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Nationalism and Ethnicity: Images of Ecuadorian Indians and the Imagemakers at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

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No matter how democratically the members of the elite are chosen (usually not very) or how deeply divided among themselves they may be (usually more than outsiders imagine), they justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they have inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented.

—Geertz, "Centers, Kings, and Charisma"

By royal decree, in 1891 Spain invited American and European countries to Madrid to commemorate the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. The center of the celebration was occupied by two joint historical exhibitions that opened in *El Palacio de la Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales* in October 1892. One was the Historic American Exposition, intended to illustrate the state of civilization of the New World in the pre-Columbian, Columbian, and post-Columbian periods. The other, the Historic European Exposition, was to exhibit "the evidences of the civilization of

Europe at the time when the New World was discovered and colonized" (Report 1895).¹ In addition, at the request of the Royal Commission in charge of the celebrations, the American countries were encouraged to "reproduce" in the Parque de Madrid some "primitive dwellings or monuments" and to send (live) "Indians to inhabit them" (Informe 1892).² In preparation for the Historic American Exposition, the Ecuadorian Organizing Committee (*Junta Directiva*) had to request funds from Congress and consequently to justify the characteristics and merits as well as the cost of the objects and Indians that were to be sent to represent the country. One such request is made in a document presented to the Ecuadorian Congress in 1892 by the minister of the interior and foreign affairs, Leonidas Pallares Arteta, who was also chief delegate of the Ecuadorian committee in charge of the exhibit (Informe 1892). Further information on the Ecuadorian participation on the Exposition was obtained from the General Catalogue (Catálogo 1893).

This essay will examine the explicit and the unspoken yet unhidden images of Ecuadorian Indians represented in those documents and at the Madrid exhibition. The dominant visual images of Ecuadorian Indians (mostly in engravings, drawings, and water colors) circulating among intellectuals, artists, and other powerful producers of public images at the turn of the century, undoubtedly contributed to the construction of the images apparent in the documents. They also seem to have influenced the selection and hierarchization of the artifacts actually presented at the exhibition. I will argue that those narrative and visual images of the Indians became incorporated as important elements in the political rhetoric of an emerging nationalist ideology. It was articulated by those class groups who, at the turn of the century, were in a position to use the power of the state to write the text and to shape cultural traditions. I will then attempt to contextualize those images by providing the socioeconomic and political characterization of the period in Ecuadorian history when those representations were made and "used." That is, how and why they were incorporated or excluded from a more comprehensive image the Ecuadorian elite was forging of the country as a whole, both as an emerging nation state (since 1830) before the mother country and the rest of Europe, and as a

viable economic player in the international market. Blessed by an increasingly profitable cacao boom at the turn of the century, the new coastal bourgeoisie in control of the state was looking to the outside world to gain legitimacy as a “civilized” society. It was trying to construct its own cultural hegemony in an era when commercial success and cultural progress were perceived to be closely intertwined. The tradition that the Ecuadoran elite “invented” for the country at that particular time was intended to convey this message, and was manufactured primarily for external, not internal consumption. Two world’s fairs (Paris 1889 and Chicago 1893) as well as the Madrid Exposition — which is our particular concern here — provided an irresistible ritual stage to display and test this developing feeling of a new national self. However, in analyzing this particular historical instance in the social construction of national identity it becomes evident that “*mestizaje*” — the concept of Ecuador as a nation of mixed bloods — Indians and Europeans — begins to emerge as one of the important “master fictions” (Geertz 1985) of the new political order. Since then, *mestizaje* became the “ethnic component” in the larger discourse of nationalism, significant for both external and *internal* consumption. Although it served to legitimize their domination, subordinate groups participated in maintaining this master fiction, until its own contradictions provided the basis for their own autonomous ethnic consciousness and resistance.³

As Sider has noted, “[t]he *process* of domination imposes a dialogue between dominators and dominated. Each must speak to the other for the economic and political transactions to occur” (1987, 22, emphasis added). As part of an *ideology* of domination, however, *mestizaje* hides this dialogue by turning it into a monologue — the monologue of the Self who has incorporated the Other or is in the process of doing so. It creates the illusion that the Other, as forged by the dominator, can be brought into the “imagined community” — the useful term by which Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to national social identities — through the doorway of “natural” ties. As such, the ideology of *mestizaje* is riddled by the same contradiction that Sider sees as the fundamental one in the colonial encounter between Europeans and Indians: a contradiction between the [European] “impossibility and the necessity of creating

the other as the other — the different, the alien — and incorporating the other within a single social and cultural system of domination” (1987, 7).

While master fictions remain the unchallenged first principles of a political order, they have the power to make “any given hierarchy appear natural and just to rulers and ruled” (Wilentz 1985, 4). Like other master fictions, *mestizaje* was invented by the dominant turn-of-the-century elites for the subordinate peoples in order to hide and maintain the asymmetrical relations of power between whites and Indians that they had inherited from the colonial administration. As the “ethnic master fiction” in the official ideology of nationalism, *mestizaje* remained unchallenged until the 1970s. It is in this decade when indigenous organizations started to publicly contest it by advocating a new imagined community that conceives of Ecuador as a country embodying a plurality of autonomous nationalities.

The Narrative Images and Their Display

In his capacity as chief delegate of the Organizing Committee, Mr. Pallares Arteta was in charge of collecting, buying, and organizing all the exhibits to be sent to the Historic American Exposition. The participation of Ecuador is regarded in his report to Congress as “a very special testimony of love, deference and gratitude to Columbus” and to the “heroic Spanish nation” that “gave him her unquestioned support” and “brought [us] civilization and Christianity.”⁴ It is also considered a matter of national honor, since Ecuador has to show the Mother Country that “the conquered nations are now powerful and *flourishing*,” and “have finally deserved the seed of civilization [she] planted in the New World.” The report is rich in such rhetorical imagery about the country and its distinguished citizens as well as its generous foreign friends, all of whom have contributed to the exhibition with their intellectual productions and private collections.⁵

It is precisely the rhetoric of historical texts like this that provides clues to the process by which the dominant groups produce and reproduce their hegemonic cultural meanings by incorporating, ignoring, or suppressing the symbol systems of the dominated

groups. The document also describes in detail several "important Inca and Caras" artifacts, the collection of medals and coins, and other "minor and ornamental" objects all of which will be included in the Ecuadoran Hall at the exposition. Finally, the author supplies us with two vivid and contrasting images of contemporary Ecuadoran Indians: the "savages," of whom the "Jíbaro" and the "Záparo" are given as examples, and the "Indians from Otavalo." These two images emerge in the narrative text through the "compelling" reasons given by Pallares Arteta point by point to explain to the congressmen why the first group of Indians should not be sent to the *Parque de Madrid* to be housed in the "primitive dwellings," and why the second constitutes "the most suitable group" for that exhibit.

To start with, the "savages" will never be convinced of the need and advantages of the trip. Even if they were, they would most certainly cause "serious inconveniences" for the person in charge, given the fact that their "dullness" and "stubbornness" prevent them from following any instructions. Besides, they don't speak Spanish and not even Quichua, "they are good for nothing," "lack the most elementary notions of civility, morality or decency," are "too fond of alcohol" (an obvious embarrassment to the government if caught by the police). Moreover, they would not even be able to perform their job of "keeping the dwellings neat and tidy." By contrast, despite the fact that the Otavalo Indians are not "pure," according to Mr. Pallares, they remain "outstanding" for their "correct features," their "above-average height" and "their vigorous forms," characteristics that they allegedly have "preserved" from their "Caras" ancestors. In addition, they are "intelligent, hard working, sober, of good manners and accustomed to neatness, order and cleanliness." Most important, however, the Otavaleños have "special abilities" such as their "San Juan dances," their "ball game" (similar to the "most popular Spanish Jai-Alai"), and their *titora* boats with which they could sail the lakes of the Madrid Park. All these exotic talents would not only attract and entertain the public, but the small fee that would be charged for this entertainment, may "even help to pay for all the expenses incurred in transporting and housing the Indians themselves" (Informe 1892).

The section of the General Catalogue (Catálogo 1893) of the exhibit devoted to Ecuador⁶ contains a long introduction presenting the "official" history of the country from its pre-Columbian past to the present, and an itemized list of the 1,327 artifacts included in the different collections exhibited. The great majority of those items are pre-Columbian artifacts designated under the all-inclusive category of "Incásicos." Among them one should note a facsimile of Inga Pirca "Palace" in wood, commissioned especially for the occasion, by Mr. Pallares in Cuenca, five figures excavated from San Pablo, which were very "similar to the Egyptian mummies," and a large stone found in the province of Manabí "with resonant qualities" reported to have been used by the "Caras" Indians to sound warnings. Dr. Antonio Flores, who had finished his term as president of Ecuador in 1892, was president of the exposition commission. He personally presented a collection of twenty ethnographic artifacts "belonging to the Jíbaro tribe" that included mostly necklaces, feather crowns, and feather earrings, and that had been "presented to him while President of the Republic by the Cacique Charupe, Chief of the Macas tribe." Another private collection included a "life size figure of a Jíbaro Indian with two sets of dresses" and a specimen of a "desiccated and shrunken head of a Jíbaro Indian called Tamaguari, chief of an Oriente tribe, Canelos, year 1590." To complete the "ethnographic" exhibit there were a series of "curiosities" of contemporary Indians exhibited all together in one large panoply, and four "paintings of Indian customs."

In the text of the introduction, which contains the official history of the country, the author (anonymous) incorporates an already existing "mythic history" (see Murra 1963, 792) most probably invented in the eighteenth century by the Jesuit Juan de Velasco "for reasons of regional chauvinism" (see Salomon 1981, 433). This invented history refers to the "Caras" (Cara or Caranqui tribe or nation) as the first civilizers of Ecuador, who, after entering through the coast proceeded to build an empire. According to the author, the "Caras" conquered the inhabitants of the kingdom of Quito who allegedly were living in "a state of barbarism." Soon after the Inca conquest of Ecuador, the "Caras" princess Paccha was married to Huayna Capac and Atahualpa the last Inca em-

peror was her son. The Incas themselves are presented in this conjectural history as possessing "great noble character," and their religion "although erroneous," is not considered "bloodthirsty," since the sacrifices performed by them "corresponded to the gentleness of their beliefs." In sum, the image of the Incas is that of "a very advanced civilization."

The only other powerful image of Ecuador present in this introduction takes the reader into the contemporary scene, not in the Highlands but on the Coast, and specifically in the city of Guayaquil. There one can find "several banks enjoying solid credit," "a vertiginous commercial life," and a place where "all the people are well off due to the abundance of well remunerated work." Finally, this "main port of the Republic" is reported to export "more than half a million quintals of cacao annually," in addition to the increasingly important exports of rubber and coffee (Catálogo 1893).

The Imagemakers' Kaleidoscope

In the narrative texts just mentioned, it is evident that the organizers of the exhibit (mainly Antonio Flores and Pallares Arteta), carefully orchestrated an economic representation of the country to promote the already dominant interests of a specific class: the coastal merchant bourgeoisie. In this picture, the image of the Indian is conveniently left out, since in the immediate experience of the imagemakers, Indians were the dispossessed peasants from the Highlands who were forced to work in the cacao plantations. However, their wretched reality is artfully inverted and hidden under the general image of an alleged prosperous and well-remunerated coastal population.

When dealing with "cultural progress," the other term in the nineteenth-century equation of economic success linked to advanced civilization, the imagemakers engage in a very selective use of the images of Indians current at the time, emphasizing the *past* and the *future* rather than the present. The past is brought to life in the images of the "Incas" and the mythical "Caras." Their history cannot be denied (since their artifacts are actively being excavated), but it can be adequately touched up and reinvented or fictionalized to demonstrate historical continuity and to legitimize the origins of

all Ecuadorians. They are not to be considered second-class Europeans, but the descendants of a “noble” and “aristocratic” race. Neither liberal democracy nor the Enlightenment but “aristocratic racism” (Muratorio 1980), which traced the ancestry of Ecuadorians to the historic Indian aristocracy—real or mythical—constituted an important pillar in the social construction of national identity. It selectively ignored the contemporary Indians.⁷ Thus Juan Montalvo, the nineteenth-century Ecuadorian essayist refers to his country as “the land of Atahualpa” (1923). As Hobsbawm has pointed out, invented traditions “might foster the corporate sense of *superiority* of élites—particularly when those had to be recruited from those who did not already possess it by birth or ascription” (1983, 10, emphasis in the original).

Furthermore, this image of the “Incas” also catered to a European public who, already by the mid-nineteenth century, had demonstrated great interest in their history. Honour notes that Prescott’s history of the Incas was widely read in England and in the United States (1975, 180). Europeans had also seen representations of the Incas in images that compared them to the great civilizations of the Egyptians and the Romans, or to the great Sun King, Louis XIV (see image from the *Encyclopedia Londinensis*, figure 1.1, found in a shop in Quito).⁸ It is in the context of this universe of discourse that Pallares Arteta compares the five figures excavated from the San Pablo site with Egyptian mummies. Honour also points out that while at the great international exhibitions of the mid-nineteenth century, the Latin American states were “represented almost exclusively by natural products,” an exception was made regarding the Incas and the Aztecs. Even the Royal Academy of London had exhibited a painting by John Everett Millais entitled *Pizarro seizing the Inca of Peru* (1975, 183).

In contrast to the historic Incas, the image of the Otavaleños is designed to represent the future. Within the nineteenth century scheme of progress, the Otavaleños symbolize for the authors, what all the Indians might and should become if the process of civilizing them is allowed to take its “natural” course. That positive perception of the Otavaleños, which makes of them the “mould image” of highland Indians to this day, was fashioned very early on. It was certainly already current by the turn of the century; as Hassaurek



The Inca and his Queen.

FIGURE 1.1

The Inca and His Queen. Engraved for the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis*, 1823
(page bought by the author in a Quito shop).

remarks, "There is a general belief at Quito that the Indians of Otavalo, and especially the women, are handsomer and cleaner than those of Pichincha, Latacunga, etc., but I have been unable to discover the slightest foundation for such an opinion" (1967, 157–58). The Otavaleños are also singled out because they are considered to have started the process towards civilization with one advantage: that of having "inherited" and "preserved" some of the best physical traits, cultural characteristics, and skills of their "Caras" ancestors (see also Stutzman 1981). After all, even in mythical history, the "Caras" had ended up establishing their empire in the Otavalo area (see Salomon 1981). Besides, their reported behavior and general "clean" attitude as hard workers and as respectful of order, may be regarded as a good example of the effectiveness of liberal ideology and laissez-faire economics. In the image that emerges from the text, this belief is reinforced by the fact that all of the Otavaleño skills in sports and the arts are considered marketable (see figure 1.2). This asset is particularly important before a European audience living in an era when—as Breckenbridge points out—"the modern entertainment industry began to take shape in European urban centers" (1989, 200). The harsh and oppressive realities discarded from this idealized image of the Otavaleños have been thoroughly examined by Salomon (1981), and can also be seen in some of the images until recently kept hidden in the privacy of hacienda homes, like the photograph of the hacienda *obraje* from the Otavalo area shown in figure 1.3 (discovered in 1989).

When the narrative text in the documents is examined in conjunction with the ethnographic artifacts exhibited, the image that emerges of "the savages" appears at first sight to be the most transparent, but actually it turns out to be riddled with ambiguities. It can be seen as composed of at least three different images: the savage as "nature," as "infidel," and as "Jíbaro." First, in the Informe (1892), the Jíbaro and Záparo Indians are just presented as examples of all savages. Their image is constructed in the semiotic field that considers the savages as part of nature. They are regarded as equal to the animals in the sense that they lack any "sensible language," they seemed to be compelled by their nature to be "stubborn" and "dirty," and are deprived of any notion of social,



FIGURE 1.2
Indian from Otavalo. Painting from the Castro y Velázquez collection. From Ecuador Visto por los Extranjeros (Quito: Salvat Editores Ecuatoriana, 1983).



FIGURE 1.3

Indians in Obraje. Photograph courtesy of Fernando Espinosa de los Monteros (Ibarra, Ecuador).

civilized life: “their essence is privation” (Ryan 1981, 537). This image of the savage conforms to the ideology that Berkhofer refers to as “scientific racism,” in which social progress, racial hierarchies, and Darwinian biology converge. According to Berkhofer, the result of this convergence is a savage that not only has “darker skin” and “bad manners,” but an “inferior organic equipment as well” (1978, 59) (see figure 1.4). For Pallares Arteta the image-maker, the savages are contained within the cage of their psychological nature. Because of their “dullness,” they cannot help themselves. Taussig, for instance, has pointed out how an experienced traveler like Simpson, who visited the Ecuadoran Oriente in the

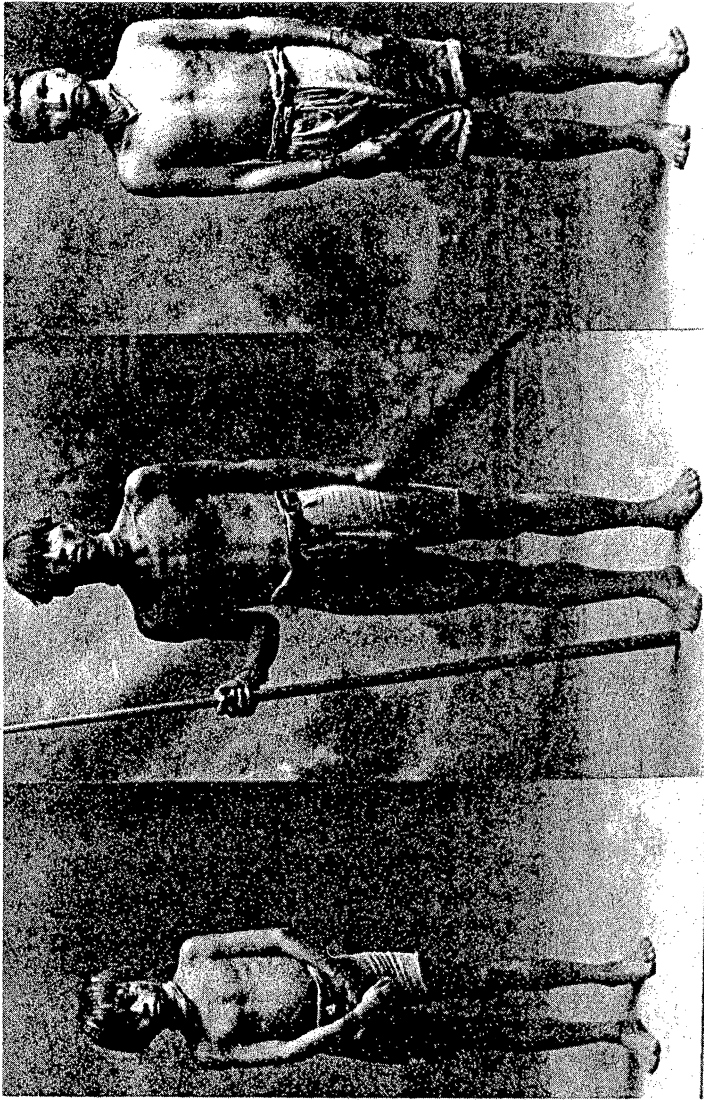


FIGURE 1.4
Indigenas del Oriente. Photograph, series 20, nos. 83 and 87. Fondo Jijón.
Banco Central del Ecuador.

1870s, powerfully describes the Záparo with all the characteristics that make them just one more animal group in the jungle (1987, 97). In fact, in many of the European travelers' illustrations, the savages graphically become one with nature, as literally part of a tree, or hanging from it like monkeys (see figure 1.5). The Other is considered merely a part of the savage landscape, observed by the gaze of the civilized Self. As Gordie points out, "the sense of belonging to nature associated with the indigene creates an immediate organicist metaphor which is often then used, in a somewhat circular form of logic, to justify the emphatically natural indigene" (1989, 21).

In a brief paragraph in the introduction to the exhibit catalogue, the author presents a second image of the savage. In the context of describing the general resources of the country, the following statement is made:

The Republic counts with 1,200,000 inhabitants, without including the population of the Oriente region, which is inhabited by several tribes of Indians that are gradually being incorporated into the life of Christian civilization, thanks to the efforts of the government and the missions. (Catálogo 1893)

Here, the savage as "infidel" is given the possibility of incorporation into the scheme of evolutionary progress. In his analysis of how the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assimilated new worlds, Ryan argues that "paganism was the most inclusive, unambiguous category of Otherness" (1981, 525). Because paganism was considered a transhistorical category like Christianity, it served to guarantee the Indians' humanity and, eventually their conversion, finally proving "the unity and identity of all mankind" (*ibid.*). Contrary to the first image of the savages "as nature," the representation of them as "pagans" and "infidels" brings them back into history, but a history whose pace is only in the power of the Self to advance.

Finally, the third image of the savage as "Jíbaro" emerges primarily out of the ethnographic exhibit, which is dominated by a great number of artifacts of their material culture, by a full-size figure of a Jívaro Indian, and by a *tsantsa*, the shrunken head for which they became so famous in Europe. I will argue that by selecting the Jívaro to represent physically (but not personally) the image of the savage, the imagemakers were responding on the one hand to

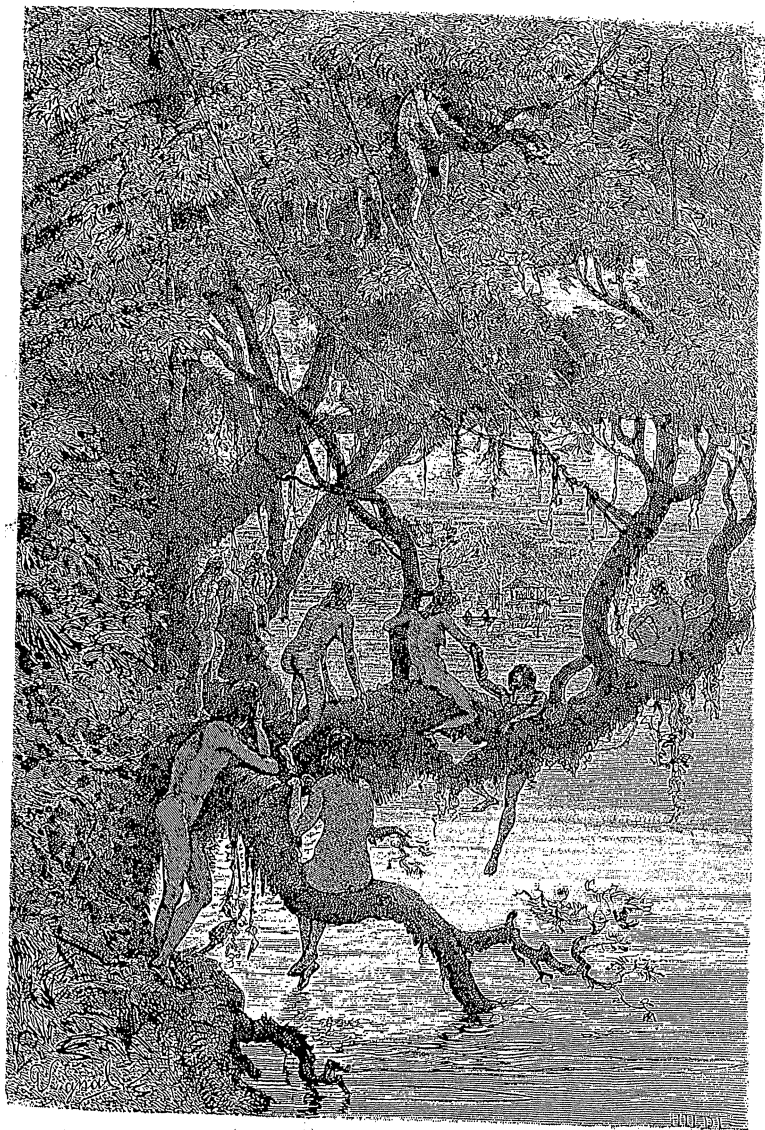


FIGURE 1.5
Cotos Indians at the Napo River. Drawing by Vignal based on a sketch by Wiener. From *Grabados sobre el Ecuador en el Siglo XIX. Le Tour du Monde* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1981).

their own ambiguous love-hate relationship with this Amazonian group, and second, to the demands of their European audience who in the nineteenth century had developed a morbid fascination with the "scientific mysteries" of the *Jívaro tsantsas* (Taylor 1985, 259–60). In her article, "The Invention of the *Jívaro*," Anne Christine Taylor has made a perceptive analysis of the complexities of that image in the Ecuadoran mind from colonial times to the present. She argues it oscillated between two polar opposites: at the negative extreme, the *Jívaro* were considered the quintessential savages defying all the canons of European civilization, at the positive extreme they were regarded as the "indomitable nation" and as a model for the new Ecuadoran nation to emulate. Taylor describes this second side of the image as follows:

Thus, those subversive Indians (*Jívaro*) come to symbolize the Republican virtues with which Creole society likes to endow itself: the warrior passion, a strong attachment to freedom, the machismo of the individual fighting against an indomitable Nature, in opposition to the pompous nobility of the European urbanites, decadent, effeminate and lovers of oppression. (1985, 258)

This multifaceted and contradictory image of the "*Jíbaro*"—the invented *Jíbaro*—fitted perfectly the intentions that the image-makers wanted visually displayed at the Madrid exhibit: to impress a cultivated European public, and to heighten their newly acquired sense of national identity and pride.

The Visual Landscape at the Turn of the Century

In an article on the historical analysis of photographs at the Carlisle Indian School, Malmshemer underscores the mutual research advantages of looking at photographs in close interrelationship with verbal historical documents:

Not only, then, do words provide the necessary context for the interpretation of photographs, but photographs provide an essential and hitherto neglected visual context for the complete historical understanding of words. From this point of view, photographs are not so much reflections of a past material actuality as they are, like words, examples of a past symbolic reality. (1985, 54)

If we add other forms of art to photographs, this research strategy is equally productive when used in the analysis of images of Ecuadoran Indians at the turn of the century, as I hope to demonstrate in the discussion that follows. On the one hand, many of those images were produced by artists specifically to illustrate foreign travelers' narratives or lyrics of popular songs, and often they were mirror images of those already available in the travelers' publications. On the other, the powerful image manipulators, who shared the social world and the appropriate semiotic codes of painters and writers, took those images for granted as part of the then current hegemonic visual landscape.

Two types of representations of Indians dominated that visual landscape: the foreign travelers' drawings and engravings, and the "Costumbrista" watercolors by Rafael Salas, Agustín Guerrero, and Joaquín Pinto.⁹ Two, that is, until one looks more closely and several of the images start to blur and become one (see figures 1.6 and 1.7). Here the written texts—primarily the travelers' accounts—provide the communication context and the framework of power relations within which the images were constructed and actually used, allowing us to decipher their meaning.

The list of European travelers who visited Ecuador during the nineteenth century is long and distinguished. It includes foreign diplomats, scientists of all kinds, ethnologists, adventurers, artists, and commercial and government envoys. Most of them had social connections at high levels of government; they stayed in the haciendas and private residences of important landowners and were in contact with the Ecuadoran intellectual and artistic community. It was then fashionable for travelers to write and illustrate detailed accounts of their experiences in books or journal articles published in Europe, all of which became extremely popular with a nineteenth-century public obsessed with precise and tangible realism (see Munsterberg 1982). When they were not traveling accompanied by their own artists, the travelers often searched for illustrators among the local pool. They also commissioned paintings to take back with them to Europe, especially to France and Italy where "ethnographic and *costumbrista* publications were much in fashion" (Vargas 1984, 428). Most foreigners wanted to take back

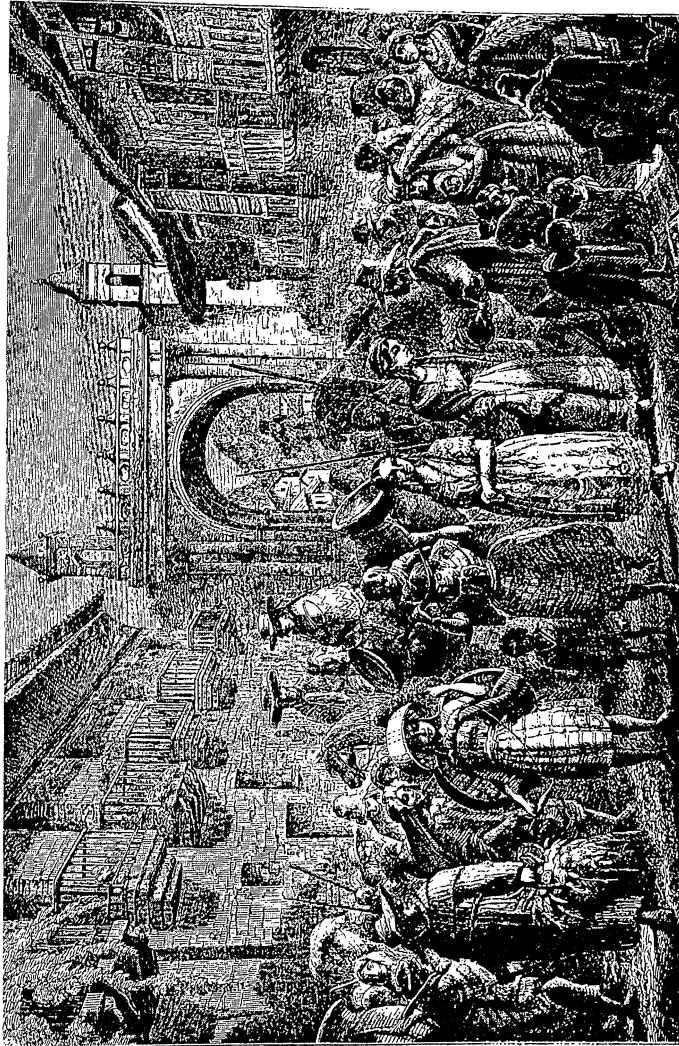


FIGURE 1.6
Inhabitants of Quito. Drawing by Fuchs based on a sketch by Ernesto Charton.
 From *Grabados sobre el Ecuador en el Siglo XIX. Le Tour du Monde* (Quito:
 Banco Central del Ecuador, 1981).



Alfarera

FIGURE 1.7
Potter. Watercolor by Joaquín Pinto. From *Ecuador Pintoresco* (Quito: Salvat
 Editores Ecuatoriana, 1977).

images of the “exotic” and “typical” indigenous populations, and the *costumbrista* painters seem to have obliged. The scientists, like the vulcanologists Stübel and Reiss, were more interested in landscapes, and the Indians then became attached to nature as an appendage (Vargas 1984, 376, 428; Castro Velázquez 1980, 471). According to Vargas, *costumbrismo* as a pictoric genre was born inspired by the detailed narrations and meticulous drawings of two famous foreign travelers; one French, E. Charton who published in “Le Tour du Monde,” and the other an Italian, Gaetano Osculati, who arrived in Quito in 1847 (1984, 376). Friedrich Hassaurek, a North American diplomat, in his book *Four Years Among the Ecuadorians* (1967 [1867]) had this to say about the painter Rafael Salas:

It was only at my suggestion that Rafael Salas, one of the best painters in Quito, left the beaten track, and undertook to paint Ecuadorian scenery and *costumbres* [customs] . . . Mr. Salas often told me that his principal supporters were the foreigners who came to Quito from time to time. The natives seldom pay more than \$16 or \$20 for a large-sized portrait. (1967, 113–14)

According to Castro y Velázquez, the first mention of *costumbrista* paintings is found in the work of Miguel María Lisboa, “Relacao de uma Viagem a Venezuela, Nova Granada e Equador,” written in 1866, in which we learn that Lisboa asked Salas (a relative of Rafael Salas) for a series of paintings of “indigenous costumes” (1980, 471).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Joaquín Pinto became the undisputed fashionable artist. He could count among his clients the minister of France, who bought twenty-three of his watercolors; other important diplomats; and the Frenchman F. Cousin, who commissioned a collection of a hundred of Pinto’s watercolors of *costumbrismo indígena* (Vargas 1984, 405).

Costumbrismo in painting has been characterized as a reaction against the academicism and sombre religious iconography of colonial art, influenced by Spanish literary romanticism (Castro y Velázquez 1980, 470), and as a development out of the liberal individualism born in the new Republican period and reflected in the innumerable portraits of the independence heroes (Samaniego

1980, 456–65). Seen in conjunction with other contemporary artistic developments in music and literature, *Costumbrismo* also reflects the newly acquired feelings of “deep nationalism” that made the artists “turn their eyes” towards the “indigenous heritage” and towards the “discovery of their own landscape” (Gallejos Donoso n.d., 11–15). For instance, Juan León Mera, a writer now famous for his novel *Cumandá*, set among Jívaro Indians, also wrote the lyrics for the Ecuadoran national anthem personifying the *Patria* (nation) and a collection of “indigenous and popular songs,”¹⁰ some of which were illustrated by Joaquín Pinto. Agustín Guerrero the painter, was also a musician and wrote a history of Ecuadoran music. He was commissioned by Marcos Jiménez de la Espada to compile a collection of “indigenous and popular melodies” for the Museum of Natural Sciences in Madrid, that was presented at the 1881 Congress of Americanists (Hallo 1981, 21). He was also the founder of an art school by the name of “Democratic School Miguel de Santiago,” whose motto was “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” and its emblem “the Phrygian cap on the painter’s pallet.” Hallo quotes Guerrero’s motives for founding the school as follows: “Culture has been maintained up to now as servile imitation; we must be inspired by nature, and throw ourselves into original production with a deep national sense. Only then will we be able to achieve our own complete independence and nationality” (quoted in Hallo 1981, 23). Both intellectuals and politicians were creating the cohesive symbol systems and meaningful ritual practices of the national community.

The realism of dress and adornments in the *Costumbrista* paintings of Indians, as well as the specificity of occupations and events in which they are depicted, often mirrors the descriptive realism of the travelers’ narratives as shown in the picture by Guerrero of a woman delousing a child, or Pinto’s rendition of the same event (figure 1.8). This image matches Hassaurek’s following description:

There is nothing more loathsome, however, than to see the common people crush lice between their teeth. In the entrances of houses, on the marketplaces, in the groceries and greenshops, and in a variety of other places open to the



Casera de piojos

FIGURE 1.8

Delousing. Watercolor by Joaquín Pinto. From *Ecuador Pintoresco* (Quito: Salvat Editores Ecuatoriana, 1977).

public eye, men, women, and children may be seen picking lice off each other's heads, and crushing them between their teeth. (1967, 55-56)

The Indians behind the costumes are represented as types, as Vargas says, "for the functions they perform for society" (1984, 403). The power of the image is conveyed by the frame in which the Indians are constrained, not by the human identity of those occupying the roles. If we look at the two extremes of what is really a continuum, (figures 1.9 and 1.10), the watercolors reveal a highly stratified and rigid social world where the Indians play a role strictly demarcated by the hegemonic signmakers. The lonely figures are totally decontextualized; they are even deprived of their own natural surroundings because they have now become part of an urban landscape. They are presented as a milestone on the unilinear road towards acculturation and miscegenation. They are also frozen in time. Exercising what Fabian (1983) calls "chronopolitics," the imagemakers have deprived them of their own cultural time.

The Imagemakers and Their Times

I have argued that the three world's fairs of the nineteenth century in which Ecuador participated provided the dominant elite with a stage to "invent a new tradition" about the past, the present and the future of the country. In this imagined community, the images of the Indians were suitably accommodated to fit the main ideological currents of the period and to serve the interests of the imagemakers. Here I intend to provide the social and political context that would allow us to situate the authors and manipulators of those images and to better understand their assumptions. Hobsbawm argues that there are certain periods in the history of nations that seem to be more prone to produce the "invention" of traditions. He says,

We should expect [the invention of tradition] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which "old" traditions have been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: in short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demand or supply side. (1983, 4-5)



Indio de la Capital.

FIGURE 1.9

Indian from the Capital. Watercolor by Agustín Querrero. Hallo Foundation Collection. From Wilson Hallo, ed., *Imágenes del Ecuador del Siglo XIX* (Quito: Ediciones del Sol, Quito y Espasa-Calpe, 1981).



*Indio de Sambisa á quien la Policía
hace barer las calles.*

FIGURE 1.10

Streetsweeper. Watercolor by Agustín Querrero. Hallo Foundation Collection.
From Wilson Hallo, ed., *Imágenes del Ecuador del Siglo XIX* (Quito:
Ediciones del Sol, Quito y Espasa-Calpe, 1981).

In many different ways, this statement accurately characterizes the situation of Ecuador at the turn of the nineteenth century. The society was going through a process of social, economic, and political transformation that would finally bring about the consolidation of liberalism and the demise of conservative hegemony. It is a period of transition that came to be known as "*Progresismo*"—a period when the old traditions of conservative authoritarianism, blessed and staunchly defended by the all encompassing power of the Church, were becoming obsolete and a new hegemony was being fashioned by increasingly assertive sectors of the bourgeoisie and the landowning class, both from the Coast and the Highlands. They were sustained by cacao, which brought unprecedented wealth to Ecuador, then the world's leading exporter (Chiriboga 1980, 116). This period also marks a political beginning for Ecuador. For the first time in its history, political conflict was contained within a representative legal framework and in structured political parties that channeled the dominant economic and ideological interests (Ayala 1982, 189). These are some of the economic and political dimensions of domination that provided the paradoxes and contradictions implicit in the attempt to build a republican nation state, seeking simultaneously to create the Indians as alien Others and as fellow nationals (see Sider 1987).

Progresismo was a brief attempt to constitute a third political movement on the basis of constitutional government, respect for civic rights and religious tolerance. It also espoused a new economic role for the state as a vehicle for the emerging economic power of the coastal bourgeoisie (Ortiz Crespo 1981, 273). Two of the three presidents who dominated this progressive period interest us here: José María Plácido Caamaño (1884–1888), and especially Antonio Flores (1888–1892), who was officially involved in the Madrid exposition both during his presidency, and in 1892, as the highest representative from Ecuador. Plácido Caamaño belonged to a family who, since colonial times, had owned Tenguel, the largest cacao plantation in the world. During his visit in 1885, the geographer Teodor Wolf described Tenguel as "the most valuable in the Republic" (Chiriboga 1980, 165). During his tenure as president, Plácido Caamaño enthusiastically promoted foreign investment and the incorporation of Ecuador into foreign markets

(Ayala 1982, 191). He was also known for his "ability to tame the fierce day laborers of Tenguel" (quoted in Ortiz Crespo 1981, 273). A large number of these workers were part of the mass of indigenous small peasant producers who, dispossessed by the landgrabbing efforts of the highland landowners, were migrating to the Coast to join the labor pool demanded by the cacao boom (Chiriboga 1980, 62–63). Charles Wiener, another of the famous foreign travelers, after a visit to one of the largest cacao plantations, described the life of those workers as "patriarchal." By contrast, a few years later, the Liberal leader Eloy Alfaro denounced their condition as "disguised slavery" (Chiriboga 1980, 117). According to the bourgeoisie and their foreign friends, that indigenous population could not be incorporated into the public images being produced for international consumption. However, their reality was being expressed more violently in the *montoneras* or armed bands led by Alfaro, whose struggle finally brought about the triumph of liberalism and the first effective legislation to ameliorate the situation of the Indians.

Antonio Flores succeeded Caamaño to the presidency in 1888, and was even more concerned than his predecessor to put Ecuador economically and culturally into the international arena. He was born to the job (literally, as son of the nation's first president he was born in the National Palace). He was educated in Paris and at the University of San Marcos in Lima, where he occupied the chair of universal history. From 1860 onwards, his life was spent mostly in the major European capitals and in Washington where he held several important diplomatic posts (see Larrea 1974). Flores was a modern intellectual of his time, a cosmopolitan and an internationalist. In addition he had strong economic and social connections with "*La Argolla*" (The Ring), an important group within the Guayaquil commercial and financial bourgeoisie. Most of the members of *La Argolla* were related by blood or marriage to the Caamaño and Flores families. While in office, Flores designed policies in accordance with the current ideas of progress and laissez-faire economics, and was a strong supporter of foreign immigration.

One particular incident at the very beginning of Flores' administration is quite relevant to our topic and will serve to illustrate the

symbolic conflict between old and new traditions, between obsolete and emerging hegemonies at that time. In his first message to Congress, Flores requested funds in the amount of 10,000 sucres for Ecuador's participation in the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. "It should be obvious to you"—he said to the legislators—"the benefits that these expositions bring to the countries involved; they become known as producers and the exchanges are instituted. From this rendezvous of industry emerges a fertile movement towards economic well being" (quoted in Ayala 1982, 192). This event, which most modern countries would consider routine, provoked a state crisis in Ecuador at that time. The Conservative-controlled Congress, which included members of the clergy, was outraged. They regarded the Paris Exposition as an "impious event," in celebration of the centenary of that "horrendous monster" that was the French Revolution (Ortiz Crespo 1981, 275; Ayala 1982, 193). New newspapers were created to defend one or the other side in the controversy. In Cuenca, one such newspaper conceived of the whole nation as dedicated to the Sacred Heart and set against the Centenary of '89 (Ayala 1982, 193). Flores personally asked for the Pope's intervention to try to stop the clergy from participating in the debate. Having his request for funds denied by Congress, Flores went as far as resigning from the presidency, a resignation which of course was not accepted by a then panic-stricken Congress. Finally, Flores got his funds from the Guayaquil merchants and financiers, who were more than willing to participate in a world's fair where most of the Hispano-American nations would primarily be exhibiting their raw materials (with the side exhibits of archaeological and botanical collections). As Ayala notes, in the Paris Exposition the merchant bourgeoisie gave a visible sign of its power in the international scene: "against the vote of Congress, the national flag was displayed for the first time thanks to private financing" (1982, 204-5)—a powerful symbolism of the new hegemony.

Concluding Remarks

There is a long tradition in the anthropological literature on Ecuador dealing with the complex interrelationship between national and ethnic identity.¹¹ As one of the main contributors to that

scholarship, Norman Whitten, in a recent article, calls for the interpretation of nationalist and ethnic culture "as complementary and mutually reinforcing systems of symbols sustained by dialogic discourse" (1988, 303–4). This essay is intended as a contribution to that tradition. Adopting a historical perspective, it has focused attention on the Self as the main speaker in that dialogue. The occasion of the four-hundredth anniversary of the Discovery of America and the Madrid Exposition, provided the Ecuadorean elites with an enticing scenario in which to enact what Hobsbawm would characterize as its "rite of passage" as a new nation (1983, 10). In the formative stages of defining this corporate Self, the emergent coastal bourgeoisie invented a historic continuity with a refashioned Indian past. It looked to images and the rhetoric of "race" and "aristocracy" to validate state formation and nation building. Thus, the ideology of *mestizaje* emerged as a dialectical process of selective exclusion and inclusion of the subordinate Other. As the dominant imagemaker, the bourgeoisie used the Indians as "semiotic pawns" (Gordie 1989, 10) for its own semiotic interests, and to legitimize its own very real economic achievements. The drive behind these achievements was the nineteenth-century ideology of liberal democracy—known in this particular period of Ecuadorean history as *Progresismo*. Through this discourse, the bourgeoisie was hoping that Ecuador would become a player in the international market, and occupy its proper place within the community of civilized nations.

Historically, the same tensions and contradictions between these two "essentialist" and "epochalist" principles (see Geertz 1973, 240–41, *passim* and also Whitten 1988, 303–6), allowed for a dialectics of accommodation and resistance among indigenous peoples. They accepted the impositions of the state and the lures of social *mestizaje*, occasionally challenging both by participating in different forms of resistance movements and everyday defiance. Furthermore, despite the fact that the material and social basis of their cultures continued to be undermined, indigenous peoples were able to retain an autonomous sense of their cultural history. Their symbolic universe even had its own distinctive ways of incorporating the history of the white Other (see Hill 1988).

As Lears argues, "even the most successful hegemonic culture creates a situation where the dominant mode of discourse—and

each visual or verbal text within it — becomes a field of contention where many-sided struggles are constantly fought out” (1985, 591). In the last two decades, the Ecuadoran indigenous peoples are increasingly becoming their own imagemakers both in the national and the international arena. Their present contest with the national society is as much a contest over power, as it is a contest over symbols and definitions of self and ethnic-group identities. This conjuncture should make the analysis of the dialogic discourse even more interesting.

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Notes

1. This article will only deal with the Historic American Exhibit. It is relevant, however, to quote here the reasons given by the Spanish authorities for the European exposition: “to teach the people of today what were the elements of civilization with which, on the side of the arts, Europe was then equipped for the tasks of educating a daughter, courageous and untamed, but vigorous and beautiful, who had risen from the bosom of the seas, and who, in the course of a few centuries, was to be transformed from a daughter into a sister — a sister proud in aspiration and power” (Report 1895).
2. It is difficult to say at this stage of the research if this part of the exhibit ever took place. Documents gathered so far make us believe it never happened. It is not mentioned in the comprehensive United States report on the exhibit, although other “less striking” events are noted, such as the meeting of the Congress of Americanists at La Rabida (Huelva), and the unveiling of a monument to commemorate the Discovery (Report 1895).
3. This same idea is developed by Silverblatt (1988) for the Andean peoples fighting against the cultural hegemony of the Incas, and by Sider (1987) for the period of the early confrontation between Europeans and native Americans.
4. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Spanish are my own.

5. Federico Gonzalez Suarez contributed to the exhibit with his monumental work *Historia del Ecuador* (the first three volumes), an Archaeological Atlas, and a plan carved in wood of the old city of Chordeleg. D.A. Cousin exhibited a collection of 1,000 pieces of "Inca" artifacts, which had already received an award at the 1889 Paris Exposition.
6. My analysis of the Ecuadoran exhibits at the exposition is based on this catalogue. I have not yet been able to find a photograph or any other visual documentation of the Ecuadorian Hall. The United States Report (1895) contains a picture of the U.S. Hall. It represents quite closely the ideological style of nineteenth-century exhibit displays.
7. In more general terms for Spanish América, my interpretation here differs from that of Benedict Anderson. He argues that there was little "reverse racism" in the anticolonial movements (1983, 139) and that Mexican mestizos traced their ancestry to the Aztecs or the Mayas out of a democratic feeling (idib., 140). However, one must remember that, like the Inca, the Aztec and Maya were highly stratified societies with identifiable aristocracies.
8. The Incas, who also invented a holy ancestry for themselves as part of the process of state formation and consolidation (see Silverblatt 1988), probably would not have objected to this image.
9. Searching for pictorial images of Indians in antiquarian shops and private collections in Quito, I found this phenomenon repeated with monotonous regularity. A large number of anonymous and undated watercolors and oil paintings of Indians can be found in private collections in Ecuador. In all probability, they were produced and circulated at around the same time.
10. Mera wrote two poems, "Melodías indígenas" ("Indigenous melodies") and "La Virgen del Sol" ("The Virgin of the Sun") in which he pretends to rescue the pre-Columbian past. In his collection of popular songs, the lyrics were "expurgated" of bad grammar and of verses "offensive to morals and persons" (Gallegos Donoso n.d., 11,14).
11. It is difficult to do justice here to all the contributors to that tradition. Among the most salient works see Whitten (1981, 1985, 1988), Stutzman (1981), Salomon (1981), Muratorio (1984), Reeve (1985), Fine (1986). Recently, Mary Crain (1990) has published an article entitled "The Social Construction of National Identity in Highland Ecuador." Our interpretations of this phenomenon coincide in several important points. My analysis differs from hers, primarily in reference to the cultural and ideological elements that enter into the construction of that national identity at the turn of the nineteenth century, and the first decades of the twentieth century.

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