how to realize a plurinational and intercultural state.

The challenge of developing concrete proposals is related to the ongoing efforts of the indigenous leadership to remain relevant to local concerns. Reflecting on Gramsci's construction of hegemony, the power of the indigenous movement leadership is limited in its ability to coerce participation in the movement. More often, successful mobilizations depend upon the consent of participants. While it is normatively better that participation is voluntary, it provides ongoing difficulties for the indigenous movement. Perreault observes in the context of the community of Mondayacu, that:

What is of concern... is the material and symbolic distance between the indigenous elites, who manage identity discourse at the regional and national scales, and the residents of very localized communities such as Mondayacu... . Whereas much of the political discourse of organizations such as CONAIE and Pachakutik revolves around such abstract concepts ... the concerns and self-identifications of Mondayacu's residents are based in quotidian practices of production and consumption (Perreault 2001:405).

Transforming plurinationality into concrete and pragmatic consequences to the daily

material experience of people at a community level is an important political project for CONAIE and other indigenous organizations. Not only is the legitimacy of the leadership based upon its ability to mobilize people, but also the indigenous movement's capacity to negotiate is dependent upon the leadership's ability to co-ordinate local activism. Participation is dependent upon abstract goals being connected to meaningful consequences.

While these challenges provide new problems for activists and intellectuals to overcome, they are the consequence of an important transformation of the Ecuadorian state and society. Mariátegui did not believe a revolutionary was capable of resolving all social problems. He wrote in *Myth and Man* that:

Today's truth will not be the truth of tomorrow... We should content ourselves with a relative truth... Humanity resists following a truth that it does not believe absolute and supreme... One must propose a faith, a myth, an action. The professional intellects will not find the road of faith the masses will find it. It will later fall to the philosophers to codify the thought that emerges from this great mass achievement (1996[1925a]:145).

In a similar vein, the revolutionary myth of plurinationality does not resolve coloniality, but does provide a new logic through which to approach the challenges faced by indigenous people in Ecuador. As a result of the actions of activists during the 1990s, a significant amount of literature has emerged to describe the successes and failures of indigenous activism in Ecuador and across the continent. A historical transformation has taken place, where indigenous people through their own actions and voices are considered legitimate and recognized political actors, with a role and responsibility to contribute to defining the diversity of constituent content of the state.

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