The Limits of *Indigenismo* in Ecuador

by
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Although Ecuador is home to a large number of indigenous peoples, the country failed to produce the number of internationally recognized indigenista *intellectuals or governmental policies that emerged in Mexico or Peru, countries with similar demographic profiles. Despite being one of the first countries to endorse proposals that emerged out of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano (Inter-American Indian Institute) formed at Pátzcuaro, Mexico, in 1940, indigenista institutions were unable to gain traction in Ecuador. The shortcomings of a national indigenista institute in Ecuador were due to the failure of its liberal leaders to present a sufficiently radical critique of indigenous realities. Their failure opened spaces that allowed a grassroots movement to grow, leading to the organization of militant indigenous federations that pressed for economic and social justice.*

No obstante que Ecuador sea el hogar de un gran número de indígenas, el país no llegó a producir el número de intelectuales indigenistas con reconocimiento internacional o políticas gubernamentales que se vieron a dar en México o Perú, países con perfiles demográficos similares. Pese ser uno de los primeros entre países apoyando las propuestas que emergieron del Instituto Indigenista Interamericano formado en Pátzcuaro, México, en 1940, las instituciones indigenistas no lograron ganar cancha en Ecuador. La deficiencias de un instituto nacional indigenista en Ecuador se debían a la falla de sus lideres liberales en presentar una critica suficientemente radical de la realidades indígenas. Su fracaso abrió espacios que permitieron el crecimiento de movimientos de base, dirigiendo la organización de federaciones militantes indígenas que presionaron para la justicia económica y social.

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Ecuador holds a curious position in Latin America's *indigenista* tradition. At the height of the classic *indigenismo* of the mid-twentieth century, Ecuadorians contributed important academic studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and history that analyzed indigenous peoples.[1] Indigenista artists including Camilo Ega and Oswaldo Guayasamín presented striking visual representations of rural realities (Greet, 2009). Indigenismo reached its highest level of expression in literature (Malo González, 1988: 90). The best-known example of this tradition is Jorge Icaza (1934), whose novel *Huasipungo*, with its social realism and critique of indigenous misery, is considered one of the primary representations of indigenista literature in the Americas. This literature portrayed Indians as primitive and ignorant people who were unable to improve their socioeconomic position without outside assistance. The solution to their

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poverty and marginalized situation, when one was offered, was education through which they might become assimilated into the dominant culture. Rarely did indigenistas recognize indigenous cultures as valuable and worthy of protection, nor did they identify the structural barriers to their material advancement.

Despite a variety of indigenista contributions in Ecuador, this ideology did not gain the same political presence or significance as it did in Mexico or Peru, countries with similarly large indigenous populations. Ecuador failed to produce a figure with the intellectual prestige of Alfonso Caso or José Carlos Mariátegui, who penned landmark essays in support of indigenous peoples in Mexico and Peru in the 1920s. In Mexico, the formation of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano (Inter-American Indian Institute—III) at Pátzcuaro in 1940 made the country the home of official indigenista thought. In contrast to Mexico, which had the government of Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s, and Peru, where Juan Velasco Alvarado's revolutionary military junta took power in 1968, Ecuador did not have a government that made the administration of indigenous peoples a central concern.

Considering Ecuador's relatively marginal position in indigenista currents, it is ironic that the country was one of the first in the Americas to endorse the III and that Ecuadorians formed an institute affiliated with the III before other countries with stronger indigenista traditions (Marroquín, 1977: 61; *Boletín Indigenista*, 1943c: 243). For a short period in the 1940s Ecuador appeared positioned to become a leader in international indigenista activities. Nevertheless, as Alejandro Marroquín (1977: 172) observes, the Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano (Indigenista Institute of Ecuador—IIE), the country's main organizational expression of indigenismo, "led a life of intermittent activity, sometimes working with enthusiasm and other times almost reaching the point of disintegration." The shortcomings of the IIE were due not to a weak indigenista tradition but to the indigenistas' inability to present a sufficiently radical critique of indigenous realities based on an analysis of their class position and to the fact that, in any case, such state institutions are unlikely to produce progressive social change. The indigenistas' shortcomings permitted the growth of grassroots movements that pressed for economic and social justice rather than the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the dominant culture.

THE PÁTZCUARO CONGRESS

On February 2, 1940, the Ecuadorian government accepted Mexico's invitation to participate in the Pátzcuaro congress that led to the founding of the III. Officials began assembling a formal delegation and searching for funding to send representatives to Mexico (*El Comercio*, February 3, 1940). As was often the case for indigenista meetings, the country's diplomatic emissary in the host country, in this case César Coloma Silva, led the delegation. Pío Jaramillo Alvarado and Víctor Gabriel Garcés also represented Ecuador at the congress. Jaramillo and Garcés subsequently became key participants in the indigenista movement, and Mexico strongly influenced the direction events took in Ecuador.

Jaramillo is often considered the founder and most important advocate of indigenista thought and practice in Ecuador. He was born in Loja in the southern

Ecuadorian highlands in 1894 and received his doctorate in jurisprudence and social sciences there. Jaramillo's masterful sociological study *El indio ecuatoriano* (1954 [1922]) remains a fundamental and defining work of the Ecuadorian indigenista movement. In it he glorified the indigenous past and passionately defended indigenous rights in the face of economic, political, and social exploitation. He worked tirelessly to condemn injustice and oppression and succinctly defined the indigenista ideal as "liberating Indians from the slavery in which they live." But Jaramillo also retained elements of the paternalistic outsider that typified indigenista thought, including considering Ecuador's large rural indigenous population to be the country's most significant "problem." It was the exploitation that Indians faced, he argued, that prevented them from realizing their full economic potential, and the solution to this problem was not a defense of indigenous cultures, values, and economic systems but their assimilation into a "modern" European-oriented culture. He did not consider the Indians themselves capable of making these much-needed transformations; rather, the responsibility for instituting these changes lay with the dominant white population and the government (Prieto, 2004: 187).

Garcés provided extensive logistical support for indigenista efforts and next to Jaramillo is the person most closely associated with Ecuadorian indigenismo. In his most significant work, simply entitled *Indigenismo*, Garcés (1957: 14) argued that this ideology should be understood as "the willingness to act on behalf of groups of people who today are living in a state of alienation and forgotten by everyone." It was the responsibility of a privileged elite to address this situation. "I do not believe in an indigenismo that remains on the level of words and expressions that are often plaintive and sentimental," he declared. "Indigenismo is creative, always an act of commission not omission." Referring to a statement that Jaramillo had made many years earlier, he considered the Indian problem "not really a problem of the Indian but rather one of the white man" (16). At issue was the mentality of non-Indians who lacked social sensitivity, despised indigenous peoples, and underestimated their value to the country. As urban professionals, indigenistas often saw themselves as needing to reform the attitudes and behavior of the traditional oligarchy as much as those of the popular classes.

In addition to his work with the IIE, Garcés worked as a representative of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Ecuador and attended III congresses as an observer for that organization. His responsibilities in Ecuador included writing a detailed response to an ILO questionnaire on the situation of indigenous peoples that examined their demographic distribution, the lack of proper legislation governing their lives, and their miserable living and working conditions (Garcés, 1941). He also drafted numerous documents on the "indigenous question" for the ILO, including a section entitled "Conditions of Life of Indigenous Workers" for the report of the ILO director to a 1939 conference in Havana (ILO, 1939: 56–58) and "Conditions of Life and Work of Indigenous Populations of Latin American Countries" for the 1949 ILO conference in Montevideo (ILO, 1949). In an ILO pamphlet entitled "Living Conditions of the Indigenous Populations in American Countries," Garcés (1946: 1) described indigenous peoples as "a deadweight holding back progress" and said that governments needed to include these backward populations "in the social and economic development" of their countries. From his perspective,

because Indians were different, they needed special treatment (Prieto, 2004: 171); if they were unwilling or unable to improve their miserable living and cultural conditions, then governments had to intervene on their behalf (Garcés, 1946: 20). Garcés helped broker an agreement in which the ILO would limit its focus to issues of indigenous labor while the III would address other concerns, but in reality the ILO continued to tackle much broader aspects of indigenous living conditions. In part through his work, the ILO gained a higher international profile than did the III as seriously engaging indigenous concerns.

Luis Rodríguez-Piñero (2005: 65) criticizes the ILO and Garcés in particular for following the lead of the political left in framing the "indigenous problem" as an economic issue. This charge, however, conflates two fundamentally different approaches to understanding indigenous poverty and marginalization. While the ILO investigated economic working conditions, its purpose in doing so was to facilitate the assimilation of indigenous people into the dominant society rather than engage in a structural analysis of their marginalization. In his landmark essay on the Indian problem in Peru, Mariátegui (1928) contended that administrative, legal, or ecclesiatical approaches that focused on cultural or moral conditions in indigenous communities were doomed to failure. Instead, he emphasized the need to engage in a socioeconomic analysis of the country's land tenure system. While Garcés described miserable indigenous working conditions in some detail, the solution he offered remained a liberal, individualistic approach that emphasized education and legislative reforms as a way to raise the cultural level of indigenous peoples—not the type of structural analysis that Mariátegui advocated. Garcés's contemporaries made these same criticisms of indigenista discourse. Referring to Mariátegui's work, the leftist Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios del Ecuador (Federation of University Students of Ecuador—FEUE) argued that above all else the problem facing indigenous communities was the lack of land and the persistence of semifeudal landholding structures (*Surcos,* May 29, 1948). Although the III and the ILO approached the "indigenous problem" from different perspectives, a much more fundamental challenge that highlighted the shortcomings of indigenista theory and action came from insurgent class-based organizations.

Jaramillo's most important student was Gonzalo Rubio Orbe, who became a third key indigenista leader in Ecuador. Rubio Orbe was born in 1909 in Otavalo, a northern highland town well known for its indigenous weavers. Already in 1935, as director of the Juan Montalvo Normal School, Rubio Orbe (1935: 3) established a center for the study of indigenous peoples. His works represent some of the earliest anthropological assessments of indigenous societies in Ecuador. His first book, *Nuestros indios* (1947), was a lengthy thesis he wrote for his degree in secondary education at Quito's Universidad Central (Central University). His *Punyaro* (1956) examined the religion, material culture, and political and economic aspects of indigenous life in a small community in the northern highlands. His *Promociones indígenas en América* (1957) was the result of a study of indigenous life in the Andes that the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru commissioned in 1952 to develop policy suggestions for international organizations. His final book, *Los indios ecuatorianos: Evolución histórica y políticas indigenistas* (1987), provided a historical synthesis

of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador and an analysis of changes in the thought, politics, and strategies of indigenistas in Ecuador through time. As were other Ecuadorian anthropologists who came after him, he was strongly influenced in his interpretations by social science trends in Mexico.[2] He rose higher in the international indigenista hierarchy than any other Ecuadorian, eventually serving as director of the III in Mexico from 1971 to 1977.

In advance of the 1940 Pátzcuaro congress, Moisés Sáenz, Mexico's ambassador to Peru, traveled to Ecuador to encourage participation in the event. Sáenz was no stranger to Ecuador. He had already published *Sobre el indio ecuatoriano* (1933), one of the earliest and most significant studies of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. In contrast to many indigenistas who maintained a studied distance from their subjects, Sáenz conducted direct observations in indigenous communities. At that point in his career, he still favored a civilizing and assimilating project and proposed a blend of legislative, educational, religious, and economic reforms to improve the situation of Indians in Ecuadorian society. By the late 1930s he had moved from an assimilationist position to one that embraced the values of pluralism. As Alexander Dawson (2004: 93) notes, "two distinct and ultimately irreconcilable visions of the Indian" emerged in Mexico, one that viewed them as members "of an oppressed nation and [another as] the slowly assimilating primitive." In Ecuador, this ideological divide separated indigenistas from those with a more radical critique of the "indigenous problem."

The final act of the 1940 Pátzcuaro congress was a request that each American republic ratify the creation of an international indigenista institute and proceed to create a national branch of the organization. Ecuador took its first formal step in this direction when on November 5, 1941, a year and a half after the founding of the III, the Ecuadorian congress passed a decree embracing the "noble goals" of the new institution and supporting its foundation. On November 28, President Carlos Alberto Arroyo del Río ratified his support of this international obligation. The decree stated that Ecuador's diplomatic representative in Mexico would be its representative to the III (Rubio Orbe, 1954: 98). In March 1942, Ecuador was one of only six countries (the others were Mexico, the United States, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua) that had ratified adherence to the III when the institute formally came into existence (Marroquín, 1977: 60–61).

That same year, the minister of social welfare, Leopoldo N. Chávez, reported that Ecuadorians were in the process of forming a national indigenista committee. Chávez was a popular educator who supported the formation of rural schools as a way to improve the lives of indigenous peoples, and this background influenced the policies he pursued in the ministry. He sought to create an indigenous-affairs section that would engage issues that indigenous peoples faced, including studying indigenous realities in all of their economic and cultural aspects. Chávez (1942: 81–82) pointed to a 1937 law that encouraged the legal formation of indigenous communities as a step in the direction of solving these problems.

The following year, in response to a request from the Pátzcuaro congress that April 19 be celebrated as a "Day of the Indian," indigenistas in Quito organized a session at the Central University, where they subsequently held many of their activities. Jaramillo gave a talk on the economic and social

aspects of indigenous lives, Garcés spoke on their cultural aspects, and the physician Carlos Andrade Marín examined biological concerns. Local newspapers warmly welcomed these comments (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1943b). The Ministry of Social Welfare (Ministerio, 1943: 6) issued a 22-page publication that included a recently issued governmental decree establishing an office of indigenous affairs as "the first step toward an Ecuadorian indigenista movement." The publication also included a statement celebrating the "Indian race" from Jasper Hill, a member of the Leuni Lenape nation in Canada, that he had presented to Luis Chávez Orozco, the chair of the 1940 Pátzcuaro meeting. The ministry asked a group of students who were training to be indigenous teachers at the Uyumbicho Rural Normal School to respond to the statement. Both Hill's statement and the students' response were then translated into Kichwa, the largest indigenous language in Ecuador. All of these activities pointed to a growing interest in indigenismo in Ecuador. Ecuador seemingly was positioned to become a leading beacon of indigenista thought and action in the Americas.

THE INSTITUTO INDIGENISTA ECUATORIANO

On July 29, 1943, Garcés organized a meeting of prominent citizens in Quito to discuss the feasibility of creating a national indigenista institute as an affiliate of the III. The attendees constituted a who's-who of the country's urban modernizing professionals, including the noted physicians Pablo Arturo Suárez and Carlos Andrade Marín, the economists Eduardo Lasso and Eduardo Larrea, the educators Reinaldo Murgueytio and Gonzalo Rubio, the sociologists Benjamín Carrión and Angel Modesto Paredes, and the lawyers Rafael Alvarado and Miguel Angel Zambrano. The proposed institute would be divided into five research branches to focus on biological, educational, cultural, legal, and economic affairs. The assembly named Garcés as acting director and Alvarado as acting secretary, while a commission that also included Zambrano drafted a decree for the minister of social welfare to approve that would provide the institute with legal status (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1943a).

On September 14, 1943, Chávez approved the statutes that granted the Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano (Indigenista Institute of Ecuador—IIE) formal legal standing. The statutes identified its primary objective as "the study of the Indian problem in all its aspects in order to improve Indian living conditions." Organizers conceptualized the institute as a technical and scientific entity that would receive government funds to address what it saw as a national problem. The IIE was to be based in the capital city of Quito, and its general assembly was to meet every April 19, the Day of the Indian, to approve an annual report on the previous year's activities and plan future projects. In contrast to some other countries' III branches, it was not a governmental institution but a quasi-governmental organization and too often depended entirely on its own resources. This proved to be a major liability.

Much as Garcés had initially proposed, the IIE set up five technical sections addressing biological, educational, economic, judicial, and sociological affairs. Each section was assigned a broad range of aims including disseminating knowledge of disease, hygiene, and nutrition among the indigenous masses,

establishing indigenous schools and providing training to teachers to staff them, studying indigenous peoples' economically productive activities and standard of living, creating bureaus for the defense of indigenous peoples that would work to stop the intervention of informal lawyers (known as *tinterillos*) in lawsuits in rural communities, and analyzing sociological structures and cultural expressions in indigenous communities (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1943c). These programmatic activities were broadly designed to assist in the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the dominant culture rather than to engage and empower indigenous communities to address structural concerns that ensured their ongoing marginalization.

This same group of well-educated white urban males gathered once again on October 1, 1943, to create the formal organizational structures for the IIE. Appropriately, participants named Jaramillo as the institute's first director. Chávez served as subdirector, the economist Eduardo Larrea was named treasurer, and Garcés assumed the position of executive secretary and served as the III's representative in Ecuador. As heads of the five technical sections, Pablo Arturo Suárez was placed in charge of biology, Reynaldo Murgueytio of education, Eduardo Lasso of economics, Fidel A. López Suárez of judicial affairs, and Humberto García Ortiz of sociology. The IIE also announced plans to create additional sections on archaeology, history, and art *(Boletín Indigenista*, 1943c). A year later, when the IIE selected a new directorate, it brought in an equally well-known and distinguished group of liberal intellectuals. Jaramillo stayed on as the director, but Carlos Andrade Marín assumed the position of subdirector and Benjamín Carrión was named head of the sociological section, César Carrera Andrade of economics, and Gonzalo Rubio Orbe of education (*Atahualpa*, 1945: 16).

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, many of the leading indigenistas in Ecuador were influential academics or political leaders in the country, seemingly well positioned to build a strong institute. They typically took progressive and nationalistic positions that illustrated their broad and deep commitments to using government structures to achieve social change (Clark, 1999: 113). Despite having access to political power, however, the IIE was never the formal governmental entity that the organizers at Pátzcuaro had initially envisioned, nor did its technical sections realize their objectives of addressing a range of issues facing rural communities. These failures limited the IIE's ability to implement its policy objectives, largely limiting its activism to well-meaning liberal pronouncements. Despite some indications to the contrary, it would seem that the problem was not simply one of leaders' not being committed enough to their goals or willing to put in the hard work necessary for social change.

The IIE formally inaugurated its activities on October 27, 1943, with a ceremony at the Central University. The event featured a variety of dignitaries, including the Colombian and Mexican ambassadors. Jaramillo was unable to attend the meeting, and in his place Chávez opened the gathering with a brief description of the origins of the institute. Chávez noted that despite all of the contributions that Indians had made to the country, they continued to be seen in a very negative light. "For many reasons," he argued, "Ecuadorian Indians deserve to have their interests, which undoubtedly are also those of the country, taken care of in a decent, effective, quick, and loyal manner." For Chávez,

it remained the responsibility of the dominant classes to save Indians from their laziness, alcoholism, criminal behavior, and antagonism to Western education and medicine. "Only a constant and systematic effort will bring about the redemption of the Indian," he said, predicting that it would take decades if not centuries to assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant culture (*Boletín Indigenista,* 1944c). Garcés spoke on indigenous communities and the meaning of the *ayllu* kinship structures in Andean culture. Implicitly challenging Mariátegui's interpretations, he denied that indigenous societies were communist, emphasizing the importance of private, individual property holdings as a "creative force that makes for the necessary richness of social peace" (*El Comercio*, October 28, 1943). These presentations pointed to an underlying liberal ideology that precluded the possibility of addressing real structural problems, one that largely characterized the work of the IIE over the following years and decades.

Comments delivered at the inauguration of the IIE, however, also indicated that not all indigenistas had the same perspective on the way to address indigenous issues. Reynaldo Murgueytio (1944: 30), the director of the Uyumbicho Rural Normal School, delivered the keynote speech on improving indigenous education, including the creation of an indigenous pedagogy by the indigenous peoples themselves. He acknowledged that acculturation flowed in multiple directions. On a topic to which he would subsequently return (*El Comercio*, March 18, 1944), he noted that "in the same way as people attempt to whiten Indians, it is necessary to Indianize mestizos and whites a bit." His comments, however, remained a minority perspective, with most indigenistas viewing education as a path toward assimilation rather than as a tool for indigenous peoples to liberate themselves (Garcés, 1946: 16). Rather than empowering indigenous communities, most indigenistas continued to promote and valorize an elite, Westernized ideal of how the Ecuadorian nation should be constructed. Anne-Claudine Morel (2010: 88) contends that Jaramillo was never seriously interested in organizing activities that would incorporate indigenous peoples into Ecuador's dominant culture.

The IIE began with a very ambitious agenda of sponsoring roundtable discussions, publishing the journal *Atahualpa* and other materials, and agitating for the establishment of a governmental department of indigenous affairs and other legal reforms. It helped with legal appeals on behalf of indigenous communities and sought to train "experts" on indigenous issues. Ecuadorian indigenistas acquired a certain amount of international prestige for their work. Soon after the establishment of the IIE, Ernest E. Maes, secretary of the National Indian Institute in the United States, offered support for a study of soil erosion and for medical and sanitary training in Ecuador (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1944a; 1944b). In 1944, the United States Department of State invited Jaramillo to visit cultural institutions in that country. *El Comercio* (December 29, 1944) featured a photograph of Jaramillo at the Museum of Natural History in New York City with a North American indigenous artifact (Garcés, 1944d). Rubio Orbe (1949) traveled to Lake Success, New York, for a seminar on the problems of indigenous education (*El Comercio*, December 3, 1949). Judging from these warm responses, Ecuador's indigenistas appear to have been engaged in valuable and well-regarded activities, both domestically and internationally.

One of the IIE's first actions was to send a circular to all of the towns in Ecuador requesting that local officials document and preserve aboriginal place-names as a way to protect and foster appreciation of native nomenclature and traditions. The institute also requested that the government designate two rooms in the newly constructed National Museum in Quito for exhibits that would form the beginnings of an indigenista museum. The directorate applauded an initiative of the Ecuadorian Red Cross to distribute Christmas presents including toys and clothes to the children of the workers on its hacienda El Tablón (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1944a). Rather than analyzing the structural underpinnings of systems of oppression or fighting for indigenous liberation, the institute limited itself to symbolic and paternalistic gestures and viewed Indian culture as something that should be preserved in a museum rather than engaging Indians' lived realities in the Ecuadorian countryside.

With the publication of *Atahualpa* (1944a) in October 1944, the IIE became the first national indigenista institute to issue a monthly bulletin. The III applauded its efforts, stating that the journal was of great interest because it dealt with ethnographic, social, and economic content from a broad indigenista perspective (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1945: 37). The IIE selected the name of the Inka leader associated with the northern Andes for their journal as a "symbol of Ecuadorian-ness, of the aboriginal nation," that would "inspire love for the land that surrounds us." The periodical's directors and IIE leaders Jaramillo and Garcés contributed much of the journal's content. Jaramillo (1944b) led the first issue with a text of a talk he gave on Atahualpa at a meeting of the IIE in August. He followed this with an ethnographic description of the Saraguros from Loja, an indigenous group that he argued was very important but little known (1944d). Garcés (1944b) responded with a short piece on Otavalo, home of Ecuador's best-known Indians, who had become a leading tourist attraction. An essay on the eastern Shuar carried the label "the ignored Indians: the jungle dwellers" (*Atahualpa*, 1944b: 10–11). Finally, Jaramillo (1944c) praised the work of a Salesian priest in the eastern Amazon as part of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the mission's work in Ecuador. The perspective of these essays was typical of indigenista discourse, championing the distant memory of ancient and heroic indigenous leaders while denigrating their modern descendants as impoverished and marginalized people in need of the paternalistic assistance of government officials and religious missionaries.

The following issues of the journal followed in a similar vein, often bringing biological, sociological, statistical, and judicial perspectives to bear on issues of indigenous poverty and marginalization. In the second issue, Garcés (1944a; 1944c) contributed an analysis of indigenous housing and alcoholism in indigenous communities, and Jaramillo (1944a) published an essay on Carlos Rodríguez's indigenista art. Humberto García Ortiz (1944), head of the sociological section, contributed an essay on the social position of indigenous peoples. Aquiles R. Pérez (1944) of the education section wrote a piece on the difficulties that indigenous peoples faced in the Andes. Although most of the essays came from Ecuadorian writers, occasionally the editors would reprint articles from the III's *Boletín Indigenista*. Unfortunately, despite accolades in the mainstream press, after only four issues *Atahualpa* ceased publication

(*El Comercio*, February 16, 1945). This was an early indicator that maintaining the work of the institute over the long haul without formal government funding and support was going to be a constant problem.

The celebration of the Day of the Indian on April 19, 1944, provides an example of the profound divisions between indigenous activists and indigenistas. On the eve of the holiday, the IIE organized a celebration in the rural community of Nayon just outside of Quito. In his report to the III, Garcés noted that the event "was completely Indian in character." He argued that the Day of the Indian ought to be not a celebration for whites but an expression of sympathy for the Indians. Seemingly without any sense of irony, the following evening the IIE organized a second Day of the Indian event at the Central University. Unlike the previous day's celebration, this formal gathering was an exclusively white and overwhelmingly male event. Garcés led with comments on the day's significance and explained the work of the institute. The featured speaker was the Guatemalan minister José Gregorio Díaz, who spoke on the Maya of Quetzaltenango. Humberto García Ortiz had also prepared a paper that he did not have a chance to read because of the late hour (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1944b). Formal organization as a funded government entity might have permitted the IIE to operate in a more reliable manner, but it still would not have addressed the more fundamental problem of the separation of indigenista discourse and objectives from rural community input.

In February 1945, Benjamín Carrión of the Casa de Cultura, the Central University's rector Julio Paredes, and the IIE's subdirector Carlos Andrade Marín organized a series of seven talks on a variety of socioeconomic topics by Antonio García, an economist at Colombia's National University and director of that country's indigenista institute. The topics focused largely on economic reforms, social thought, and agrarian politics, including the evolution of indigenista thought in Colombia (*El Comercio*, February 10, 1945).[3] Organizers planned to follow up on these talks with a joint Colombian-Ecuadorian indigenista congress in Pasto in July 1945 that would draw on the expertise of intellectuals in both countries to discuss solutions to the problems that indigenous peoples faced. But, as happened all too often for the IIE, these plans fell apart and the meeting never took place.

Despite the IIE's organizational shortcomings, indigenista intellectuals still made significant contributions to the study of indigenous peoples. Not only did the Ecuadorian branch launch the journal *Atahualpa* but its members contributed numerous academic studies to the III's flagship journal *América Indígena* as well as numerous books on the subject. Its most significant publication was *Cuestiones indígenas del Ecuador* (IIE, 1946), which contained 12 essays by leading indigenista scholars that reflected the wide range of issues the IIE engaged. In its introduction to the book, the IIE (1946: vii) stated that with its publication it intended "to ratify its irrevocable proposal to continue firmly in defense of the Ecuadorian indigenous proletariat without racial discrimination." Despite the importance of the volume and the accolades it received from the III in Mexico, even its publication pointed to the problems and shortcomings that the institute faced. The papers in the volume had been prepared for the 1945 Colombian-Ecuadorian indigenista congress that never took place. Furthermore, the book was published as "volume 1" with the apparent expectation that the IIE would subsequently publish further volumes on similar themes, but additional ones never appeared. Perhaps more than anything else,

this book encapsulated the promises, potentials, problems, and pitfalls of Ecuador's indigenista institute.

STRUCTURAL SHORTCOMINGS

Less than a year after the founding of the IIE, in July 1944 workers organized a national congress in Quito to found the leftist Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador (Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers—CTE). At the congress, the lawyer Juan Isaac Lovato, who served in the judicial department of the IIE, argued for the urgent need to reorganize the institute "in order that it might realize its noble national aims" (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1944d). The need for reorganization became a common critique voiced both inside and outside of the organization. Jaramillo (1954: 507) noted that despite its limited economic resources the institute had maintained a program of "persistent and modest activities." He repeatedly pointed to the problem that the IIE had not been organized as a state institution with government funding. Its rather nebulous status meant that it operated at best on an intermittent basis. It was most active when it drew on government support to meet its international obligations, in particular attendance at international indigenista congresses. Jaramillo argued that the best way to revive flagging interest in the IIE was to collaborate with the anthropology institute in order to refocus attention on the urgent needs of indigenous and peasant peoples (*Boletín Indigenista*, 1952). Given Jaramillo's reputation and powerful connections, it was never clear why he was unable to reorganize the IIE as a governmental institution, nor is there any evidence that he made an effort to do so.

In his analysis of indigenismo in the Americas, Marroquín (1977: 178, 173) concludes that Ecuador never achieved the "true indigenista politics" that had been proposed at the 1940 Pátzcuaro congress. Although members of the IIE had realized "small but very positive achievements," their tendency to put practice before theory meant that they had neglected to develop an adequate political strategy. Indigenistas also faced other problems, including a failure to gain a sufficiently broad reach for their programs, a lack of governmental support, an absence of technical training and coordination among different programs, and an inadequate analysis of the contemporary national situation. To succeed, they needed to develop a political perspective that would focus their efforts. Furthermore, Marroquín reiterated the concern that the IIE never enjoyed access to a secure revenue stream. Whether this lack of governmental support was due to political opposition to indigenista policies or a failure of indigenistas to lobby the government for more funding was never entirely clear. Since the indigenistas came from the same social class as the political leaders and on occasion were those leaders, the IIE's shortcomings would seem to point to organizational difficulties rather than political opposition to their objective of assimilating indigenous peoples into the dominant culture.

The IIE faced harsher criticism for its lack of effective action from the political left than from within the ranks of indigenistas. The FEUE, for example, noted a lack of serious work on indigenous peoples in Ecuador and complained that much of the existing literature "exaggerated the Indians' vices and defects" to the point of dehumanizing them. The task was additionally complicated because white indigenistas came from a different world and their

failure to understand indigenous peoples too often reduced them to caricatures. Nevertheless, the FEUE applauded the institute's creation and argued that if members "engaged in their labors with seriousness, planning, discipline, and a great deal of dedication, they would manage to come to know the real Indian in all his positive and negative aspects." With that approach, it would be "easy to find the solutions to their problems," overcoming the backward economic structures that were "the real obstacle to their economic and cultural progress." The FEUE, however, doubted that the liberal elites who led the IIE were capable of such action, given their individualistic and assimilationist attitudes (*Surcos*, November 15, 1943). Those paternalistic attitudes continued those of Eloy Alfaro's 1895 Liberal Revolution, which embraced a ventriloquist's image of indigenous concerns that denied subalterns their own voices (Guerrero, 1997). Indigenistas similarly emphasized individual identities over collective or community structures while at the same time arguing for the need to assimilate indigenous peoples into a nation (Prieto, 2004).

Less than a year after urban intellectuals founded the IIE, in August 1944 a group of indigenous leaders met with leftist labor leaders and other activists in Quito to form the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians—FEI). The purpose of the federation was to unify indigenous peoples and present their interests to the government, particularly as they related to agrarian reform. The composition and ideological orientation of the FEI were in marked contrast to those of the IIE. No indigenous people (or women, for that matter) were present at the founding of the IIE, nor did they play any role in the new organization. Unlike the FEI, which had always had Indians (and women) in top positions of leadership, the IIE was made up exclusively of white urban males and did not encourage or accept indigenous participation. The FEI was a collaborative project that advanced a radical critique of society as it cultivated the active participation of indigenous militants. In contrast to the FEI, the IIE had no place for indigenous peoples in the IIE or the reforms that they proposed (Becker, 2008).

When Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas organized the 1940 Pátzcuaro congress, the indigenous newspaper *Ñucanchic Allpa* (May 28, 1940) asked why the Ecuadorian government did not send any indigenous delegates, given that they were building their own organizations and could represent themselves:

> With what democratic criteria have they selected the personnel to form the Ecuadorian delegation? Have they even thought that the two million Indians–the overwhelming majority of the Ecuadorian population–are the only ones who have the right to nominate their own authentic representatives and to defend their own vital interests?
>
> For years in Ecuador numerous legal organizations of indigenous peoples have had sufficient knowledge of the facts and, therefore, are able to make their millenarian voices heard in these historical moments of great importance for their own economic, political, cultural, and social lives.

Why, the paper reasonably asked, should outsiders represent indigenous peoples at an international conference when they could represent themselves? It challenged elite assumptions that its posture was a leftist ploy to gain representation for indigenous groups. Rather, the newspaper editorialized, "if they want to situate Indians in their appropriate place, listen to their voice, the

authentic voice of their race." The editors noted that "we are not recent indigenistas; our journalistic work on behalf of the Indian has been going on for years, and never for purposes of *financial gain*." They argued that "the Indian knows that the redemption of the workers is the task of the workers themselves!"

The most significant advances for indigenous peoples during the IIE's first years were the result not of indigenista efforts but of those of parallel and more radical activists and organizations. In fact, despite the IIE's close contact with governing officials, many of the political advances reported in the III's *Boletín Indigenista*, including the expansion of indigenous rights in the new progressive 1945 constitution, were due to the efforts of radical Marxists closely allied with indigenous activists in rural communities. At its founding assembly, the FEI named Ricardo Paredes, the white secretary general of the Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano (Ecuadorian Communist Party—PCE), to be its representative to the National Assembly. Paredes made effective use of this post to advocate for the interests of indigenous peoples and exerted a positive influence when petitions were brought before the body. He worked hard for the constitutional reforms and other laws that the indigenistas applauded, including defending indigenous languages and expanding citizenship rights for indigenous peoples. But, unlike the indigenistas, Paredes was able to realize these material gains. He was the strongest voice behind proposals to found a Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, arguing that until the government created the ministry it would be impossible to assemble the personnel and resources necessary to address pressing indigenous issues in a proper manner. Such a ministry, Paredes argued, would be the crowning achievement of the May 1944 revolution, which promised a new and more humane future.[4] The FEUE's newspaper *Surcos* (March 2, 1946) noted that significant legislative advances were largely due to the dedicated labors of leftists, including socialists, communists, and some left liberals (not the more moderate liberals who ran the IIE). Despite their close affiliation with governmental officials, liberal indigenistas were unwilling to pressure the state to address the structural causes of indigenous marginalization.

Although the IIE and the FEI emerged at the same time and confronted similar issues, they occupied two entirely separate spheres, and most indigenistas moved in circles completely separate from those of the leftist activists who supported the FEI. The two organizations did not refer to each other in their publications, and no one was involved in both. On April 19, 1947, the Day of the Indian, the FEI organized a conference of indigenous leaders at Quito's Central University. While indigenous leaders discussed important political and economic issues, indigenistas held their own cultural celebration that presented a folkloric image of an aboriginal population at the Juan Montalvo Normal Institute (*El Comercio*, April 19 and 20, 1947). The leftist FEUE applauded the FEI and its work on behalf of indigenous communities and criticized the IIE's goal of attempting to assimilate indigenous peoples into Western civilization. It encouraged the IIE to follow the FEI and stop being little more than a "mere bureaucratic apparatus and justification for a budget line item"—to become a "useful and truly necessary organization" (*Surcos*, April 27, 1948). Militant solutions were necessary to realize economic and social justice for indigenous peoples.

FROM PATERNALISM TO ACTIVISM

Ecuadorian indigenistas continued their work throughout the 1950s, although at a noticeably reduced level. In 1959 the conservative government of Camilo Ponce Enríquez organized a delegation to represent Ecuador at the Fourth Inter-American Indigenista Congress in Guatemala. Leading up to the meeting, the *Boletín Indigenista* published lengthy reports from Minister of Social Welfare Gonzalo Cordero Crespo. Cordero replaced liberal paternalistic notions of helping the Indian with a conservative nationalist rhetoric of how indigenismo could benefit Ecuador. Although Ponce Enríquez had engaged in few activities on behalf of indigenous communities, because of the interest that the government demonstrated in integrating indigenous peoples into the country the Guatemalan meeting decided by acclamation to designate Quito as the location of the next congress.

Official delegates from 18 countries gathered in October 1964 for the Fifth Inter-American Indigenist Congress. As with previous congresses, the official delegations were largely made up of diplomats and other governmental officials, religious leaders, and academics. In fact, the only delegates listed as formally representing indigenous groups came from the United States, with four delegates appearing on behalf of various tribal governments. In addition, the list from Ecuador included 10 people with the title "observador indígena" (*V Congreso*, 1965: vol. 1, xxv–xxxv). Discussions at the meeting followed the same assimilationist and paternalistic lines that had informed the creation of the III and the IIE two decades earlier. The congress concluded with a statement that the "integration of indigenous groups into the economic, social, and cultural life of their nations is an essential factor for development" (*V Congreso*, 1965: vol. 5, 11). The published proceedings of the congress included a photograph entitled "The Ecuadorian Indigenous Delegation" with a note that the presence of a small indigenous delegation at the debates surprised the white organizers. "The interest which those aboriginal delegates demonstrated for the items discussed," the caption under the photograph read, "was a true revelation" (*V Congreso,* 1965: vol. 3, 32).

Given the political environment in Ecuador at the time, indigenous interest in these debates should not have been surprising. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the FEI organized repeated protests in rural communities against exploitative working conditions and submitted hundreds of petitions to the government in defense of the rights of indigenous workers. Militant actions included a December 1961 march of 12,000 indigenous activists, one of the largest such marches in Ecuador's history, for agrarian reform. Constant pressure forced the Ecuadorian government to promulgate an agrarian reform law in July 1964, only a few months before the indigenista congress. Rather than championing the strength of the indigenous world, the IIE painted a negative picture of indigenous life with the intent of triggering elite guilt for society's abuses against rural communities. Indigenous organizing efforts contradict Roberto Santana's (1995: 146) assertion that leftist activism on indigenous issues emerged out of indigenista ideologies. The activist, indigenous-led FEI was too radical for the paternalist IIE. Not only did indigenistas continue to operate in isolation from much more radical activist currents swirling around

them, but their assimilationist policies remained out of touch with the indigenous militants' calls for economic and social justice.

Although the FEI began to fade once its primary demand of agrarian reform had been met, its actions laid the groundwork for new organizations that culminated with the formation of the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador—CONAIE) in 1986. Indigenous-led actions opened up important political spaces for indigenous peoples to emphasize the value of embracing their own identities (Ibarra, 1999). With a continued focus on assimilationist policies, in contrast, indigenista currents failed to provide policy suggestions that would result in meaningful improvements for Ecuador's marginalized indigenous peoples. A lack of effective action also meant fewer attempts to co-opt incipient community organizations that had the potential for agitating for real and significant social, political, and economic change. Rather than exercising a direct influence on indigenous realities, the IIE remained a pet project of a small group of intellectuals (Fauroux, 1988: 276). Indigenista failures during the middle of the twentieth century helped lay the groundwork for a more significant indigenous movement at the end of the century.

The underlying liberal ideologies that informed indigenista activities in Ecuador were representative of broader elite attitudes toward indigenous peoples. Instead of recognizing the value of indigenous cultures and strength in diversity, elites regarded indigenous peoples as disrupting national unity and halting the country's economic development. As Clark (1998: 206) shows, social reforms offered indigenous peoples "the paternalistic hand of the state to become modern, rational and educated." Nevertheless, "to become full Ecuadorians, Indians would have to conform to white-mestizo cultural, social, political, and economic norms." The IIE's policies and activities embodied these types of liberal, individualistic, assimilationist, paternalistic attitudes.

Indigenista organizing strategies remained weak in Ecuador precisely because of the IIE's failure to engage in radical critiques that addressed the root causes of indigenous marginalization. A weak indigenista movement, by its very nature paternalistic, left more political space for indigenous leaders to organize, gain critical organizing experience, and agitate for real and significant social, political, and economic change. Rather than being based in millenarian movements that glorified the indigenous past or indigenista rhetoric that objectified the Indian as an "other," militant indigenous movements emphasized a specific, concrete structural analysis of society. Their grassroots organizing efforts quickly surpassed and supplanted efforts emerging from the dominant culture. Out of Ecuador's weak indigenista movement a strong indigenous movement emerged.

NOTES

1. In the 1940s some indigenistas denounced the term *indio* (Indian) as insulting and offensive, preferring *indígena* (indigenous) (see Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1998: 193). Nevertheless, most of the writers cited in this paper switched back and forth between the two terms with seemingly little semantic or political difference intended. Following their lead, I use both terms.

2. Both Hugo Burgos Guevara (1970) and Gladys Villavicencio Rivadeneira (1973) studied cultural anthropology in Mexico at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia with the noted Mexican indigenista and III director Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán.

3. Benjamín Carrión, Julio E. Paredes C., and Carlos Andrade Marín, Instituto Indigenista del Ecuador, February 5, 1945, Sección General, Oficios Recibidos, Noviembre y Diciembre 1944, 1945, Archivo General del Ministerio de Gobierno (AGMG), Quito, Ecuador.

4. Ricardo Paredes, "Actas de la Asamblea Constituyente de 1944," t. 3, 325–30 (September 21, 1944), Archivo Palacio Legislativo (APL), Quito, Ecuador.

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1944b "A report from our Ecuadorian representative." 4 (2): 116–123.
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