

FROM PEASANT STRUGGLES TO  
INDIAN RESISTANCE

*The Ecuadorian Andes in the  
Late Twentieth Century*

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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS : NORMAN

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pallares, Amalia, 1965-

From peasant struggles to Indian resistance : the Ecuadorian Andes in the late twentieth century / Amalia Pallares.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8061-3459-3 (alk. paper)

1. Indians of South America—Ecuador—Politics and government.
2. Indians of South America—Ecuador—Sierra—Ethnic identity.
3. Indians of South America—Ecuador—Sierra—Government relations.
4. Indian activists—Ecuador—Sierra. 5. Self-determination, National—Ecuador—Sierra. 6. Sierra (Ecuador)—Politics and government.
7. Sierra (Ecuador)—Race relations. I. Title.

F3721.1.S54 P35 2002

322.1'19808661—dc21

2002019423

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources. ∞

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## CHAPTER THREE

# UNCERTAIN DEVELOPMENT

### *Post-agrarian Reform Politics and the New Racial Order*

The analysis of the origin and development of Indian political identity requires linking two important questions: how was social inequality organized and structured in contemporary Ecuadorian civil society, and how was an indianista discourse and practice that contested this inequality articulated? A pressing challenge in studies of resistance is to establish the linkages between change in economic and political structures and the production of alternative frameworks of meaning that make the construction of a collective identity possible. As subordinate groups confront and interpret the impact of broad socioeconomic developments in their everyday lives, they are also in the process of defining their collective identity(ies), developing common goals and, when mobilized, articulating forms of resistance. Although it is possible to think of cases in which collective identity has developed without leading to collective action, it is difficult to imagine a sustained movement that has not involved a process of collective identity formation.

There is a direct relationship between land reform, political modernization, and the contemporary Indian movement, as changes in relations of production contributed to the dissolution of old identities and the creation of new ones. Rural modernization in Ecuador was not a process of economic transition alone. It also entailed shifts in racial politics and in racial relations that led to the forging of a common identification among Indians of various communities and provinces. This political identity became the springboard for a national Indian movement that established cross-ethnic alliances among highland and lowland Indians of different ethnicities.

Here I explain the relationship between changes in the economic, political, and racial order and the contemporary Indian movement. Relations of production were rearticulated after land reform through the abolition of the *huasipungo*. The new economic order reorganized, rather than minimized, racial subordination. State-led land reform, as well as rural development and modernization policies, resulted in segmented distribution of resources in which most indigenous peasants faced increasing poverty, while middle-class and upper-class mestizo landowners benefited from policies originally targeted to assist the poor.

The public debate over land reform policy during the mid-1970s had two important consequences. First, as a power struggle between a nationalist military regime bent on social reform and landowning elites, it led to the victory of the latter in curtailing redistribution. Second, it was a site for the rearticulation of racial meaning. Debates over the social function of property and the best means of achieving rural development led to the reconstruction of the principal agents involved. Landowners were recast as efficient producers, whereas indigenous peasants were increasingly seen as inherently unproductive, resulting in a modern spin on the long-standing image of Indians as premodern. These new constructions were crucial in constraining land activism and limiting radical reform.

For most Indians, agrarian modernization marked the transition from one form of racial subordination to another. The shifts in racial politics and relations reveal the "newness" of some mestizo strategies of racial exclusion. Once Indians were displaced from the hacienda and entered the white-mestizo public sphere, socially constructed racial differences served to restructure economic and political oppression. The new transformations and their effects were understood racially because that is how they were experienced by many. Because exclusion of those perceived as racially inferior was sustained across ethnic, class, and occupational lines to remarginalize Indians in new relations of production, Indian activists were able to draw from Indians' shared experiences of racism to establish political coalitions between different indigenous groups and develop a national movement.

### AGRARIAN REFORM

With the exception of Mexico, most countries in Latin America adopted some type of agrarian reform after 1950. In the Andes, the sweeping Bolivian

agrarian reform of 1953 and the Peruvian reform of 1963 preceded the Ecuadorian reform of 1964. All three reforms aimed to end land tenureship, provide former tenants with access to land, and free the rural labor market. All also purported to improve rural efficiency and productivity. However, all three reforms fell short or were reversed. In this context, Ecuadorian land reform is not exceptional but rather a reflection of similar policies in the region.

The 1964 agrarian reform law introduced modernization in Ecuador, officially terminating precapitalist labor relations.<sup>1</sup> The *huasipungo* was officially abolished and former *huasipungueros* with a lengthy work history on a particular hacienda received the small plots of land they had worked. Agrarian modernization, defined as the joint effect of land reform and subsequent supplementary agrarian development policies, dramatically transformed the social milieu of indigenous peasants.<sup>2</sup> The displacement of Indians from the haciendas led to three important changes: a fundamental transformation in local power relations, as national law subverted traditional landowner power; the revival and restructuring of semiautonomous indigenous communities and local councils; and the unprecedented migration of indigenous workers to predominantly mestizo highland towns and cities.

Land reform was not a substantial threat to all highland landowners. In its first decade, most of the lands awarded were state owned. Those landowners in the northern highlands who invested in dairy production had terminated their *huasipungos* before reforms were implemented so as to consolidate the best grazing lands for the exclusive use of their livestock. Further, as export products became more profitable, many landowners switched from traditional domestic staples grown on highland haciendas to export products.

Nevertheless, for the vast majority of central and southern highlands landowners who depended on the *huasipungo* system for high profit margins, land reform was an obvious threat.<sup>3</sup> These landowners focused their efforts on finding ways to avoid expropriation. Some evicted *huasipungueros* under false pretenses or converted them into salaried workers before they could file a demand for expropriation. Once a demand was filed, landowners resorted to intimidation as well as various legal and political mechanisms to avoid unfavorable decisions. Unlike Peru, where judges who were partial to reform were selected to adjudicate lands, the court system of the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización (IERAC), the body

responsible for adjudicating plot transfers, was composed mainly of official or ex-officio members of the Chambers of Agriculture and Livestock, powerful interest groups representing large landowners. This meant that many cases that merited land transfers under strict interpretation of the law did not lead to rulings that benefited former huasipungueros. The IERAC was underfunded, and like its equivalent in Bolivia, it was characterized by impropriety and corruption. Decisions were often delayed for a decade or more, and rulings were frequently appealed, ultimately favoring landowners. Another common strategy was the sale of land parcels to landowners' friends and relatives, to mestizo town dwellers, or even to "cooperative" peasants, all mechanisms that facilitated more landowner discretion over the quantity and quality of land sold. These strategies were so successful that by 1980 land reform had affected less than 15 percent of agricultural land in the country, and 68.4 percent of Indians had gained access to only 8.9 percent of land surface (Handelman 1980, 11).

As landowner tactics postponed or prevented most land reform, indigenous peasants in several highland provinces opted for more direct forms of confrontation. A direct relationship can be established between the frequency and intensity of peasant mobilizations and implementation of the law (Sylva 1986). While reform legislation created the institutional and legal framework for change, indigenous peasant struggles forced change by literally occupying the spaces landowners had so arduously protected. Through the use of land invasions, unauthorized grazing of their cattle, and unauthorized harvesting of hacienda products, Indians carried out de facto occupations of haciendas they claimed, pressuring the IERAC to rule in their favor and thus avoid their displacement. While much academic debate has questioned the role of peasants in getting the law passed, it would be extremely difficult to deny their crucial role in its implementation.<sup>4</sup>

Another group that became politicized was indigenous peasants from "free" communities whose need for land had not been considered by the law or pro-reform activists from the FEI. As they witnessed huasipungueros receiving lands, indigenous communities adjoining haciendas and beholden to them in looser labor arrangements demanded to be included in the reform process.

The demand for land, however, was not the only issue that prompted peasant mobilizations. Successful implementation of land reform created its own contradictions. With the abolition of servile labor, many of the



landowners' former responsibilities to huasipungueros were also abolished. As huasipungueros, indigenous peasants had access to hacienda water and pasture, both crucial resources for subsistence. Although they worked in exchange for this access, there was also a common belief that it was their right. Before reform huasipungueros had relied on landowners to share their resources to ensure subsistence. After reform landowners barred former huasipungueros from any access to their land and water, punishing trespassers personally (usually by forcing them to work for free for a few days) or calling on local authorities to do so. For peasants, this denial constituted a violation of the moral economy. They responded by engaging in what Scott (1985) has called everyday forms of resistance. They would sneak into the hacienda to seize wood and water or graze their animals. While water rights were also pursued legally by some former huasipungueros, in most cases they continued to carry out these small forms of resistance.

After being excluded from these resources and having usually received the most barren and eroded hacienda parcels, the now-landed peasants realized that the sole transfer of land was no guarantee of economic survival.<sup>5</sup> Without access to water and pasture or credit for fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, and irrigation systems, their lands would not be able to generate the necessary income to subsist.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF LAND REFORM: THE EXPANSION OF CITIZENSHIP

Land reform brought at least three main consequences that transformed indigenous citizenship and redefined the relationship between Indians and the Ecuadorian state. While initial land redistribution had legitimated an unprecedented role for the national government as a supposedly neutral arbiter in peasants' confrontations with landowners and local authorities, the expansion of indigenous peasants' demands required a new role, the state-as-provider. Demands for benefits previously provided by landowners were now placed on the state, as were demands for resources to upgrade inferior plots and advance socioeconomic development: water, machinery, infrastructure, agricultural credits for the purchase of chemicals and technology, schools, community centers, and roads.<sup>6</sup>

The military government that seized power in 1972 addressed some of the peasant's demands in an effort to implement and direct rural development,

a primary goal in its nationalist and populist agenda. This involved the creation of new institutional mechanisms. In addition to IERAC, several governmental offices were created in the Ministries of Agriculture, Work, and Social Welfare. As development projects were implemented in each highland province, the state deployed a group of experts on agrarian affairs who based their intellectual authority on their cumulative knowledge of the countryside.

However, state intervention did not necessarily mean complete state control over rural development. Unlike in Peru, where more than one thousand cooperatives were created and managed by state-appointed officials who rarely consulted with indigenous peasants, in Ecuador the cooperative model was not implemented on a broad scale. Instead individual landholders relied on local indigenous communities and intercommunal organizations to gain access to state officials and programs. This experience with the state altered the role of indigenous organizations.<sup>7</sup> Just as the state's knowledge of rural infrastructure grew, indigenous community leaders produced their own knowledge about state-mandated development. The presence of state bureaucrats in highland towns institutionalized unmediated exchanges between peasants and the state, in many instances legitimizing indigenous organizations as political actors. Unlike in Peru, where cooperatives were initiated and micromanaged by urban technocrats, most recipients of land reform organized into communities and intercommunal organizations that worked directly with public officials and NGOs. Participation in state-funded development projects helped local Indian activists to gain hands-on expertise in rural policy development and implementation. At the national level, local activists learned about broader political processes as they worked closely with legal representatives of national umbrella organizations such as the FEI, the FENOC, and ECUARUNARI. As this process unfolded, indigenous activists acquired valuable knowledge of the national government's structure and functions. The emerging indigenous leadership of the late 1970s and 1980s benefited from experiences their predecessors never had. Several of them had been the first in their families to complete high school. As they became involved in local organizations receiving state funds, they developed negotiating skills, gained experience in assessing, negotiating, and evaluating state proposals, and began to demand control over the planning and execution of rural development.

The second important consequence of land reform policy was the reconfiguration of local governance through the reconstitution of previous *anejos*, or annexes, into legal communities.<sup>8</sup> After the traditional haciendas were dissolved, indigenous peasants sidestepped the government's encouragement of state-planned cooperatives and drew on a 1937 law that established the legal and political legitimacy of Indian communities, protecting their right to land. Communities proliferated for important reasons. To qualify legally as a community, residents had to assign some land to communal use. In turn they would be protected by the law as legal communities and would have better standing in disputes with individual landowners and possible land expropriation.<sup>9</sup> Another reason for the growth of communities was the dissolution of traditional local power relations after the demise of the hacienda. In the Ecuadorian hacienda system, landowners, with the support of the church and local officials, had held a virtual monopoly over power, assigning local leaders or captains to maintain social control. In contrast to Peru and Bolivia, where important mining economies were prioritized over haciendas during the colonial and early national periods, Ecuador had relied primarily on haciendas as its main source of income since the seventeenth century. The long-standing dominance of the hacienda system in the rural highlands meant that political and economic power were tightly interwoven. After the 1964 reform community structures helped to reorganize power locally, replacing the power vacuum left by the hacienda's breakdown. Elected councils pursued social integration and some degree of political autonomy, using both consent and coercion to achieve community goals.

But indigenous communities also served a larger purpose. The idea of community, its survival and reproduction, lent tangible meaning to indigenous peasants' struggles, enabling the framing of what mestizo bureaucrats perceived as merely material demands into cultural claims. The joint pursuit of land for the community meant a common quest for recognition; its final acquisition signified both the end of struggle, abuse, repression, and death and the beginning of a shared, uninhibited space for cultural reproduction.<sup>10</sup>

The third important consequence of land reform was the spatial and economic dislocation of many indigenous peasants from the hacienda system and their insertion into a relatively new realm: town and city life. As many peasants were dismissed from hacienda duties and were confronted by new economic hardships, they increasingly sought economic opportunities in

both distant cities and adjoining towns. But Indians had a tense coexistence with mestizo market intermediaries, authorities, educators, and vendors. They were excluded from many employment opportunities, as towns and cities institutionalized a labor-partitioning system that assigned them the most menial and underpaid tasks.

As they migrated and diversified their labor activities, many Indians could no longer be called peasants in the strict sense of the term. Occupational differentiation and the urban lifestyle that stemmed from it rendered their identity as peasants problematic and yet not obsolete, as their ability to function in both worlds precluded placing them in a simple worker/peasant dichotomy. Indians who still owned land or worked in agriculture were also artisans, merchants, vendors, construction workers, and professionals; and many who worked exclusively in urban jobs eventually purchased lands and returned to their communities.<sup>11</sup>

These three contemporaneous consequences of land reform played important roles in the formation of a collective political identity that was the basis for political action. Whether intended or not, these consequences confirm the existence of a strong relationship between modernity and the emergence of movements based on cultural and racial difference. Instead of accelerating Indians' assimilation into mestizo society, the elimination of a servile class of huasipungueros and their incorporation in state policy and urban economies actually encouraged the proliferation of "Indian" organizations that stressed cultural difference from a dominant white-mestizo society. Freed from the subjection of hacienda servitude, the children of these huasipungueros reinvented the Indian in their own modern image, reproducing ethnic identity through community living and return migration, transcending traditional spatial boundaries to promote cultural revitalization and political organization. Two crucial factors that facilitated the creation of this new emergent identity were state policies designed to incorporate former huasipungueros and changes in everyday racial relations as a consequence of economic and political modernization.

### THE INDIAN AND THE STATE

State rural policies in the 1970s served to shape societal conceptions of the expected roles, rights, and duties of Indians. The ways in which the state sought to integrate Indians were made evident in public declarations

concerning their role in agrarian development, the possibilities for their functional integration into the market, and their ability to advance the national development process.

Paralleling the Peruvian reform, Ecuadorian policy makers sought to reconcile the goals of equity and productivity. There were two main state approaches to the incorporation of Indians in the military regimes of the 1970s: integration through redistribution and integration through productivity. The first approach argued that integration of indigenous peasants could be achieved by simply targeting them as the beneficiaries of land distribution policies, thus freeing them to become fully incorporated in the market. It was conditioned, however, on a conceptualization of the nation as homogeneous and therefore easily able to be “guided” by a technocratic military elite. The second approach required that Indians maintain an adequate level of domestic crop productivity and occupy the place assigned to them in the agrarian structure. Although each of these approaches was initiated in different political moments to justify different policies, both still occupy an important place in contemporary political debates. While the latter has taken precedence over the former, the former has been internalized by Indian activists and remains an important component of many contemporary indigenous organizations’ rhetoric.

#### *Integration through Redistribution*

The military regime that ousted President Jose María Velasco Ibarra in 1972 introduced important changes in the state’s approach to rural development. Velasco owed his power to a lack of consensus between industrial and traditional agricultural elites. The military seizure of power was supported by both industrialists and landowners, who jointly believed that neither Velasco nor the populist Assad Bucaram would be able to administer the new oil revenues adequately.<sup>12</sup> Led by a progressive wing, the military government headed by General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara attempted to implement economic and social reforms that promoted social justice and ensured profound social change (Isaacs 1993). The Rodríguez Lara administration is comparable to the military administration of Velasco in Peru, which sought an alternative path to development that addressed the needs of popular sectors. The Ecuadorian regime’s self-designation as a “nationalist” revolution reflected its desire to carve an Ecuadorian path of devel-

opment that would no longer depend on or emulate first world countries. In contrast to the 1963 junta that had been unabashedly antiunion and anti-communist, the Rodriguez Lara government held a more open position toward popular organizations, occasionally seeking their support in a national development plan that hinged on fiscal and agrarian reform, import substitution industrialization, and nationalization of the petroleum industry (Bocco 1987, 155).<sup>13</sup>

One of the first proposals presented by Rodriguez Lara was a new land reform law designed to strengthen the 1964 law by enforcing strict limits on the amount of land one landowner could have and by extending reform to include nonhuasipunguero indigenous communities. Expanding land reform was viewed as the best means of integrating peasants into national development and of achieving legitimacy for the regime through popular support. It was also considered good for capitalist development because it was believed to enlarge the domestic market, leading to growth in industry and fuller employment of urban workers. These workers, in turn, would produce a larger demand for agricultural products, which would increase productivity and economic growth in the rural areas, integrating all the country's population. Finally, increased productivity would decrease international dependence by replacing national products for foreign ones, rendering the importation of basic staples unnecessary (Rosero 1990).

Thus land reform was considered not only socially just, and politically wise but economically expedient. Land redistribution was considered a desirable goal for its own sake, because it was judged a necessary condition for economic growth. In national addresses and declarations, the Rodriguez Lara government used a logic that intertwined economic development goals with the indigenismo of the pre-agrarian reform Left to argue for reform.<sup>14</sup> Proclaiming its antifeudal nature, the government made frequent allusions to preagrarian reform horrors to decry the opposition of landowners to the regime's "sincere revolutionary efforts."<sup>15</sup> Its attack on the hacienda system was based not only on "the degrading human relations it involves" but also on the "backwardness of its system of production."<sup>16</sup> The problem of land concentration was not considered an exclusively indigenous issue but a condition that hindered the entire process of agricultural development, productivity in particular. Concentration of land was blamed for slow market growth, low productivity levels, and growing inflation.<sup>17</sup> More specifically, it had barred peasants from economic and social integration:

"We can't go back on agrarian reform and ignore the human masses marginalized from production."<sup>18</sup> While increased productivity helped to justify reform to industrial elites, the main reason stressed in public forums was the regime's commitment to social justice. Publicly announcing its opposition to "groups who oppressed the dispossessed,"<sup>19</sup> the government claimed it would try to limit the earnings of those who "already have too many opportunities" in order to help the popular majority.<sup>20</sup>

The Rodriguez Lara regime's preoccupation with equity went beyond land distribution concerns to include other social benefits, such as education and health, without which, the government stated, the "marginals" could not be integrated as full citizens. Hence, this regime was the first to legitimize (if not always respond to) a number of non-land-related indigenous demands, stressing that their full participation and incorporation in national economic life was their right as citizens, not a gift or privilege (Rosero 1990, 19). Finally, this regime made the first attempts to offer legal and juridical assurance to what it called the "permanently marginalized groups," asking for their more extensive participation in the elaboration and execution of decisions that affected them (Rosero 1990, xi). Regardless of whether this new approach came out of the regime's sincere revolutionary intentions or was simply a better way of ensuring capitalist domination, its effects were profound, in terms of both policy impact and promotion of indigenous organization.<sup>21</sup>

What rendered the regime's approach problematic for Indians, however, was that its concept of integration was based on an ideal of a homogeneous nation that precluded the assertion of difference. While the nationalist government had used selected aspects of Indians' ethnic identity to build a national image of Ecuador that would differentiate it from foreign countries, it appropriated them as part of a mestizo myth of origin that all Ecuadorians could absorb. In this perspective, highland and lowland Indians, urban workers and rural poor, were all defined as marginals who should be integrated into the center but could not be protagonists in this process. This notion of a single national interest, defined according to urban mestizo elites' conceptions of progress and culture, was used to justify national development policies that infringed on Indians' rights and resources and excluded them from participation in decision making, in essence further marginalizing the "marginals" it purported to integrate.

One example of this occurred in the province of Pichincha, where several state-supported cooperative projects were eventually unsuccessful in satisfying indigenous peasants' expectations of reform. Although the cooperative model of rural development was not as widespread as in Peru, it took hold in Pichincha, where land transfers had been made from the state to huasipungueros. This cooperative model did not meet Indians' expectations, nor did it allow for a more democratic participation in decision making about labor practices, resource allotment, and member rights. The strict rules made former huasipungueros feel they were working for someone else. The restrictions on other employment did not allow them to pursue nonmembers' common labor strategy of working as migrants in the city and returning to work the land periodically.

In addition to the failed cooperative experiments, there were other problems with rural development. Indigenous peasants usually had no choice in determining who would be the targets of rural policies. Rural development projects organized by the Ministry of Agriculture with state and international funds often targeted areas that public officials thought were most likely to perform well because previous conditions (soil fertility, local enterprise) were already conducive to success. These projects excluded criteria based on local need and density of population and usually overlooked populations with greater financial insecurity and instability. Moreover, most important decisions about production and infrastructure were made by national or regional officials or by committees that did not include indigenous officials and rarely consulted with indigenous activists.<sup>22</sup>

### *Integration through Productivity*

The Rodriguez Lara administration's pursuit of redistribution was tenuous and short lived. The premise that social equity was a necessary condition for economic growth was challenged by landed elites as soon as the government announced its intention to expand agrarian reform. The ensuing debate over the implementation of a new land reform policy in 1973 illustrates the tension between "integration through redistribution" and "integration through production" and sheds some light on the ultimate victory of the latter. As Reidinger (1993) has pointed out in his discussion of land reform in the Philippines, elite land reform debates frequently involve the idealization of landowners and the demonization of peasants, which can



ultimately lead to the repression of contestation. The Ecuadorian land reform debate should also be understood as not being simply about policy implementation and land redistribution, but about the very conceptualization of Indians and their relationship to productivity and modernity.

By early 1973 the government had disclosed that the proposed law would include cases involving high demographic pressure, as well as set stricter controls on the amount of land an individual proprietor could own.<sup>23</sup> No details were known until a text mysteriously released to the press in July reported that the new law would expropriate the property of any landowner who was exploiting less than 80 percent of the plot (*Mensajero*, July 1973, 1).<sup>24</sup> Landed elites, organized in the Chamber of Agriculture of the First Zone, immediately attacked the reform plan. They initiated an intense media campaign against what they called a communist government that threatened private property and called for the removal of the IERAC's "excessive" powers. They argued that, instead of promoting the peasants' welfare, the state should be more concerned with protecting the individual right to private property of "agrarian producers," the term they reserved for themselves.

In an astute political move, elites achieved political legitimacy not by holding on to a concept of absolute property (e.g., defense of private property as a natural right to be protected at all costs) but by redefining the concept of socially functional property in public debates as well as in Ministry of Agriculture declarations and interviews. The notion of the social function of property was originally coined by the Frenchman Leon Duguast, in reaction to individualistic notions of property established in the 1789 Declaration of Man and the Citizen and the Napoleonic Code. Duguast argued that public interest and social welfare are above the interests of individuals or specific groups. In Latin American rural struggles, this notion was used to argue that it was in the public interest to prevent the concentration of property in a few hands (Muñoz and Lavadenz 1997). In Ecuador this concept was used by reform advocates to undermine the historical sanctity of absolute property rights. The main argument was that the landowners' practice of leaving significant portions of their land idle, a common phenomenon in the highlands, was detrimental to the nation's prosperity because it erased all potential for improved agrarian production. In these cases, land reform was necessary, not only because it was a just option, but also because it would advance agrarian development. It was argued that

indigenous peasants in a particular area deserved the idle land because they would make use of it and increase agrarian production.

Initially a compelling rationale for reform, this argument was attacked by landed elites who claimed that the rapid modernization of agrarian technologies required new criteria for determining whether a plot of land was meeting its social function. The basis for judging cases of expropriation should no longer be the quantity of land used but the quality of cultivation, harvesting techniques, and machinery used. This meant that “producers,” a new landowner term for themselves that replaced *hacendados*, could be much more productive than peasants, even when using less land. If a landowner used modern technologies that substantially improved production, the land was definitely carrying out its social function, and concerns about the amount of land remaining idle should become secondary. In addition, landowners argued that productivity could improve more easily in larger plots, not in *minifundios*, or small plots. The social function of land, therefore, should be based on the productivity and efficiency of the producer. Thus redistribution was considered detrimental to the nation’s wealth because it removed resources from those most capable of carrying out the social function of land.<sup>25</sup>

The construction of mestizo landed elites as modern producers erased the *gamonal*, or large landowner. The disassociation from gamonalismo, now considered a defunct system of production, allowed these producers to inscribe themselves into the state’s modernization initiatives, to place themselves on an equal playing field with indigenous peasants, and to accuse the government of playing favorites by placing peasant’s rights above the rights of producers, thus privileging redistribution at the expense of productivity (*Mensajero*, July 1973, 3). The landed elites’ campaign was successful in more ways than one. The government was put on the defensive, riddling its public declarations with contradictions as it tried to assuage landowners by presenting the policy as a reconciliation of the interests of producers and peasants. “The greatest fallacy is to say that agrarian reform will lower production: we have raised the challenge that in Ecuador it will rise,” stated Minister of Agriculture Jorge Maldonado Lince (*El Comercio*, October 9, 1973, 3). Rodriguez Lara argued that peasants who benefited from reform were an aid, not a hindrance, to agrarian development: “The peasant masses will be incorporated into our national development, adding to our wealth, increasing the capital invested in

agriculture and the management of efficient exploitation" (*El Comercio*, October 9, 1973, 3).

At the same time, however, the government was changing the terms of debate by incorporating the landowners' concerns in its discourse. It adopted the definition of social function proposed in landowners' arguments, as evidenced in Maldonado Lince's statement that the purpose of the new law was to "fulfill the social function of property with a criteria of efficient production." Furthermore, he reassured landowners that "the law is not an attempt against private property, since lands will only be affected if they don't fulfill their social function." In the same declaration in which he had defended peasant's rights to land, Rodríguez Lara reassured the public that the law would not infringe on producers' rights: "Land reform will not be for peasants or for landowners but for a just distribution of land" (*El Comercio*, October 9, 1973, 3).

By the time the final version of the law was decreed in November 1973, the original proposal had been considerably watered down and redistribution as a goal had taken second place behind productivity, although it included an important clause that validated demographic pressure as a valid cause for expropriation (the only aspect of the law the government was able to secure). The objective was no longer to democratize land use and distribution but to expropriate only if landowners did not comply with state-designated productivity goals. This was achieved by creating a loophole that provided landowners—with advance warning—a grace period to make their production more efficient so as to avoid expropriation. For subsequent decades, this provision served to legitimate mere reprimands in cases in which expropriation would have been historically and legally justified. It has since provided an escape valve not only for landed elites but also for subsequent administrations less sympathetic to reform. The final version of the law revealed the limitations of the nationalist revolution to popular sectors that had hoped for radical change. Pressured by landed elites and with little support from industrial elites, the Rodríguez Lara administration abandoned its progressive agenda. The political consequences of the debate could not be dismissed lightly: Maldonado Lince had been forced to step down, and a military faction that had supported landed elites' position had gained political strength, eventually taking power in 1977.

After the 1973 law productivity became the yardstick by which all state policies, as well as producers' and peasants' economic activities, were meas-

ured. Two important factors hindered peasants' ability to produce efficiently and abundantly, however. First, the government promoted urban subsidies at the expense of rural prices. Despite its expressed concern for rural poverty, the regime's import substitution model of development showed a clear urban bias by setting price ceilings on rural products, such as corn, wheat, and barley, consumed by the urban popular sector. This led to exacerbation of rural-urban inequality: between 1971 and 1983 the ratio of urban and rural wages increased from 3.31:1 to 6.49:1, while the price of industrial products Indians purchased increased substantially, producing a decrease in indigenous peasants' purchasing power (Sylva 1991). Second, peasants were excluded from most credit opportunities. Between 1973 and 1976, 75 percent of the agricultural credit was granted to producers who invested in export products or profitable domestic sectors such as dairy and livestock production, while minimum amounts were channeled to the production of staples for domestic consumption by indigenous peasants (Chiriboga 1988a).

#### COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS

Land reform in Ecuador followed a path that is both similar to and different from that in Bolivia and Peru. The reforms in all three countries sought to adequately combine redistribution and productivity. All fell short on both counts. Although Bolivia instituted sweeping land reform after its 1952 revolution, it affected one zone primarily. Also, the law was used to distribute fiscal land to a small number of large producers, creating a new concentration of land and income (Muñoz and Lavadenz 1997). Although Peru was successful in attacking gamonalismo, the distribution of benefits was highly uneven. The reform distributed land only to former huasipungueros, benefiting only 400,000 of 1.4 million peasant families that were landless (Alberts 1983). In addition, as in Ecuador, many landowners had already evicted tenants and sold off their productive assets in anticipation of the reform. As De Janvry (1981) and Dorner (1992) have argued, even when large amounts of land were distributed in Latin America, other governmental policies led to reconcentration. As a consequence, most countries today have a skewed pattern of land distribution.

In all three countries, production did not increase considerably. Common factors that undermined the productivity of the minifundios were state-imposed price controls of domestic products that benefited the urban

population at the expense of the rural population, inadequate infrastructure and credit, and support of larger farmers who engaged in export agriculture. In all three cases, the primary focus was on changing ownership, not necessarily on raising productivity or peasant income. Most small landholders who benefited from reform had to supplement their incomes with migrant work.

Two key distinctions of the Ecuadorian reform are relevant for this book. While the Bolivian and Peruvian reforms are considered social if not economic successes (Bolivia, for the large percentage of hectares transferred in the context of a revolution; Peru, for its ability to undermine gamonalismo if not the power of landowning families), Ecuador, by most expert accounts, was considered neither. Ecuadorian reform efforts encountered much more political opposition in their implementation, and the underfunded IERAC was not allowed to actively engage in expropriation. The basis for landowner power was not destroyed but reasserted as the hacienda reinvented itself and landed elites learned to organize the rural economy in new ways. Hence the most important social and political impact of reform was not necessarily the overturning of elite power but the politicization of indigenous peasants who began to chip away at this power to ensure the implementation of reform. The obvious need to continue the struggle to ensure implementation, even in limited ways, distinguishes the Ecuadorian post-land reform period from the other cases.

The second distinction is the limited application of the cooperative model in Ecuador, especially compared to Peru. The cooperative model was characterized by state control of production, the land market, resources, credit, and rural workers. It essentially turned former debt peons into workers for the state, assuming that these rural laborers lacked the knowledge necessary to organize their own labor and production. The cooperative was an imposed model that attempted to homogenize all rural peasants into one work model. According to Hopkins (1985), Peruvian peasants felt a loss of control over their lives that was reminiscent of the hacienda system. And according to Seligmann (1995), struggles that ensued among peasants and between the state and peasants who resented the lack of control over production opened opportunities for radical organizing, specifically, for the radical organization Sendero Luminoso. In Ecuador the state never exercised this amount of control over former huasipungueros. Although it funded selective rural development projects and aimed to integrate indigenous

peasants via rural policy, it did not engage in the massive micromanagement of rural agriculture. Former huasipungueros organized their own labor and production, according to market demands. Moreover, the indigenous community and intercommunal organizations, not the cooperative, became the social and political unit that organized social and economic relations and mediated among individual producers, NGOs, and the state.

This last distinction is important, because the revitalization of communities for the purpose of implementation of land reform and other rural policies played a key role in the politicization of former huasipungueros. The relative autonomy of organization and leadership that communities offered—and cooperatives did not—allowed for the creation of networks and the building of solidarity within and across different zones of the highlands. At the very minimum, the community model offered more opportunities for cooperation by not pitting the privileged (cooperative members) against the unprivileged (nonmembers). While social differentiation in the Ecuadorian highlands has increased with changes such as land reform, migration, and the commercialization of artisan production, it has lacked the additional layer of cooperative membership that exacerbated interethnic and intraethnic conflict in Peru. This key difference is one important reason why a strong national indigenous movement has developed in Ecuador but not in Peru.

#### THE REINSCRIPTION OF RACE

The effect of the rural policies in Ecuador was the institutionalization of an agrarian production system that was organized by race, consisting of wealthy white and mestizo producers who abandoned domestic grain production for revenue-generating production, mestizo landowners of middle-sized plots who ventured into smaller-scale but still profitable production, and indigenous peasants who produced the substantially less profitable domestic grains. The latter can be divided further into a minority of petty merchants who have enough land and production to sustain themselves and sell for profit and a vast majority who have small plots and therefore must also sell their labor.

This racialization of production was maintained by constructing the Indians as unproductive. While the very design of this policy raises the question of whether it was ever intended to benefit peasants, Indian peasants were faulted for not taking advantage of reform to raise productivity

and improve their socioeconomic status. The representation of gamonales as productive, efficient, mechanized, and profit-oriented producers was accompanied by the contrasting depiction of Indians as backward, primitive in their cultivation technologies, inherently lacking the capitalist spirit, and thus destined to remain at the lowest levels of production.

Here is where racial characteristics took central stage. Representations of Indianness—not peasantness—were used to justify the relegation of indigenous producers to supporting players in agrarian modernization. In this case, racial discourse, understood as the dissemination of ideas about how inherent body differences shape social realities and social relations, is expressed in economic terms. With economic modernization, economic arguments for the inferiority of Indians have intensified throughout Latin America. According to Rex (1986), racism in the region is evidenced by the fact that while many of the distinctions of the colonial caste system have disappeared as economic factors have come to the fore, racist explanations are offered for the failure of Indians to succeed in a theoretically equal society. Ideas about rural development, economic progress, and modernity are therefore loaded with racial content.

To support their position in the 1973 debate, landed elite organizations had begun circulating studies claiming that domestic agricultural production was not meeting its targets and speculating on indigenous peasants' ability to boost production. By 1976 landowners were arguing for an end to reform by denouncing what they termed the tragedy of *minifundización* (i.e., the reduction of average plot size) as the main reason for the decrease in production and the paralysis of national development. This position has a striking parallel to early nineteenth-century positivism, in which the large numbers of indigenous people and blacks were considered an impediment to national development.

Although the contemporary discussion referred to land policy instead of indigenous population per se, the strong link in the collective imagination between indigenous peasants and low productivity infused this debate with racial meaning, as reform was viewed as a threat to humanity. On March 9, 1978, *El Comercio*, one of Ecuador's two major newspapers, published an editorial describing agrarian reform as antiproducer, anti-Ecuadorian, antisocial and antihuman. It was judged antihuman because it was blamed for the decline in productivity and a general economic decline in the rural sector. Through the late 1970s and the 1980s, landowners denounced the

displacement (however limited) of “producers” from land that in their view had brought a shift from a mythical pre-land reform prosperity to poverty and misery. In their view, Ecuadorian development had been stifled because of land reform. By 1983, for example, when the government was addressing the agrarian “problem” once again, the Chambers of Agriculture and Livestock of the highlands and lowlands denounced a new agrarian code proposal:

This law attempts to reactivate and deepen agrarian reform, which has brought the destruction of efficient units of production, the scarcity of food, and to the so-called beneficiaries of reform has brought unemployment and more poverty.<sup>26</sup>

Reviewing a clause that proposed the strengthening of communal and cooperative property rights, the chamber found it unacceptable that article 17 supported the transfer of private lands to the public domain:

[T]his is not a positive thing, since it has led to a grave deficiency of production and to the destruction of important economic units that are today in a lamentable state of abandonment and deterioration.<sup>27</sup>

The notion of abandoned land that had been used by land reform advocates to obtain reform in cases of sociodemographic pressure was now being applied by the former landowners to indigenous producers. Furthermore, the notion of deterioration suggests, once again, the existence of a previously prosperous highland countryside. By the late 1980s and early 1990s (particularly after the 1990 uprising), the Chambers of Agriculture and Livestock were hiring foreign experts to confirm their claims about the positive correlation between land reform and economic decline. Completing the reversal of roles, chamber representatives in one meeting I attended called the Indians the *terratenientes*, or real landowners, because they now owned a majority of the land.<sup>28</sup> The “*terratenientes*” lack of skills, their cultural distinction from white and mestizo society, and their traditionalism were blamed for the decline in productivity.

*The Second Military Government:  
Colonization, Repression, and the Decline of Reform*

In addition to the consolidation of racialized production and the decline in agrarian reform implementation, two other state practices ensured the



subordination of Indians: the project of lowland colonization and the legal sanctioning of the repression of peasants who were involved in land struggles. Colonization of the Amazonian lowlands, initiated by the Rodríguez Lara regime and consolidated by the 1977 military triumvirate, was posited as a way to address peasant organizations' land claims.

Colonization provided for state adjudication of "empty" lowland plots to peasants willing to leave the highlands and settle in the rainforest region. Posing the Amazonian region, or *oriente*, as a "no-man's land" enabled the state to declare that there actually was enough land for all those who needed it, even if the redistribution issue in the highlands remained unresolved. The omission of lowland peoples from the national imaginary can be explained in part by the dominant representation of lowland Indians as savages, whereby Indians are viewed as an extension of nature and not as a part of civilization (Muratorio 1994). While colonization was initially promoted as a support policy for redistribution in the highlands, in its implementation it became a replacement for it. When the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Colonización y Reforma Agraria (INCRAE) was created in 1977, IERAC's budget was slashed by 55 percent, as funds were redirected to the colonization of lowlands.

The repression of Indians who were active in land struggles was another mechanism of control. The reform law created the necessary legal framework for land adjudication, but most transfers were finally implemented because of organizational pressures, such as land invasions, animal kidnappings, and de facto occupation of the hacienda. Until 1979 these acts were not always considered illegal. Depending on the case, the state had considerable discretion in whether to intervene or let an incident slip by. As peasant unions proliferated, however, landowners felt more threatened and lobbied successfully for a law that would prohibit and punish violations.

The systematic, state-enforced prohibition of invasions was not secured, however, until the military triumvirate decreed the Agrarian Development Promotion Law in 1979, months before the democratically elected president, Jaime Roldós, was to be inaugurated. In a process that excluded the participation of peasant organizations, the Chambers of Agriculture and Livestock negotiated extensively with the triumvirate to obtain the stated goal of promoting export production and lowering the domestic production deficit. The law implemented a series of protections for "producers" and restricted peasants' access to agrarian reform benefits.

Another important component of the law, article 37, called for the punishment of all land invaders, disqualifying all those who participated in an invasion from receiving any of the land finally adjudicated. This policy greatly increased the risks attached to land invasion by ensuring state retaliation and facilitating landowners' use of police and military forces to remove peasants from lands in dispute. Through the 1970s and early 1980s, many methods of repression and abuse were used against Indians who organized, including paramilitary forces, death threats, imprisonment under real or false charges, and torture. Although few activists were actually killed, harassment, physical violence, and beatings were routine.

Two notable examples are the conflict of the Llinllín hacienda, in Chimborazo province, and Quinchuquí, in Imbabura province. In Llinllín, the owners, the Davalos Donoso family, had turned the hacienda into a company in 1979 and hired the former huasipungueros as wage workers, a common tactic used to avoid expropriation. The peasants organized to obtain back payments for years of labor, asking for land parcels and houses as minimum demands. The landowners' failure to meet these demands led to a labor strike in October. In response, forty-five police occupied the hacienda residence. When the land court found in favor of the peasants, police repression intensified, and police officers attacked, imprisoned, and tortured several of them (*Nueva* 62 [February 1980]: 21).

In Quinchuquí indigenous peasants had lodged a demand for land expropriation in 1975. In December 1977 there was an initial police intervention, and in 1978 the landowner Carlos Montufar, secured a permanent police patrol. In addition, military personnel started gun "training" on hacienda grounds. Police persecution, imprisonment, and torture intensified and continued until 1981, when the Ecumenical Committee for Human Rights secured the withdrawal of police. Repression was both selective (four founding members of the cooperative were imprisoned and tortured in August 1979) and random, designed to intimidate. All members of the nine communities in the area were at risk. A nineteen-year-old peasant woman described her encounter with the police:

I was getting on the bus that goes to Otavalo when in that instant the police grabbed me, made me get off the bus, and hit me right on the street. Then they took me to the hacienda and beat me there, and then they took me to the Otavalo jail. The next day three policemen hit me:

one threw gas at me, one held me by the arm, and another one hit me with sticks and a rock. They hit me as much as they wanted.<sup>29</sup>

Another woman described her experience with the police in her community:

I was arrested almost a month ago. I was not saying or doing anything. I was sick and only stood there to watch. I am not a man, so how would I hit? All the people ran up the hill when they saw the police. The police were throwing those things . . . what are they called . . . those bombs [tear gas] . . . [T]hey threw them up the hill and the people kept running. I told them "Don't run. We're only women standing here, we are not doing anything." And when they caught some of them [men] the women would tell them, "Don't hit them too much sir." And then they started calling us dirty Indian woman, Indian this and Indian that . . . here . . . here . . . and they started hitting us with a stick. Even though I was sick they hit me a lot and they took me to prison and I still can't get better.<sup>30</sup>

When the National Planning Development Corporation handed down a judgment favorable to the peasants, Montufar organized a cooperative of his own, offering to sell the land to three hundred mestizos, *chicha* (alcoholic drink) vendors, and Indians who had never worked on the hacienda, instigating them to seize the lands and attack the peasant workers. Members of the peasant cooperative visited the IERAC office in the governor's office earlier that day to request protection from an imminent attack, but none was given. Later that day three hundred of Montufar's people attacked one hundred peasants, and twenty Indians were hospitalized in serious condition.<sup>31</sup>

Article 37 of the Agrarian Development Law did not call for the use of violence in land conflicts, but it facilitated and legitimized landowners' use of the police. Landowners' ability to use force even when cases had been decided in favor of the peasants and the lack of protection for indigenous citizens who filed (and eventually won) legal claims reflected the new environment created by the law.

That this law was passed just a few months before Roldós's inauguration is not coincidental. It guaranteed certain transition to a democratic regime in which integration through redistribution had been eliminated as a development option, landed elites' privileges could once again be guaranteed, and peasant activism would be controlled. If the contradictions between

redistribution and productivity had been tensely negotiated in the Rodriguez Lara administration, the institutionalization of rural reform that meant increased productivity and colonization was finally and undeniably secured under the military triumvirate.

*The New Racial Relations: The Maltrato and Its Implications*

The indigenous activist Alberto Taxco staged a public trial in Cotopaxi province during the Indian uprising of 1990, holding local authorities responsible for the *maltrato*, or mistreatment, of Indians. He received an enthusiastic response from all those present as well as the thousands of highland indigenous people who heard of it. Although he made specific reference to the responsibility of Cotopaxi's governor and city councilmen for the abuse and exclusion of Indians in the province, he could have been referring to any of the highland towns in which similar mestizo-Indian relationships prevail. In addressing particularly common racial incidents, he was referring to the everyday set of inequities facing Indians: abuse by public authorities, unequal exchanges with mestizo merchants and intermediaries, and ostracism of town dwellers.

In Ecuador and most of Latin America, far from disappearing, race has become more salient with modernity, facilitating the creation of an imagined community of different ethnic groups who share a similar socioeconomic location in multiracial countries. The homogenization of all pre-Colombian groups into one naturalized Indian category began in the colonial period and has been maintained and rearticulated in subsequent periods. It has been reiterated in Latin American scholarship on the Indian throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that had been read widely on the continent and understood to apply to all Indians in the Americas. If cultural and language differences facilitated the racialization of the Indians on the continent (Todorov 1992), the long-standing generic categorization of indigenous peoples of many ethnic groups has generated its own dynamics, enabling whites and mestizos to make distinctions between themselves and other ethnic groups, as well as enabling those classified as Indians to identify among themselves as a group distinct from white and mestizo others.

Like many colonial regimes, those in Latin America were characterized by a rigid caste structure that legitimized colonization, repression, and slavery. By the late colonial and early national periods, however, intermarriage

and the concomitant increase in racially mixed populations along with post-independence nationalist ideologies of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* had a distinct effect on Latin American national identities. The nation-state model created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries valued integration and homogeneity over plurality and heterogeneity. Becoming *mestizo* characterized the new hybrid citizen, embodying simultaneously the supposed disappearance of racial divisions and the inheritance of a grand precolonial past. The erasure of distinction was emphasized, difference was considered problematic, and hybridity represented the future. (Vasconcelos 1948).

Taxco's public discussion of contemporary post-land reform racism takes on particular resonance in a region characterized by racial exceptionalism, or the notion that Latin America, compared to the United States, had somehow freed itself from racism (Hanchard 1994; Skidmore 1992). Racial exceptionalism is the coexistence of a myth of racial harmony and a reality of "strong racist sentiments and discriminatory practices" (Hanchard 1994, 44).

Whereas in the colonial caste structure racism is acknowledged, after the elimination of slavery and debt peonage and the insertion of free blacks and Indians into the labor market intellectuals considered class, not race, the central organizer of difference in the Americas. Hence the indigenous activists now highlighting the salience of racial discrimination against Indians were not only faced with the "surprise" of *mestizo* officials who denied racism but also were accused of being racists themselves.

The appeal of Taxco's message almost thirty years after land reform challenges racial exceptionalism by pointing to the existence of everyday racism, despite land reform and rural modernization. Land disputes were not the sole cause of confrontation between Indians and *mestizos* and were absent in communities with no hacienda tradition. The dissolution of the hacienda led to a reshuffling of local economic boundaries, which raised the stakes in interracial competition between *mestizos* and Indians for state and non-state resources. Once Indians were displaced from the bounded realm of the hacienda and entered the spatial, political, and social terrain of the *mestizos*, the latter asserted their dominance in everyday practices where, as Escobar (1992, 75) states, the interests of the dominant elites are contested, and the social practice of difference is played out. Before land reform, *huasipungueros* had been relatively isolated from town *mestizos*. Bound geographically and socially by the hacienda, they rarely visited adjoining

towns except to make selected purchases (those not available in hacienda-managed stores) and to attend church or religious festivals. The hacienda supervised the resources and expenditures of peasants and even oversaw their leisurely activities. Priests, *tenientes políticos*, and merchants who wanted access to Indians had to negotiate with the *hacendado* before taking any action.<sup>32</sup>

Land reform brought significant transformations both in indigenous communities and in adjoining towns. Within indigenous communities, new relationships were established between Indians and mestizos. Former *huasipungueros* established a more direct relationship with mestizo parish dwellers to negotiate the new aspects of posthacienda life, such as tax issues, contracts, and land conflicts.<sup>33</sup> Because it was difficult for them to command the attention and respect of local authorities without the intervention of the landowner or overseer, they increasingly relied on mestizo town dwellers to act as mediators with local authorities (Salamea 1980). As their dependence on mestizo intermediaries grew, Indians became more vulnerable to mestizo exploitation of their limited knowledge of Ecuadorian law and politics. In addition, Indians became more vulnerable to mestizos' encroachment into their communities. Without the presence of the *hacendado*, communities were much more vulnerable to the growing presence of *chicheros* (vendors of *chicha*, a fermented corn drink popular in the Andean highlands), *chulqueros* (moneylenders), and others targeting the communities. Local indigenous leaders increasingly perceived mestizo vendors, particularly *chicheros*, as a threat to their way of life and initiated early efforts to defend their communities by organizing campaigns to eject them. Hence many early attempts to organize involved issues of defense of the community against encroachment and exploitation by outsiders.

Interracial relations became increasingly complex as many Indians who were economically displaced by reform sought work in the adjoining towns and cities as market carriers, construction workers, and food vendors. More dynamic than their small populations may suggest, *pueblos* are frequently mini-centers of ceremonial events, commercial activities, and administrative functions. For Indians, the *pueblos* represent an intermediary space—not necessarily a place of transition between rural and urban life but a permanent in-between. *Pueblos* are the symbolic and ceremonial center of the rural highlands (Pachano 1986, 55). Surrounded by several indigenous communities, they are the site of encounters between the community and the

nation-state, the Indian and the mestizo. It is in the pueblos that most of the post-land reform generations of Indians first encountered mestizo power as they attended school, sought jobs, and carried out commercial transactions in local markets.

Just as the pueblos were the site for new forms of material reproduction, they were the location of new, specifically urban practices of racial domination. Faced with the threat of indigenous newcomers, mestizo townspeople struggled to preserve their economic and political control in a number of ways. In some cases, mestizo notables organized committees of town *fuerzas vivas*, or live forces, which relied on claims of the pueblo's historical tradition and identity to exclude Indians from positions of power, often in the name of preserving hygiene, morality, and sobriety. Generally, however, this was not necessary. Exclusion was secured through a complex of everyday practices, most notably segregation and de facto discrimination in schools, workplaces, public offices, and local markets.<sup>34</sup> These relations were not a mere remnant of pre-land reform behavior but the product of a rearticulation of racial subordination that affected all highland provinces. As late as ten years after reform, in the pueblos the spatial domain of Indians and mestizos was clearly demarcated in public offices, public transportation, employment, education, the market, and the street.

Public facilities were racialized and privatized. Indians could not occupy specific public places, which could include certain sidewalks, churches, parks, and plazas (Burgos Guevara 1977). Waiting rooms in hospitals and public offices, for example, were out of bounds. These practices were sustained through the notion that Indians were dirty, smelly, and flea-infested. Having them wait outside offices while mestizos waited inside was considered a necessary sanitary measure. A local activist in Guamote, Riobamba, refers to these practices:

Guamote is a pueblo that is very racist. We could say that they treat the Indians as if they were anybody and it is very rare to see them giving service to an Indian in a public office, regardless of whether the Indian is from the town or the country. They insult them tremendously. They call them *rocotos*. "You are sitting in the chairs, *rocotos*, how dare you, *verdugos* [executioners]." Well they are very strong and hard insults, threatening ones. And if the Indian responds, they [mestizos] call him arrogant, abusive, aggressive.<sup>35</sup>

Another activist from Chimborazo province remarked:

When an Indian goes to the civil registry to request a document, if she [the office worker] sees that it is an Indian, she continues to paint her nails—"Wait a moment, I'm busy"—and she continues on with her business, commenting on the intimate details of her personal life to her coworker. But if she sees a mestizo coming: "How are you, how have you been, rest, how can I help you?"<sup>36</sup>

Manuel Paca, president of Inca Atahualpa in Tixán, Chimborazo, mentioned problems in the public offices as a major concern of his organization. Specifically, he referred to the custom of charging Indians for services that were their rights:

When we created the organization we had a fight with the parish and canton authorities, because before, to get a birth certificate you had to pay between 3,000 and 5,000 sucres. And then we talked to knowledgeable people and they told us that we should not be paying anything, that the people working in those offices have a salary. Based on that, we gathered several people and we went to ask them why they were charging us 4,000 or 5,000 sucres. And it's not only with money that they have hurt us. They also asked us to take them hens, eggs, milk. And in the civil registry. . . if an Indian went to get a paper in order to marry, they would ask him his name. If one of the last names was wrong, then it wasn't only 5,000 sucres, but 60,000, 70,000, and even 100,000 sucres, and what could people do but sell their animals.<sup>37</sup>

In buses, one of the few sites where mestizos were obliged to share a space with them, Indians were expected to stand or sit in the back. As one interviewer explained,

In a bus, some twenty-three years ago, if an Indian got on and sat in front, even if the car was empty, the driver would send him to the back, to the last seat, insulting him. That was a daily experience, and people would prefer to sit in the back to avoid conflict. For example, in a bus if an Indian was sitting down and a mestizo arrived, and there were no more seats available, not only the driver but all the mestizos would say "Hey, hey, get up," and they would be furious. And that was terrible because one could not answer back. I remember in my case in a bus in Quito. I was standing in a space, and then a man came along and he took over my space without any consideration, as



if nobody had been there. So I reacted by not letting him push me, and then he immediately pushed me and started insulting me. And I responded, saying, "You started it." And all the people defended him, and they threw me out of the bus, accusing me of being a thief.<sup>38</sup>

There were other abuses that Indians would experience while riding on a bus that mirrored common hacienda practices such as removal of one's clothes as punishment or payment:

The car wouldn't stop for you, or you would be pushed around inside, or they would remove a piece of your clothing if a coin was missing.<sup>39</sup>

When Indians sought employment, they were hired only to perform the most menial tasks as domestic servants, market carriers, and construction workers. They were usually excluded from service sector positions that require exchanges with mestizos. With the exception of successful self-employed indigenous merchants, this pattern has not changed significantly in the last two decades, despite a substantial increase in the numbers of educated and professional Indians.<sup>40</sup> Gladys, a young activist in the *Movimiento Indígena de Chimborazo (MICH)* who is a high school graduate and an assistant in a medical office, commented:

If they [mestizos] see an Indian working in a medical office, they won't speak to the Indian, they look for a nurse with a skirt [a mestiza], no matter how illiterate, but she should wear a skirt. No matter how much the Indian knows, they simply ignore her.<sup>41</sup>

Gladys added that she had been able to obtain some respect in the medical office but that the doctor lost ten patients as a result of hiring her.

Young Indians faced difficult experiences in the rural education system. Most activists interviewed said they first faced discrimination in mestizo-administered schools and in encounters with mestizo students as well as teachers and administrators. Mestizo administrators and teachers frequently punished indigenous children for speaking Quichua in the schools or for wearing traditional clothes. Indigenous children's intellectual capacities were usually not taken seriously by their teachers, and they were frequently ostracized and humiliated in public by mestizo peers. A migrant worker from Chimborazo now working in Quito remembers that in his attempt to get an education he was reminded of his "place":

A school that was far away was only for them [mestizos]. They did not want to even give poor peasants a desk. "This Indian should sit over there," they would say in the school. "Why is this Indian studying, he should go herd the sheep, he should go plant, not study." And that is why, until recently I only knew how to sign my name.<sup>42</sup>

Segundo Andrango, an activist and engineer from Cotacachi, discussed his school experience in the late 1960s:

I studied in the elementary school of the city [Cotacachi]. Of thirty kids, two of us were Indians. In the country we were normal children, but over there [in school] we had to be quiet all the time because the mestizo kids would get angry if we laughed too loud. We had to be very submissive people, and then they would say that we were alright. . . . For example, all the mestizos would call us *tu, vos* [informal second person]. But for us it was impossible to call them *tu*. We had to call them *usted* [formal second person]. It was an unequal relationship. And the teacher observed all that and never said anything. That is what makes me angry about the teachers. And we would wear a white shirt, white pants, and in those times they used ink with a special pen that had a metal [tube] in which one placed the ink in order to write. They would grab the ink and throw it on our pants that were white. And so we suffered a lot, those of us who studied in the urban school. Terrible, terrible. It was a suffering made of terror.<sup>43</sup>

Local law enforcement authorities (all mestizo) were responsible for some of the most blatant forms of maltrato; repeated instances of unwarranted arrests, police brutality, torture, and other forms of inhumane treatment were common. Local courts were notorious for their unjustified delays in processing Indians' cases, an obvious partiality to mestizos in cases involving mestizo-Indian disputes, and excessive penalties and sentences in cases involving Indians.

Another important site of interracial tensions was the local market, where indigenous participation as vendors and purchasers increased considerably during the 1970s (Pachano 1986, 73). Mestizo intermediaries exploited indigenous producers in several ways. They took advantage of Indians' scarce resources by purchasing Indians' crops months before harvest for prices much lower than they would have eventually obtained in the market. Racial allegiance was used effectively to maintain mestizo control over

product prices, as evidenced in the common practice of price-fixing. In this process all mestizo intermediaries purchasing products in rural markets would agree to offer only an excessively low price for indigenous products. When Indians arrived in town, they would not be able to sell for more than this price. Finally, the “snatching,” or *arranche*, still remains a common problem in many highland markets. Instead of asking for the price of a particular product, a mestizo first snatches it from the grasp of Indian producers and then pays whichever amount he or she considers adequate. The *arranche* is especially important because of its racial overtones. Although the economic exploitation of vendors by intermediaries occurs among mestizos throughout the country, the seizure of products and the lack of basic respect it embodies are a specific feature of interracial relations in the highlands. Whereas unfair pricing mechanisms are also used against poor mestizo peasants in predominantly mestizo provinces such as Carchi, the *arranche* is one of many practices that portray the Indian as the mestizo’s servant.

The idea that Indians are servants is reflected in a number of racist practices originally enforced in haciendas and later reproduced in urban environments. Removing an Indian’s garment in mockery or as punishment, forcing Indians to do unpaid chores, and enforcing strict norms on how an Indian should greet a mestizo were “reminders” of the Indian’s place in sites outside of the hacienda:

Here, some fifteen years ago, the municipal police would take clothes from Indians in the communities. They would take your hat, your pants, and make you work on the sewer system, install street posts, or make sidewalks [to get the clothes back]. So the cities have been built entirely by *mingas* [forced labor]. . . . [O]n Sundays, as we went to mass, if there was some damage the police would grab a piece of clothing. . . . [I]f there was some damage, we were the ones who had to work and repair it. So I think that in that sense, they have used us as workhorses.<sup>44</sup>

The reconstruction of servile relations suggests a transposition of racial knowledge that had served to exploit Indians in a previous time and that would also become a focal point of contestation in the history of indigenous resistance.<sup>45</sup> Some practices were not entirely new, such as the *arranche* and bus-seating arrangements. What makes them so distinctive, however, is that the number of people affected was much greater after *huasipungueros* were

freed from the hacienda. Incidents were not only more frequent, but they involved many more indigenous peasants, whose commercial, religious, and governmental transactions had previously been restricted to the hacienda. They also involved new sites, particularly schools and public offices, which had previously been rarely attended or visited by hacienda Indians without mestizo intermediaries.

In addition, there was increasing public awareness and discussion of the *maltrato* after reform, as indigenous peasants had obtained new experiences of citizenship and a new awareness of their rights. *Maltrato* practices were increasingly considered unacceptable and became the focus of early activism of the 1970s. It was this sense of shared discrimination, more than any common tradition, that became one of the strongest bases for common identification. Forced labor, the *arranche*, public taunting, bus-seating arrangements, and discrimination in the schools were experiences shared by all indigenous groups throughout the highlands, free community members or former *huasipungueros*. Ethnic distinctions among Indians did not allow any of them to escape the *maltrato* or minimize the effects of racial subordination.

All of these practices share a common trait: the use of material dispossession. Excessive charges at public offices, spoiled pants, removed clothes, forced labor—all were perceived to deprive and rob Indians of something. In addition to depriving them of material goods, these practices reinforced Indians' sense of difference from mestizos. The white or mestizo was not only viewed as the attacker of the Indian but as the beneficiary of those rights and goods that were being taken from or denied to Indians. If newly forming indigenous organizations were just beginning to affirm a more positive identity, a sense of who they were and who they wanted to be, this negative identity, or sense of who they were not and who they were against (and who was responsible for their subordination), was already understood. As the Cotacachi activist Pedro de la Cruz stated:

Before there was no one, no one who would say these [Indians] are worth something. . . . [A]ll that was Indian was useless. . . . [F]or example, they would call the little dog "an Indian's dog" or the [small] hen "an Indian hen." What I mean is that everything that was little, all that was negative belonged to the Indian, and all that was positive, that was developed, belonged to the mestizo. . . so much influence. In the schools they would say, "Quichua is useless." Now our grandparents say, "*Llanga shimi* Quichua." *Llanga* means useless, that it had

no use; shimi means language. That is what our grandparents and parents would say, "Llanga shimi."<sup>46</sup>

Together, these interweaving daily practices of segregation, exclusion, discrimination, and labor segmentation reveal a complex pattern of post-land reform domination in which discrimination against Indians was increasingly viewed as operating outside the boundaries of any one ethnic group. As Indians became an important part of town life and its institutions, their racial identity—their Indianess—came increasingly into focus as a set of apparently unchangeable physical and cultural traits that made them unsuited for contemporary urban life or modern rural development. While broader state constructions emphasized their backwardness, unproductiveness, and potential for violence, town mestizos focused on their lack of cleanliness and their servile nature.

The existence of *maltrato* in the post-land reform period may have alternative explanations. If one assumes that changes in relations of production should have mitigated or ended racial discrimination, one could conceive of a lag theory, which would argue that racial relations and racial politics were a couple of decades behind reform and that they would eventually be redefined in a more equitable manner. But without significant resistance, these changes did not take place. Moreover, the relationship between the new economic order and the institutional and everyday racism is not coincidental. There is, however, a very different assumption: racism can not only persist but can be reinvented in the process of building a new economic order. Thus race played a key role in the formation of a new class system, and the new economic order was characterized by constructions of racial difference that were used at different points in the policy process to justify specific distributive arrangements.

In highlands Ecuador, exclusion was rearticulated after reform by a new and intense competition for political resources during the reorganization of relations of production. Competition between mestizos and Indians, landowners and peasants, old merchants and new ones, led to the more heightened relevance of race, in terms of both the reorganization of the economic and political order and the organization of resistance to the new order.

Since everyday rural racism was located in these specific forms of *maltrato*, their elimination became an important goal for Indian activists. The abuses of local public and police authorities, for example, led ECUARUNARI,

the first regional Indian organization in the highlands, to make demands no peasant organization had ever made before, such as lobbying for the appointment of Indian *tenientes políticos* and for state-funded indigenous teachers. Eventually, when the vote was expanded to illiterates, Indians would run for and capture local offices. While other, more complex patterns such as the *arranche* and other forms of servitude were often not specifically addressed in broader organization campaigns, they were extremely important in the process of consciousness raising that took place initially in small groups whose members eventually formed organizations. As chapter 7 illustrates, young Indian intellectuals and national activists used these discussions to describe, analyze, and problematize the mestizo-Indian power differential, to draw distinctions between peasant and Indian identity, and to assert the need for Indian organization and resistance.

### CONCLUSION

The indigenous experience in Ecuadorian agrarian modernization challenges views of race as a superstructural or merely ideological phenomenon whose survival depends on the survival of specific relations of production. Former *huasipungueros* were not automatically integrated as equals in a modernizing society. In theory, new rural development programs presented opportunities for all producers, Indian and non-Indian, wealthy and poor. The exclusion of Indians as unproductive and therefore noncredible participants in the agrarian transformation allowed non-Indian producers and former landowners to benefit from rural development programs.

Economic restructuring went hand in hand with the development of a new racial formation in which some forms of subordination persisted, some became defunct, others were reconstructed, and new ones were invented to organize inequality in entirely new situations. Constructed racial differences were used as political tools in the organization of the labor market, the production market, and the distribution of goods and services by local and national governments. Contemporary power relations were not “deracialized” as a consequence of land reform but were taken out of the more private realm of the *hacienda* and the local *teniente político* and into the realm of public policy and discourse.

Post-agrarian reform racial subordination involved the reinvention of the Indian both as an object of domination and as a subject of resistance. In

the economic and political reorganization of rural society, mestizo privilege was maintained through social hierarchies based on racial difference. Despite the egalitarian rhetoric of the first military administration, Indians were relegated to a second-class position in an agrarian development model they played no role in defining. The subordinate role assigned to them in the postreform development model is evidenced in their inferior socioeconomic position, their secondary role in a segmented agrarian production, and the persistent construction and reconstruction of everyday forms of discrimination against them all, regardless of occupation, ethnicity, or place of origin. Indians were fully aware that despite agrarian reform, or more precisely, because of it, the stigma of being Indian seemed inescapable.

How, then, do we explain the racial and political connection between this post-land reform period and the development of a collective indianista identity that has played such an important role in the formation of a national Indian movement? On a basic level, the creation and proliferation of Indian organizations precisely in this period could be viewed as a problem of unmet expectations. Borrowing from Gurr's (1970) relative deprivation theory, one could posit that indigenous mobilization stemmed from the gap between indigenous expectations of reform and what they actually received. Clearly, some contradictions existed between a state discourse of equal citizenship and integration, on the one hand, and a policy that sustained inequality and promoted diversification and segmentation of production, on the other. Furthermore, the limited redistribution model was depleted by the late 1970s and then discarded after the 1981 debt crisis exhausted the possibilities of the original development model (Rosero 1990). But beyond the broken promises lies a bigger issue. State rural development policies designed for a homogeneous nation by definition seemed to exclude the majority of indigenous peasants from participation, which facilitated the reproduction of subordination. As Warren (1978) concludes in her study of Indian identity in Guatemala, despite democratic rhetoric, there are informal mechanisms in the labor market and political realm that, in practice, ensure the separation of Indian and Ladino spheres and impede democratic access to institutions. As the experience of liberalism in the United States has shown, universal rights are often far from universal. The nonrecognition of difference often leads to the prevalence of the interests and beliefs of some groups and the total absence of others. The contradictions inherent in Ecuador's plan for rural development led Indians not only

to question the effects and implication of state-designed development but also to question their lack of representation in the polity and their absence as political actors. Lacking any presence in decision-making bodies or elected office, they had little or no say in shaping policies and debates. This lack of voice and access was by no means the only reason for racial subordination, but it became an important factor in the organization of resistance. As the next two chapters on local movements illustrate, the changing relations with mestizo authorities and town dwellers and the new relationship with the state led to the development of new Indian demands that traditional peasant unions had not addressed.