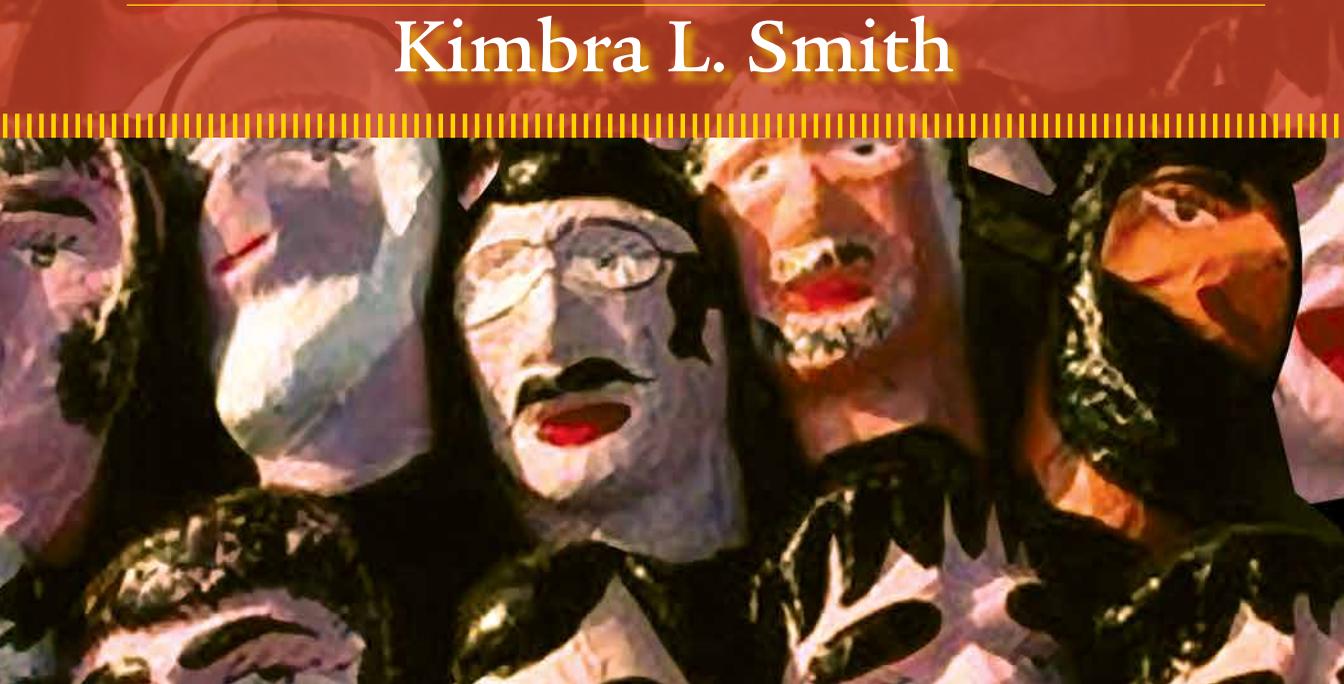




Practically Invisible

Coastal Ecuador, Tourism, and the Politics of Authenticity

Kimbra L. Smith



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*Para Alfredo, Aliana, y las generaciones pasadas,
presentes y futuras de Agua Blanca*

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Indigenous Communities and Globalizing Narratives

The Ecuadorian coast is frequently conceived
in the social imaginary as a space devoid of ethnicity.

Silvia Álvarez (2002)

LOCATED NEXT TO THE CHURCH and just down the hill from the museum, Cristi's shop was one of the prime spots for conversation in the coastal indigenous community of Agua Blanca, Ecuador. Smaller and quieter than El Barquito, where a TV constantly blared, or than El Descanso, where the sounds of drunken laughter, eclectic music, pool cues hitting balls, and the occasional tourist horde clamoring for cold drinks and snacks filled the air, it was my favorite place to meet with people, especially if serious matters were on the agenda. On this particular afternoon in 2003, Paúl, at the time the elected president of Agua Blanca, was meeting with me to discuss potential projects that could help meet community needs. We were also talking about the ongoing difficulties the community faced in its dealings with representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, who were trying to get Agua Blancans to sign papers permitting a Guayaquil-based investor to set up a tourism infrastructure, including a small aircraft landing strip in the frequently dry river valley that ran through the community.

One reason for the ongoing problems was that Agua Blanca's communal land holding was located in the center of the Machalilla National Park, Ecuador's only coastal park. As the only non-state-controlled land within a relatively lucrative tourism zone, Agua Blanca's territories were highly coveted by developers prohibited from building in other areas of the park—but as communally held land, the area could not be leased or sold unless the majority of community members agreed to the proposed changes. Given the economic and political clout of the external investors, Agua Blancans' right to the land was constantly being challenged, and the slippery question of how to produce concrete claims to legitimacy exacerbated the problem.

In terms of ethnicity, Agua Blancans officially identify as Manteños, part of the recently unified Manteño-Huancavilca-Puná indigenous people (*pueblo indígena*). But in negotiating everyday life, things often become much more complicated than that. Agua Blancans have increasingly found, as have all of us, that they must work within a framework of globalizing processes and discourses. In this book,

I will argue that the discursive framework of globalization produces the assumption that racial categories always exist and make sense. Hierarchized categories of race are furthermore embedded within broad notions of the nation-state and of international relations, as well as being central to Ecuadorian history and politics. Being agentive under these circumstances means that those who are labeled within those categories must not only be aware of the categories themselves, but must also engage with the discourses that produce the categories in the first place. For example, as I learned that day talking to Paúl, in order for the community to maintain its access to certain communal rights it has at times had to let itself be classified by the government not as an indigenous community, but as a “pueblo tradicional de la costa,” a traditional coastal village. What did that mean, I asked? “Afro-Ecuadorians,” Paúl explained with a wry grin on his face. “Indigenous groups only live in the highlands or in the Oriente,” the Amazonian lowlands. “At least that’s what the government says. So in some documents, we’re black.”

Agua Blancans, like other indigenous groups along Ecuador’s coast, are frequently invisible within Ecuador—if noticed or mentioned at all, they are currently most often described as *mestizo*, of mixed heritage. Coastal communities in the Andean countries are frequently imbricated within this type of symbolic violence, in part because most of the coast has historically been less geographically accessible or economically useful on the large scale than other topographic regions, as I will detail below. Thus during moments when they are unavoidably visible, such as during the creation of a national park around their communal lands, Agua Blancans’ identity has to be cast in terms recognizable and acceptable to a broader public. Over the years, Agua Blancans have been described not only as Afro-Ecuadorians, but also as peasants, *montubios*, mestizos, cholos, or various other terms, none of which recognizes their indigenous status but all of which reinforce Ecuadorian discourses of racialized geography—the idea that racially defined groups of people belong—and exist—only in specific locations within the landscape. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, part of the problem is that Ecuadorians are socialized to believe that coastal indigenous groups “disappeared” with the arrival of the Spaniards in 1532.

Writing on constructions of Blackness in Ecuador, anthropologist Ethan Johnson proposes that “indigenous groups may find it easier than Black people to unite through race and . . . develop more coherent forms of resistance, because they occupy a relatively more legitimate space in Ecuadorian national development” (Johnson 2007, 67). Yet in their ongoing legal and political struggles for recognition and rights, the community of Agua Blanca faces situations similar to their Afro-Ecuadorian compatriots with whom, as Paúl notes, they are sometimes interchangeably identified. Lacking access to what Johnson calls “legitimate space” because their narratives—like those of Afro-Ecuadorians—fit neither within the dominant discourse of *blanqueamiento* nor within the origin myths upon which the modern Ecuadorian state bases its legitimacy, coastal indigenous communities in Ecuador must also develop effective ways to challenge their ongoing marginalization and relative invisibility. In this book, I engage with the multiple tactics Agua Blancans use to negotiate within the

competing constructs of authenticity set up through racialized geography in Ecuador, to generate both collective and individual voice within a severely hierarchical society, and to move toward a future they themselves are authoring.

Interpracticality as a Methodology of Decolonization

At the ethnographic level, this book is about a local community's negotiations, both quotidian and extraordinary, within a rapidly globalizing network of claims, interactions, opportunities, and limitations. More broadly, it is also about how Agua Blancans' political, economic, and social struggles have shifted from helping to perpetuate broader hegemonic discourses—of legitimacy, of nation, of indigeneity, of globalization—to deconstructing those discourses and reordering them in ways that more directly benefit the community. Tactics originally formulated as momentary responses to acute moments of constraint have come to form the basis of a broader Agua Blancan methodology of decolonization.¹

Innumerable works by indigenous and (post)colonialist scholars suggest that colonization is not only a historical moment or a set of material constraints, but also an enduring, complex system of inequality that relies broadly on the internalization of discourses and practices by colonized groups, resulting in their production of themselves as subalterns, as actors with limited agency and voice. In order to escape from modes of practice that result in self-subordination by indigenous and other subaltern groups, activist scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2008), Beth Blue Swadener and Kagendo Mutua (2008), Luis Mirón (2008), Miguel Zavala (2013), and others call for methodologies of decolonization.

In the chapters that follow, after laying out the broader context of the ongoing systems of inequality within Ecuador generally and southern Manabí specifically, I will detail the many ways Agua Blancans have gradually shifted from practices that reproduce their inequality and limit them to responding to existing structures, to practices that bypass the colonialist sources of those limiting structures and that, in essence, reconstitute the fields on which they practice—their own methodology of decolonization. The most effective tactics they employ all involve what I will call *interpracticality*.

Derived from practice theory, *interpracticality* relates to Bourdieu's concepts of fields, dispositions, and *habiti*. Practice is our activity in the external world. Fields are basically structures-in-practice, playing fields guided by sets of rules. Practice on fields results in a set of attitudes toward the world, of categories we embody, which Bourdieu calls dispositions; through enacting those dispositions, we create a *habitus*. Importantly, Bourdieu suggests that an individual's *habitus* can change as he or she is exposed to new fields. As actors learn to negotiate each of those fields' boundaries concomitantly, they alter the structures themselves.

Related to this set of ideas are the concepts of *racialized geography*—again, the perception, constructed through both discourse and practice, that certain groups belong in certain places in the landscape and not in others—and *suitability*, or *appropriate*

practice. Through practice, we come to embody particular identities associated with specific fields—identities that thereby come to appear appropriate within those fields.

Finally, *interpracticors* are those with whom we engage in practice, just as those with whom we engage in speech or discourse are our interlocutors; the process of engaged practice through which we produce fields and *habiti* are what I am calling interpracticality. I posit that interpracticality is central to Agua Blancan tactics of decolonization.

This book, then, presents both an ethnographic account—of local contexts in which globalizing discourses play out and of local practices challenging the hegemony of those discourses—and a broader theoretical argument on the development of a methodology of decolonization. In order to ground both those aspects of the book, I find it necessary first to reflect on the nature of the universal discourses that enable globalizing processes to persist despite growing awareness of the inequalities they engender. Even while certain globalizing discourses produce and reproduce the persistent inequalities within which subaltern groups are constrained, Agua Blancan interpracticality depends both on the shared awareness of those discourses, and on the existence of the multiple levels of interaction that also result from globalizing processes.

Globalization and the Production of Everyday Inequalities

Ultimately, the force of globalizing processes seems to lie less in what Tomlinson and others have referred to as the “complex connectivity” of globalization (2000, 2) than in what I see as globalization’s most essential and ubiquitous aspect: a global familiarity with increasingly hegemonic discourses, tropes, and trends. While this book is an ethnography of one community and its decisions, community members interact of necessity with others embedded in these globalizing processes, and their decisions are never completely free of the influence of these frameworks. A brief introduction to these processes and discourses at a more abstract level can provide insight into the complex situations and historical-political contexts within which Agua Blancans negotiate their daily lives.

To understand what we are calling globalization, we need first to consider broadly the current socio-political-economic structures around the world and how they interact with one another, without privileging any particular vantage point, whether of dominant or underprivileged groups. This approach suggests that, yes, we are all interconnected, but not in the ways discourses on globalization often lead us to imagine. Interconnectedness can suggest an equality of voice that is simply not present here; this is where debates on the nature of globalization get bogged down, with one faction claiming that technology will soon lead us to that rosy picture of a world more closely tied together, and the other arguing that warring political regimes, neoliberal economic policies, and reactionary social constructions are pulling us increasingly apart (see Jameson 1998).

While locally-based studies are essential to a fuller understanding of how globalizing processes work on the ground, even these often suffer because while they link local experiences to specific aspects of broader structures that produce such experiences, they fail to recognize the underlying discourses that are crucial to how globalization as a whole works—what I refer to here as the underpinnings of the current world system. What I am suggesting is that, if we want to understand how globalizing processes affect people locally, we need to understand how they work within their own logic. From the vantage point of citizens of nations responsible for producing and maintaining so many of these discourses, pinpointing the cultural logic of globalization is difficult because these discourses have come to form part of our collective consciousness, our national narratives, all the aspects of culture one never thinks to question. Recent analyses of globalization have each named some of the discourses, narratives, and processes that play into the cultural logic of globalization (see, for example, Augé 1995; Ferguson 2006; Gregory 2006; Jameson 1998; Tomlinson 1999; Tsing 2004). If we consider these and other globalizing processes simultaneously, however, we begin to perceive just how well they support one another, contributing to their collective invisibility. In other words, once we assume any one of these things to be either natural or an inevitable part of a globalizing world, we stop looking for the connections and eventually stop perceiving them as noteworthy. But if we analyze each of these processes in terms of what they are capable of producing—in industrial terms, if we look not only at their products, but also their by-products—they once again begin to seem strange, their camouflage exposed.

What are some of these discourses, then, and how do they work within globalizing processes?

Belief in the Nation-State System

In 1983, Benedict Anderson famously described nation-ness as “the most universally legitimate political value of our time” (1983, 3). While social scientists in the intervening quarter century have written numerous critiques of the specifics of Anderson’s work, raising awareness of the limitations of the model of the imagined community, we have not yet been able to imagine a political configuration capable of supplanting the nation-state, in part because the political form of the nation-state has come to be taken for granted. To put this in another way, a globalized identity has not supplanted a sense of national identity, nor yet come close; and regardless of the failings of an individual nation-state to meet our expectations of what a nation-state should be and do, we ourselves fail to question whether every place on earth is in fact a nation-state or how that term—and its corresponding emotions—have been constructed.

A perhaps unintended consequence of our continued emphasis on the nation-state as the *sine qua non* of political legitimacy is that such a perception enables the unlikely conjunction of increasing state paternalism—“the government knows best”—and decreasing adherence to any sort of social contract. Since we expect a nation-state to exist—we would be horrified and unmoored if, one morning, we awoke to

find some other political arrangement in its place—we again tend to perceive the shortcomings of a given nation-state as momentary problems emerging from a particular government, an exception, rather than as a problem with the inadequate and unequally applicable nation-state model and related processes of (unequal) globalization. One of the most widespread trends associated with the modern nation-state is a growing phenomenon whereby families and local communities subsidize the government by providing for basic needs formerly perceived as the state's responsibility through the social contract. As Cynthia Enloe has pointed out, even in the US, returning military troops who have suffered injury or trauma are taken care of by their families rather than the government, and predominantly by women—mothers, wives—who often must leave their jobs to do this work (Enloe 2006). In Thailand, according to Mary Beth Mills, the government attempts to attract multinational corporations (MNCs) to Thailand by touting its abundant cheap and mobile labor force, but the people who participate in this labor force can only do so *because* they have local families they can return to in times of extreme need, or upon whom they can rely for certain kinds of aid, such as basic agricultural staples, childcare, or a place for recovering from illness (Mills 1999, 8). As James Ferguson (2006) has argued, in many places the state's involvement is socially thin: economic structure may be provided, but the corresponding infrastructure is not.

There is a profound disconnect between, on the one hand, international perceptions of the nation-state form as unquestioningly legitimate (think of the corresponding images of “imagined community” so often promoted at moments when a country is the focus of an international gaze—the Olympics, the World Cup, other prominent sporting events, major festivals) and, on the other, the breakdown of the social contract and the prevalence of patron-client relationships rather than the horizontal communities of equals Anderson describes (1983; see also Lómnitz 2001). A similar pattern marks international relations. Just as many nation-states depend on an imagined community of equals who are relatively few in number and who act as representatives for the great majority of the citizens who are in many ways constructed as not-equal (Lómnitz 2001), so do certain nation-states form a network of equals who represent the others, even in a system where all have the same form. In other words, the category of “nation-state,” just like “citizen,” implies equality but constructs and relies on essential inequalities.

Corporatization

Again, Anderson's nation-as-imagined community comprises a supposed horizontal fraternity of equals that emerged with the decline of religious community and the dynastic realm. When the political structure of the monarchy ceded to that of the nation-state, one element that was lost was the figure of the leader as head of the community, he who was ultimately responsible for that community. While the new form of the nation was able to provide for citizens the continuity lost with the decline of religion, the centrality of conscience and responsibility was not replaced. What I am

suggesting is that the process of becoming a nation-state is very similar to what occurs to businesses or cities when they become incorporated: the result is a legal entity separate from the individuals who form that entity, individuals whose liability is thereafter limited.

To expand on this idea, in the “religious age,” individuals were personally responsible, through their own actions in life, for their fate after death; after the decline of religion, particularly in Protestant areas, the nation and capitalism took the place of religion in many senses—yet nothing replaced that individual moral conscience. Responsibility in the modern nation-state is diffused. The term “corporation” implies that a body politic has been created; it seems, however, that what is created is a body with no head.² And while that corporation can be held responsible for its actions, individual responsibility is very limited. This means that repressive actions are less risky for those at the upper ends of (social, political, economic, governmental) hierarchies, so corruption is not only possible but also facilitated. The lower one is in the hierarchy, however, the more he or she is held personally responsible for his or her actions. In our current world system, in an inversion of what we might logically expect to find, lack of authority seems to equal responsibility.

Identity Politics

What does it mean to *have* a politics of identity? While the present book deals with the politics of identity construction and consumption throughout its pages, what I want to highlight here is the way processes of globalization and nationalism—processes that presume we are all working toward a unitary system—force subaltern groups to cast their projects in terms of “identity politics.” The phrase emerges from the ranks of the global unmarked, those whose identity is taken for granted, not noteworthy—the average citizen of a First World country. Those who can go through life unmarked are able to perceive identity as a luxury or an excess, not as an everyday necessity. Within a context dominated by the unmarked, the concept of identity politics presumes that particular groups lobby to create and expand difference, rather than underscoring the historical reality of already-existing difference and rather, even, than recognizing that the primary goal of identity politics is to challenge the continued erasure of subaltern histories, not to plead for special benefits. Yet by framing the struggle for recognition and respect as politics in a political system wherein lobbyists contend for limited benefits, this kind of misperception is not merely made possible, it is almost guaranteed. Furthermore, framing the process as one of claiming identity also alludes to other kinds of claims which resonate ambivalently within our capitalist and political framework.

What I am suggesting here is that, in the absence of the interconnected discursive frameworks of nationalism and globalization, minority groups would perhaps be able to define the parameters of their identity more fluidly and privately. It is the spotlight placed on minorities within these totalizing discourses that ultimately requires a conscious, political declaration of a stable and delimited identity as a tactic of resistance,

rather than permitting the simple existence of alternative categories of identity as a facet of everyday life. Thus a noteworthy byproduct of globalizing processes is the curtailing of agency for many groups.

Universals and Essentialized Difference

Two more discourses central to the internal logic of globalization are those of universals, as Anna Tsing has pointed out, and essentialized difference. The belief in universals is fundamental to continued disparities (of wealth, of opportunity, of cultural capital) worldwide. To give examples, the ability to impose neoliberal economic systems on others depends on the hegemony of the concept of universals: policies and systems such as the free market are depicted as universally applicable even though they are flawed or nonexistent in the very places that tout them. The perception that universal values exist—values such as freedom, or human rights, or equal opportunity—means that groups who define those values differently, or subalterns who are prevented from benefiting from those values, can be and frequently have been construed as having rejected them because they are stuck in the past. Finally, official histories and national narratives, which are necessary to the continued centrality of the nation-state model, enable the silencing of counternarratives that would otherwise belie the official stance (see Trouillot 1997).

Belief in these and other universals leads to perceptions of essentialized difference.³ Many of our narratives about the world and how it works rely on binary oppositions—Us and Them, developed and developing, urban and rural, the West and the Rest, white and black, modern and traditional, the haves and the have-nots. Difference is not perceived as contextual or relative, but as an absolute, and as something that can easily be identified. Once difference has been essentialized in this way, it is easy not only to discriminate but to justify discrimination—and the existence of the exception, as outlined above, permits those who do not benefit from such a system to continue buying into it, in essence giving their consent.

Non-Places

In 1995, Marc Augé introduced the concept of the non-place as indicative of what he called a “supermodernity” in which one could move from place to place—airports, highways, hotels, fast-food joints, bus terminals—without requiring any deep knowledge of the larger cultural spaces one traversed. This concept has been introduced into both positive and negative readings of globalization—pessimists lament the impending McDonalidization of the world at large, while optimists note that this is one more way we are all becoming increasingly interconnected.

If we look at who is affected by the existence of non-places, rather than what is present or absent in those spaces, it appears that both camps are missing the point. It is not that non-places are symptomatic of an underlying, cancerous homogeneity, or that they augur the end of our sense of place. Yet neither is it that non-places connect us more readily to one another. They exist for precisely the opposite reason.

Non-places permit a very specific kind of ignorance to persist among very specific groups of people—businesspeople, political leaders and government representatives, and the majority of Western tourists. Economic, social, and political disparities can be swept under the rug because cultural differences are minimized through non-places. Non-places, however, are not accessed by or accessible to the majority of the world's population, so their illusion—that these markers of modernity, technology, progress, and global capitalism are available everywhere—goes unchallenged. If those highly mobile consumer groups (businesspeople, tourists, government officials) are made to feel comfortable everywhere, they can remain ignorant of certain realities that people still embedded in local places never even question. This means that it is precisely those groups with the collective power to make important decisions affecting the rest of the world who continue believing that similarity to a Western idealized standard of living is *possible* because they have experienced it in other parts of the globe. As a result, discourses which blame the victim, which rely on particular historical silences—discourses of underdevelopment, of nations stuck in a Stone Age, of peoples somehow naturally prone to savagery and violence, of Others inherently different from us and to be feared—go unchallenged.

Participatory Isolation

In considering how consent is constructed in the modern world, I find that two contradictory factors seem essential. To give consent—to enable a dominant structure to become hegemonic—people must feel that they are represented within that structure, yet at the same time, there are so many people who do not have access to the benefits of any given structure that silencing mechanisms are necessary so that the minority do not discover that, in fact, they may comprise the majority. Accomplishing both goals requires what could be described as a maneuver of alienation, in which people are given to believe they are active participants in a democratic system, yet through their very actions within that system they become increasingly compartmentalized from one another.

This maneuver of alienation is what I am calling *participatory isolation*. Examples abound. They include such common facets of recent popular culture as televised competitions in which viewers are encouraged to “vote” for their favorites and tune in to see the results of their voting—while sitting alone in front of their television sets. In universities, faculty are encouraged to develop online versions of their course—software currently exists that enables students to participate in discussions, ask questions, and receive feedback from the professor, all from the most convenient computer terminal connected to the Internet—yet again, students are encouraged to think of themselves as participants in a virtual classroom despite their isolation. Even the democratic process in this country relies on participatory isolation. We all feel as though we participate in the democratic process, but that process is not transparent (we do not all sit in a room together and call out our votes, for example). In fact, our isolation is greatest at the moment of our participation in the democratic process, as we enter a booth and shield

our decisions from the eyes of our compatriots, even while we are being congratulated for our participation in one of our greatest rights as citizens.

More immediately relevant for Agua Blanca is the example of the process of *blanqueamiento* (whitening). Individuals play into a national narrative of mestizaje and accept and adopt its values because they believe they will benefit from greater inclusion in the collectivity of the nation, although to do so they must isolate themselves from their neighbors, as Peter Wade has argued (Wade 1995). People who do not realize they share negative experiences with one another are unlikely to recognize exception as exception—which means hegemonic hierarchies go unchallenged.

These examples hark back to two earlier processes: the assembly line and other forms of capitalist production, which Karl Marx argued led to alienation; and Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community of the nation, created through audiences for national newspapers, nationalist novels, and the like, all of which rely on what Anderson describes as homogeneous, empty time. Main characters may disappear for days, or chapters, on end, yet we assume characters will reappear at some point, just as we assume our fellow national citizens exist and are similar to us, even though we will never know all of them.

Disconnections

Closely related to the effects of non-places outlined above is the existence of significant disconnects within globalization. In his recent work on globalization in Africa, one of James Ferguson's central arguments is that globalization is not just about connections—globalizing processes also facilitate disconnections (see Sawyer 2004). Ferguson contends that the usual language of global “flows” falsely depicts globalization as a natural process and one that either already does or soon will extend everywhere, more or less equally. In contrast, he suggests that globalizing processes could be more accurately described as moving in “hops” rather than “flows,” language that frames globalization as a conscious process rather than a naturalized one, and a severely unequal one at that (Ferguson 2006). By focusing on the interconnectedness of globalizing processes suggested in discourses of global flows, narratives of globalization either render invisible the disconnections many subaltern communities experience or place the blame for those disconnections on the communities experiencing them.

Indigeneity

What I am attempting to demonstrate through the preliminary examination of these interrelated discourses is that, collectively, they guide our perceptions—and resultant classifications—of the world and the people in it in particular ways. While we can view the nation-state, trends toward corporatization, or the concepts of collective identity and citizenship as products of specific discourses, we should also examine the by-products of those discursive processes—the covert ways we are encouraged to perceive the world that are also produced by and inextricable from those discourses. What is particularly worthy of attention is how closely these by-products mirror one

another, regardless of the particular discourse that produces each. The overt characteristics of these discourses—the visible products we desire and thus agree to consume—are characterized by equality and universal availability. All the more disturbing, then, that the invisible by-products in every case include hierarchical structures that not only enable essential inequalities, but also legitimize the subordination of particular groups precisely because they can be construed as having rejected the overt structures of global equality.

Indigeneity as an Alienable Marker of Authenticity

In a related sense, all these discourses shaping globalizing processes also shape whom we are willing and able to perceive as participants in those processes, and under what conditions they may participate. For example, our broad acceptance of the nation-state system as connoting political legitimacy pushes indigenous communities to present themselves as nations if they want any sort of access to political efficacy. Universal tropes of the noble savage and the constructed binary between tradition and modernity also limit the ways indigenous communities can present themselves if they want to gain global support and interlocutors; our perceptions of non-spaces suggest to us that indigenous groups have chosen to reject modernity. Thus the “savage slot” open to them is that of the noble savage, the romanticized being who is one with the earth and whose innocence, otherwise not long for this world, must be protected (see Trouillot 2003). Participatory isolation both enables the perception of *blanqueamiento* as a way of becoming part of a broader community and tends to forestall broader connections among otherwise similarly disenfranchised groups; disconnections thus are perpetuated.

Indigeneity itself, within this context, has become a marker of a particular kind of value: a sort of alienable commodity that confers cultural capital on the consumer even as it extends political capital to the producer. Working with Amazonian groups, Conklin and Graham note that “since the 1980s, indigenous people have become key symbols, as well as key participants, [in movements for social change]. . . . Indians possess, to use Bourdieu’s . . . terminology, ‘symbolic capital,’ and positive ideas about Indians and their relations to nature have become a potent symbolic resource in transnational politics” (1995, 696). This external valuation, however, can lead both to metonymy, in which one individual is assumed to represent the values and visions of the entire community, and to limitations on which values are viable (see also Comaroff et al. 2009, 12–13), constraining the value of this commodity to its producers. Thus even while indigeneity may represent symbolic capital, its definition is simultaneously diffuse and narrow, lending itself to external appropriations that can easily result in what Bruce Granville Miller describes as the “intentional ambiguity that states rely on to manage indigenes, who are frequently treated as indigenous in some circumstances and as nonindigenous in others, even while those states are developing purportedly ‘unambiguous delineations’” (2003, 19). The intertwinings of all these discourses, which collectively support particular visions of value, mean that even when a disenfranchised group can access one sort of symbolic capital, it may not

control the ways that capital is defined or the contexts in which it can be deployed. Those who are not visible would seem to have even fewer options.

In this book, I first present the broader national discourses laying out the Ecuadorian landscape in ways that render some groups visible and others invisible. In later chapters, I investigate the ways in which the interconnections of globalization might be utilized by invisible groups to their advantage. Do globalizing processes make alternative tactics and methodologies possible?

Constructions of Invisibility

Since 1996 I have been conducting research on and in the Andean countries of Ecuador and Peru, yet when asked what region I work in, I find it difficult to answer. Most people whose research interests lie in those two countries consider themselves Andeanists, but the term implies that one works in the mountains, whereas I do most of my work on the coast. Furthermore, I am interested in the construction of authenticity and indigeneity in both countries, but in both the coast is considered to be home only to mestizos. Archaeologically speaking, the coastal areas are rich in cultural heritage, but in modern perceptions that heritage is relegated to museums, archives, monumental but remote archaeological sites, and mythology. In the present, we are led to believe, indigenous groups live only in the highlands or the far reaches of the Amazon basin.

The question of why coastal indigenous groups are generally unrecognized—invisible—throughout the Andean region has always nagged at me. In his discussion of the Panopticon and the concept of the gaze, Michel Foucault argues that historical trajectories result in the creation of dominant discourses concerning what is “normal” in society (Foucault 1975). We reinforce those discourses in our everyday lives, looking around us and classifying those we see. “Normal” is what we are told to expect, the status quo, our society’s Everyman. Our collective visual classification of others results in what Foucault describes as the gaze, a moment of pause in our visual scanning of our surroundings, a blip on our register. Anyone who does not register—anyone we perceive as “normal”—is therefore able to remain invisible, not the subject of the gaze. Individuals perceived as not-normal are depicted by Foucault as having a visibility beyond their control; their identities are marked, whereas he refers to whatever identities we have defined as “normal” as unmarked. Furthermore, Foucault suggests that we internalize this process, in effect turning the gaze constantly on ourselves and controlling our public performances and self-presentations in attempts to fit as closely as possible into those normative categories so that we can remain unmarked, invisible, unjudged.

Foucault’s insight is useful in understanding why certain social categories seem to be privileged while others seem unable to access that privilege. The binary opposition of visible/invisible, marked/unmarked, is misleading, however; the current example and many others suggest that we need to complicate that binary division. In Foucault’s scheme, invisibility implies a sort of comfort conferred upon an individual

by a group that perceives that individual as “normal,” not requiring surveillance. While the status quo is invisible, however, it is *invisible by choice*. Those perceived as likely to be “normal”—and indeed some of those within marked categories—can choose to become visible; public figures are examples of this. In other words, if I as an individual generally do not stand out because I fit into an unmarked category, I can always choose to mark my identity in some way and thereby become visible, but that visibility would be the result of my own decision. This class of invisibility could be considered productive since it affords those who fit within it certain freedoms from surveillance that, perhaps ironically, permit fluidity, autonomy, and self-determination.

What I am suggesting is that other types of invisibility also exist. By inscribing identities into landscapes, we render oppressed groups invisible as long as they exist in what our discourses suggest are appropriate ways within those appropriate spaces. This kind of invisibility is what I refer to here as negative or restrictive invisibility, similar to the philosophical concept of negative freedom—invisibility one cannot choose to abandon and that does not grant one access to an unmarked status or the mobility it implies or even, in most cases, to a marked status that may be lower in the social hierarchy—normal’s Other—but that still registers within public perception. This kind of invisibility is similar to the sort of situation affecting those to whom Gayatri Spivak (1988) refers as subalterns. Spivak claims that the subaltern in many cases cannot speak; he or she is not merely invisible, but invisible to the degree that his failure to be entertained by an audience need not be due to conscious rejection but rather merely to what becomes the potential audience’s inability to perceive his speech in the first place.

What, though, renders speech inaudible or subalterns invisible? Bourdieu notes that, to be effective, speech acts must not only take a form their audience will perceive as appropriate, but also be undertaken at the appropriate moment by an appropriate speaker (Bourdieu 1991). Spivak’s subalterns are voiceless for precisely this reason: their appropriate existence is already defined as a silent one. Throughout this book, I consider the ongoing negative invisibility of coastal groups and use a number of theoretical models and approaches to examine why this might be the case, how this (lack of) perception is perpetuated, and whether it might be changed. One such model is that of racialized geography. Agua Blancans, part of a fuzzy rendering of a laboring mestizo coastal region, are silenced just as Spivak’s subalterns are, their imputed inauthenticity further rendering them invisible within the landscapes they and their ancestors have inhabited for millennia.

Why is racialized geography such a powerful mental model for understanding social fields? Working among the similarly invisible Toba of the Chaco region, anthropologist Gastón Gordillo surmises that “places are produced in tension with other geographies and . . . these tensions are made tangible though the spatialization of memory” (Gordillo 2004, 3). How is memory spatialized? How do we come to understand places as having not only histories, but also historically informed identities inscribed onto bodies? Why do we feel certain groups of people belong in certain

places and not others, and what practices and processes render someone an appropriate denizen of a particular place? To put this another way, if the body (whether the individual body or the body politic) is the site of incorporated history, can it be reinscribed?

For coastal groups historically represented (when represented at all) as mestizo laborers, natural to and therefore an unseen part of the landscape, answers to those questions have the potential to circumscribe both present realities and future mobility. For Agua Blancans in the Machalilla National Park, being invisible as indigenous people means living each day with the risk that Gordillo's "geographic tensions" could transform communally held lands, the places where generations of family have existed, into wilderness. For other groups, the causes, parameters, and consequences of negative invisibility differ. In some cases, long-persecuted local communities have chosen to deny their indigenous heritage; in other cases, that heritage is denied them by official narratives, biopolitics, or common-sense understandings of national realities. In the majority of cases, representations are unstable and shifting; how one chooses to represent oneself may depend on many factors, including momentary context, one's occupation, relevant connections to others, family narratives, political expediency, and desire.

Which approaches to this question prove most fruitful in both understanding the situation and potentially changing it? For at a broader level, the question is not merely one of the relative visibility of particular indigenous groups, but rather one of how inequalities themselves are perpetuated. Several anthropological, sociological, and historical approaches are useful in analyzing inequality, but recognizing a constructed reality in hindsight—conducting a Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge—only takes us so far. What anthropology needs is a tool that can help us not only to reinterpret our collective history, but also to use that momentary understanding, that chink in our cognitive armor, as a way to recognize our ongoing construction of inequalities and, perhaps, finally to shift those constructions toward greater equality. This book represents both my own attempt at a step in that direction and a representation and analysis of the many practical steps toward balancing the playing field already taken by members of a coastal Ecuadorian community.

A Brief History of Agua Blanca and the Southern Manabí Coast

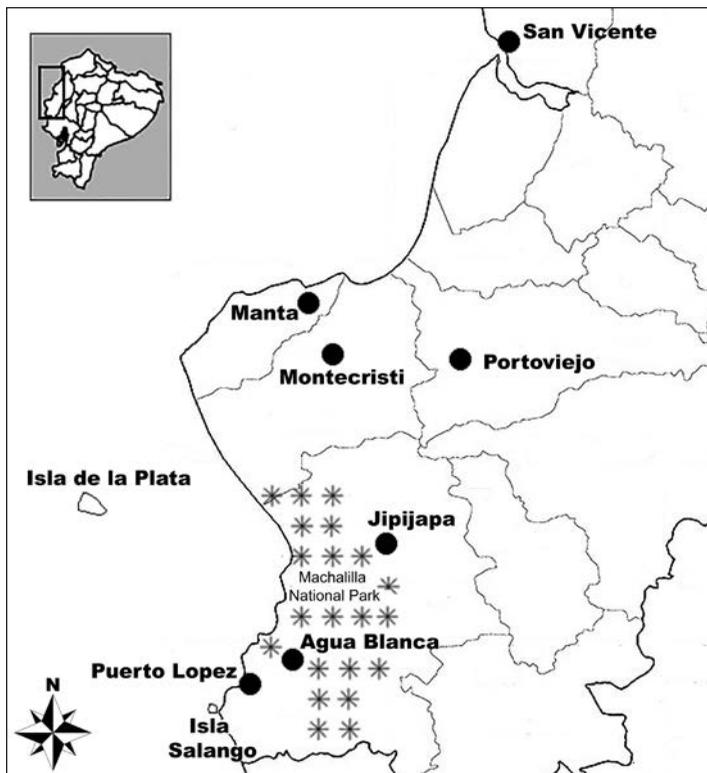
The indigenous *comuna* of Agua Blanca descends from the Manteño groups present during the Incan and European conquests of the Andean region, as well as from earlier material cultures. Within Agua Blanca's territory, which has been continually occupied for over 4500 years, lie remains of the Valdivia, Machalilla, Chorrera, Guangala, and Manteño material cultures and peoples associated with them.

Today Agua Blanca is an indigenous community of fifty to sixty households located within Ecuador's Machalilla National Park, in the southwestern corner of the coastal province of Manabí (see map). Over the past century, however, its organization has changed dramatically. At the turn of the last century most families in the area worked as peons for local hacendados, growing cacao and coffee in the higher

rainforest regions and corn in the lower ecological zones, and collecting *tagua*, or vegetable ivory, from palm trees in the rainforest.

Economic and political crises of the 1930s destabilized state control and provoked the flight of many foreign hacendados from various regions of Ecuador, resulting in the 1937 Law of Communes. This law granted peasant or indigenous groups control over lands held in common. Most groups taking advantage of the legislation, however, chose to represent themselves as peasant associations rather than indigenous groups. This was due both to the negative implications of the term “Indian” within Ecuador, and to Marxist-inspired movements centered on class consciousness that culminated in the land reforms of the late 1960s. Self-identifying as indigenous was perceived as a liability, something that could result in both physical and symbolic violence, and in Ecuador many groups began to refer to themselves as mestizo. This means that Agua Blanca’s younger generations today, even while recognizing a direct connection to local *antepasados* (ancestors) and archaeological sites, do not necessarily make the connection between local and indigenous. “Indio” is still a pejorative term in Ecuador. Particularly in areas where indigenous organizations are weak or absent, such as the coast, groups often perceive the term as an insult rather than as an historical category of identity.

Despite their recognition of their own indigenous heritage as a potential source of greater political voice and economic opportunity, coastal indigenous groups have long been erased from the Ecuadorian imaginary—both figuratively and literally, they



Map of southern Manabí province, showing the location of Agua Blanca and the Machalilla National Park. Inset map shows location of Manabí within Ecuador. (Map by Chelsea Blackmore)

have been mapped out of existence. Colonial, state, and touristic discourses have long constructed Ecuador's central coast as comprising urban mestizo areas and rural landscapes inhabited by *cholos pescadores* (peasant fishermen) or *montubios* (unruly backwoods farmers; see Chapter 2 for a fuller description of the term). Both rural groups are denied access to and visibility within the ethnic hierarchy of the nation; their externally ascribed mestizaje is inscribed in their laboring bodies rather than thought of as being inherited through an "authentic" millenarian culture. In other words, their heritage is not imagined—not symbolically available—in ways that might permit them to be externally assessed as appropriate embodiments of indigenous praxis.

Part of the reason coastal indigenous groups have remained invisible for so long is a series of historical conjunctures. First, coastal Manabí's land was predominantly divided into *haciendas* (plantation estates), many of which in southern Manabí were run by Germans—so in some ways the region became more connected to other places (Europe) than to other communities within Ecuador. The hacienda system itself also led to the creation of the *campesinado* (peasant class) in Ecuador; political rhetoric in later periods focused on class consciousness rather than indigenous identity, as I will outline below.

Second, the absence of infrastructure reinforced the sense of isolation promoted by plantation owners' connections to Europe, as well as by a more general invisibility of coastal communities. Many coastal residents could only reach provincial capitals by boat or by horseback through densely forested areas even as late as the 1950s; paved roads did not connect the southern Manabí coast to other areas until the 1980s. Coastal Manabí was not readily available, in the symbolic sense, to be imagined by the rest of the country.

Third, indigenous communities in Manabí lack some of the expected external markers of indigeneity. Most communities appear to have abandoned their native languages very early in the colonizing process; the few accounts available from the 1600s already show language shifts, and colonial-period documents suggest that most residents of the area were multilingual traders (see Saville 1907, appendices: *Descripción de la Gobernación de Guayaquil*, 1605). Unfortunately, language is still perceived by many, including some anthropologists, as a *sine qua non* of indigenous authenticity; those who have chosen, for whatever reasons, to adopt new languages are perceived as mestizo. Furthermore, community members dress in Western styles. On an average day, an older man in Agua Blanca will be wearing a short-sleeve, button-down shirt and pants; his female counterpart will don a skirt and blouse. Younger Agua Blancans, regardless of gender, usually wear shorts and t-shirts or sleeveless tops. Given the high visibility of indigenous groups in both the Amazonian lowlands and the Andean highlands that have placed a heightened importance on visible indigenous costume in recent years, Agua Blancans are not immediately perceived as indigenous by outsiders (see Conklin 1997).

Finally, national narratives of *mestizaje*—or of a homogeneous national past—are continually being constructed in attempts to regain state control over populations and over the official history of the country. Again, because of its isolation—and because

of the absence of indigenous markers like language—Manabí has been particularly prone to being characterized as mestizo, as I will analyze in Chapter 2. The state even created a particular term for the region; Manabí's "montubio" culture is touted on Ministry of Tourism billboards throughout the province, but "montubio" itself was until recently a pejorative term in most contexts, meaning backward, bumpkin cowboy, or, as anthropologist Norm Whitten puts it, "unruly coastal person" from Manabí and the surrounding provinces (2003b, 65).

One of the strategies the Ecuadorian elite and the representatives of the Ecuadorian state use to consolidate their control over the nation is what Whitten has called a "racialized topography" (2003b, 65), Mary Weismantel describes as "geographies of race" (2001, 4) and Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood term "racialized imaginative geographies" (1996, 28, 118). Geographically, continental Ecuador is usually divided into three regions: the Andean highlands or Sierra, the Amazonian lowlands or Oriente, and the coast. In the broader Ecuadorian imaginary, in the social geography taught on official government websites, to children in school, and to adults through mass media stories and census questions, certain people "belong" in certain places in Ecuador. The nation's history is centered in a handful of highland cities. Indeed, cities everywhere in the country are viewed as primarily mestizo in population, with a small, ethnically white elite. While indigenous groups are also recognized in the highlands, they are portrayed as small capitalist groups that produce goods for Ecuador's colorful markets. In a maneuver that subtly reinforces perceptions of the legitimacy of government control over the area central to national petroleum production, the Oriente is characterized in the national imaginary as nearly empty, home only to scattered indigenous groups that are not entirely "civilized" (see Kane 1996; Oakdale 2004).

Finally, within this racialized geography, a coastal Ecuadorian has three main categories to which he may pertain. If she lives in a city, she may be one of the foreign or national elite, usually cast as white in Ecuador (see Stark 1991; Stutzman 1991); in northern Ecuador, he is quite possibly Afro-Ecuadorian or *mulato*. In the most likely scenario, however, he falls into the catch-all category of mestizo. Ecuadorians imagine "pure" indigenous communities as existing only in the highlands and the Amazon lowlands. This perception has been reinforced in recent years, since the groups in those two areas have formed the most highly politicized and effective indigenous organizations in the Americas, and are widely visible in daily life. By contrast, coastal populations are small, scattered, lacking in organization and representation; if they are imagined at all in central Manabí province, they are imagined as mestizo fishermen—*cholos*—or unruly peasants—*montubios*—ignored by their white government in the provincial capital of Portoviejo.

Most ideas about who belongs where in the Ecuadorian landscape derive from the narratives of Ecuador's highland elite, the old-money, conservative families of European descent who live in Quito, celebrate their colonial heritage, and run the government ministries, media channels, and industries through which those discourses are perpetuated. As noted in Chapter 2, from the Quiteño perspective the

palm tree-dotted coast is a distant and wild land inhabited by *monos*: the darker-skinned, the uncultured, the curly-haired, the not-fully-human. Guayaquil—Ecuador’s most populous city, busiest port, and most important hub connecting both people and products to the rest of the country and abroad—has its own elite who revere the Republican period when they helped lead the nation to independence. To these groups, the highland elite are *serranos* stuck in the past, while the majority of highlanders are *longos*, a derogatory term referencing both indigeneity and lack of modern culture and manners. Outside Guayaquil, however, urban *costeños*, intensely aware of the prejudice toward the coast and its new money, tend to emphasize their connections to Europe, to old money, to urban spaces, and to whiteness, particularly in the smaller coastal cities.

In recent years several attempts have been made to revitalize and popularize the *montubio* identity, particularly in the coastal interior. Some urban individuals have even begun to recognize—or perhaps invent—connections to a montubio heritage, similar to what has at times occurred with Native American ancestry in the United States. In this context, the montubio is seen as someone who dominates and is completely comfortable in his or her environment: the consummate horseman, knowledgeable in animal husbandry and agriculture alike, able to wield a machete with artistic precision, strong, brave, and fiercely independent, yet also incredibly loyal to spouse and children (cf. Alvarado Buenaño 2008). Nonetheless, such portrayals appear to be constructed from external perspectives rather than described from internal experience, as I will analyze further in Chapter 2. In any case, even as this recent emphasis on an alternative category of identity for *costeños* manages to underscore the differences between highland mestizos and their coastal counterparts, it still fails to acknowledge indigenous presence in the coastal regions.

Within this context, the coastal performance of indigeneity can be interpreted as a political maneuver, one that challenges the hegemonic voice of the nation’s elite.⁴ In recent years Ecuador’s indigenous groups have organized powerful coalitions that act as some of the Ecuadorian state’s most effective interlocutors. In response, the state exercises ever more control over its production of both racialized national geography and public knowledge of what “indigenous” means. Despite the growing spaces in which indigenous voices are making themselves heard, and the relative willingness of the current Ecuadorian government to listen to those voices, the category of “indigenous” can become dangerous to those indexed within it, precisely because authenticity tends to correspond to perceptions controlled from outside the communities that the term is used to describe. Furthermore, because relations between groups of people in the Andes are always raced and gendered, constructions of a group’s identity are always fraught with danger (Weismantel 2001; see also Pallares 2002; Pribilsky 2007; Rahier 1998; Sawyer 2004; Selverston-Scher 2001; Wogan 2003).

One of the problems I address in this book is how it might be possible to define *indigenous*, *indigeneity*, and *authenticity*. What do we really mean by these terms? And who gets to define them? Suzanne Oakdale has written on the “pointlessness of trying to define authenticity in contemporary native life” (2004, 72).

Nonetheless, perceptions of authenticity can grant indigenous groups authority and access to broader political voice, while perceptions of inauthenticity are frequently used as leverage against indigenous groups, rendering them silent or invisible. As Oakdale has also pointed out, calling something an invented tradition often leads us to “ignore the possibility that native people are simultaneously living an authentic way of life and acting effectively as political subjects” (2004, 61). In other words, we tend to see authenticity and agency as antithetical to one another. What I will document in this book are various forms, venues, and discourses in which and through which unrecognized indigenous Ecuadorians are both underlining their own agency and rejecting the broader structures and definitions that would otherwise confine them. At least in the minds of the groups using these concepts, indigeneity and authenticity do not refer to particular unchanging traits or traditions, but rather to an alternative to “Western” culture and its values. In this context, “alternative” does not necessarily imply “polar opposite,” just something distinct and something over which one has control.

This approach looks at the construction of racialized categories as an ongoing, contextual political strategy. I need to emphasize, however, that strategy does not mean deception (see Handler 1996); it implies that whatever is being performed, displayed, or defined as indigenous at the moment of that public definition is not necessarily salient at every moment. Human beings often perform aspects of our identity for particular reasons or in particular circumstances—that is, strategically. The conscious use of strategy does not mean that those performed facets of our identity are any less real or meaningful to us. It simply recognizes that in our experience they are not *always* salient; they cannot be considered a constant index of an essential identity. Unfortunately, in the polarizing world of global discourses, those facets of identity often are interpreted as absolutes.

In recent years a series of events in Ecuador have threatened state control. In the last three major indigenous protests presidents were ousted as either a direct or an indirect result of those efforts: Abdalá Bucarám in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000, and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005 (see Martínez Novo 2010, 5). The protests also contributed to the most recent revisions of the Ecuadorian Constitution (1998) and the Law of Communes (2004) to recognize certain indigenous/community rights. At such moments the urgency, for the Ecuadorian state, of controlling how “indigenous” is defined and perceived quickly becomes apparent. Thus the first signs of protests are described in a manner calculated to dampen ancillary efforts in other provinces. When protests become sufficiently widespread to gain coverage in the international press, government representatives act quickly to generate positive PR campaigns to limit the potential damage provoked by indigenous demands. Many of these campaigns work to create a perception of unsophisticated indigenous populations who ignore both the real needs and desires of the country’s citizens and what is necessary for progress and modernization (Sawyer 2004; see also Gerlach 2003; Selverston-Scher 2001; Whitten 2003a). Given the power of Ecuador’s indigenous coalitions, it is clearly disadvantageous for the elite-controlled Ecuadorian state to recognize coastal

groups as indigenous. The more divisions created among Ecuador's internal communities, the better for continued neoliberal government policies.

What are the implications of essentialism for how states construct identity? Everything from the ways festivals are celebrated to the costumes one dons for public performances, the stories one chooses to tell, and the specific vocabulary one uses to present an argument can be considered not only as part of a broader construction of a cultural narrative, but also as a political, strategic choice. In their construction of paths to agency within globalized settings, Agua Blancans are adopting practical tactics that, in contrast to the overly essentialized state productions of indigeneity and authenticity, are markedly anti-essentialist in both nature and form.

Approaching Field Work, Confronting Hegemony

Whether we are referring to applied work or to ethnography, approaches that identify an isolated issue and search for a single path to its resolution or description tend to reify, naturalize, and legitimize the conceptual or societal systems from which the issue emerges. My final goal for this book is to call those systems into question by highlighting the ways hegemonic discourses are bound together with techniques of power and with the maintenance of political, social, and economic hierarchies, and yet are at the same time always contextual and shifting. Through the lens of Agua Blancans' awareness of, and multiple responses to, many of the globalizing processes and discourses outlined in the previous section, I want to analyze the idea of globalization itself. Thus this book will serve as an introduction to a critique of a more traditional ethnographic approach—not because traditional ethnographies have no value, but because, too frequently, they both reify our colonialist origins by giving readers the sense that anthropologists are those who study remote Others and heighten the sense that theoretical research *about* communities and processes is somehow both inherently separate from, and far more valuable than, applied work *with/in* those communities and processes.

Perhaps the most powerful argument for an ethnographic (and action-oriented) approach that refuses to isolate issues is that by *not* choosing such an approach, we enable the continuation of the productive relationship between isolated cases—exceptions—and hegemony. Hegemony requires exception for its stark inequalities to be accepted and even promoted by those on the lower rungs of its hierarchies. The magnificent sleight-of-hand that is hegemony's most incisive result is that the exception comes to be perceived not as the rule, but as the ubiquitously possible. In other words, exceptions are not present everywhere, but they could occur anywhere, to anyone—and they are therefore instrumental in supporting and enabling hegemony. They enable us to perceive the generally unattainable ideal type proposed by a hegemonic discourse as within our reach, precisely because we begin to see the exception as forever possible. This perception locates responsibility for the attainment of that exceptional status firmly within the individual, erasing the ways social structures and techniques of power collude in one's potential for success. Further, even where

it recognizes communities, it fosters the sense of a need to compete rather than to join forces. The discourse of exceptionalism implies that opportunity is constantly possible, but limited, and if others achieve those goals our own attempts may have foregone negative conclusions. All these factors tend to perpetuate the hierarchical social structures that mark our world, and I think it is both important and necessary to identify how that process occurs.

Hegemony is perhaps one of the terms most frequently (mis)used in the social sciences and least frequently defined. Its etymology shows that the term originally meant leadership, from which the more common usage signifying power emerged. When Antonio Gramsci developed his concept of hegemony through the *Prison Notebooks*, however, his principal interest was in distinguishing the source of a given regime's power (Hoare et al. 1971). In essence, he was asking how governments or other leaders controlled the populations over which they ruled, particularly when the parameters of the political-economic structure did not benefit the majority of the population. For Gramsci, there were two closely related paths to control: coercion and consent. Both tend to be present, if covertly, in any government, but the more people believe in the government and thereby grant it legitimacy, the more they tend to consent to their own domination and the less coercion is necessary. If, however, a group of people questions the legitimacy of a governing body, coercion becomes increasingly necessary if a government is to maintain control of the population. Perhaps the most powerful insight within Gramsci's concept of hegemony is that control by consent is much more stable over the long term than control by coercion. This insight was developed in a number of important directions by later thinkers. For the purposes of this book, the most important theme emerging from this body of work is the idea that the larger and more diverse a group of people is, the more central is the role of the imaginary in their governance.

In this book, I use *hegemony* to refer to any system, structure, or process whose success depends on the consent of a majority of those affected by it. *Discourses* are ways of talking, thinking, and communicating about a particular idea through common and interrelated tropes, symbols, and phrases. *Hegemonic discourses* are those that are either unquestioningly accepted by the majority of a society because we take the truth of the ideas they incorporate for granted, or they are discourses whose tropes we challenge only in limited contexts, rather than systemically.

What, though, is at the root of hegemony? What *are* these ideas we all buy into and come to take for granted? Two primary and interdependent frameworks come to mind: a society's systems of value and its ideas of authenticity. Without those two concepts consensual domination of one group by another is not possible. The first concept, value, serves to justify a hierarchical arrangement of social identities; meanwhile the second, authenticity, serves as a gatekeeper prohibiting access to higher levels within the hierarchy.

The Ecuadorian state promotes public perceptions of a racialized national geography that locates both indigenous and black communities in specific rural or marginal(ized) locations; outside those boundaries, they are negatively invisible,

perceived either individually as anomalies or collectively as mestizos. This is one Ecuadorian state strategy promoting a hegemonic discourse of *blanqueamiento*: that the road to progress, whether individual or national, lies in becoming more white. Other, related strategies include the silencing of marginalized groups' contributions to the historical and modern Ecuadorian state, and essentialism, including linguistic essentialism and control over the perception of authenticity in both visible markers of identity and group values or goals. In other words, the Ecuadorian state identifies particular ethnic groups on the basis of markers such as language or dress. Where those are absent, the ethnicity is also presumed to have been lost, so rural communities of dark-skinned people are cast as mestizos, lost somewhere on the road toward whiteness. Whites are perceived as having more inherent value than indigenous Ecuadorians—in part because of the associative relations between whiteness and other concepts including the urban, the cultured, the educated, the wealthy, the Christian. At the same time the nation of Ecuador relies on a narrative of *mestizaje* (the mixing of several pasts) to arrive at a present dominated by whites, but predominantly populated by mestizos. Constructions of authenticity hamper those in that broad mestizo category from fully attaining *blanqueamiento*—they are whiter, yet never white—while simultaneously blocking their return to indigeneity.

Contextualizing the Book: My Research in Agua Blanca

As a teenage exchange student in the late 1980s, I spent a year in Portoviejo, the capital of Manabí province. At the time, members of my host family were designing the coastal highway that would improve access to the Machalilla National Park. However, I did not visit the Park until 1998 when, as a graduate student conducting dissertation research in Peru, I crossed the border to renew a research visa. I knew of the archaeological remains in the area and decided to visit them. I jumped off a coastal bus in Puerto López, where the Park headquarters were located, and within an hour had contracted with a local truck driver to take me to Agua Blanca. The usual two-hour tour took three due to my incessant questions and the guide, simultaneously exasperated and amused, finally asked me what on earth I did that made me so curious about absolutely everything. I gave him a brief account of my previous stay in Manabí and longstanding desire to see the site, but added that I was an anthropologist studying the political uses of the archaeological past in Peru, besides having an interest in traditional knowledge and landscape use.

Upon hearing the word archaeology, the guide perked up and barely let me finish my sentence before confirming, “So, you’re an archaeologist?” I replied that I had participated in excavations and done some coursework, but that I was primarily a cultural anthropologist. “But you know how to do archaeology?”

We continued talking for a few minutes, then the guide asked permission to cut the tour short—skipping the sulfurous lagoon and the lookout point from which the entire valley could be seen—because he wanted to “introduce me to some people.” Given that he had already spent an extra hour with me, a lone grad student, rather

than potentially with far more lucrative buses full of international birdwatchers or highland Ecuadorians on holiday, I immediately apologized for taking so much of his time, but he insisted that there were people in town I should meet. When we arrived at the museum, he handed me a bottle of water and asked me to relax on a bench for a few minutes until he returned. Twenty-odd minutes later, a small delegation of men arrived to ask me if I could return the following day. I had planned to travel further, but was intrigued; I agreed to be there.

Upon my arrival the next day, I was heartily greeted by a man I had met briefly the day before, was asked a few polite yet enthusiastic questions, and was almost immediately whisked off to a concrete-block structure just outside the center of town: the *centro comunal* (community hall). Inside the rusty metal doors, concentric semi-circles of chairs held approximately forty to fifty community members. My erstwhile guides led me to one of six seats facing the group. After a few moments during which the people in the other five seats consulted with one another, I was introduced to the group, still having no idea what was going on. After a few formal speeches, a man I later realized was the head of the tour guides—formally known as the Archaeological Committee—asked me to state whether I had experience in archaeology. When I agreed once more that I had participated in excavations, several people interrupted me simultaneously. One voice finally prevailed, that of my guide from the day before, asking whether I would consider running an excavation in Agua Blanca. The group proceeded to explain to me that their previous archaeologist, Colin McEwan, had left. They wanted another archaeologist to take over, particularly because they were worried that if they kept showing tourists the same material, the tourists would lose interest. Although I did not realize it at the time, the far weightier underlying concern was about their ability to control public perceptions of their belonging in the park, and thereby to maintain communal control of their lands. Since most public awareness of Agua Blanca derived from tourist visits, catering to tourists' desires had become an indispensable tool in building legitimacy.

Three years later and after a few shorter visits, I did indeed return to Agua Blanca on a Fulbright, leading a community-staffed four-month excavation and two-month laboratory analysis of artifacts. Since the excavation I have returned fourteen times, working directly with community members on a variety of applied projects and simultaneously conducting my own research on the politics of indigeneity and cultural production. As I got to know more people in the community and spent increasing amounts of time there, I also met the man who is now my husband, which in such a small community means that I am now related by marriage to a sizable number of Agua Blancans.

Organization of the Book

Attempting to bridge the two presumably exclusive sociological and philosophical paradigms of structuralism and phenomenology, Pierre Bourdieu described habitus as a “structured structure predisposed to function as a structuring structure.” On the

surface this is a singularly oblique phrase, but one central to understanding Bourdieu's work. What he contends is, on the one hand, that structures are indeed informed by history—they are passed down from generation to generation—and thus they tend to guide our understandings of the world and how it works. We learn those structures so early in life, from observing and imitating the interactions of those around us, that they become embodied, a second nature so ingrained that we do not consciously focus on them or question them but rather take them for granted. In other words, the mimesis of surrounding cultural norms forms the basis of our habitus.

On the other hand, importantly, Bourdieu is also suggesting that an individual's habitus can change as he or she is exposed to new structures-in-practice, or fields. The earlier we are introduced to those fields, the more likely we are to become fluent in the practices associated with them. This means, of course, that those "structured structures" may exist, but only imperfectly and partially—an assumption similar to the one Max Weber made for his concept of ideal types. We can only ever approach the ideal structure—that is, social laws—because in practice we exist at the intersection of so many of those structures that we must learn ways to negotiate all of their boundaries concomitantly; in doing so we alter the structures themselves. For these reasons, structures are only predisposed to function as structuring structures: guidelines for our learning, molds for our collective futures. Practice inevitably shifts them. This is why habitus within globalizing processes tends to be more an individual attribute than a group one. Group habitus can be temporary, shifting, dependent to some degree on who is present and how their practice reshapes the field, while individual habitus, though also shifting and context-dependent, is a more constant, if emergent, function of the individual.

Even though habitus may indeed be a structuring structure, it is an ideal structure that no two individuals ever share completely and that is never constant. Thus, if it is to guide group practice and collective discourse, it has to be constantly reinforced. Here again is where Gramsci's discussion of the balance between coercion and consent in constructing hegemony becomes relevant. Coerced practice, when reinforced through discourse, can eventually turn into consent. The more individuals who are exposed to a dominant discourse and expected to put it into practice, the easier it is for individual habitus to shape those of the group.

Ultimately, this book reflects on the racialized geography of Ecuador—how the landscape of Ecuador is discursively populated with *suitable* groups of people, people imagined to belong in particular places and not in others. At a deeper level, however, it questions how that racialized geography is produced and how it might be productively transformed through practice. Discourses about who belongs where (in terms of landscape, labor, or social class) inform legislation and other parameters that guide practice, often forcibly in the beginning. Still, even oppression, if practiced long enough, can lead to *interpretive drift* (see Luhmann 1989), a process whereby participants in a practice gradually shift their perceptions of reality through that practice. In other words, even an imposed practice can eventually transform one's habitus and come to appear natural or be taken for granted.

Through the ethnographic research described in this volume, I have come to recognize that the process can work both ways. As clearly occurs within Agua Blanca methodologies of decolonization, once individuals become aware of their own agency—once they recognize the connections between practice and fields—they can choose to act in new ways, produce new fields and therefore habitus, through practice.

The body of the book is divided into four parts, arranged in terms both of the theoretical approaches within which they are couched and of the ways they are experienced or conceptualized within Agua Blanca. The first section considers the role of discourse in the construction of indigeneity, racialized geography, the central Manabí coast, and Agua Blanca itself. Discursive constructions are central to establishing a certain fixity in the ways perceptions of those categories occur throughout Ecuador, resulting in normativities that constrain people in concrete ways. To understand Agua Blanca tactics of anti-essentialism, it is important first to understand the fixed categories that constrain them, how such categories have been constructed and defined, and how they are reinforced through everyday experience. These two chapters set the scene for the rest of the book.

In the first chapter, I analyze official discourses of indigeneity and popular representations of Ecuador's racialized geographies. Considering historical documents, museum displays, government and tourism websites, standardized elementary school textbooks, and recent Ecuadorian history, I deconstruct popular understandings of how racialized categories are both defined and mapped onto the Ecuadorian landscape, and consider how the perception of a divided social space has become hegemonic in Ecuador. Additionally, I introduce the concept of *imperfect mestizaje* as a strategy intended to enable a national narrative based on the concept of mestizaje, or a mixed-heritage population, while still excluding the majority of Ecuadorian citizens from access to power. Using these general constructions of racialized landscapes and differentiated mestizajes as background, in the second chapter I examine the ways indigenous heritage has been erased on the coast, considering some of the constructions introduced in its absence and the effects of relevant discourses on local communities.

In the second section of the book, focused on practice and fluidity, I consider both public performances and everyday practices through which alternative possibilities for ordering the Ecuadorian state and its peoples are presented. In Chapter 3 I examine how, within the invented tradition of a festival celebrated on October 12 (Columbus Day), Agua Blancans incorporate various pan-indigenous elements to call Ecuadorian racialized geographies into question. I also introduce the question of how theatre and appropriated dress are used to create a space for interpretive drift, whereby Agua Blancans are able to challenge more fixed perceptions of indigeneity and reinvent their own position within both national and globalizing processes. Chapter 4 considers the unlikely protagonist within a particular body of local fables, Tío Guatuso (Uncle Agouti), a trickster-like figure who embodies fluidity within local negotiations of belonging and counternarrative.

The third section considers the Bourdieusian concept of dispositions and the role of fear in constraining fluidity and practice. Chapter 5 considers the ambivalence

of Agua Blancan attitudes toward globalization and outlines both everyday practices and public performances community members utilize to combat what they perceive as destructive foreign values, including the desire to consume and to compete with one's neighbors. Chapter 6 examines the role of fear more generally within a cognitive framework. I consider what situations evoke fear for Agua Blancans and discuss the introduction of applied community theatre as a tool for addressing that fear.

Finally, in the Conclusion I revisit the concept of interpracticality introduced here and discussed in Chapter 3, analyzing some of the ways Agua Blancans have successfully engaged global interlocutors through practice in their efforts to maintain access to fluidity in their self-identification.

DISCOURSE *fixity*

Telling Histories

Everyday Inequalities and the Construction of Authenticity

LANGUAGE IS A QUIRKY THING; it not only reflects Bourdieu's idea of the "commonsense world" expediently, but also makes it difficult to destabilize those commonsense ideas, because in many cases we literally cannot find the words in which to state our positions. Originally, I wanted the title of this book to reference the idea of belonging (and not-belonging) to problematize the ways racialized geographies are not only constructed through discourse, but also naturalized and put into practice. As soon as I tried to put the words on paper, however, I realized that I would never really be able to translate them. Those of us who work on the topic of racialized geography may discuss policies that convey a sense of "these people belong in this place (and therefore don't belong in other locations)," but the most common way I've heard Andeans themselves express the idea of belonging is *allí viven* (that's where they live), a phrase that connotes obviousness, inevitability. When I mentioned this conundrum to another bilingual anthropologist, he suggested the phrase *ese sitio les corresponde*. The translation is accurate, but it is a phrase no one actually uses, at least in Ecuador—perhaps because the phrasing so blatantly unmasks the colonial project. As in other colonial situations, Ecuadorians have been socialized to think of racialized geography not as a conscious project but as a naturalized order (Ahern 2007, 1). Part of what I want to get at in this chapter, then, is the relationship between discourse and practice. How do we not only accept a discourse that tells us who belongs where in a racialized landscape, but also put that discourse into practice, literally embodying its precepts and producing both emic and etic perceptions of suitability—of who is an appropriate actor in particular social and geographic settings?¹

In the end, indianness is not just about where one belongs in the landscape, but also about where one fits in the national hierarchy. Despite an increasing consideration of indigeneity in various global and legal settings and its growing cachet among tourists and other consumers of authenticity—"part of . . . a particular economy of desire whereby [sic] the object of desire is indigenous authenticity" (Canessa 2012, 252; see also Comaroff et al. 2009)—being indigenous in Ecuador still means being inferior and often also means putting one's own taken-for-granted inferiority into practice. As Carlos de la Torre notes, "there is no need for laws: informal sanctions and customs constantly remind [Ecuadorian] Indians of their subordinate rank in

society. The dominant and the subaltern sectors have been habituated in the use of racially structured spaces, so much so that they reproduce existing racial structures almost subconsciously in their day-to-day interactions” (1999, 100).

In his discussion of everyday forms of racism in contemporary Ecuador, de la Torre references Pierre Bourdieu’s practice theory, suggesting that racialized categories and racially-structured human interactions are taken for granted because they are put into practice throughout the nation. Thus all Ecuadorians, regardless of where they fit into local racialized hierarchies, are exposed to them from birth. Through practice, these embodied attitudes, or dispositions, become part of the habitus of every Ecuadorian; reinforced through discourse, they are transformed into doxa, or what is collectively taken for granted. What I will try to trace in this chapter are some of the many strands of Ecuadorian doxa: how people are divided into racialized categories both historically and in contemporary settings, and how specific, hierarchized meanings and values are not only ascribed to those categories but come to be perceived as natural, inalienable attributes of individual bodies, located in particular, appropriate places within the landscape. I will begin with a historical overview of colonial divisions of Andean society and then consider the multiple spaces of contemporary production of racialized difference within Ecuador.

***Castas* and Colonial Categorizations**

Domination is not only political and socio-economic; it is also, or aspires to, total effectivity in the naming of things, in signifying and explanatory systems.

Biodun Jeyifo (1993, 378)

Throughout the history of the Andes, political and economic conflicts have created social chasms separating various groups of people, both prior to and after the Spanish conquest. From the early Spanish colonial period on, textual and visual depictions of the region produced by representatives of the political-economic elite clearly evoke a sense of racialized geography: again, the idea that certain people belong in certain places. This is perhaps nowhere more blatantly laid out than in the various series of *castas* paintings commissioned throughout the hemisphere during the Spanish colonial period. These sets of paintings explain, via relationships presented in terms of mathematical equations, precisely what category of people results from the interbreeding of individuals from various categories. Indexed within each painting are clues to what the appropriate social standing of members of the various categories should be: presence or absence, type, and relative luxuriousness of attire; access or lack thereof to land and holdings; geographic setting. Indeed, even in this early period, remote rural or agrarian landscapes (as opposed to walled haciendas) are clearly demarcated as home to various types of poverty, whether of dress, social status, education, or economic wealth; meanwhile the denizens of such spaces are animalized both through the absence of morals referenced in their visual representations and through the names given to the categories themselves—names like *lobo* (wolf) or *chino*, a shortened version of *cochino* (pig).

From the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, sets of castas paintings were displayed in public offices, particularly those associated with judicial and governmental settings; others were commissioned from and sent back to Europe. Even though the majority of Andeans would not have seen any of the paintings, individuals within the Church, the government, or even the economic system would have had many opportunities to peruse them while waiting for an audience and to ponder their messages, one of which was the precision of the equations. The suggestion that particular kinds of people produced particular kinds of offspring lent a fixity to those categories that everyday experience and practice might not have achieved. The racial terms also conveyed a hierarchy in which race and class were expected to overlap, and in which the further one descended from whiteness, the more chaotic one's existence was likely to be.² The rhetorical arguments posed through these paintings meant not that racial boundaries were unlikely to be crossed, but rather that the resultant human admixtures could be codified and thus controlled.³

Theorist Homi Bhabha argues in his work on constructions of the Other that the efficacy of colonial discourse requires several elements (Bhabha 1994). Most important among these is fixity: through repetitive stereotypes, the "culture" of the other is presented as unchanging. Constructing the fixity of the Other facilitates the simultaneous construction of categories (such as sex and race) based on concrete, embodied markers of identity through which both colonizer and colonized can perceive and categorize essentialized differences. Once the Other's difference is marked and thus readily perceived, colonizers maintain inequalities through their collective fear of that Other as constructed through art, literature, and the colonial imaginary: if the absence of fixity might result in savagery and anarchy, colonizers can justify to themselves an unyielding control of the uncivilized Other.

Bhabha is concerned with the productive power of colonial discourses that presume this sort of fixity of the colonial subject. Perceptions of fixity enable the colonizing Self to set up categories of Self and Other that reinforce two sets of assumptions: first, that those categories are always, obviously, and completely distinct from one another; and second, that the Other is knowable because his or her attributes are both constant and essential. For Bhabha, the set of colonial discourses works collectively as a discursive strategy of power, reinforcing our perception of doxic interconnections that work strategically to bolster one group's claims to accessing power. Through this set of discourses, the colonizer is able to objectify the Other, limit his or her access to integral systems of cultural production, and ultimately imprison that Other both literally and figuratively. Bhabha's central argument, however, is that despite these *discourses* of fixity, in *practice* colonial situations are far more fluid and potentially productive. The power of the discourses, then, lies in their effectiveness in guiding perception and hence limiting practice that might threaten the stability of the colonial situation.⁴

Philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe has also considered the production and reproduction of images of colonized Others as essential to the efficacy of colonial discourse. As I have analyzed elsewhere,

through their visual codification into repeated symbols, individuals with complex identities and histories are turned into representatives of categories. The codified nature of their markers of identity renders the objectified Others recognizably different, yet in a controlled manner. The[se] processes of objectification and codification distance the Other from the Self, rendering that Other both separate and harmless. [As in Bhabha's analysis, t]his sense of control is enhanced by the fixity of the depicted context, just as geographic control is codified through mapping. The Other is ultimately knowable through the recognition of these markers, which are repetitive and limited in number; [he can thereby be named and controlled.]. . . . Control is further emphasized through the subtle manipulation of perceptions of responsibility and choice. In Mudimbe's interpretation, the juxtaposition of a "normative sameness" (this Other is recognizable) and the "cultural distance" visible in the "accumulation of accidental differences" between the unmarked colonizing Self and the [marked] colonized Other makes those differences seem optional (1988, 9). The inference is that the Other has rejected the possibility of being part of the dominant group through his elective adoption of those markers of Otherness. Framing colonial interactions in this way places responsibility for separateness on the Other. However, the projected idea of choice also means that the possibility of incorporating the Other into the dominant group did and does exist, enhancing the essential ambiguity of the definitions of self and Other. (K. Smith 2001, 55–56)

As Bhabha also notes, within the fixity inherent in representations of the Other an ambivalence is also always present: the Other is constructed as an object of both fear and desire. For Bhabha, setting up this ambivalent perception of the colonized Other is one of the most significant strategies of colonial power because it underlies all the ways we learn to discriminate against that Other.

Attitudes reflected in the castas paintings exemplify this strategy. Colonizers in the Andean world had to maintain ambivalence toward native Andeans: they needed to reproduce and increase their own numbers, a goal which at least in the earliest years required the participation of indigenous women, but they also needed to establish a natural order of difference in which their right to governance could remain absolute and unquestioned.⁵ By the time Ecuador achieved national independence, those within the new national borders already embodied one or another of these broadly recognized identities and had internalized appropriate dispositions toward the remaining categories. The question became one of establishing legitimacy for the new nation without disrupting those colonial constructions—a question often resolved through (paradoxical) presentations of patrimony.

Narratives of Patrimony

As research on nationalism has made abundantly clear, while external assessments of a nation's legitimacy may reflect how well a state is perceived to fit within expected

political and economic parameters (see for example Ferguson 2006, 60–66), the internal legitimacy of any nation depends primarily on a sense of shared experience, generated in part through narratives and cultural patrimony. Patrimony implies collective ownership, and in this way, patrimony is similar to the theoretical concept of the imagined community (Anderson 1983). Both are able to be *presented*, even when they are emphatically not *experienced*, as equally accessible to or shared by all members of a nation (see Lómnitz 2001; García Canclini 1995). Additionally, as García Canclini and others have pointed out, not all cultural artifacts are considered patrimony; they must also be relevant to national narratives.

In Latin America, indigenous populations were frequently not only still present at the moment of national creation, but present in significant numbers. This rendered the question of framing a national narrative even more difficult. In order to justify practices of repression and domination in what would otherwise have been considered kingdoms commensurate with those of Europe, European colonizers from the early 1500s on developed discourses of race that clearly placed indigenous Americans (and, later, African slaves) into inferior categories within the Great Chain of Being, as conveyed through castas paintings and other media. At the moment of independence, however, those racialized categories had to be renegotiated.

Needing to create a perceptive difference between themselves and Spanish *peninsulares*, American *criollos* and their close mestizo relatives also had to negotiate the boundaries between themselves as the rightful leaders of newly recognized nation-states, and the vast majority of the inhabitants of their national territories to whom they did not intend to extend the right to rule. How might already-defined categories of people be reinvented to support both the legitimizing narratives and the political-economic goals of nascent nation-states? Who was to be considered a citizen, and what rights would such a status afford? Perhaps most centrally relevant to the question of patrimony, how might it be possible to use history to legitimize a newly created nation without over-emphasizing the role of indigenous groups in that history? That is, how could a new nation both create a sense of shared history to underlie a national narrative and simultaneously deny a continuity between that history and indigenous peoples in the present—a continuity which would grant *those* peoples political legitimacy?

Enabling newly created Latin Americans to define themselves distinctly both from their European genetic forebears and their indigenous political predecessors, the concept of *mestizaje*, or the mixing of “bloods” or “races,” underlay the majority of justifications of national autonomy. Even if not all the denizens of a new nation could be described as mestizo, a case could be made not only that the new rulers of a state were genetically (and historically) distinct from their Spanish forebears, but also that the populations within a nation were moving toward *mestizaje*. Common components of several newly created national narratives were the interrelated tropes of progress and modernity.

One comparative case is that of Nicaragua, as outlined by historian Jeffrey Gould. While strategies of direct domination of Nicaraguan indigenous communities in the early post-independence period were seldom fruitful, “what was more successful was

the government's discursive casting of the . . . repression [of indigenous groups] as 'a struggle of civilization against barbarism, of darkness against light, of idleness against labor.' This military victory over the Indians, construed as a triumph of civilization, gave birth to the myth of Nicaragua mestiza" (1998, 37–38).

Within the discourse of progress such attitudes permitted perceptions of hierarchies of indigenous groups to be constructed or maintained: "congruent with the discourse of Nicaragua mestiza, the Indian here is defined as noncivilized, as barbarous." However, another option existed for those indigenous groups whose members did not resist assimilating projects. They could be "convert[ed] into civilized ladinos, with the same rights as other citizens; but . . . [now] hold[ing] no special rights to the land" (Gould 1998, 48). Gould provides significant evidence that throughout this period discursive boundaries already existed between the rural and the urban, the "civilized" and the "wild," and the mestizo-as-integrated-into society and the indian-as-separate-from-society (31). He goes on to note that, in the early twentieth century, even the few nominally pro-indigenous government leaders "shared the positivist view that Indians must become ladinoized or perish as obstacles to progress" (47).⁶ In other words, Nicaraguan mestizaje ends up being defined both spatially (as located in urban centers) and temporally (as participating in modernizing projects).

Similar boundaries existed in other colonial settings, including Ecuador. As Suzana Sawyer notes, artist Oswaldo Guayasamín's mosaic within the Ecuadorian National Palace "exemplifies a dominant cultural logic whereby one cannot simultaneously be both Indian and Ecuadorian. Hierarchical binaries between civilized/savage, modern/traditional, cosmopolitan/tribal, national/indigenous infuse this origin myth of Ecuador . . . Indians have little place in elite notions of the Ecuadorian nation. If they are to join the process of modernization they must renounce their identity as Indians" (2004, 35). In addition to reinforcing racialized hierarchies within a colonial situation, the starkly binary oppositions constructed through such logics set the stage for what I consider strategic discourses of *imperfect mestizaje*—discourses essential to the success of new national narratives intended to separate the majority of their citizens from access to political and economic power.

Imperfect Mestizaje

For how . . . can a racially imagined category become a statistical majority other than through a process of ethnogenesis, specifically through a massive and recent 'conversion' of Indians into mestizos—a process that links the genealogy of the political center rather intimately to a peripheral Other which continually threatens to disrupt it?

Christopher Krupa (2011, 162)

In the Andes national narratives and relevant cultural patrimony did and do rely on the construction of a glorious indigenous past transformed through Spanish colonial

processes into a generically mestizo present. Yet this brief outline does not tell the whole story. In the Ecuadorian case, from the early period of independence on, internal borders between the governing elite and the largely indigenous populace were alternately constructed and erased through simultaneous, ambivalent, and ambiguous discourses of *mestizaje* and of a “traditional,” shared indigenous past. The latter is frequently postulated through symbols taken from history and archaeology but, as might be expected, the deployment of those symbols is problematic and fraught with inconsistencies. Groups and individuals relegated to the past (e.g., the pan-Andean Incas; the more local, and perhaps mythical, Quitu-Caras; Atahualpa) provided a basis for the Ecuadorian national narrative—a repository of legitimacy, illustrious forebears to the mestizo nation, yet safely distanced in time so as not to present challenges to political leaders of that nation (see Fabian 1983).

Andean archaeology has always been a generative source of value within constructions of patrimony, authenticity, and national narratives, enabling conceptual links between indigenous groups and the past. In some settings, however, cognitive dissonance overwhelms this narrative. Where indigenous groups cannot successfully be relegated solely to the past in our perception, they are distanced from the present in space rather than in time (see Fabian 1983); this plays into constructions of racialized geography.

All national narratives privilege particular actors and cultural groups—not all members of a nation are equally represented in its narratives (see García Canclini 1995, 130). How do national narratives achieve the effective erasure of widely shared perspectives and experiences of that nation and its history? In other words, how are members of a nation encouraged to see its legitimating narrative as adequately representative of a common experience—even if they as individuals have never had the experience described in the narrative? Reducing the cognitive dissonance that can arise both from realizing that a narrative is foreign to one’s own experience and from recognizing members of a nation who are excluded from its narratives requires another assessment of authenticity: the question of whether one is a “real Indian” or merely a cholo, a peasant, a rural mestizo. Just as with other forms of patrimony, indigeneity also harbors internal hierarchies—some groups form part of the national narrative, while others have little value within it, a theme to which I will return in Chapter 2. In other words, both the nation-as-imagined community and cultural patrimony are shaped in our perceptions by narratives, which, as do all narratives, harbor silences: lacunae in our perceptions, spaces where certain actors are somehow transformed into invisible beings whose very existence falls outside the scope of the collective radar.

Despite all the labored distinctions constructed to distance indigenous groups from the idea of the modern nation in space and time, a more generalized concept of *lo indio* is nonetheless central to the Ecuadorian national imaginary. Even within the supposed mestizo nation, narratives of whiteness as a category of social worth, progress, and urbanity remain. Writing of the discrepancies between discourse and practice, anthropologist Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld notes that while “the word mestizo

refers to the majority of Ecuadorians whose identity blends Amerindian and European physical and cultural heritages . . . in daily discourse it is an exclusionary identity that is ethnically white and closely identified with the dominant, Spanish-speaking national culture of cities and provincial towns (Stutzman 1981; Whitten 2004) (2009, 10). Chris Krupa adds that “insofar as mestizaje implies a process of *blanqueamiento*, as Stutzman has famously argued . . . it has likewise always maintained an important distinction from the fully realized or accomplished condition of actually *being blanco*” (2011, 153). If white-mestizaje in Ecuadorian discourse tends to be constructed as a class-based rather than a racialized identity, still, indianness is a category that is intensely and stubbornly physical (see Weismantel 2001).

As I noted in the introduction, groups like Agua Blancans that are erased from the national narrative are cast as lost somewhere on that path to whiteness. It is not only that, spatially and temporally, they do not fit into dominant definitions of mestizaje; the ways race is inscribed into their laboring bodies further impede their “progress” on the path to whiteness. The very fact that their race is read through their labor rather than through their history, cultural practices, phenotypes, genetic heritage, or relevant aspects of their daily lives means, however, that they are also denied access to an indigenous identity. In other words, national projects of mestizaje produce tangible as well as discursive distinctions between white-mestizo communities, constructed as representing the nation, and indigenous communities, many of which come to be understood *not* as indigenous but as imperfectly mestizo. This is a strategy that impedes their access to the political space afforded by what we could call full mestizaje, yet also denies them the potential productive power of a recognized indigenous status.

Thus Ecuadorian and other Latin American national narratives rely on producing a subconscious hierarchization of their citizen-subjects—a collective understanding of imperfect mestizaje that enables both the perception of whiteness as superior and the production of a generic concept of *lo indio*, that which is indian. Even as the importance of past indigenous civilizations and material culture feature prominently in the narrative of Ecuador’s origins, less illustrious iterations of that more generic category of “indian”—reproduced everywhere from tourism media to museum exhibits to epithets and derogatory phrases heard throughout the nation even today—are essential to the ability of Ecuadorians to reproduce the “exclusionary identity” of ethnically white mestizaje, the category of whiteness-as-worthiness, as marker of progress, education, urbanity.

Discourses of Otherness

The lingering question is not what the discourses of domination are, but rather *how* those discourses—of nation, of patrimony, of authenticity, of racialized geography, of fixed categories of Self and Other—are so effectively constructed. What are the precise mechanisms whereby citizens learn to perceive entire groups as unchanging, even when their own practice and interactions might indicate otherwise? Several discursive

strategies seem to be replicated across different colonial situations. First, as seen in the castas paintings, colonial discourse often presumes an evolutionary framework that relies upon particular markers of difference. This framework reinforces Christian discourses of a “Great Chain of Being” (see Ferguson 2006, 179–82, 190), privileging ideas of a natural hierarchy and hence facilitating the discursive linking of people to essentialized categories based on their “nature.” Second, following early concepts of evolution (and misreadings of Darwin’s work within theories of social evolution), a slightly later emphasis on narratives of progress allowed everyone within a colonial or republican political system to blame the fixity of the Other for impeding that progress. Third, the same ideas of essentialized categories suggest naturalized connections between types of bodies and types of labor; less-developed facets of a nation’s economic organization are thereby justified, or at least left unchallenged (see Weismantel 2001, xxvii). Finally, these strategies enable the construction of discourses of racialized geography that situate identifiable groups in specific and differentially valued places within a national landscape. All these approaches reinforce hierarchies of race, class, gender, labor, and place, further supporting the binary opposition of Self and Other. In the rest of the chapter, I will begin by considering broadly how each of these subsidiary discourses has historically been constructed in Ecuador and the Andean region and then will analyze more precisely where those discourses are reinforced within contemporary Ecuador.

Markers of Difference

Couched within Mudimbe’s analysis of colonial representations of Otherness is the notion of a set of reliable, clearly recognizable, and essential markers of difference through which an individual can comfortably and confidently classify anyone he or she encounters (Mudimbe 1988). While a wide range of identifying characteristics might be considered relevant in different circumstances, certain features seem nearly universal in supporting assessments of where one belongs in a given society, including language and dress. As Maximiliano Viatori notes in his work with the Zápara nation of lowland Amazonian Ecuador, this perception is so pervasive that groups wishing to stake a claim to their own lands or rights often feel compelled to do so in their “native tongue” and in “native dress,” even when neither is quite familiar to them:

Zápara dirigentes have successfully navigated, as well as reproduced, discourses of linguistic essentialism that are predominant in Ecuadorian identity politics (and in international indigenous politics as well). I use the term “linguistic essentialism” to refer to the belief that the cultural uniqueness of any group is represented first and foremost by a language which connects the group to its primordial, pre-contact, cultural essence. Within identity politics, indigenous languages are one of the most tangible emblems of Indians’ cultural distinctiveness from non-indigenous society. Furthermore, indigenous languages are positively valued by many non-Indians as symbols of indigenous groups’ perceived lack of cultural ‘contamination’ or foreign

influence. . . . Thus in the process of emphasizing the continuity of indigenous culture or “tradition,” indigenous leaders have also extended and naturalized dominant discourses of power and essentialism that mask the complexity of indigenous identity and practice (Turner 2002, 231; Warren 1998, 26; Mallon 1995, 285 [citations in original]). (Viatori 2007, 106; see also Hendricks 1991, 63; de la Torre 1999, 93; Sawyer 2004; French 2006)

These framings also impede interconnections among indigenous communities; even Ecuador’s strong indigenous coalitions have been hesitant to include groups who do not display these markers of identity (see, e.g., CONAIE 1989, 284).

Clothing and other external adornments are also central to the creation and perception of difference between colonial Self and colonized Other. Essentialist discourses equating specific indigenous groups with particular visible markers of identity are reinforced through public data sets, from government and touristic websites to schoolbooks and basic, mass-produced school study guide sheets.⁷ In essence, these serve as modern versions of castas paintings, but versions that have gone beyond the mathematical formulae: one is led to assume that the differences are now so stark, and the spaces between groups so vast, that further intermixing is unlikely to occur.

This proliferation of visual lessons on markers of identity, rarely reinforced through “sightings” in one’s everyday experience, exists simultaneously with both tropes and policies of *mestizaje* that also suggest that indigeneity is not long for this world. Discourses of *blanqueamiento* (whitening) equate both physical and social whitening with upward mobility, which itself is presumed to be something everyone desires, to the extent that the phrase *mejorar la raza* (to “improve the race”) is commonplace, used to motivate children to date or marry someone of a lighter skin tone, to travel abroad, or to study. The trope of the vanishing Indian is also ubiquitous, and through it vibrant indigenous communities are reduced to remnants of an outdated, dying way of life. This framing enables them to be depicted as so scattered, so sparsely populated, and so very distinct from one another—and from whiteness—that intermarriage is neither desirable nor likely.

Boundaries constructed among groups identified along lines of ethnicity—but also of location, social class, and type of labor performed—at some moments enable individuals from one such group to interact with individuals of other such groups without experiencing cognitive dissonance. At other moments, however, individuals do become visible: their markers of difference suddenly stand out, and, as Mary Weismantel puts it, “the consequences . . . are rarely benign” (2001, xxvi).

Progressive Difficulties

De-Indianization [may be] defined as the struggle against the wretchedness implicit in the dominant definition of Indianness.

Marisol de la Cadena (2000, 320)

Another problematic aspect of racialized markers of difference—in Ecuador or elsewhere—has to do with the underlying national narratives and globalizing discourses within which those differences are couched. As noted in the introduction, the logics of globalizing processes tend to be interconnected; as the narrative of each discourse underpinning globalization interweaves itself with the rest, the entire set of discourses becomes, if not entirely invisible, then at least difficult to perceive. If we can be led to assume globalization to be a natural, inevitable process—a flow—then anything defined in terms contrary to the goals of globalization can be framed as a discontinuity, a friction, something halting our collective progress toward a global future.

When an indigenous group is described through reference to a fixed set of markers of identity, that group itself appears fixed in time, unchanging; and of course, fixity is perceived as impeding progress, rendering one's being "up-to-date" impossible (see Mills 1999). Rhetoric of national development enables a simultaneous justification of colonization through what can then be framed as civilizing efforts. For indigenous communities, this means that combating colonialist policies requires raising awareness of the taken-for-granted frameworks through which they are justified. As Leon Zamosc notes, "contemporary Indian movements can be read as a radical critique of the kind of modernity that has prevailed in Latin America . . . a bigoted modernity whose imagery of national identity stereotyped Indianness as backward and justified humiliating discriminatory practices and repression or 'folklorization' of Indian culture" (1994, 64).

The discourse of modernization works in two ways: it erases Others from our perceptions in the present, relegating them to national history rather than current events; or, if colonized groups do become visible in the present, it suggests that they will disappear, a plight they cannot escape because they cannot adapt. Canessa finds that "the prevailing attitudes of the day [mid-twentieth century] are neatly expressed by Saavedra: 'As Le Bon says, if an inferior race is placed next to a superior one it must disappear, and if . . . we must exploit those Aymara and Quechua indians for our benefit or eliminate them because they constitute and [sic] obstacle to our progress, then let us do so frankly and energetically' (Saavedra 1955, 146). Bautista Saavedra was none other than the president of Bolivia in the 1920s" (Canessa 2012, 79). Such a stance reinforces already-entrenched hierarchies and inequalities of access; it also enables colonialist and imperialist discourse to persist unchallenged because that discourse can be framed positively, as pro-progress, even while its motivations and consequences might more accurately be described as anti-Other.

In a study of indigenous Nicaraguans within national narratives, historian Jeffrey Gould outlines similar strategies the Nicaraguan government used to justify repressive measures against native peoples in the early twentieth century, analyzing "the government's discursive casting of their repression as 'a struggle of civilization against barbarism, of darkness against light, of labor against idleness'" (Gould 1998, 37–38). In other words, through framing indigenous peoples as not just not-modern, but anti-modern, the Nicaraguan government was able to present actively repressive measures as lamentable necessities in the move toward a national future: "Indians must become

ladinoized or perish as obstacles to progress” (Gould 1998, 47). Anthropologist Emma Cervone similarly notes that “in the indigenous case in Latin America, the forging of the colonial category of Indian changed over time to acquire different meanings according [to] the context and actors involved. With the process of modern nation building and throughout the twentieth century, dominant notions of indigeness depicted indigenous cultures as cradles of tradition and primordialism, where tradition was equated with backwardness and antimodernity” (Cervone 2012, 15). The implicit connections linking modernity, nationalism, and progress reinforce binary oppositions of nature and culture, rural and urban, all of which tend then to be mapped onto racialized categories that come to be seen in equally oppositional terms (see Ortner 1995, 378).

These implications are equally visible in Ecuadorian history. In the 1960s leaders of communist-inspired social and political movements attempted to create a pan-national peasant identity as a basis for change. In many parts of the country, unrecognized indigenous groups finally able to acquire lands after agrarian reform chose to register those lands as *comunas campesinas* (peasant communes) rather than *comunas indígenas* (indigenous communes). Superficially, this appears to reflect a class-based rather than a racialized identity, but in practice it has served to reinforce prominent discourses linking indigenous people to the “uncivilized” countryside, thereby rendering it easier yet to portray native groups as impeding progress, as anti-modern.

Working Knowledge: Labor and the Production of Appropriate Embodied Identities

The body, in Andean thinking, is an object built up over time. As it ingests, digests, and expels substances from the world around it, it provides its owner an identity drawn from worldly substances. Body and identity thus originate in the intimate physical relationship between persons and their social milieu: each human comprises a particular mix of food and drink, laughter and language, work and rest.

Mary Weismantel (2001, 191–92)

As elsewhere in the Spanish colonies, during the mid-1500s much of the land within the area that would later be known as Ecuador was distributed to *peninsulares* (Spanish-born colonizers) under the *encomienda* system. In return for protecting their holdings and taking responsibility for collecting annual tributes to the Spanish crown and the spiritual conversion of the peoples living on their lands, settlers were granted ownership of land as well as of the indigenous communities living there. Indians thus became the de facto labor force for the early colonial period, sent to work in mines or on agricultural plantations. Unlike Peru and Bolivia, the northern Andes had fewer mineral resources, meaning that conditions were slightly better for workers whose duties tended to be more agricultural.

While the *encomienda* system was legally modified several times, in practice conditions for indigenous people and slaves brought from Africa did not change for centuries; *encomienda* labor was merely rewritten into the *huasipungo* system (famously decried by Ecuadorian author Jorge Icaza) and similar exploitative systems relying on peonage. *Huasipungos* were small agricultural plots granted to indians to work in return for their labor on larger landholdings controlled by hacienda owners. These minimal plots did not grant indigenous peoples much control over their existence, which was predominantly defined through labor; nor were the plots fully controlled by the families who lived on them. Here we see one of the reasons land tenure is so important to indigenous communities: beyond romantic notions of its representing a way of life and a sensibility or *habitus*, access to a communally-owned and inalienable territory enables groups more control over their own existence and the possibility of community where external labor would be divisive.

The emphasis on the centrality of labor in constituting race is clear despite the persistence of colonial discourses that depend on tropes of “lazy Indians” who are morally inferior to dominant groups in society. Considering the role of labor in constructing racialized categories and histories in the Chaco, anthropologist Gastón Gordillo contrasts local Toba perceptions of their ancestors as “strong and hardworking” or “highly regarded by their bosses” with administrators’ evaluations “of their indigenous labor force as unproductive and undisciplined” (Gordillo 2004, 58–59). Similarly, relating justifications of different working conditions for differently racialized laborers, anthropologist Carmen Martínez Novo notes dominant perceptions that “modern traits are inherent in the nature of Baja California, whereas traditional features are imported from the south of Mexico” (Martínez Novo 2006, 53). Factory owners can therefore justify keeping indigenous Oaxacans in lower-paid, harsher working conditions while giving whiter northern Mexicans indoor jobs.

The logic here is circular: as the Andeans cited by Weismantel know, particular categories of labor produce specific types of bodies; within colonial discourse, racialized bodies are not only associated with particular kinds of labor, but perceived to be the most suitable for those types of labor. Seeing bodies that have been shaped by a particular social reality performing specific kinds of tasks facilitates the association of racialized bodies with “appropriate” labor (see Gregory 2006, 19). In other words, in a sort of practical application of racial hierarchies, differently classified bodies come to be perceived as suitable for different types of labor. Thus each racialized group is already ensconced in a geography and a class structure, both of which are naturalized through this representation of embodied identity.

Labor not only produces particular kinds of bodies, but also limits the categories into which particular bodies can be placed (see Baron and Boris 2007, 23). Certain kinds of labor in very specific settings are part of what constitute a *campesino* identity: the daily rhythms of coastal agricultural labor mark the body in particular ways, changing both the composition of one’s body and the tone of one’s skin. As I will consider in Chapter 2, however, the dominant assumption is that it is precisely that

labor that prevents coastal campesinos from being authentically indigenous. There is no obvious reason that the categories of peasant and indigenous should not overlap, but one classification is defined through labor politics as a class-based identity and the other through identity politics as a race-based identity (see Greene 2007, 449).

Racialized Geographies and Naturalized Connections to Place

Postcard makers create a fantasy of premodern social life that is immensely appealing to tourists. And in the process, they also confer a race upon the people photographed. Manufactured goods . . . bestow whiteness on the people around them; their absence performs the reverse. . . . But imagine what would happen if someone whom tourists could readily identify as being “like” the people in the pictures—an Amazonian native carrying a blowgun, or even an Indian maidservant on her way to the bus—were to walk into a souvenir shop and begin thumbing through the cards. The immediate effect on white tourists would be one of incongruity: the picture has stepped out of the frame.

Mary Weismantel (2001, 180–81)

As nearly every guide to Ecuador states in its opening paragraphs, Ecuador is a land of contrasts. While many authors refer to the geography of the country, others include the cultural landscape as well; as a highly marketed tourist destination, Ecuador is known not only for its stunning biodiversity, but also for its colorful indigenous markets, vibrant festivals and music, and colonial cities. Apart from national parks nearly every tourist destination within the country is marketed in terms of its cultural heritage—the indigenous markets of Otavalo or Salasaca, the more recently promoted ethnic tourism sites (“stay with shamans!”) on the edges of the Amazon basin, the enduring Spanish colonial architecture in Cuenca and Quito, the Afro-Ecuadorian street music in Esmeraldas. Imagining Ecuador means imagining a stunning array of pristine, beautiful, yet wild landscapes dotted with the occasional city or village with its own clearly distinguished ethnic heritage. Within a national narrative that has long valued indigeneity only as part of a heroic past (see Benavides 2004; Sawyer 2004), contemporary indigeneity can discursively be rendered practically invisible everywhere outside those specific settings framed as part of Ecuador’s cultural heritage. Just as we would not expect the actors from Colonial Williamsburg or similar parks to be found throughout our spaces of daily experience in the United States, Ecuadorians do not expect indigenous actors to be present outside the village marketplaces, shamanic encounters, or festivals where they and other tourists travel to consume that heritage.

In her volume *Cholas and Pishtacos*, Mary Weismantel demonstrates that various aspects of everyday life in the Andes, from art to music to complaints about the marketplace to children’s high school textbooks, teach Andeans that the city and the countryside are antithetical to one another. The city is portrayed as a place of culture, of learning, of progress, of modernity—and a white space; the countryside, by contrast, is remote, natural, beautiful but uncivilized, located in the past—and indian.

Indigenous culture is valued only when it is contained; the presence of individual indians within urban settings, while an everyday occurrence, does not fit easily within those national narratives, resulting in cognitive dissonance that provokes everything from a sense of the uncanny to violent rejection to colonialist nostalgia for a more ordered past (Weismantel 2001). Weismantel compares the work of novelists, journalists, letter-writers, and even anthropologists from various time periods and notices that all of them record a sense that the presence of indians in the cities is a recent change—and one they all bemoan.⁸

Similarly, cultural geographer Sarah Radcliffe and sociologist Sallie Westwood have noted that, within Latin America, “‘national’ history is pictured in metropolitan, urban, and predominantly ‘white’ social spaces. . . . Moreover, the conflation of metropolis with nation reiterates the role of the city as the departure point for the colonizing/development project of progress” (1996, 115). If cities connote progress and modernity, then their denizens are expected to display that modernity through race. Individual indians able to transcend their fixed identities become mestizos, according to this logic; those who are not so mutable remain in the countryside, which is perceived as their most suitable setting, their natural habitat, as it were.

In a study tellingly titled *Indigenous Mestizos*, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena notes that “landowners [in Peru] used the expression ‘*Indio leído, indio perdido*’ . . . which in its mildest version means that a literate Indian is not an Indian anymore . . . this expression defines Indians as so essentially opposed to literacy and to urban ways that if they learn to read and write or migrate to the city, they are no longer Indians but racial/cultural mestizos” (2000, 314). The equation of indigeneity with rurality is deeply entrenched and so widespread it has rendered indigenous practice invisible in places where such practice is not expected to exist. Famed Peruvian novelist and former politician Mario Vargas Llosa has contended, “Indian peasants live in such a primitive way that communication is practically impossible. It is only when they move to the cities that they have the opportunity to mingle with the other Peru. The price they must pay for integration is high—renunciation of their culture, their language, their beliefs, their traditions and customs, and the adoption of the culture of their ancient masters. After one generation they become mestizos. They are no longer Indians” (Vargas Llosa 1990, as cited in de la Cadena 2000, 1).

What these constructions mean in practical terms, if one happens to be indigenous, is that one must choose between authenticity and political efficacy, as I noted in the introduction. Much as Peter Wade has argued for black Colombians, the decision to pursue any path designed to increase one’s options in broader society and promote the interests of one’s community—training in a profession, going to college, entering politics, becoming a lawyer, advocating for indigenous rights—of necessity means abandoning one’s place of origin, since such options are not accessible from those settings (Wade 1995). Institutions of higher education do not exist in rural areas; one cannot garner sufficient political support to be elected into office from a remote location. As Wade’s work on *blanqueamiento* suggests, choosing such a path means that one ceases to be perceived as indigenous, both by the broader national society and by

one's own community—precisely because the discourse of racialized geography is so powerful and productive in Ecuador.

This is a particularly good example of how narratives work, and how well they work: Weismantel points out that it is not just upper-class Andeans but everyone, including urban indians, who believe that indigenous people live in the countryside and whites live in the cities. In other words, their conceptual map of who “belongs” where in the Andean landscape is not altered merely by their own experience. This means that even when indigenous people live in cities for generations, they do not necessarily perceive themselves as belonging there. By the same token, whites are perceived as not belonging in the countryside even though they, too, are always present.

Because people have been so effective at using the idea of social geography as a metaphor for essential differences between indigenous and white, people tend to sublimate the awareness of just how familiar they all are with both landscapes—and with one another. Referring to Freud's essay on the Uncanny, Weismantel suggests that the proliferation of unlikely stories of *pishtacos* (ghoulish white males who supposedly steal the fat from indigenous bodies) and *cholas* (Andean market women) have their origin in the suppressed recognition of just how familiar each constructed Other is within the local landscape of each Self. White men and *cholas* are both fascinating and frightening not because they are unknown, but rather precisely because they are so very familiar, yet simultaneously perceived as out of place.

As I will outline in the following sections, a number of institutions within Ecuador reinforce these discourses and their implications, a situation common within Latin America and other postcolonial spaces.⁹ In an ethnography of modern Maya negotiations of cultural positioning within global economic processes, Edward Fischer describes the “dichotomous worldview into which military recruits become indoctrinated, positing a stark contrast between the progressive, modern, urban world of ladino society and the untamed, regressive chaos of the rural Indian world. In this scheme, Indians represent the animal ignorance and brutality that threatens modernizing development, and an explicit link is developed between Maya cultural values and savagery” (2002, 198) When values are mapped onto places which are already associated with particular racialized groups, the links between values and peoples are easily assumed to be hereditary and unavoidable. I will return to this theme throughout the chapter.

Where, then, are these general themes of difference reinforced within contemporary Ecuadorian institutions?

Museums

National archaeological narratives, official or not, are always about presenting: a smooth history where there are only accidents; a continuous subject where there is only discontinuity; a homogeneous nationality where there is a heterogeneity of communities; and historical truth where there is only subjugated knowledge.

O. Hugo Benavides (2004, 383–84)

Museums often rank among a nation's most effective purveyors of narratives of history, inheritance, belonging, and culture, reaching audiences as diverse as international tourists, virtual visitors of websites, groups visiting from around the country, and local school groups. Ranging from national collections of patrimony to small site museums, from preserved historical and religious buildings to personal collections of artifacts, museums have long been central to tourism within Ecuador. In recent years, the Central Bank of Ecuador has purchased a number of previously private collections, consolidating them into more representative displays in cities throughout Ecuador. While this process has streamlined tourist decisions of what to visit, it has also resulted in more centralized control over how national narratives are presented. One of the most striking examples of this can be found in Cuenca, a colonial city recently named a World Heritage City and frequented by Ecuadorian and international tourists alike.

An odd pastiche of styles and representations, the Pumapungo Ethnographic Museum of the Central Bank of Ecuador in Cuenca guides visitors through a maze of dioramas representing the different regions and cultural groups of the nation. Even here, within a building, racialized geography triumphs; groups are divided by geographic region rather than language group, interaction network, customs and beliefs, or other possible cultural markers. Tropes placing those regions themselves into a hierarchy of authenticity and civilization are subtly reinforced throughout the visitor's experience (cf. Blakey 1990, 39 and *passim*). For example, dioramas of highland indigenous groups are brightly lit and colorful; within each, individuals are depicted in elaborate costumes performing dances on religious holidays or seated in marketplaces surrounded by their wares. While still marking difference effectively, all these accoutrements suggest more populated settings, landscape modifications, a highly developed aesthetic sense, and at least a cursory acceptance of Western religion. Highland groups are not white—whiteness is not depicted in the museum, in fact, nor is a more broadly Ecuadorian *mestizaje* (see Weismantel 2001), reinforcing the colonialist potential of ethnography to document the exotic Other—but neither are highland Andeans portrayed as being as remote in time or space as other groups included in the museum's presentation. Lowland Amazonian groups are represented in darker, wilder settings, scantily clad and clutching spears, their near-naked bodies adorned with feathers and paint. On at least two of my visits, dioramas of some groups included *tsantsas* (shrunken heads), highlighting what was clearly cast as a savage practice that distinguished these groups evolutionarily from their highland counterparts.

What is interesting about museum dioramas is their ability simultaneously to evoke and to constrain a sense of activity. Weismantel describes this particular museum as presenting “different groups . . . arrayed on a timeless plane of difference like species of butterflies pinned to a sheet of cardboard” (2001, 85). Each group is portrayed as if in a still from a video capturing an ongoing process—a celebration, a market interaction, a parade, a hunting trip¹⁰—yet none is portrayed interacting with any other group, despite the obvious efficacy of inter-ethnic coalitions within the

country. Isolated in these representations, a group also comes to be perceived by visitors as isolated in reality (Fabian 1983).

While Pumapungo is the only setting with this sort of ethnographic dioramas in the country, numerous museums both in major cities and at smaller sites do represent indigeneity. However, with the exception of the Interamerican Foundation of Popular Arts, also in Cuenca, other museums represent indigenous groups only as material cultures in the archaeological past. Distanced in time as well as in space, groups displayed through such representations come to be perceived as no longer existing in the present (Fabian 1983). Visitors' experiences traveling through many of the more elaborate of these museums reinforce a message of evolutionary progress (see Blakey 1990; García Canclini 1995).

A prime example is perhaps the best-known museum in the nation, the National Museum of the Central Bank of Ecuador in Quito, located in the heart of Quito's tourist zone at the end of the Avenida Amazonas in El Ejido Park. Upon entering the museum, tourists are guided first to a few dioramas of preceramic archaeological sites and then through a dimly lit room containing a series of glass cases where exquisite examples of material culture, primarily ceramic and stone work, are displayed. Most tourists walk right through the first rooms to get to the more beautiful objects on display in this second area. While stunning, the objects are decontextualized, removed conceptually from the contexts in which they might have been used, the human beings who made them, and the technologies and trade necessary for their creation. Artifacts are displayed in vague areas according to the "cultures" to which they belong, but the casual observer could easily miss this information, simply taking in the beauty of the pieces themselves. The idea of interconnections among groups—whether in the forms of technological or aesthetic influences, or of economic and political interactions—is not raised through the exhibit. This section of the museum, on the ground floor, ends with an exhibit of pre-Columbian goldwork; thus manipulations of the substance so central to the Spanish conquest are subtly presented as the aesthetic pinnacle of ancient Andean civilization.

Upon exiting the exhibit of goldwork, one walks up a long ramp and turns right into a brightly lit room full of Spanish colonial art, mostly religious in nature and liberally decorated with gold leaf. The use of that material provides the most obvious connection to the previous room. Another link is more subtle, as the back wall of the colonial exhibit is made of glass and overlooks the pre-Columbian artifacts below. The relative positioning, as well as the differences in lighting, suggest not only evolutionary progress but also the spiritual elevation of colonial society over indigenous culture. Furthermore, indigenous Ecuador is suddenly absent, as if the native population had simply disappeared upon contact with Europeans.

This absence of depicted indigeneity continues through the next series of rooms dedicated to the Republican period and primarily containing two types of paintings: romantic landscapes and portraits of political and military leaders. These rooms evoke a sense of sterility; no one really lingers here. Finally, visitors proceed to the third floor, situated at a distance from the earlier areas, which houses modern and postmodern

art comprising various styles, messages, and media. Indigenous themes reappear in the work of such artists as Eduardo Kingman, Oswaldo Viteri, Camilo Egas, and Oswaldo Guayasamín, but the overwhelming message is one of oppression, of desolation and poverty, of sadness. Many of these artists intended their work as commentary on the treatment of indigenous people in modern Ecuador (Greet 2009), but for the casual viewer, what is emphasized is how out of place—and time—those groups seem to be. Outside, the bustling metropolis of Quito roars.

Virtual Worlds

While museums provide an evolutionary framework guiding perceptions of different racialized cultural groups within Ecuador, as well as reinforcing discourses of racialized geographies, their messages are often perceived as part of one's historical knowledge, informing general perceptions of the national narrative and landscapes. Tourism media—guidebooks, posters, and, most prominently, websites—are more likely to incorporate discourse and images indexing particular and specifically located indigenities.

I have been visiting the official website of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism as well as other ministerial and government-sponsored websites for over ten years. What I have found is that, while the specifics of representation change constantly, both the underlying messages and the tone in which they are couched were constant through at least 2010.¹¹ First, indigenous peoples are depicted as colorful, clearly identifiable but sparsely populated groups, each of which inhabits a very specific place in the rural Ecuadorian landscape. Second, despite the touristic message that groups welcome visitors, the majority are portrayed as isolated, living in remote areas, with traditions and ways of life that have not changed for millennia. The remaining few have somehow managed to participate in the modern world via markets and music yet have not thereby lost their traditional identities. In other words, once again, indigenous identity is essentialized and geography itself is racialized. Positive representations of indigenous people or groups always reiterate these two messages, conceptually locating indigeneity in rural places and in the past (see Fabian 1983). The only references to indigenous presence in Ecuadorian urban areas are deeply buried within the sites; if those references are encountered by website visitors at all, they attribute a gamut of social ills to the migration of indigenous (and black) groups to Ecuadorian cities, clearly marking them as conceptually out of place in—and foreign to—those locations.

The depicted dichotomy between rural and urban belongings is blatant and ubiquitous. On its main page in 2005, for example, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism described the country's people thus: "Several different indigenous nationalities continue to live their traditional lifestyles in rural villages and towns throughout the nation. In the cities, you find mainly mestizos, African Ecuadorians, and whites" (www.vivecuador.com/htm12/eng.htm; accessed March 12, 2005). Following this description were several links to subpages on the website, including one on the

“culture” of Ecuador. That subpage had an unobtrusive link in the bottom corner labeled “More information.” The English-language version of the link led viewers to the following description:

Ecuador is a multiethnic and multicultural nation. It has a population of more than 12.6 million. Of these, five and a half million live in the highlands. Six and a half million of Ecuador’s inhabitants live on the Pacific coast. The Amazon region is home to more than six hundred thousand inhabitants and nearly seventeen thousand live in the Galapagos Islands. More than fourteen indigenous groups live on the Ecuadorian mainland, maintaining their own traditions and ways of life. The following are the principal indigenous groups of the Amazon region: Huaoranis, Achuar, Shuar, Cofán, Siona-Secoya, Shiwiar and Záparo. . . . Los Tagaeri, related to the Huaorani, are another group from this area. The Tageri [*sic*] were declared “intangible” by the State, in order to respect their wish to live far from civilization. . . . The principle [*sic*] indigenous groups of the highlands are the Quichua, Cañaris, and Saraguros. In northern Ecuador, live the Awa community. On the Pacific coast, live the Chachis, Cayapas, Tsáchilas, and Huancavilcas. The nations [*sic*] cities and villages are primarily populated by people of mixed race, white, and Afro-Ecuadorians, although large numbers of indigenous migrants have moved from the country to the city. This has caused some problems such as growth of slums, lack of housing and schools, unemployment, crime, among other issues. (*www.vivecuador.com/htm12/eng/culture.htm*; accessed March 12, 2005)

Several aspects of the statement stand out. First, the first sentence reinforces the language of multiculturalism rather than multinationalism, again casting indigeneity in racialized rather than political terms. Second, in the following paragraph, rather than framing the preferences of the Tagaeri in terms of autonomy or control over what they perceive as potentially negative cultural influences, the website phrases the decision as a “wish to live far from civilization,” implying that the Tagaeri themselves are uncivilized and thus reinforcing the rural/urban dichotomy and its associated moral values. This message is reiterated in the final paragraph, which concedes that in fact indigenous people can be found in urban settings, but they are recent arrivals. Furthermore, several social issues are pathologized as directly caused by the vector of polluting indigeneity (see Douglas 2002 [1970]).

Not only the rural/urban dichotomy, but also a more generalized sense of racialized geography is reinforced through government agencies’ representations of the nation. For example, in 2006 the former Ministry of Education and Culture presented a map of “Intercultural Ecuador” on its website, providing viewers with visual representations of whom they should expect to find in which places (fig. 1.1; *www.mec.gob.ec/inicio/inicio.php*; accessed February 20, 2006).¹² Similar representations were at the time included on other government-sponsored websites and still grace the back covers of all government-produced school texts.

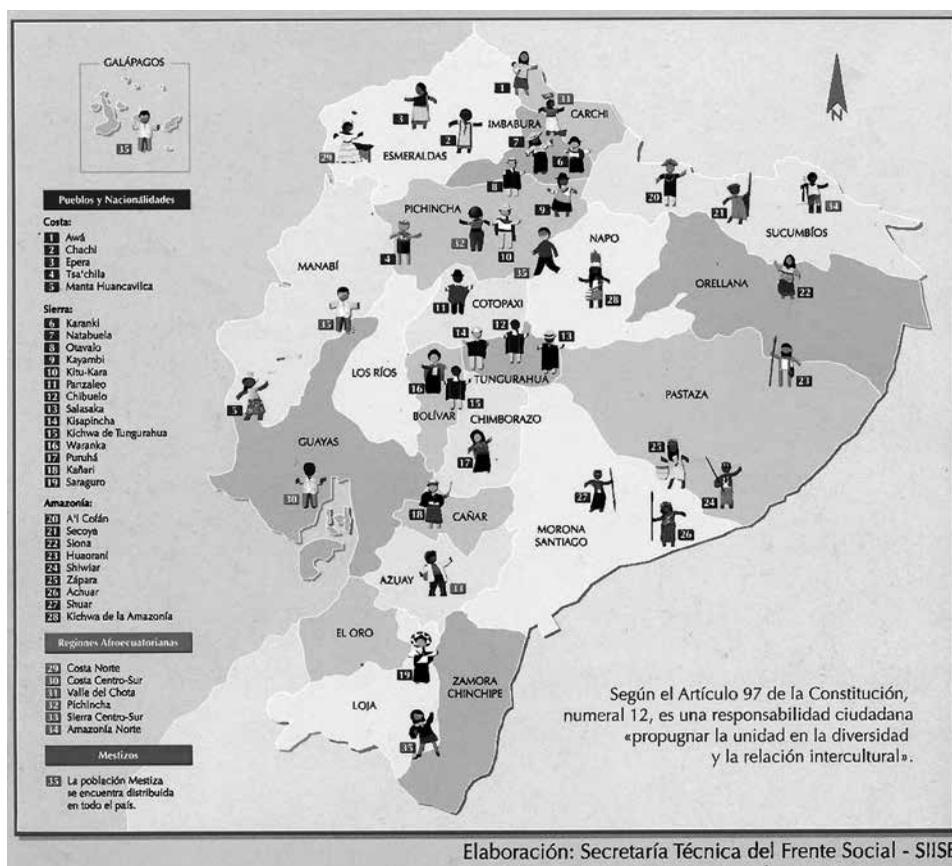


Figure 1.1. Map from the back cover of all 2006 school textbooks (MEE 2006). (Image courtesy of Grupo Santillana Ecuador)

Two iterations of the Council for the Development of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE)'s version of this map, no longer available online, also stood out. The first included head-and-shoulder mug shots of representatives of each "type" of indigenous person. In Manabí and Guayas provinces, by contrast, the individuals were mestizos, shown in profile, bent over and working—most people who saw the site perceived them as monkeys rather than people. A later version depicted figures in each area that were identical except for dress and adornments (www.codenpe.gob.ec/swf/Nacionalidades%20y%20pueblos.swf; accessed March 10, 2006 and February 10, 2008). The most recent version has returned to the mug shots, but does include indigenous people on the coast, albeit in ridiculously small numbers (www.codenpe.gob.ec/index.php/component/content/article/96-pdf/mapa/125-mapa-del-territorio-de-nacionalidades-y-pueblos-el-ecuador; accessed May 30, 2013).

Frequently visited tourism websites, some government-sponsored and others private, reflect these constructions of racialized geography. Sites describe Amazonian groups as isolated communities where people's lives have changed little in the past millennia and where daily life involves communing peacefully with nature. *Exploring*

Ecuador (www.exploringecuador.com) was a subsidiary of Ecuador's Ministry of Tourism that provided online information for travelers in both Spanish and English. In 2006 its overview of lowland Ecuador was as follows:

Especially in the rain forest, many ethnic groups are still isolated and have little contact with Western culture. To this day, they maintain a way of life similar to the way their ancestors lived over 500 years ago. . . . In Ecuador, when we speak of mega-diversity we speak not only of our magnificent biological world, but we also refer to the human factor. . . . Many archeologists sustain that some of the oldest cultures that survived (over 10,000 years) are actually from this tropical humid rainforest, impossible to reach for many centuries. In the "Cosmo vision" of these indigenous groups, the human being is a part of the "Amazanga" (rainforest) and the human spirit wanders in this forest every dawn. The human spirit can enter an eagle or a serpent or a jaguar, each one with a symbolism as to their nature according to their beliefs. The rainforest provides their food, medicinal plants, and spiritual richness. To these people, the tropical rainforest is their home, their drugstore, their supermarket, and their religion; thus, their extreme respect to the ecological balance. These people are neither naturalists nor consumers. They are apparently very poor (according to modern world economical standards), however, they have a rich spiritual life and live in peace surrounded by their families, taking from nature only what they need for survival and taking time to meditate and enlighten their spiritual selves. (exploringecuador.com/en_ar_indigenous_cultures.htm; accessed March 12, 2006)

Over a decade after lowland groups first organized to force meetings with government officials and to bring multinational petroleum corporations to trial for contaminating their lands, mere months after organizing protests resulting in the removal of President Lucio Gutiérrez from office, and in the midst of another set of protests which would result in the suspension of discussion of a Free Trade Area of the Americas, the government still described these groups as remote, spiritual communities who consider the rainforest their "home, their drugstore, their supermarket, and their religion," and who sit around "enlightening their spiritual selves."

Coastal groups are almost never mentioned; when they are, descriptions are brief and tend to position them as anti-modern: "The cultures that subsist to this day are three different groups: the Awá, the Chachis or Cayapas and the Tsachilas or Colorados. They live in the tropical rainforest on the west Andes and possibly settled there escaping from the invasion of the Incas from Peru (XV Century) or from the Spaniards (XVI Century)" (exploringecuador.com/en_ar_indigenous_cultures.htm; accessed March 12, 2006). Such depictions give readers no sense that groups in either the Amazonian lowlands or the coastal areas interact with others, that they might be politically engaged, or even that they might inhabit the same world as visitors of the websites.

As in the museums, highland Andean communities are described in language that suggests they are more civilized than indigenous lowland peoples, as well as easier for tourists to encounter, particularly in marketplaces such as the well-known tourist mecca of Otavalo, which “offers wonderful weavings, tapestry, rugs, bags, and more products of the hard working community of Otavalo. These people are very skillful and artistic. . . . Families work together and then sell together at the fair. Transactions take place most quietly with bargaining and all. These are a very proud people that have not lost their cultural identity despite the fact that mestizos and whites inhabit Otavalo city as well, and also that they all have televisions to expose them to the modern globalized world” (*exploringecuador.com/en_ar_indigenous_cultures.htm*; accessed March 12, 2006). Here what is highlighted is each group’s colorful cultural identity, portrayed as stubbornly persisting despite each community’s “exposure” to the “modern globalized world.” Tellingly, the potential parallel concern that the whites and mestizos who inhabit the same city are in danger of losing their own cultural identity is never addressed: evolution is unilinear. Such depictions not only mark difference, but also grant it moral value and place it along an evolutionary path; highland Andeans are somewhat more developed than their lowland counterparts, but have still not completely entered the modern world (see Ferguson 2006).

In the same vein, rather than acknowledging the political efficacy of highland organizations, the site chooses to present each group as unique and disconnected—as quiet, peaceful people, subservient but open to capitalism (e.g., “Transactions take place most quietly with bargaining and all. . . . Otavalo Indians travel around the world merchandising their goods” [*exploringecuador.com/en_ar_indigenous_cultures.htm*; accessed March 12, 2006]). The Ministry of Tourism thus quietly erases the political momentum of indigenous Andeans who were partially or wholly responsible for three changes in government, various rewrites of the Ecuadorian Constitution, and the abandonment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations, in favor of portraying groups as picturesque and passive.

Commercial websites provide similar constructions of indigenous life in Ecuador. Touted as “the most trusted travel guide to Ecuador since 1997, updated daily,” the Ecuador Explorer website compiles information from around the tourism industry and is maintained by ads from tour agencies, hotels, and other service-sector companies within the country as well as by advertisers such as Amazon.com. According to the “Peoples and Cultures” link on that site (*www.ecuadorexplorer.com/html/people_and_culture.html*; accessed January 30, 2012), of the “eleven” peoples making up the indigenous population, the lowland groups live in “rainforest worlds” characterized by “shamanistic traditions,” while the highlanders are again those with booming markets known to tourists. Like most African diaspora populations, Afro-Ecuadorians are described as the descendants of slaves and presented as entertainers. Coastal indigenous groups are not described at all.

In the page’s opening description of physical locations, there is no sense of indigenous communities as part of the country at all; Ecuador comprises “Amazonian

frontier towns, Pacific coast fishing villages, rambling old haciendas, packed markets, and colonial cities” (www.ecuadorexplorer.com/html/people_and_culture.html; accessed January 30, 2012). The language used in most of these descriptions evokes either white wealth or adventure (frontier, haciendas, colonial) or vague spaces imaginable as filled with homogeneous masses (fishing villages or packed markets). The individuals would be the frontiersmen, the hacendados, the leaders of those colonial cities—and the tourists themselves.

Another important commercial site, Ecuador Travel Guide (www.ecuador-travel-guide.org), is sponsored by Ecuador Tours Online. On a series of subpages on the cultures of Ecuador, the site lists four coastal groups (Afro-Ecuadorian, Tsáchila, Chachi, and Awa-Kwaiker), a handful of colorful, market-oriented highland groups (Cañar, Otavalo, Quichua of Chimborazo, Salasaca, and Saraguro), and the peoples of the Amazonian lowlands. All of the latter are described as mystical noble savages: “This rainforest is home to thousands of indigenous inhabitants, who make up nearly 200 distinct nations, including the Siona, Secoya, Cofan, Shuar, Zaparo, Huaorani, and Quichua. The indigenous tribes that live in Ecuador’s rainforest are the ancient keepers and guardians of the world’s biological heritage—having lived there for more than 10,000 years, they know its trees, its animals and its rhythms better than anyone” (www.ecuador-travel-guide.org/regions/JungleGen.htm; accessed February 12, 2013). As on other sites indigenous groups are portrayed as distant from the modern world. There is no mention of other groups in the highlands, or of their sheer numbers and political power; nor is there a hint of any coastal indigenous group that is not somehow removed from the population.

During the first administration of Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, the Ministry of Tourism overhauled its website, introducing stylized icons representing each of Ecuador’s four regions: a volcano for the Andes, a bird for Amazonia, a sun for the coast, and a fish for the Galápagos. Each region also had its own banner atop each relevant page, as well as its own slogan. The banner for the Andes included in its foreground a head-and-shoulders photo of a market woman—Weismantel’s *chola cuencana* par excellence, sporting a bowler hat, embroidered shawl, and a non-matching but brightly-colored sweater. In the background, a photograph of a snow-capped volcano dissolved into purple outline art of stylized llamas and plants; amidst this, the slogan “Ecuador, life in a pure state” could be seen. For Amazonia, an artist had combined a foregrounded photo of a man marked as indigenous by a feather headdress, facepaint, and a beaded neckpiece and chest ornament, apparently caught in the act of kissing or smelling a macaw. Here the background was more generic: the edge of a river where it met the trees, framed by a rainbow. This dissolved into green outline art of plants and butterflies, topped by the label “Ecuador: the country of four worlds.”

Representing the coast, artists foregrounded a smiling, dancing, Afro-Ecuadorian couple against a background of the Pacific coastline, the label “Ecuador: friendly and hospitable people,” and yellow outline art of *ceibo* (kapok) trees and waves. Finally, for

the Galápagos, someone had included a photo of procreating tortoises atop the iconic image of Bartolomé Island, surrounded by blue outline art of waves, seabirds, and fish. Here, the slogan was “Ecuador: the giant in mega diversity [sic]” (*www.turismo.gob.ec*; accessed May 12, 2010).

Each page included photo galleries as well as a textual introduction to the region. For the most part the photos were of iconic landscapes—colonial cities, volcanoes, lakes, rocky coastlines, plantations, jungle lodges—or activities for tourists to enjoy, such as parasailing, train-riding, motorcycling, kayaking, snorkeling, or birdwatching. Most people pictured were tourists, with a few images of market women, shamans in feather headdresses, and Afro-Ecuadorian dancers included as examples of touristic activities, but at a safe remove (see O’Rourke 1998), as people performing for touristic consumption rather than engaging in touristic or more everyday encounters. Much of the accompanying text was dedicated to descriptions of the landscapes of each region as well as the flora and fauna to be encountered in each area. Ecuadorian people themselves were only alluded to as scenery—picturesque fishing villages, indigenous markets, colonial cities. This approach renders people an inseparable part of particular landscapes, much as the trees, fish, and plants outlined on the banners heading each page.

Reproducing tropes of indigenous groups as connected to, and at times even as part of, the rural landscape naturalizes the essentialized identity attributed to each group. As a rhetorical strategy the discourse of racialized geography generates and reinforces the perception that indigenous peoples not only are, but also *by nature* will continue to be, foreign to the political and economic decision-making centers of the country. This discourse means that even the presumed advances toward equality represented by state recognition of indigenous groups as nations are undermined, as those indigenous nations may still be perceived as foreign within sites representative of the broader nation of Ecuador.

Thus within the virtual representation of Ecuador on state and corporate websites, indigeneity is effectively erased from all but the expected settings—the spaces within Ecuador’s racialized geography where specific groups are expected to be. This strategy dramatically reduces the potential for cognitive dissonance when tourists and Ecuadorians alike experience encounters in which the indigenous person does live in an urban setting, does adopt markers of modernity or accept values associated with the discourse of modernity, or is clearly interacting with members of diverse groups, because in those settings, the indigenous person is automatically and subconsciously categorized as mestizo.¹³

School Texts and Learning One’s Place

We Are Different. When we walk along the street and look around us, we can realize that the inhabitants of this country are different; we don’t look or dress alike, we don’t think the same way, nor do we hold the same beliefs.

Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador (2010a, 48)

Within current global processes, indigeneity is coming to be recognized as a source of symbolic or cultural capital. That is, demands for rights are beginning to be couched successfully in terms of indigeneity for global audiences, but often this is not the case at either national or more local scales. In response, a common strategy for states with significantly large indigenous communities is to work through state institutions to distract members of indigenous communities and keep them from reproducing the markers of authenticity that are internationally recognized. The educational system is central to this process. Given that the state is bypassed in the symbolic economy of indigeneity, internal hierarchies previously maintained through those states' internal, racialized moral economies have to be reinstated via channels less likely to cause international backlash. One exceptionally effective strategy has involved the reworking of the educational system.

Arguably, the majority of Ecuadorians probably do not access government websites or visit national museums frequently; the messages there help maintain broader perceptions of appropriateness within Ecuador more generally, for tourists, investors, and others. As innumerable scholars of colonialism have pointed out, education has long been about the production of particular kinds of citizens rather than merely concerned with the sharing of knowledge (e.g., Wilhelm 1995; Luykx 1999; Bourdieu et al. 2000; Rival 2002; Wigginton 2005; Johnson 2007; Godreau et al. 2008). In the Andean states, education has not always been available to everyone. Local communities are granted access to education when they pose a threat to the state, and often that education is minimal, involving three to seven years of basic citizenship training. In the current moral economy, however, as indigeneity becomes increasingly valued internationally, Andean states have responded in various ways. One strategy has been to institute bilingual educational systems, which appear superficially to level the playing field in many ways while affirming the value of indigenous "culture," but which in actuality entrench internal racialized hierarchies more deeply, particularly because such policies are usually only enforced within subaltern communities. For example, anthropologist Andrew Canessa notes that in Bolivia "the Educational Reform Act stipulates that *everyone* in Bolivia should have a bilingual education, but to date this has only been implemented in Indian communities" (2012, 212; see also 2012, 197).

Other strategies are more subtle, having to do with the basic doxa of everyday life—what is taken for granted within a social system, and why. In Ecuador the educational system helps to perpetuate the interrelated discourses and dispositions associated with them outlined at the start of the chapter, all of which reinforce particular perceptions of indigeneity. The first of these is the basic sense of racialized geography; the second is the idea that the division between rural and urban life is not only experiential, but also racialized and moralized; and the third is that ethnic identities are easily distinguished from one another, are determined in part by one's geographic origin, and are diminishing over time through an ongoing process of mestizaje.

Public school textbooks are produced by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, and thus their contents change with each new government. Nonetheless, examining representative examples of images, exercises, and language from recent social studies textbooks demonstrates that subtle ideas about racialized (and class-based) geography are present throughout these texts regardless of the political regime under which they were produced. Students are taught to self-classify and are instructed in racialized geography as early as the third grade, even under Correa's government. In the inside cover of all 2006 third-grade texts, an activity accompanied by a cartoonish graphic of children from around the country directs students to classify themselves. Looking more closely at the accompanying images, one notices that the drawings emphasize an absolute racialized geography, reinforcing the idea that certain people live and belong in certain parts of the country (fig. 1.2; MEE 2006).

In the fourth-grade text from 2006, students are taught about the differences between rural and urban communities. Although the text itself recognizes that the majority of Ecuador's population is rural, all the homework assignments assume that students live in urban areas. Students are asked not only to describe their city, tell what neighborhood they live in, and write the name of the street their school is located on, for example, but also to imagine what people in the country—peasants—are like. The idea that rural populations are unlikely to be literate is subtly encouraged here; more importantly, students are socialized to believe that they themselves should not be *campesinos* if they want to be included within Ecuador.

Finally, in all of the 2006 grade-school texts, the term “pluricultural” is very consciously used to describe the Ecuadorian state. A map displayed on the back cover of every elementary school textbook for that year is titled, “Ecuador, a pluricultural and multiethnic country.” This language is one factor common to elementary education texts, recent legal measures, and state-approved representation

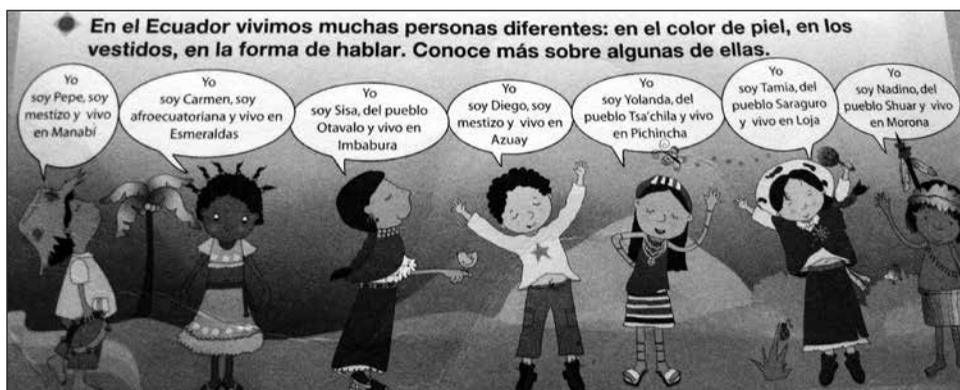


Figure 1.2. Image from the inside cover of all 2006 third grade texts. The main text reads: “In Ecuador live many people who are different from one another in skin color, dress, and way of talking. Learn more about some of them” (MEE 2006). (Image courtesy of Grupo Santillana Ecuador)

of the Ecuadorian nation as seen in government ministry publications and websites. In wording these documents, representatives of the Ecuadorian government have been extremely careful to use terms that fulfill two simultaneous goals: they appeal to the idea that indigenous groups have equal rights within the Ecuadorian democracy while effectively limiting those groups' access to power, whether directly, through the ways the terminology is defined by the state, or indirectly, through framing. In the legal documents mentioned above, opening statements on the rights of indigenous groups in the pluricultural state are followed immediately by points detailing the state's charge to "strengthen national unity within diversity." To quote only the most recent of these legal documents, "the State recognizes the existence of indigenous peoples who self-define as nationalities of ancestral roots, all of which form part of the single and indivisible Ecuadorian state" (Congreso Nacional del Ecuador 2007, 1). In this context, descriptions of a "pluricultural" state are crafted to avoid the language preferred by indigenous organizations, in which Ecuador is described as "plurinational." On the surface, this appears to reflect a valuing of a nation's indigenous as well as colonial histories but, as Suzana Sawyer (2004) has pointed out, the language used highlights ethnic difference while denying indigenous nations the right to self-determination; groups' existence, but not their autonomy, is recognized within a broader statement reinforcing the indivisibility of the Ecuadorian state.¹⁴

Since his first election in 2007, self-declared populist Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has instituted numerous changes in social policy and has dramatically increased funding for social programs, including healthcare, housing, and education. Ecuador's Ministry of Education is charged not only with standardizing the national curriculum, but also with producing the textbooks through which that curriculum is taught. Since 2010, the Ministry has introduced significant changes to the state curriculum. One technical change has been the requirement that texts include indicators of the specific objectives to be met; these are now printed in small font on the page with the relevant lesson. An example of a social studies learning objective for seventh graders is "to value the diversity of Ecuador's cultures through studying their origins and locations, and through identifying their basic characteristics (language, clothing, gastronomy, and others).¹⁵ While certain aspects of the texts are beginning to reflect Correa's overt emphasis on inclusion of all groups within the nation, the objective itself reiterates the concepts of essentialized identities and racialized geography, framing the former in terms both of the latter and of "basic characteristics" reminiscent of Mudimbe's analysis of depictions of colonial Otherness.

The text of that particular lesson provides the following description of the regions of Ecuador, accompanied by two photos, one of blond children taking photos of Galapagos tortoises, and the other of "inhabitants of Amazonia":¹⁶

The Andes divide us into natural regions and define us inside. They shelter us and give us food, and also transmit to us a little of their nostalgia, of the

solitude of the tundra. In the Andes, men and women bury their hands in the soil and embrace the earth. From that relationship their gods are born, and the signals that Pachamama gives to them define what to do and what to avoid. *The Andean man is indian but also black, white and mestizo.* Because the heart of the mountains is large and takes in all who inhabit them [*sic*]. At times the Andean shivers with cold; at others he laughs, to the beat of the music that comes from his wind instruments.

The sea has its magic. It is a good and powerful god. It gives us food and sings to us. On the coast, men and women hold the sea inside. That is why their happiness is unique. That is why *their naked feet never stop dancing.* And it is because like the ocean, *the woman and the man of the coast have no pier other than that on which their heart rests.* That is their home. *On the coast we live outdoors.* Our souls open *two by two* just like the windows of our homes. From the waters, men and women inherited their nobility. Their willpower. *There, the montubio, the black, the white and the mestizo live.* In the eyes of the sea colors don't exist. Its bosom is so large that all can find shelter there.

The Amazon is a privileged space due to its *natural diversity.* *The Amazonian has the strength of the jaguar and the patience of the first trees.* We men and women of the Amazon lands are beings who control time. Many of us have been here forever. Others arrived not long ago to build a different future with our families. In Amazonia any attack on trees and rivers is met with spears. We are people of an ancient warrior tradition who in times of peace hold our hearts and arms open. *In Amazonia we are whites, mestizos, indians.* We use feather headdresses, caps, or hats, but in the end we are all one within the river that washes over us. (MEE 2010b, 63; translation and emphasis mine)¹⁷

The flowery, romanticized descriptions of each area and its denizens distract from the underlying messages of the lesson. At first glance, this appears to be an attempt to rethink racialized geography, affirming that each area is home not to only one but to several different groups of people, all described in racialized terms. Nonetheless, the descriptions reinforce tropes of the noble savage, naturalizing particular ways of being and of making meaning within each landscape that resonate with earlier discourses about each ethnicity: “the signals that Pachamama gives to them define what to do and what to avoid”; “the sea . . . is a good and powerful god . . . on the coast . . . their naked feet never stop dancing”; “the Amazonian has the strength of the jaguar and the patience of the first trees.” Again, these descriptions are far from harmless. They serve both to reinforce stereotypes of distinct groups of people at different stages of development and simultaneously—in an important shift from earlier tropes of racialized geography—to recognize that each area now also holds “white” people. The underlying message is that everyone now belongs equally in these areas, leading students to the corollary conclusion that everyone’s rights to the lands within each region must then also be equal. This attitude facilitates acceptance of external exploitation

of environments and reinforces positions that indigenous people who protest such activities as mining or petroleum extraction are indeed inhibiting progress that would serve the greater good.

Another example, a lesson from the 2010 fourth-grade social studies text titled “Ethnic groups of our country,” cites the objective of “quantitatively comparing the ethnic groups who live in the country, through distinguishing majority and minority groups” (MEE 2010a, 50). The objective itself stresses the importance of numbers; the lesson falls two pages past a discussion of the 2001 census, in which 77.42 percent of Ecuadorians claimed to be mestizos and 10.46 percent declared themselves white, by comparison to only 6.83 percent indigenous, 2.74 percent “mulatos,” 2.23 percent black, and 0.32 percent “other” (MEE 2010a, 48). While the census discussion suggests that these numbers might be problematic, since “there exist Ecuadorians who consider themselves of a race to which they don’t belong,”¹⁸ that lesson itself is titled “We are different,” suggesting that there are in fact basic biological and cultural differences that would make such blurrings of boundaries obvious.

The text of the lesson on ethnic groups defines them thus:

An ethnic group is a set of people who can be identified, recognized, and distinguished because they share the same ethnicity and culture, which is to say that they have the same nationality, they belong to a tribe or group, they share a religion, a faith, a language, and some traditions. According to many scientists, each group of people has its own culture. In our country, that is obvious. Due to that cultural variation, Ecuador can be considered a pluricultural country. (MEE 2010a, 50)

Again, this echoes earlier iterations of school texts privileging the term “pluricultural”—which stresses difference, and difference by choice—over “plurinational,” the term preferred by indigenous organizations themselves, and one that implies political sovereignty. Even more importantly, however, this definition reinforces the idea of essential markers of difference such as language and religion, rendering groups who speak Spanish mestizo by definition.¹⁹ Additionally, the definition socializes children to perceive difference as something essential, hereditary, obvious (defined in a sidebar as “clear and without the slightest doubt”), and scientifically proven—something biological—rather than something constructed through centuries of structural inequality and differences in access to resources. Images on the page include cartoon drawings of individuals whose dress marks them as highland indigenous people and a photo collage of painted, befeathered faces. Despite the stated objective of recognizing ethnicities quantitatively, the “majority” categories of whiteness and mestizaje are nowhere pictured or referred to on the page.

Finally, the opening paragraph asks students to consider whether they have seen or heard of “the feasts of Inti Raymi, montubio rodeos, or shamanic cleansings of the Amazon region” (MEE 2010a, 50). This rhetorical construction presumes

that children in school will only have witnessed or perhaps heard of such events, rather than having participated in them, rendering those practices both exotic (not Ecuadorian) and foreign to the school setting (not part of national progress), and thereby suggesting that educated Ecuadorians do not belong to groups who might practice such activities. Discussing considerations of cultural heritage within elementary education in Puerto Rico, Isar Godreau and colleagues claim that

when celebrated, representations of African heritage come in the form of festivals, carnivals, folk art, or state-sponsored kiosks where foods, instruments, masks, and other commodities associated with black culture are presented or sold. Such authentic cultural products of blackness are often located in specific so-called isolated communities, where black people and their traditions are said to have “survived” modernity and its by-product: blanqueamiento. In Puerto Rico, this maneuver of whitening operates by locating blackness only in certain coastal towns or communities . . . indirectly identifying the rest of Puerto Rico as non-black. (Godreau et al. 2008, 118)

Similarly, in her analysis of Cuzqueños’ experiences of the Peruvian educational system, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena notes that “the academic ethnic taxonomies that emerged in the 1950s projected images of the superiority of literate, rational Western tradition, and defined culture as traditional and therefore as the opposite of (formal) education. Hence they did not include ‘educated’ Peruvians in their classification systems and implicitly whitened them—or, at least, subordinated their phenotype to their ‘knowledge’—and recognized their privilege to be unnamed (cf. Frankenburg 1993; Williams 1989)” (de la Cadena 2000, 29).

In both examples, as in Ecuador today, whiteness is defined by contrast to ethnic categories, which are highly marked and delimited in space, time, and circumstance. Students are clearly being socialized to perceive themselves as non-indigenous—or to view themselves as indians, but not Ecuadorians. Changes in pedagogy under Correa have not even begun to displace these fundamental Ecuadorian dispositions about race, modernity, and belonging.

In the Eyes of the State

As noted above, many of the most easily accessed visual representations of Ecuador’s landscapes and peoples for both internal and external audiences are produced by two Ecuadorian ministries: the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Tourism. Since most of my research is centered on communities in and around the Machalilla National Park—and that park is administered, promoted, and regulated by those two ministries—long ago I decided to look into their histories and general structures.

According to its official website the Ministry of Tourism was founded by presidential decree on August 10, 1992. The significance of that date initially eluded

me as I was more interested in the broader history of the event. For some time the Ecuadorian government has modeled itself on the United States in several ways, including the four-year presidential term. Election years also were set to coincide with those in the United States, and Ecuadorian presidential inaugurations take place on the *10 de agosto* to recognize the date of the *Primer Grito de Independencia* (First Cry of Independence) in 1809.²⁰ Double-checking my dates against an online list of presidential inaugurations, I realized that the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism was created by newly-elected President Sixto Durán Ballén on August 10, 1992—the very day he came to office.

Placing these events into a broader context suggests that this decision was far from coincidental. Throughout the twentieth century indigenous activists formed coalitions—among themselves, with liberation theologians within the Catholic Church, with labor unions and pro-Communist organizations, and, more recently, with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—to fight for improved working conditions, land rights, water rights, bilingual education, and political voice. In 1944 activists and allies formed the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI/Federation of Ecuadorian Indians), seeking an agrarian reform that was ultimately implemented in 1964 (see Becker 2008). From that point on, several organizations continued to fight for expanded rights for indigenous and other subaltern communities in Ecuador. These included the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (CONFENIAE/Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon) and its later iteration *Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE/Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador); *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (FENOC/National Federation of Peasant Organizations), and later *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas Indígenas y Negras* (FENOCIN/National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Black Organizations), among others.

By the late 1980s, a series of governments supporting US-based neoliberal economic policies had instated measures that reinforced rural disadvantage with respect to accessing basic resources and services. In addition, Ecuador's petroleum reserves were being exploited by several foreign corporations whose policies and practices increasingly impaired indigenous health, everyday practice, and autonomy, particularly in the Amazonian lowlands. In 1990, a coalition of indigenous organizations from both the highlands and the Amazonian lowlands, frustrated by the government's unwillingness to engage directly with their representatives, collaborated in an incredibly effective *levantamiento* (protest), blocking roads and airfields throughout the country and effectively halting national and regional commerce for a week, forcing government officials to negotiate with them (Selverston-Scher 2001; Gerlach 2003; Sawyer 2004; Becker 2008).

As would others in the hemisphere, in October 1992 Ecuador celebrated the quincentennial anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Americas,

a celebration reread by other communities as the concomitant subjugation of native peoples. Indigenous coalitions such as the CONAIE and CONFENAIE had been pushing for a broad recognition of the “500 years of indigenous resistance,” urging indigenous communities and allies throughout the country and the hemisphere to engage in collective actions commemorating the date. The person inaugurated in August would have two short months to develop and implement a response to those actions, providing an arena in which to proclaim either support for, or dismissal of, indigenous rights. While incumbent President Rodrigo Borja was generally considered an effective leader, given the high degree of organization revealed in the 1990 levantamiento, many eyes were on Ecuador and the president-elect throughout the year to see what would transpire.

On August 10, 1992, Durán Ballén took office. One of his first acts as President was to create the Ministry of Information and Tourism, framing the resolution as a way to promote positive images of the nation for both internal and external audiences. The Ministry was charged with taking advantage of “physical, archaeological, and cultural resources and attractions” to promote tourism and thereby provoke increased development of remote regions within the country (RO-1 1992, 3). The resolution took effect the following day upon its publication in the Official Registry of Ecuador.

In 1994, nearly two years into Durán Ballén’s presidential term, indigenous groups organized another major levantamiento in the highlands, blocking travel and commerce from June 15 through June 26 (Gerlach 2003; Sawyer 2004). Three days later, on June 29, Durán Ballén changed the organizational structure; now known as the Ministry of Tourism, the organization was granted far more breadth of control over national parks, archaeological sites, and other touristic spaces within the country (www.turismo.gob.ec/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=3; accessed May 28, 2010). Nonetheless, this second decree also seems to have passed almost unnoticed in the context of indigenous control.

Certainly, through promoting tourism in previously unaccessed areas of the country, the Ministry of Tourism has generated opportunities for local communities to access audiences and resources they had not previously been able to take advantage of easily. At the same time, however, increased oversight and regulation by Ministry officials and local offices have limited everyday activities and have made the forging of broader coalitions more difficult. What this suggests is that Ecuadorian indigenous movements and levantamientos have been a double-edged sword, particularly for groups not recognized as part of those indigenous coalitions. Indigenous movements’ success in forcing policy changes within a political space whose leaders had for centuries generally neglected indigenous rights has been well commented (Selverston-Scher 2001; Gerlach 2003; Sawyer 2004; Yashar 2005; Becker 2008). What tend to remain obscured by that very success are the myriad ways that the increased recognition of indigenous political voice has provoked the creation of state actors that have worked in subtle and often unrecognized ways to

maintain public perceptions of racialized geographies, even while they appear to support broader visions of inclusiveness in national projects.

As international awareness of Ecuador's indigenous coalitions grew and those coalitions became more politically effective, Ecuadorian government officials increasingly felt obligated to respond to their demands, if only through creating visible spaces for dialogue (see Sawyer 2004). As the elite-controlled government lost its former absolute control over political process in the country, various political leaders acted to reformulate ministries and create other government agencies that would serve both to heighten awareness of cultural diversity within Ecuador and, at the same time, give the government the means to regulate that diversity, maintain public perceptions of a racialized geography for both internal and external audiences, and surveil local communities in very controlling ways.

Telling Histories

States often derive a great deal of their perceived authenticity and power from the national narratives they construct; how different groups are depicted within that narrative tends to frame attitudes toward them in everyday interactions. From the Spanish colonial period to the present day, Andean and Ecuadorian discourses have situated indians in remote times and locations, yet despite the tangible disdain for indians within Ecuador, indigeneity itself is never completely absent from the narratives. The point of telling these stories is not only to delimit the forms indigeneity can take but also, and more centrally, to construct whiteness.

Whiteness, whether perceived predominantly as a race-based or a class-based identity, depends on alienated labor (see Goldstein 2003); by contrast, indigeneity depends on the inalienable fact of one's body as produced through labor (see Canessa 2012, 68). In other words, an essential part of what is perceived as whiteness in Ecuador is the ability to displace manual labor to others whose labor one controls. That labor, in turn, produces very particular kinds of bodies (Weismantel 2001, 189). Bodies can and do change through practice, and are in fact constituted through practice; over time, however, enforced limitations on practice shape bodies in ways that can then be read as natural attributes of those bodies' identity.

The colonial-period combination of both enforced participation in particular practices on particular fields and hegemonic discourses of racialized geography would likely have produced interpretive drift over time, guiding the habitus of specific groups in ways that naturalized those identities not only from an etic but also from an emic perspective. In other words, not only being told that one belonged in a particular place, but also experiencing the world on a daily basis from that field that was deemed appropriate, might have resulted in one's perception of that (metaphysical and geographic) location as the place where one belonged. The racialized hierarchy and its resultant separations of racialized groups from one another in perception led each group to perceive its own space as the most suitable, or natural, one.

Without indigeneity as an understood category, located in rural landscapes and in laboring bodies, whiteness as constructed in the Andes cannot make sense. Yet the positioning of indianness within a landscape discursively constructed as the appropriate setting for it renders indigenous groups' negotiations over belonging in other settings less visible. The consequences of negotiations over visibility for groups who fall outside the dominant definitions of indigeneity are the topic of the next chapter.

Manteño, Montubio, Mestizo

Silencing Histories in Coastal Manabí

SEPTEMBER 2001. FOLLOWING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL excavation in Agua Blanca, I was staying for a couple of months in the coastal village of Salango, a fishing community about six miles due southwest of the excavation site. During each week, a handful of Agua Blancans, an Ecuadorian archaeologist, and I worked in the lab, processing and cataloguing the material remains recovered during the excavation in a laboratory built by coastal archaeologist Presley Norton in the 1970s. On the weekends, however, I was working with a local youth group interested in collecting folktales, opening a local archive, and promoting cultural preservation more generally. Each Saturday and Sunday morning, they would stop by the museum to pick me up, and we would go in pairs to local houses, interviewing older community members about life in the past, older festivals and celebrations, and folktales. I enjoyed comparing the stories in Salango to those in Agua Blanca; some were similar, while others were new to me, given the difference in settings and subsistence patterns between this fishing village and the inland agricultural community of Agua Blanca.

I was not yet aware of the reasons for their sudden concern with cultural preservation. Swiss-Ecuadorian cement magnate Patrick Bredthauer, whose company, La Cemento Nacional (now Holcim Ecuador SA), had purchased Salango's museum and the adjacent laboratory where I was working, had also secretly been buying up Salango's lands, including oceanfront properties and access to them. I would later learn that fishermen throughout town were being devastated by the new developments, which rendered them unable to access the ocean from their homes. Even later, I would read of the battles being fought in court over the legality of the purchase of what were supposed to be communally held lands.¹

During my stay, however, I was still unaware of these proceedings. In late September, the youth group asked me to help with one more project, an upcoming cultural festival.² They had invited folkloric dance groups from all over the country to participate, and would be hosting a series of events including the launching of balsa rafts to the nearby Isla Salango and back, an event they somewhat self-consciously referred to as a regatta; various cultural performances; a food fair; and the election of a Señorita Manteña, an indigenous princess. Each visiting community, plus some local organizations and their peers from Puerto López, would be sponsoring a candidate

who would present a short speech and some kind of performance. As we walked through town, one of the young women asked me to serve as a judge for the event. Protesting that I was not the most apt judge for a beauty contest, I tried to decline, but she replied that I would be helping them out, that they could not themselves judge due to bias, and that they needed me, as I would also be the only woman on the panel. After some discussion, I accepted.

On the morning of the festival, I took my place on the sunny beachfront to watch the performances. As we waited, I glanced at the rest of the group of arbiters: a young, long-haired Italian whom I had seen biking around Puerto López on a few occasions; another US citizen living in Puerto López; and a European who worked in a local NGO, of whose specific origin I was not certain, but guessed German or Swiss from his accent. The performances began. I was most impressed by the candidate from Esmeraldas, who was modest but well-spoken, and who danced beautifully. Expressing this, however, I was quickly silenced by my fellow panelists, who gestured to the local master of ceremonies (MC). When he arrived, the Italian told him to explain the rules to me. His sotto voce reply was that I was using the wrong criteria. A candidate had to “look *manteña*”—look like a representative of a local indigenous community—to be the local princess. I wanted to know: What did *manteños* look like? That was easy, he replied: while I should look also at the dress and adornments of each candidate, and think about my archaeological experience in judging which were most authentic, in the end I really just had to pay attention to one factor, the presence or absence of *una buena nariz manteña*, a good Manteño nose.

From the moment I was asked to serve on the panel, I had been uncomfortable at the thought of evaluating others on subjective qualities, particularly as an outsider with comparatively little local knowledge. After this statement, however, I was dumbfounded. We four were the arbiters of authenticity—an authenticity based on an essentialized indigeneity presumed to be located in facial features and thus inalienable (see Omi and Winant 1994; Mudimbe 1988; Wade 1997). Furthermore, of all the participants, audience members, and witnesses present at the event, we were, not inconsequentially, the whitest. That authenticity and indigeneity were to be not only evaluated but also validated through whiteness and foreignness seemed, to me, at the time, both ironic and tragic.

As it turned out, we were chosen as panelists neither as connoisseurs of beauty nor as representatives of whiteness, but rather because, as outsiders, we could be depicted as impartial judges of authenticity. The idea, of course, was that a local candidate—who, after all, would necessarily be the one with the most *manteña* of noses, given that *manteños* had not historically inhabited the other regions of Ecuador—would win. Again, at the time I was not yet aware of just how much was at stake. Were Salango to lose the battle with Bredthauer, they stood to forsake not only land, but also access to livelihoods, and potentially their precarious status as a *comuna*, a group authorized to hold lands in commons. As foreigners—people with a different understanding of ownership, with no deep stakes in the matter, and whose presumed expertise was based both on their perceived knowledge of the local past and on their appreciation of

local aesthetics—we were ideal judges, since, if we awarded the title to the local candidate, we would essentially be providing independent, unbiased corroboration that a local *manteño* community did, in fact, exist.

Negative Freedoms: The Politics of Shifting Social Identities in Coastal Ecuador

Understanding the underlying tensions of the Salango beauty pageant requires an overview of the broader context of identity politics not only within the nation as a whole, but also within coastal Ecuador more specifically. Like many of their counterparts the world over, coastal Ecuadorian indigenous groups have had to fight to be recognized by an Ecuadorian state that for decades has denied their existence. In other words, in the racialized geography of Ecuador put forth by that state—in the ideas of who lives and belongs where in the Ecuadorian territory—the central coast has always been portrayed as the home of mestizo fishermen and farmers, images familiar and accepted within the national imaginary. Indigenous people are imagined to live—and, by extension, to belong—in the rural highlands or eastern lowlands.

This chapter examines elite Ecuadorian narratives of race and place, and explores how the coast of Ecuador is represented within those narratives in ways that result in the negative invisibility of coastal groups. As noted in the introduction, most “old-money” Ecuadorian elite reside in the highlands, with the majority in Quito, which is also home to many of the organizations, government ministries, and other groups whose discourses I analyze here. Quiteños frequently represent the coast as a space of blackness inhabited by *monos* (monkeys, a highly offensive term used to describe those perceived as being uncultured and as having darker skin). In dominant narratives, Esmeraldas, the province to the north of Manabí and home to the descendants of several communities of escaped slaves, is conflated with other areas of coastal Ecuador and with Colombia, also considered an uncultured, wild space of blackness. Furthermore, while dominant indigenous activist coalitions such as CONAIE have gained visibility, they are perceptually located primarily in the highlands and secondarily in the Amazon basin. Even within CONAIE’s own schematic representations of the country, the central coast appears not to have any indigenous communities (cf. CONAIE 1989, 284). These broader narratives frame the ways coastal groups are (or more frequently are not) perceived.

As noted in the introduction, the community central to this ethnography, Agua Blanca, is located within a national park, meaning that its control of land and resources is even less stable than it might otherwise be. Salango is another of the indigenous communities descending from the pre-Columbian communities within the Kingdom of Salangome. While its lands lie just outside Park boundaries, Salango faces similar threats to its sovereignty. With little control over material possessions, legal rights, or governmental representation, coastal groups of necessity often focus on guiding or manipulating external perceptions of themselves, perceptions held by ordinary citizens as well as government officials, by tourists as well as NGO

representatives. The very lack of control over other aspects of their existence, however, means that groups often must work within existing parameters of categorizations or labels, rather than being able to self-represent freely.

For groups to be able to “strategically deploy discourses of cultural essentialism and authenticity,” as Maximiliano Viatori argues (2007, 105), those discourses must be broadly recognized, if not in their minutiae, then at least in their general form. In the past several decades, indigenous communities on the Ecuadorian coast have represented their identity in a number of ways. At the turn of the last century, most coastal indigenous communities had been commandeered as the labor force within foreign-owned haciendas. In 1937, the Ecuadorian government passed the original Ley de Comunas, the first step toward agrarian reform. Communities in Manabí such as Agua Blanca began calling themselves *comunidades campesinas* (peasant communities) because the law was written to provide for self-governance within those communities that self-identified as peasant. This identity was reinforced in the 1970s, a period marked both by a second series of agrarian reform laws and, in Agua Blanca, by a decade of research by archaeologist Colin McEwan, who encouraged the community to take control of their lands by all means possible. Agua Blanca joined the Provincial Union of Peasant Organizations of Manabí (UPOCAM) and marched for its rights as a peasant community in the provincial capital of Portoviejo, as shown in the photographs (figs. 2.1, 2.2, 2.3).



Figure 2.1. Agua Blancans marching in Portoviejo, the provincial capital of Manabí, as part of the Union of Southern Manabí Communities (UCOM), an organization of peasant communes, later known as UPOCAM. (Photo courtesy of Archives of the Museum of Agua Blanca. Photographer unknown; ca. mid-1970s)



Figure 2.2. Agua Blancans in an agrarian reform rally, ca. mid-1970s. Agrarian reform, officially legislated in 1964 and commenced in the highlands, was not enacted on the coast until the mid-1970s. It was legislatively terminated in the late 1970s. (Photo courtesy of Archives of the Museum of Agua Blanca. Photographer unknown)



Figure 2.3. Agua Blancans in a pro-Roldos peasant march, May 1980. (Photo courtesy of Archives of the Museum of Agua Blanca. Photographer unknown)

Meanwhile, the Ecuadorian government continued to represent its coastal provinces as populated by mestizos, with the exception of Esmeraldas and its Afro-Ecuadorian communities. Thus in Manabí, *peasant* and *mestizo* began to be conflated with one another. To this day, although mestizos live throughout Ecuador, it is only in Manabí and Guayas provinces on the coast that they are automatically assumed to be poor, barely literate agriculturalists or fishermen—an assumption fed by sources as diverse as state tourism propaganda, elementary education texts, and official government ministries, as I will demonstrate. In fact, a word has been coined to describe coastal agriculturalists—*montubios*—a term used everywhere from Ministry of Tourism posters depicting machete-wielding individuals in Panama hats, bandanas, and work clothes, to Ministry of Agriculture television ads featuring the backward *montubio* farmer Don Esculapio and his unfathomable ignorance of cattle illnesses and respective vaccines. While at various moments coastal groups such as Agua Blanca may choose to describe themselves as *montubios*, since the term reflects a cultural identity distinct from that of *mestizos*, within the nation more generally the word is often used pejoratively, with an approximate translation that combines the ideas of “unruly coastal peasant” and “hick” (Whitten 2003b, 65).

Another category of identity used by coastal groups refers to the indigenous past. Throughout Manabí and Guayas provinces, communities are beginning to identify as Manta/Manteño or Huancavilca; in Agua Blanca, the decision to self-represent as manteño in particular circumstances and settings has been a conscious political choice. While government and indigenous organizations are beginning to recognize these coastal groups as indigenous, many government websites still describe the Manteño-Huancavilca civilization as having disappeared in 1532 with the arrival of the Spaniards, so choosing to self-represent in this way heightens public perceptions of indigenous communities as stuck in the past.

The broader term “indigenous” itself tends to be used only in particular settings where it might confer a political advantage—when applying for grants from government organizations or attending meetings of indigenous groups, for example. Few individual *costeños* (coastal denizens) publicly describe themselves as indigenous because they perceive the term to carry a strong social stigma. While highland and eastern lowland groups do use the term, their higher visibility and degree of political organization render the term more advantageous than embarrassing; coastal groups are already discriminated against in nearly every setting, so they are understandably hesitant to choose a label that other *costeños* use as an insult.

Ultimately, whatever specific terminology has been used in a given historical moment or political arena to evoke a categorization or label, it has always served both to disparage coastal indigenous groups and to cast them as intrinsically different from recognized indigenous communities. While many categories of self-representation are clearly available to coastal groups, all incur discrimination in at least some circumstances. Thus there is not a simple way to self-represent without limiting oneself, if one pertains to a non-majority or non-ruling group, because certain things are taken

for granted about each of these constructed categories. But where do those hegemonic ideas come from, and how have coastal identities, narratives, and experiences been erased from ideas of Ecuador?

Silencing Histories: The Construction of Coastal Invisibility

In an early publication on changing indigenous economies in the Ecuadorian highlands, sociologist Carlos de la Torre asserted that “the appearance of an Indian middle class calls into question the common Latin American assumption that Indian means the rural, the uneducated, the poor” (1999, 92). In southern Manabí, indigenous groups are, as a whole, rural, uneducated, and poor—yet they, who do fit the stereotypes as a result of a series of structural inequalities, are unrecognized.

As noted in Chapter 1, whiteness as a structural category is constructed in opposition to indigeneity in Ecuador. Coastal groups, however, are marked as non-white in different ways, primarily through labor and social class. The indigenous markers used to identify highland groups—language and distinctive dress—have long been absent here, both for historical reasons and as local strategies of self-preservation within what has frequently been a strongly anti-indigenous nation.

The landscape of southern Manabí, a coastal area whose tropical dry forest just inland rises sharply into mountains covered in dense vegetation, has meant that for most of Ecuadorian history it has been isolated from other regions. As trading and fishing villages during the pre-Hispanic and early Spanish colonial periods, communities in the region were often multilingual (Saville 1907, appendices), an adaptive strategy common among many trading groups worldwide. The Spanish spoken in indigenous communities in southern Manabí incorporates toponyms, zoonyms, and phytonyms from long-lost native languages, but no one in living memory has heard those languages spoken (see also Gómez Rendón 2011).³

Because coastal Manabí was difficult to access by land—there were no roads into the area until the 1950s, according to people in Salango and Agua Blanca—most of the outsiders who arrived did so by sea. The availability of a large port in Manta facilitated travel by smaller craft to the areas just south of that town, with smaller fishing ports in Puerto Cayo, Machalilla, Puerto López, and Salango, to name a few (see de la Fuente 2007). Many of the local landowners were Italian or German, interested in exporting tropical crops back to Europe, particularly coffee for consumption and vegetable ivory (tagua) for button manufacture (see Robles 2007). Following practices common to the Andean region since the Spanish colonial period, foreigners who acquired lands in Manabí as a source of raw materials tended to consolidate local communities, using them as laborers within their landholdings.

All these historical processes led to the relative isolation of coastal groups from the rest of the country. No recognizable coastal groups formed part of Ecuador’s national narrative, nor were there any available empty signifiers to be filled with invented traditions (see Barthes 1972; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983): hence the “barren landscape of identity” lamented by Silvia Álvarez.⁴ Despite the invisibility of coastal peoples

within the national imaginary, however, they have been categorized over the years, as outlined above, with a number of labels, all of which have different implications within the racialized geography of the nation.

Manteño

Official narratives about the Manta and Huancavilca peoples describe them jointly as one of the most advanced civilizations in Ecuador, but as having disappeared in 1532. The Banco Central de Ecuador—the institution that over the past century has invested the most resources in researching, collecting, and displaying Ecuador’s pre-Hispanic remains—presents the group in the past tense, as having existed from “ca. 500–1532 AD” (www.exploringecuador.com/espanol/museum_bce/mantel/htm; retrieved March 12, 2006). Even Agua Blanca, a community whose members not only construct their homes on the same platform mounds as their ancestors, but also lead tours through archaeological ruins beginning in their own site museum, is described in the past tense and as having disappeared.

As noted in Chapter 1, official representations of the country by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of the Environment reinforce popular understandings of racialized geography; importantly, neither of their websites mentions any indigenous presence in Manabí province whatsoever. On tourism websites, as outlined in the previous chapter, coastal groups are rarely mentioned; when they are, they are generally described as living in a “rainforest” to which they escaped several centuries ago. Furthermore, as of 2013 there was no mention of indigenous culture in Manabí whatsoever on the tourism sites—all the groups named were located on website maps in the provinces of Esmeraldas and Pichincha.

From the period of land reform and the adoption of the first *Ley de comunas* in 1937 to the early 1980s, as noted above, most indigenous communities from the coastal provinces of Manabí and Guayas were registered with local and state governments as peasant communities with collective landholdings. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, however, coastal groups began the process of attempting to gain official recognition by the Ecuadorian state. These initiatives represented a response to several changing circumstances: growth in foreign control of local lands, transformed by buyers into resort-like retreats, large landed estates reminiscent of earlier haciendas, or huge touristic ventures; increasing state and industrial control over some of the coastal lands through the creation of national parks, petroleum processing sites, shrimp farms, fish canneries, and other land-intensive industries; and the growing political efficacy of the coalitions of highland and Amazonian lowland indigenous groups.

Agua Blancans had always maintained connections with a number of other coastal communities through intermarriage and occasional collective work. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Agua Blancans had been expanding their networks of communication in several ways. When Scottish archaeologist Colin McEwan began nearly a decade of research in the community, most of his workers were Agua Blancan community members. McEwan invited the workers to join him in visits to other archaeological and cultural sites throughout Ecuador, giving them an opportunity

to make connections with indigenous community members from several places. This eventually set the stage for the annual cultural encounters hosted by Agua Blanca in the 1980s, encounters that provided a space in which Agua Blancans could learn directly about some of the organizing taking place in the highlands that would result in the uprisings of the 1990s and beyond. Thus Agua Blancans were involved with the regional conversations from the outset.

Through word of mouth, Agua Blanca and other concerned coastal communities began to convene regular meetings that rotated among several locations. Once enough people were involved, the group decided to ask each participating community to elect one representative to attend a monthly meeting. Eventually, over two dozen communities—from the coast of Manabí south of Manta, to the Santa Elena Peninsula and the southern Guayas coast, to the island of Puná south of Guayaquil—were involved in the group.⁵ Although it had begun simply as a series of conversations about regional change and threats to landholdings, at this point the group felt it would be easier to protect their lands as an organization representative of (a) people(s) than as individual communities. The group eventually began organizing more openly as the “Pueblo Manta-Huancavilca-Puná.”

What those attempting to raise general awareness and recognition of coastal groups discovered, however, was that strategies of racialization of Ecuador’s geography within public perception had been exceptionally effective. For a long time, the national indigenous coalitions themselves failed to recognize the legitimacy of indigenous communities on the coast. One conceptual map showing the general locations of indigenous communities in Ecuador was originally published in a volume produced by members of the CONAIE about their ongoing process of organizing the various indigenous nationalities within Ecuador into a coherent political entity. Yet even with political organization as their stated goal, coastal groups from Manabí and Guayas remained unrecognized by the CONAIE (CONAIE 1989). Eventually, on public websites, the organization was described as a *pueblo en proceso de autodefinition* (people in the process of defining themselves). While creating the organization did raise some awareness of coastal indigeneity as a debate, the lack of broader official recognition of the group and its leadership at times presented new problems for the region, as the following vignette demonstrates.

Returning from an appointment in Manta in June 2005, my husband and I missed the direct bus to Puerto López and had to make a transfer in Jipijapa. About to get on the second bus, we ran into three people he knew from the nearby community of Salango. They looked frantic. We asked where they were going, and they asked us to accompany them to an important meeting. We looked at them and at one another, and agreed.

As we hopped into a taxi heading for an office building toward the center of town, they explained that they had heard rumors that Petroecuador, the national petroleum company, was planning to expand prospecting activity on the coast and was claiming to have the support of local communities. They asked if we had heard anything about this in Agua Blanca, to which we shook our heads to indicate that we had not. One of

the men voiced the concern that, in business as usual, the company was facilitating its own expansion by installing puppet representatives of communities. As he explained quickly, the taxi pulled to a stop outside a concrete-block building.

We headed quickly upstairs, where we could hear a meeting in progress. As we slipped into the room as inconspicuously as possible, I heard a woman's voice. From her comments, it quickly became clear that she was acting as a representative of Petroecuador, touting the benefits that the state oil company had brought to various regions, in terms both of its local investments in communities and of national progress more generally. The dark-haired woman concluded by inviting one of the men in the front row to join her in addressing the crowd. Dressed in a button-down shirt, bespectacled and with short, well-groomed hair, the man walked over to her; she introduced him as the "elected president" of the "Manteño-Huancavilca Coalition." At this, audience members looked around the room surreptitiously and began to murmur in small groups. No one seemed to have heard of the man or to recognize him; all appeared to be assessing whether their neighbors were in similar situations.

Standing somewhat nervously beside the Petroecuador representative, the man began to speak in an overly loud voice to the assembly. Claiming already to have spoken with representatives of other communities who appreciated the potential benefits of working with the national oil company, he asked for the current audience's approval to move forward with the plan. No one responded directly, but the grumbling in the room got louder. Perhaps trying to forestall conflict, the man claimed that all the communities had been invited, and that it was unfortunate how little some groups cared about their own development and progress.

Looking at the men who had invited us, I noticed them mumbling among themselves, looking both annoyed and frustrated, yet clearly loath to speak. I stood and introduced myself, noting that we had just found out about the meeting by accident and that no one from Agua Blanca had been informed, much less invited. The woman tried to dismiss my intervention, asking sharply whether I would be privy to all the workings of the community while openly looking me up and down, drawing attention to my obvious non-local status. Her strategy failed, however, since at that point others began to challenge the authority of the so-called president, whom no one had apparently met.

¿Quién es tu familia? ¿De qué parte vienes? Shouts from all corners of the room addressed the man familiarly rather than formally, clearly threatening his authority and momentarily silencing both the man himself and his companion. Eventually, he replied that he had been working in Quito, which was why they did not recognize him, but that he was originally from "around Montecristi"—somewhere around twenty minutes from the location of the meeting. His failure to address either query directly resulted in a huge shouting match in which it quickly became apparent that no one present knew him—even those who verbally identified themselves as being from the Montecristi area.

Interrupting loudly, the Petroecuador rep shouted that the man was the recognized representative of the Manteño-Huancavilca peoples, and if community

representatives had failed to attend the election it was their own fault, since everyone had been invited.

The man interrupted her, probably seeing that her strategy was not going over well, and shifted topics, heartily promoting the supposed benefits of allowing them in. Individual audience members stood to respond. One complaint—one I had heard in Agua Blanca as well—was that on prior occasions, Petroecuador had clear-cut areas for the pipes delivering light crude from northern wells to the processing plant in La Libertad. Those areas were initially replanted, but most of those plantings had died because of inadequate water. At this, the two representatives promised to replant the areas they cut and even to invest in reforesting the older areas. No one appeared to be convinced, however. This fight went on for some time. My husband and I eventually had to leave to catch the last bus back to the coast.

Obviously, we had been unprepared for the meeting, and I was only able to take short notes on my arm while we were there. I bought a notebook at the bus station and rounded out my impressions of the event in it as we rode down the coast, scribbling in the dark, wanting to record as much as I could recall as soon after it transpired as possible. Despite the late hour of our arrival in Agua Blanca, we immediately went to the home of the cabildo president, and confirmed that he had heard nothing of the new petroleum initiative, the coalition president or his election, or the meeting that day. A day later, the president of Agua Blanca called an emergency town meeting; no one had been made aware of the event, and the community members began to discuss their options, recalling similar *engaños* (deceptions) by the petroleum corporation in the past.

This event evokes strong similarities not only to meetings described by Suzana Sawyer (2004, 144) between government officials or petroleum executives and Amazonian indigenous communities, but also to some of the broader exclusionary strategies utilized within those meetings. First, Sawyer describes a maneuver whereby government officials select “representatives” of communities or peoples who are not recognized by or known to those peoples, yet who are represented as speaking for those communities; second, she analyzes a strategy in which the attitude is made palpable that merely accepting a meeting with members of a group is enough and hence difficult to protest. In her account, within Ecuadorian politics of the 1990s—overshadowed by the series of indigenous uprisings of 1990, 1992, 1996, and 2001—simply permitting a subaltern group to enter spaces of national government and be recognized could and did take the place of any kind of reciprocal dialogue, negotiation, or even a willingness to listen to the points of view brought up by members of that subaltern group.

President Rafael Correa quickly espoused a pro-indigenous rhetoric upon his election in 2007, intentionally creating the perception of a contrast with prior administrations to bolster his support by indigenous coalitions. Stating as his goal the creation of a more populist and inclusive Ecuadorian nation, Correa not only openly incorporated indigenous representatives into government ministries and other decision-making bodies, but in 2007 also developed the now-infamous Yasuní-ITT

Initiative.⁶ This initiative was part of Correa's conservationist campaign platform, which he promoted in Kichwa (the indigenous language of the highlands and parts of the Amazonian lowlands) as *Sumaq kawsay*, in Spanish as *Buen vivir* (the good life), referring to the protection of the nation's biodiversity.

In order to further support his desired image as a people's president and pro-indigenous leader, Correa made the decision to broadcast biweekly radio chats in which he jokes around while giving updates on government initiatives and opinions on various newsworthy events within national borders. He travels—by plane, but also, at times, by car or boat or even by bicycle—to remote communities, has his team set up broadcast connections, and gives these public discourses—an Ecuadorian, more hands-on version of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats—seated at a table in front of community members rather than from the austere environs of the Carondelet National Palace.

Initially, CONAIE and other indigenous coalitions in Ecuador supported Correa's vision of a "Citizen's Revolution," but since then, CONAIE leaders have come to reject what they see as veiled policies aimed at reducing indigenous autonomy despite the apparent positive changes mandated in the 2008 Constitution. Anthropologist Carmen Martínez Novo notes that "what social movements are exposing are the contradictions between bodies of legislation or, perhaps, between government discourse and government practices. I propose that we could understand the Constitution as discourse or presentation of the government's self for international and national consumption, and secondary legislation as being more entangled with the actual practices of government that seem to be more pragmatic" (2010, 3). Martínez Novo's assessment seems quite accurate. Furthermore, it is not only the autonomy of recognized groups that Correa's political agenda attempts to thwart; generally unrecognized groups with no political voice and with no history of political visibility are treated by Correa's government much as Sawyer noted that their highland and Amazonian lowland counterparts used to be treated by non-*indigenista* regimes.

This kind of strategy, which in terms of its intentions and effects seems not to have changed significantly since the 1990s, allows Ecuador's political leaders to dismiss subaltern challenges or requests, as they can portray indigenous objectives as having already been met. Momentary, top-down, completely controlled recognition—an event that occurs within one moment and setting and is almost immediately forgotten by the general public, if indeed it is even ever acknowledged—not only takes the place of real give-and-take negotiations, but also precludes such negotiations.⁷ Any further noise made by the indigenous groups who have been so graciously received is construed within the tropes of existing negative stereotypes, like colorblindness in the United States ("racism no longer exists, so you must be overreacting").

In part, it is the persistence of this kind of attitude that leads groups to be wary of accepting definitive labels. In speaking with Agua Blancans over the years, they frequently comment on and even joke about the options available to them for self-identification, and tell stories about the categories to which they have historically been assigned. While at first I understood only the undercurrent of frustration with

the limitations of the categories, it took a series of experiences like the ones outlined above and some of the others I will describe in the rest of the chapter for me to comprehend more viscerally why Agua Blancans find it necessary to develop tactics to avoid fixed labels of racialized identity.

Montubio

montubio, -bia. adj. (S. Am.) Coastal peasant.
(Amer.) An unrefined, coarse, rural person.⁸

Walking into the Pumapungo Museum of the Central Bank of Ecuador in Cuenca for the first time, I was aware that one of its touted attractions was a series of ethnographic displays, dioramas representing the lives and cultural settings of indigenous groups from around the country. I was conversant in the critical discourse surrounding museums and display and collections; I had seen questionable dioramas and reconstructions myself and had even written on these in the past (see also Chapter 1). Given the racialized geography so clearly set up through the progression through the displays, and my own knowledge of which groups were included and excluded from public discourse about that geography, I did not expect to see any coverage of coastal groups. Even had I predicted their inclusion, however, nothing would have prepared me for the scene that awaited me around a corner in the middle of the exhibit.

Upon first glimpsing the exterior of the cane hut in front of me, what struck me was its simultaneous shininess yet haphazard appearance, as if its constructors could not decide on a single design, so felt the need to incorporate everything. I chuckled at the dilemma of the curator: how to feel one has adequately represented every possibility, so as not to lead viewers to a sort of essentialized, monolithic image of the Other. Still amused, I entered the structure as guided by arrows. My light-hearted take on the structure's exterior left me utterly unprepared for what awaited within (fig. 2.4).

While other groups in the museum are represented in action—hunting, selling goods, dancing, or merely conversing—the montubio is depicted sleeping, not the controlled sleep of the civilized, but the haphazard sprawl of the man too inebriated to control his limbs, one who was unable even to rinse the dust from his legs or remove his hat before collapsing in his hammock in the center of his one-room cane hut. He wears dirty Western-style clothing—a t-shirt, running shorts, and a baseball cap. The walls of his stark abode hold a few cooking utensils and a printed image of a Catholic saint; an incongruous metal-legged desk takes up one corner, a blackened cooking pot on its surface. There is no apparent way to use those cooking vessels, given that there is no fuel source or safe place to cook in the room; the hammock in which he rests would not hold a second body. He is alone.

Historian Ronn Pineo describes highland depictions of montubios as resulting both from a sense of ethnic purity—the highlands as home to white, Catholic, old-money Ecuadorians who maintained close cultural and social ties with Europe—and



Figure 2.4. Figure within diorama of the montubio hut. Ethnographic exhibit, Museo del Banco Central, Cuenca, Ecuador. (Photo by Alfredo Ventura)

from the concomitant understanding of the coastal regions as marked by new money, upstart capitalism, and racial mixing. In Pineo's words, "cultural differences divided Ecuador. To racist whites of the sierra, the swarthy montuvios [sic] of the coast were a bastard race—part European, Indian, and Negro—and living proof of the evils of miscegenation" (2008, 145). Yet even while the isolation and depravity portrayed within the diorama resonate with this set of perceptions, the individual depicted does not appear to be "of a bastard race." With the exception of dress, all his physical attributes more clearly evoke Ecuadorian expectations of indigeneity.

Perhaps more oddly still, while the scene above suggests moral inferiority, if not depravity, the written description of the category accompanying the exhibit reflects a more typical image of the montubio:

MONTUBIO: Lives inland along the coast and is the symbol of the untamed man braving Ecuador's tropical nature. His housing settlements are dispersed among the hills or form small population areas on the banks of rivers or next to roadways.

He dresses like the members of other mestizo groups of the coast, with light, simple clothing and a straw hat. He always carries his machete.

Rice, manioc, plantains, fruits, along with hunting and fishing, make up his meals. Agriculture is the primary activity, usually monocropping for export: cacao, coffee, or bananas. Ranching has also developed.

He makes crafts of straw, ceramics, leather, as well as furniture.

Stories and legends about beliefs and customs pass from generation to generation.⁹

The website adds the following: “he likes cockfighting and breaking horses; he loves music and magical oral traditions” (www.bce.fin.ec/etnicosampliar.php; accessed June 30, 2010).¹⁰ This image of the montubio—a rodeo-loving traditional farmer dressed in a simple, white button-down shirt and straw hat and carrying a machete—is the typical one reinforced through government census campaigns, political websites, television shows, and posters inviting tourists to experience montubio culture, as I will show in following sections of the chapter. Thus it is interesting that in the national museum of ethnography, where one expects to see all the cultures of Ecuador authoritatively represented, the quintessential gear of the montubio is absent. We see merely a solitary, drunken man in cast-off Western clothing; the mestizo par excellence, the degenerate result of too much intermixing about which castas paintings warned.

Mestizo: Discourses of Geographic Racialization within the Educational System

Elementary education everywhere is central to state-sponsored processes of producing citizens. That is, we learn more than the three Rs in school; far more important to national cohesion are the constant lessons in how to be a productive citizen of the nation, and subtle reminders of who belongs in what roles in the national space (see Wilhelm 1995; Luykx 1999; Bourdieu et al. 2000; Rival 2002; Wigginton 2005; Johnson 2007; Godreau et al. 2008). In Ecuador, as everywhere else, children learn what it means to be Ecuadorian and who the ideal Ecuadorian is. Looking at examples taken from state-sponsored textbooks over the past decade reveals both consistency and changes in what recent administrations want children to learn about themselves and about the Ecuadorian state more generally.

Texts teach students that the majority of the population is mestizo; major historical figures were predominantly European in origin, but in more recent years have also been mestizos. Most of the historical figures children can name were born in Quito; very few are associated with rural areas, or even with towns or cities outside the highlands. As we saw in Chapter 1, racialized geography—the idea of who belongs where within the nation—is subtly emphasized throughout one’s education. Geography is not only racialized, however, but also differentially valued: the highlands, centered around Quito and Cuenca, are constructed as the true seats of Ecuadorian culture, whereas the coast is presented as more recently populated, home to new-money industrialists and plantation owners. Amazonia is barely considered other than as a set of resources within national development.

For purposes of this chapter, I want to focus on how the coast itself is constructed as a social space. In the 2010 version of the fourth-grade social studies textbook in Ecuador, coastal growth is explained thus:

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, *the coast was a region with very few inhabitants, limited production and very small populations*. But great growth began due to an increase in exports of cacao, the fruit from which chocolate is made.

In the province of Guayaquil the cacao haciendas of that port's landowners grew, where darkies (sambos and mulattos), other coastal mestizos, and *indigenous [people] who came from the highlands worked*. Next to the haciendas there were *small properties of peasants* that produced tobacco, plantains, and other foodstuffs. (MEE 2010a, 64; translation and emphasis mine)¹¹

Here the passive voice naturalizes labor-intensive processes, rendering workers invisible: the haciendas *grew*; small properties *produced*. Development of the coast is furthermore completely attributed to landowners and external desires. The passage also reinforces an image of the coast as practically devoid of inhabitants, none of whom were autochthonous. Indigenous people in the coastal areas (equated here with Guayaquil) came from the highlands rather than being of local origin. Finally, the language used to describe non-landowners is offensive and emphasizes race and color, equating not only higher socioeconomic status but also moral superiority with whiteness (see Stark 1981; Stutzman 1981; Whitten 1981, 2003a, 2003b; Goldstein 2003; Wade 1995, 1997).

This racialized stratification of social class, particularly for coastal groups, is present throughout several of the texts. In the 2006 third-grade text graphic analyzed in Chapter 1, the series of cartoonish drawings of children that serves to reinforce racialized geography also reinforces class divisions. While each of the children is dressed and adorned distinctly, it is only Pepe, the mestizo from Manabí, whose clothes are dirty and tattered (see fig. 1.2, above). The mestizo child depicted from Cuenca, in contrast, is whiter, dressed in Western clothing, and well-groomed. It is only in Manabí that mestizo is conflated with poor and rural, as well as darker-skinned. Furthermore, as we have seen in the fourth-grade 2006 text already discussed in Chapter 1, this depiction is reinforced through the idea that rural populations are unlikely to be literate.

Interestingly, the definition of coastal regions as solely mestizo has shifted in the most recent (2010) set of texts produced by the Ministry of Education, yet not all years' texts represent the groups in the same ways. In a section titled "The Cultures of Ecuador," the eighth-grade social studies text lists the following "peoples and nationalities" for the "coastal natural region":

In Esmeraldas live the Awá, Épera, [and] Chachi peoples, and a large population of Afro-Ecuadorians. Their ways of seeing the world are different . . .

The montubio people are concentrated in Manabí. The montubio culture gives an account of the way of life of peasants from rural areas.

In Los Ríos, Guayas and El Oro the majority of the population is mestizo.
The Wankavilka people are concentrated in Santa Elena. (MEE
2010c, 178)¹²

Despite its brevity and straightforward descriptions, this short text includes several points worth noting. First, following the pattern of previous educational documents, it does emphasize a mestizo population in three of the six coastal provinces, a point to which I will return. Second, although both the government and organizations such as the CONAIE generally treat communities identifying as Manteño/Manta and Wankavilka (Huancavilca) jointly, here only one of those communities, the Wankavilka, is mentioned, and is located per the text only in the newly formed province of Santa Elena.¹³ Third, the text not only creates an association between montubios and the province of Manabí, but also, by equating montubios with rural peasants and claiming that they are concentrated in the province, suggests that Manabí itself is almost entirely rural.¹⁴ Interestingly, several coastal provinces include communities where people do identify as montubio, including Guayas and Los Ríos; nonetheless, those provinces are defined as predominantly mestizo in population. Finally, taken as a whole, the passage suggests that four different kinds of people exist on the coast: mestizos, montubios, Afro-Ecuadorians, and indigenous communities, each of which is located in a different area.

By contrast to this description, the fourth-grade social studies text from the same year (2010), in a section titled “Ethnic groups of our country,” claims that “the great majority of ethnic groups in Ecuador are recognized as indigenous nationalities and peoples. Two peoples stand out: the montubio[s] (Manta-Huancavilca-Puná) and the Afro-Ecuadorian[s]” (MEE 2010a, 51).¹⁵ This section equates montubios—who are depicted in the 2006 text above as mestizos, and who are distinguished culturally (but not biologically) from mestizos in the 2010 third-grade text—with three separate indigenous ethnicities of the coast; the implication is that those groups are really mestizos, but sometimes prefer to give themselves names of indigenous communities.

Thus even in official representations of the coast within institutions controlled by government entities, a great deal of slippage exists in constructions of coastal identities. Why, though, is this the case? Why not simply call coastal groups mestizo and be done with it?

Estimating Population

One historically significant source of information about how ethnicity is constructed within the national setting is the census (see Anderson 1991; Kertzer and Arel 2002a, 2002b; Nobles 2002). For its first several iterations, while terminology shifted on a few occasions, the underlying Ecuadorian census categories for ethnicity remained fairly constant: white, black, indigenous, mestizo (understood as a person of mixed ancestry not involving Afro-Ecuadorians), mulato (a person of mixed Afro-Ecuadorian and other ancestry), and other (comprising primarily the various immigrant groups

from East Asia and the Arab world). While actual percentages have varied widely, most representations of the Ecuadorian population, both internal and external, have historically posited that Ecuador is predominantly mestizo. The biggest difference in estimates has revolved around the category of “indigenous.”

Andean researchers and indigenous organizations routinely estimate the indigenous population as between 25 percent and 35 percent of the total population (e.g., Cervone 2012, 7). Even after the 2001 census, external sources from world atlases to online data sites such as Index Mundi to the CIA *Factbook* concurred with these estimates. Significantly, the 2001 census was the first in which people were permitted to auto-identify by ethnicity; in prior census data collection, the collector would assign an ethnicity, presumably based on his or her perceptions of the person being interviewed. Ethnic categories appearing on the last two census questionnaires included indigenous; black (Afro-Ecuadorian); mestizo; mulato; white; or other. If one selected “indigenous,” then he or she was further asked to identify the “indigenous nationality or people” to which he or she belonged.

Results of both the 2001 and the 2010 census were similar: in 2001, approximately 77.5 percent of the nation’s people auto-identified as mestizo, 10.5 percent as white, just under 7 percent as indigenous, just under 3 percent as mulato, just over 2 percent as black, and 0.32 percent as “other” (INEC 2001). In 2010, after the addition of a new category—montubio—numbers of mestizos and whites went down as some individuals identified themselves within that category (www.eluniverso.com/2011/09/02/1/1356/poblacion-pais-joven-mestiza-dice-censo-inec.html; accessed May 31, 2013). Prior to these two census events, as mentioned above, census officials collecting information in local communities would ask respondents questions about household members, education levels, occupations, and ages, but would answer the question of race or ethnicity themselves (see Lucero 2008, 57)—and in rural Manabí, nearly everyone was assigned to the categories *mestizo*, *montubio*, or *cholo*, all of which imply mixed ancestry, and all of which, in this particular region, also connote poverty, as outlined below.

By contrast in 2001, while numbers of indigenous people declined sharply for many highland provinces,¹⁶ census results for the coastal provinces of Guayas (now Santa Elena) and Manabí for the first time included large numbers of self-identified indigenous people (fig. 2.5)—yet until this census, with the exception of highland indigenous migrants to the port city of Guayaquil, these provinces were thought to be “devoid of ethnicity,” as Ecuadorian anthropologist Silvia Álvarez has put it. Was the change merely semantic or was something else going on?

Identify Yourself! CONEPIA and the 2010 Census

One manifestation of the current Ecuadorian state’s discomfiture with the growing recognition of re-emerging coastal indigenous groups is highlighted within the most recent census campaign. In 2010, echoing census changes throughout the region as well as familiar divide-and-conquer strategies in the United States wherein

Regions and Provinces	Total number of individuals identifying as indigenous	Men identifying as indigenous	Women identifying as indigenous
Country Total	830,418	404,748	425,67
Highland Region	595,798	284,257	311,541
Azuay	20,733	9,465	11,268
Bolívar	40,094	19,496	20,598
Cañar	33,776	15,053	18,723
Carchi	4,263	2,166	2,097
Cotopaxi	84,116	39,764	44,352
Chimborazo	153,365	71,984	81,381
Imbabura	86,986	41,713	45,273
Loja	12,377	5,818	6,559
Pichincha	95,380	47,513	47,867
Tungurahua	64,708	31,285	33,423
Coastal Region	70,391	37,746	32,645
El Oro	5,505	2,920	2,585
Esmeraldas	10,543	5,619	4,924
Guayas	42,377	22,894	19,483
Los Ríos	5,518	2,942	2,576
Manabí	6,448	3,371	3,077
Amazonian Region	162,868	81,984	80,884
Morona Santiago	47,495	23,328	24,167
Napo	43,456	21,679	21,777
Pastaza	22,844	11,627	11,217
Zamora Chinchipe	9,348	4,741	4,607
Sucumbíos	13,476	7,004	6,472
Orellana	26,249	13,605	12,644
Island Region	739	425	314
Galápagos	739	425	314
Other Areas	622	336	286

Figure 2.5. Chart of 2001 Ecuadorian census results showing population identifying as indigenous by province. (Ecuadorian National Census Institute, INEC. Accessed March 20, 2005; www.inec.gob.ec/cpv_indigenas/cpv_in_t02.htm)

a (non-white) census category is subdivided when the numbers within it become too large, several more explicit categories were included on the census. In addition, Correa's government ran a highly visible campaign to urge citizens to identify themselves as members of specific ethnic groups. The campaign reflected both general expectations about particular ethnic groups and specific strategies Correa's government appears to be employing in attempts to control and limit the ever more powerful and organized indigenous groups within the nation.

¡Autoidentifícate! From its front-and-center position on the Agua Blanca museum's information booth in early 2011, the poster screamed out at me (fig. 2.6). "Identify yourself! Cultural identity is your right!" My gut response to the exclamation points was more reminiscent of stumbling upon an unexpected military control point than of a joyful celebration of some sort of communal identity. Examining the poster more closely, I noticed an acronym I did not recognize: CONEPIA, the Comisión Nacional de Estadística de los Pueblos Indígenas, Afroecuatoriano y Montubio (National Statistics Commission of the Montubio, Afroecuadorian, and Indigenous Peoples). While the poster exhorted people to self-identify as "proudly indigenous," the CONAIE was nowhere listed as a supporting organization, so I decided to look into the campaign more closely.

Online in nearby Puerto López, I quickly located CONEPIA's website. One of the first images I encountered was of a series of individuals, each with paperwork in front of them, seated behind a table wired with microphones. The wall behind them was covered with graphic representations of the different areas of the country. The individuals at the table were themselves highly marked through dress and other accoutrements, clearly meant to be identified with particular regions of the country and their associated ethnic groups: a highland indigenous person in poncho and bowler, a coastal montubio in cowboy hat and bandana, an Afro-Ecuadorian woman marked only through skin tone, and a lowland indigenous person in feathers and body paint. Heading the group, in the left-most chair, sat a bespectacled mestizo in a button-down shirt, the typical office wear of the Western male.

The first question the image on the website raised was why the commission members found it so important to mark themselves in generically racialized ways. The second question was why "indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and montubio peoples" needed their own statistics commission within the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC, National Institute of Statistics and Censi). Why was it suddenly necessary for individual Ecuadorians to "auto-identify"? In their recent work on the commodification of ethnicity, John and Jean Comaroff note that the ability to isolate particular markers of authenticity has been essential to the survival of certain groups within processes of globalization. While the benefits of commodifying identity may be obvious to some groups and to particular leaders, however, the question this campaign raised for me was how the same globalizing processes that render commodifying ethnicity a viable option for groups might affect the everyday person who suddenly feels the utter necessity of proclaiming an identity, and one over whose ultimate definition he or she has no real control. Over the next few months many Agua Blancans commented on the prior year's census questions, wondering why the category of *montubio* had been added, and what the consequences might be of each of their choices—echoing my response to the site. People who had claimed indigenous identity in the 2001 census were discomfited by the sudden appearance of the new category, and many told me they had opted to claim mestizo identity on the census due to the lack of transparency behind CONEPIA's campaign.



Figure 2.6. Original poster from Ecuador’s 2010 census campaign. Note the icon for CONEPIA’s campaign, a tripartite figure in which three curved arms protrude from a central image of the sun setting into a blue ocean. The uppermost arm is composed of an image suggesting the head and long black hair of an indigenous woman, a wiphala (indigenous flag) and a boa constrictor in her hair, which intertwines itself with an ear of corn. Below this and to the right, the next arm suggests the head of an Afro-Ecuadorian woman whose hair disappears beneath a headscarf, only to reappear and transform into a brown river in the shape of Africa, within which a marimba, bongos, a canoe and a stalk of sugarcane float. Finally, the third arm is topped by an icon of a montubio of ambiguous gender, complete with hat and red bandana; this head resolves itself into a green banana leaf, atop which three cacao pods, a machete, and a tent appear. (Autoidentificate Ecuador Facebook page. Accessed June 6, 2013; www.facebook.com/pages/Autoidentif%C3%ADcate-Ecuador/155529614487061?ref=ts)

Propaganda for the campaign was publicized primarily through printed advertisements. In cities, these frequently adorned the sides of buses and *troles* (electric trains). In smaller towns and rural areas, though, other media were employed. Multiple versions of printed posters were created to target different audiences; these versions were distributed throughout the country based on perceived audience. Interestingly, Agua Blanca officials, like other representatives of indigenous groups, should have received posters focusing on indigenous identity—but early versions of the posters did not include either *manta* or *wankavilka* as options in the long list of indigenous nationalities and *pueblos* or peoples (the latter category implying groups without officially recognized political representation). Posters naming these groups were only made available at the very end of the campaign; posters promoting self-representation as montubio, however, were readily available throughout the months of CONEPIA's efforts (fig. 2.7).

The montubio poster differs from other examples of CONEPIA's images in several regards. First, rather than exhorting people immediately to "auto-identify themselves," the heading of the poster reads, "I have an identity . . . I'm montubio!" The wording insinuates a people long denied a particular identity, yet the image below suggests a longstanding homogeneity in the way that identity might be visually expressed. The plaid shirts, cowboy hats, and red bandanas that adorn the family on the poster are mirrored in the icon of the census-taker below: in media targeting other groups, the cartoon figure simply sports a blue census cap, but on this poster, he is depicted with his own red bandana and Panama hat.

Furthermore, the top of the poster includes a tiny, bearded, and similarly behatted icon under which runs the phrase "Eloy Alfaro lives in the soul of the Montubio People . . . !" Eloy Alfaro, Manabí province's most famous son, was the 19th and 22nd President of Ecuador. Born in the village of Montecristi, a parochial capital just inland from Manta and approximately 45 kilometers northeast of Agua Blanca, the son of a Spanish merchant and a local indigenous woman, Alfaro led insurrections against various conservative governments in Ecuador, calling for the separation of Church and state and the modernization of the country. While nationally he is remembered primarily for the construction of a railway between the highland capital in Quito and the major port city of Guayaquil, completed in 1908, within rural Manabí he is known as a machete-wielding rebel, a fighting man, and the only president from the province. Still highly popular within Manabí, Alfaro represents the image of the angry rural *costeño* and consummate revolutionary, a coastal liberal fighting against entrenched highland conservatism dominated by old money and the Catholic Church. Images of Alfaro are common throughout the province; in none of them, however, is he wearing a montubio hat.

In addition to printed materials, CONEPIA ran a similar campaign through television and, more intensively, through radio ads. The ad targeted toward montubio identity both reveals underlying assumptions about montubios, and hints at why people might not self-identify so readily within this category: "I'm a *montubio*! I have



Figure 2.7. Montubio poster from the 2010 census campaign. (Autoidentificate Ecuador Facebook page. Accessed June 6, 2013; www.facebook.com/pages/Autoidentif%C3%ADcate-Ecuador/155529614487061?fref=ts)

an identity! Coming from the deep cultural reality of my beautiful coast, I am *montubio*, yes sir! On horseback, with a *sombrero*, those are my origins. For Alfaro, for my grandfather and my homeland, in the next national census I will define myself *montubio*" (CONEPIA 2010b; my transcription and translation).¹⁷ The surreal mental images of backwoods people born on horseback with hats already in place that the radio ads brought to mind were hardly less provocative than the uncanny juxtaposition

of CONEPIA's images of generic indigenous people and the actual indigenous people sitting in front of them, something seen on buses and in public buildings around the country. Why was so much effort and expense being poured into a campaign that appeared to be about raising awareness and recognition of non-mestizo identities in Ecuador?

The many new pueblos named, not only on the posters, but on the maps and in the radio and television ads, appear to signify the far more open, more truly democratic and egalitarian nature of Correa's government—as they are intended to do. However, the sudden recognition of a montubio identity only ten years after coastal people were given the option of self-selecting ethnic affiliations suggests that other factors might be at play.

The Creation of CODEPMOC

The census campaign raises a series of questions. Who are the montubios? Why is the category of montubio distinguished from that of mestizo? Why are other subcategories of mestizo not also officially recognized? When I asked Agua Blancans about this, most had no idea, but two of the more politically aware council members pointed me toward the website of a relatively new organization, CODEPMOC. Officially (and bureaucratically) named the Council for the Development of the Montubio Peoples of the Ecuadorian Coast and Subtropical Zones of the Coastal Region, but better known by its acronym, CODEPMOC was legally created by the Ecuadorian government under President Gustavo Noboa through Executive Decree No. 1394 on March 30, 2001 (www.codepmoc.gob.ec/informacion.php?seccion=gedLXMS&codigo=8eHmDJuvvR; accessed March 21, 2013).¹⁸

Opening the CODEPMOC web page, one's attention is immediately drawn to the top corner of the screen. Over an orange-red Pacific sunset background, a stylized clockwise-spinning sun rises, grows to fill the screen segment, and then recedes to fill only part of the area. As it shrinks, a new green background resolves into a logo that revolves around the sun, spinning counterclockwise. This logo is made up of five shadow portraits of hatted figures brandishing machetes over their heads; combined in this way, however, at first glance it most resembles a cog, particularly given its rotating motion around the sun, which also appears very gear-like. To complete the image, the name CODEPMOC appears below the revolving logo in red, stenciled letters (fig. 2.8; www.codepmoc.gob.ec/codepmoc.php; accessed June 11, 2012)

The logo suggests that montubios, their green color perhaps symbolizing their position as the backbone of the nation's exportable agricultural production, work tirelessly under the sun of the Pacific coast. Not only do they work around the clock, they work against it—their motion is counterclockwise, and the sun is setting even as they labor. The stenciled acronym suggests control: the Army-style stenciling is as large as the figures themselves.

Left of the spinning logo is the seal of the Presidency of the Republic, denoting official approval of the organization. To its right, the website includes a banner—a



Figure 2.8. CODEPMOC website banner. Note the hats and machetes on the figures in the main logo. (CODEPMOC. Accessed June 11, 2012; www.codepmoc.gob.ec/codepmoc.php)

composite of several color photos, the leftmost of which depict crowds of anonymous, behatted individuals in what might be rallies or meetings (suggesting that all montubios are readily identifiable because they dress exactly alike, and that all belong to this organization), and the rightmost of which depict fewer, similarly dressed individuals in agricultural fields, working with hoes and their paradigmatic machetes. In none of the images is any individual recognizable; rather, the image suggests a clearly identifiable yet anonymous labor force.

In coastal lore, montubios, particularly those from certain regions of Manabí, are historically known for being tough fighters, both politically and within local skirmishes. The potentially frightening image of large numbers of montubios brandishing large machetes has been watered down, however, by the ways montubio has been glossed and represented recently in the national media. The television comedy show *Los Compadritos* portrays montubios as ridiculous, brash individuals, ignorant of what might constitute good manners or cultural expectations. The *compadritos* depicted are never without their iconic sombreros, whether at a pajama party, a wedding, or swimming in the ocean; far from frightening, they cannot be taken seriously. Similarly, after a 2009 outbreak of *fiebre aftosa* (hoof and mouth disease) resulted in the quarantine of Ecuadorian beef products, the government launched a vaccination campaign to try to eradicate the disease. A commercial on the topic aired almost continually that featured two sombrero-and-bandana-wearing men, one of whom berates his neighbor, Don Esculapio (ironically named after the Greek god of medicine), not to forget to vaccinate his wayward cattle. Again, the dominant message is that these people are simple, rural folk, not to be taken seriously.

Below the main banner on CODEPMOC's webpage, a subheading panel reads:

Modelo de Desarrollo Endógeno

. . . *PRODUCIMOS LIMPIO Y SANO!*

Somos un pueblo portador de una cultura bicentenaria.

Endogenous Development Model

. . . WE PRODUCE CLEAN AND HEALTHY!

We are a people [who are] bearers of a two-century-old culture. [ellipses in original]

I include the Spanish original here because of the slippage inherent in the terminology selected. Most important is the uncommon, and relatively unfamiliar, term *endógeno*.

It is a word I have never heard anyone use in everyday speech in Manabí; most people I asked were not sure of its definition, and some asked if I might have made it up, or translated it from English.

Both definitions given in the 2005 *Espasa-Calpe Dictionary of the Spanish Language* refer to biological processes:

Endogenous

1. Adjective. That which originates or is born in the interior, as a cell which forms within another cell.
2. That which originates due to an internal cause: an endogenous infection. (www.wordreference.com/definicion/end%C3%B3geno; accessed June 23, 2011; my translation)¹⁹

While the term implies something internal to a larger body, it refers to “that which is born in the interior,” which in Spanish also implies “in the middle of nowhere,” “in the deep countryside.” Within the racialized and differentially valorized geography of Ecuador, *el interior* implies areas marked as non-white, non-urban, non-modern—and generally invisible, as *el interior* is not directly marketed to tourists; its remoteness does not imply tranquility, a haven for world-weary urbanites, but merely remoteness, backwardness, somewhere not only geographically but also philosophically and developmentally removed from the civilized and civilizing space of the city.

To continue with the official definition, the example given of something endogenous is “a cell which forms within another cell”—in political terms, a cell that is not greater than the nation, not concomitant with the nation, but posterior and inferior to that nation. This is similar to the official language used to describe the nation more generally: Ecuador is pluricultural, not plurinational (Sawyer 2004; see also Chapter 1). The nation’s government is willing to recognize the diversity within its borders, but not at the expense of its sovereignty.

Something endogenous is further defined as “originating in internal causes, as an endogenous infection.” Beyond the negative tone inherent in “infection,” the term *endogenous* thus also subtly implies that the organization arose organically from within the montubio community, a diversionary tactic drawing attention from the government’s role in reinventing and promoting montubio traditions, organizations, and cultural events. Belying this aspect of the definition, the phrase “Endogenous Development Model” (which can alternatively be translated as “A Model of Endogenous Development”) sounds very stilted; it seems to reflect a government’s desire to encourage a specific kind of development, one that can be marketed in particular ways (as organic, healthy, clean), rather than something actually developing organically from within.

Finally, the term recalls the very similar-sounding *indígena*; when I asked Agua Blancans what the word *endogenous* meant, the few who hazarded a guess suggested it might be another way of saying indigenous—something close to the actual definition. Given the promotion of the category of montubio within indigenous communities

in the recent census campaign, the similarities of the two terms may be the primary reason for its selection. However, the final phrase, “We are the bearers of a two-century-old culture,” places arbitrary limits on those similarities. Again, the specific wording of the phrase is unusual. Rather than “we are the people *of* a culture,” it states that “we are a people who *carry* a culture.” The possibility presented is that culture is not necessarily inherent in us; we may be carrying it for someone else. Furthermore, that culture, itself unnamed and unspecified, is defined as only two centuries old—not millennia old, as local indigenous cultures would be. Given the ubiquity of the phrase *cultura milenaria* in reference to indigenous groups in Ecuador, the word choice is particularly telling.

Clicking on a link within a left-hand sidebar titled “Nuestra Identidad” (Our Identity) takes a website visitor to an artistic collage of text against a green background, interspersed with images that provide glimpses of montubio life. These iconic images include two figures fabricating Panama hats; a multi-age group seated on the ground listening to an older, bearded man in a hammock playing guitar; a *rodeo montubio*; and a parade where girls in montubio hats and green colonial-style dresses presumably present a folkloric dance in front of a banner reading “Gestiones de identidad cultural” (www.codepmoc.gob.ec/index.php?seccion=EixdaTs; accessed June 12, 2012). The word *gestión* has several meanings, most referring to bureaucratic procedures; the banner could be translated either as “Steps toward a cultural identity” or “Management of cultural identity,” but most coastal Ecuadorians would probably read it as “Requests for a cultural identity.”

The text on this portion of the webpage reads (in translation):

What is the *montubio* group of people [*pueblo montubio*]? It is a group of individuals who are organized as and who define themselves as *montubio*, with features characteristic of the coastal region and subtropical zones, who are born naturally as a social-organic unit blessed with a common spirit and set of ideals, possessing a natural and cultural education that molds them [*que los auto determina*] as the result of a long spatiotemporal process, and who maintain their own cultural traditions and ancestral knowledges.

We are a people carrying a bicentennial culture. The *montubio* is the result of a complex historical process of ethnic, interregional and sociocultural adaptation and transformation which occurred along the coast where Indians, whites, and blacks fused together; from this fusion we *montubios* have come, with our own cultural identity and specific reality, which distinguishes us from mestizos and peasants [*campesinos*] from the highlands and other peoples of this country.

We are the sociocultural and historic product of the fusion of different racial, regional and cultural groups [etnias] who went about fusing [*que se fueron fusionando*] together throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, with that process of fusion reaching its completion at the beginning of the nineteenth century. (www.codepmoc.gob.ec/codepmoc/nuestra-identidad; accessed June 12, 2012)

One striking aspect of this description is its disjointed nature, skipping back and forth between the third person singular (“the montubio is”) and the first person plural (“we are”). The very first question asks *what* the group is, rather than *who* the people are. All of this suggests an external definition of the group; no one would be likely to describe herself and her family in the third person, as “the result of a complex historical process of ethnic, interregional and sociocultural adaptation and transformation which occurred along the coast.”

Verbs and adjectives themselves frame the definition oddly within two discourses at odds with one another. Some terms naturalize the montubio presence within a landscape and a history (*propia, naturalmente, formación natural y cultural, ancestral*, etc.); others, taken from the language of science and industry (*resultado, fusión* several times, *proceso*), suggest again that the group has been externally created. While the first set of words reinforces racialized geography, the second set clearly emphasizes that montubios are distinct from other mestizos and campesinos, but also from indigenous groups—montubios are defined as a “fusion” of “Indians, whites, and blacks” in a description strongly reminiscent of a scientific or chemical equation, a sort of alchemy whereby distinct metals are fused into a new alloy.²⁰

The abundant use of the term *fusion*, which appears in some form five times on the page, suggests the melding of separate nuclei to create power: the merging of different elements through heat to create a new entity. In most settings, however, elements do not naturally fuse together. The term usually refers to laboratory experiments, creative cooking, or other processes that result in fusion through external human intervention. Again, differently racialized groups in Ecuador are perceived also in terms of labor—both in the sense that they are defined by their labor and in the sense that their labor defines them, both metaphorically, in that groups come to be perceived as “suited” for particular kinds of labor, and physically, in the ways work and other activities shape the body. The terminology on the CODEPMOC website suggests that these various elements have been combined in ideal ways to create a new labor force, naturally suited for agricultural work beneath the burning Pacific sun.

Finally, the page concludes that the “process of fusion reach[ed] its completion at the beginning of the 19th century.” Again, the website utilizes scientific terminology to describe utterly unscientific conclusions: first, that clear biological distinctions separated the original groups who later fused to create montubios; second, that the genetic makeup of the category of *montubio* is the same for everyone and can be defined with mathematical precision; and third, that the process of fusion somehow stopped, reaching a conclusion two centuries ago. Interestingly, the timing mirrors that of the creation of the Ecuadorian nation—the move for independence began in the early nineteenth century, along with the emphasis on a narrative of mestizaje. Thus coastal agriculturalists are once again by definition distinguished from the nation’s mestizo leadership, but also separated (scientifically, genetically, historically, culturally, and definitionally) from the possibility of indigeneity. The montubio category serves as yet another diversionary tactic, a maneuver attempting to create arbitrary

and problematic connections among otherwise very disparate coastal communities. Indigenous communities on the coast, encouraged to auto-identify as montubio, are loath to do so: even more so than other racialized categories in Ecuador, this one conveys a fixity that, once accepted, would be difficult to abandon.

Coastal Communities and Imperfect Mestizaje

The high visibility of Ecuador's indigenous coalitions within political processes over the past two decades have played a central role in recent changes in discourses and praxes of indigeneity in Ecuador,²¹ visible within academic approaches to the region and tangible within indigenous communities themselves. Perhaps counterintuitively, this situation—a significant increase both in indigenous efficacy and in attention to praxes of indigeneity within Ecuador—has created new dilemmas for unrecognized groups, because it is easy to assume that all indigenous groups face similar stressors and have similar relations with the government.

Racialized geography significantly limits the kinds of labels coastal groups can persuasively use for self-identification. Existing limitations have been exacerbated by recent emphasis on the montubio category. As I have shown in this chapter, under the government of Rafael Correa, several initiatives—the 2010 census campaign, televised and radio-broadcast public service announcements, language and images used to promote regional tourism, and revisions to scholastic texts—have all contributed to a broader strategy designed both to create public perceptions of increasingly visible coastal groups as montubio and to pressure rural coastal individuals to self-identify as montubio.

Within the categorization of the nation into the hierarchies of imperfect mestizaje,²² the montubio category is specifically constructed as fundamentally distinct from and not subsumable within the other available categories, as I have shown above. Although definitions given by the state presume those labeled as montubio to have indigenous, black, and white ancestry, importantly, montubio is constructed as different from mestizo and, simultaneously, as categorically distinct from any of its presumed component parts, both biologically and culturally. Thus as a category it is quite limiting; the recent visual equation of montubio with laboring bodies renders the category even less appealing to many coastal indigenous communities.

While some groups—usually in the riverine interior of the provinces of Manabí, Guayas, and Los Ríos—do identify as montubio, these have long been part of the national or at least the regional imaginary: hotheaded cowboys with green eyes, huge ranches, and the ability to use their machetes in politics as well as in their agricultural exploits. Recent processes of recovering traditional identities in the region have led some agriculturalists—and even some nostalgic urbanites—to reclaim their montubio roots. Those individuals who do claim this heritage and who do currently choose to self-identify as montubios despite the historically negative connotations of the term would not, however, recognize Agua Blancans or their peers as montubios. Thus

accepting state pressure to identify as montubio would sever many of the connections Agua Blancans maintain with their own peers without replacing those ties with other kinds of belonging.

Accepting a label of montubio would also render the land claims of communities such as Agua Blanca far more easily contestable; state definitions themselves describe the montubio as the result of a process of racial mixing that is only a couple of centuries old—more or less the age of the nation, rather than preceding the nation in emergence. This denotation implies that any land claims would be based on recent tradition rather than autochthony.²³

Most importantly, the label itself implies again an imperfect mestizaje, a category of mestizo intrinsically separated from the white-mestizo political and economic elite, but also distanced in time, genealogy, and culture from the “disappeared” indigenous groups of the coast. Of all the categories of self-identification available to coastal groups, this one is perhaps the most limiting; thus it is perhaps not coincidental that it is the category most forcefully being presented to those groups as an option. Furthermore, even though imperfect mestizaje might appear to enable fluidity, the fact that the originators of the discourse are also its gatekeepers mean that the various labels and distinctions alluded to within the broader discourse of mestizaje can be just as limiting as the label of “Indian,” but without the possibility of engaging with and benefiting from the global cachet of indigeneity.

Ambiguity as Flexibility?

Within rural coastal Ecuadorian communities, group self-definitions have frequently changed in response to shifting state policies and governments. While groups are theoretically permitted to represent themselves as they see fit, ironically, all of the available categories for self-definition reify inherent difference from the mainstream. In other words, groups perceive the need to define themselves in ways that preclude their full and active participation in democracies, yet it is only due to the existence of those democracies in the first place that such definitions become necessary. Self-definitions take on the role of moral imperatives, fomenting ideas about *how* people are, not just *who* they are, and forcing groups to choose between pride and political efficacy. To ensure their continued rights within the Ecuadorian democracy, these groups are encouraged to define themselves in ways that lead to their exclusion from important aspects of a democracy.

This is a clear example of a negative freedom in Bourdieu’s sense of the term—groups appear to be given the freedom of choice in self-representation, but only within a limited list of available identities, all of which are perceived as marginal; groups are not permitted to come up with new categories. In accepting external definitions of themselves that are acceptable to the state, these groups would only continue to emphasize their isolation rather than their inclusion in the nation. Given how each of the available categories has been constructed historically and more recently,

how each plays into that national imaginary, and how the tropes of racialized geography that guide Ecuadorian perceptions of people and space already constrain Agua Blancans and their peers, the adoption of any of the categories as representative of one's own communal identity would constrain a group severely.

Coastal communities in Ecuador, as elsewhere in the Andean nations, occupy an ambiguous ethnic space. Long unrecognized as indigenous communities, neither are coastal peoples typically mestizo: their labor marks them physically in ways the mestizo majority neither embodies nor wishes to emulate. This conundrum can play out in different ways, as I have already noted. Traveling along the long, rural roads through Manabí, one does not see many people; visiting beaches and national parks, one does not expect to see people who are not tourists. Most frequently, then, coastal communities find themselves rendered invisible. In circumstances where visibility cannot be avoided, as Agua Blanco president Paúl noted in our conversation described earlier, coastal communities have been officially labeled "Afro-Ecuadorian" or simply "traditional peoples," a maneuver of imprecision, of sidestepping the deeply political issue of ethnic identity in Ecuador. However, as I will argue in the rest of the book, this very imprecision can enable more control and flexibility in self-definition than would otherwise be the case.

PRACTICE *fluidity*

Vessels of Legitimacy

Performance and Interpretive Drift

Racism is a collective cumulative experience (Feagin and Sikes 1994 [citation in original]). Any act of aggression against an individual Indian is an attack against all Indians. The individual does not exist as such in the racist aggressor's imagination. The presence of an Indian evokes the generic Indian who needs to be kept in his or her proper social location.

Carlos de la Torre (1999, 105)

WITHIN THE HIERARCHY OF ETHNICITIES in Ecuador, as we have seen, indigeneity is often a liability. In the piece from which the epigraph above is taken, Ecuadorian sociologist Carlos de la Torre analyzes what he calls “everyday forms” of racism in Ecuador; for rural individuals, external perceptions by self-described white Ecuadorians of their ethnicity have significant concrete effects in limiting their access to various aspects of social, economic, and political processes in the country. De la Torre refers to the “generic Indian,” the constructed category of indigeneity as a whole and the entire set of related discriminatory dispositions that inform and are generated by the habitus of upper-class Ecuadorians. Clearly, the awareness of such dispositions is central to the attempts of individuals and groups to distance themselves from the negative effects of being identifiable as indigenous.

Many anthropologists have analyzed the effects of displacement, such as through forced migration, on the construction of group identity (see Daniel et al. 1996; Malkki 1992, 1995). What I consider in this chapter is the possibility of being displaced while in one's original location—being displaced through racialized geography and external constructions of authenticity—and what kinds of agentive cultural production are possible in those circumstances. Can indigenous groups actively challenge external narratives of authenticity through metacultural performance without forfeiting indigeneity as cultural capital? More succinctly, what happens when another kind of “generic Indian” is put on public display?

To address this question, two strands of anthropological analysis seem particularly salient: mimicry/mimesis, and the production of dispositions in fields of practice. In terms of the first, is it possible to destabilize dominant discourses and shift the fields of cultural production through mimicry? Several instances of anthropological analysis of mimicry and mimesis in colonial situations consider whether colonized individuals

are ever able to access the colonial Self or its defining categories—whiteness, dominance, modernity (Bhabha 1994; Ahern 2007; Taussig 1992; but cf. Ferguson 2006). The status of the Other as “not-quite/not-White” that is imposed by colonizers is generally viewed as limiting mimesis, but rendering mimicry (mockery) more effective.

Agua Blancans, of course, are not only “not-quite, not-White” (Bhabha 1994); they are also not-quite-indigenous, as outlined in the introduction. Anthropologist Mary Weismantel has considered another, far more visible case of an Ecuadorian group constructed and perceived as of ambiguous ethnicity: highland *cholas* (market women) (Weismantel 2001, *passim*). In a chapter on how *cholas* “perform race,” Weismantel insightfully compares the effects of ethnic slippage to those of gender slippage for a more clearly identified public: “like a straight audience at a drag show, viewers equipped with only two racial categories find themselves frustrated in their desire to read a unitary race into what they see . . . if the clothing is itself layered, multiple, subject to more than one reading, the body that inhabits it might turn out to be equally complicated . . . to intentionally occupy a position in between is a brazen disruption of the binary categories themselves” (2001, 112). Considering the performance of both race and gender in the Andes, Weismantel cogently demonstrates how destabilizing the performance of in-between categories can be. What her analysis suggests is that the externally attributed status of not-quite-mestizo/not-quite-indigenous provides performers with even more boundaries to transcend and blur through their performances. Given that Agua Blancans are multiply ambiguous, but also less visible overall than their highland counterparts, I want to consider whether their performances are effective in creating spaces for cultural productions that might ultimately render them visible without fixing that visibility in negative ways.

The second analytical approach I want to employ incorporates both practice theory and a discursive analysis that includes extralinguistic factors. In her discussion of the above example, Weismantel notes that “the market women’s exuberant clothing styles perform race and sex as improvisational collages constantly subject to revision: they thus undermine the notion that the social order that exists, must be” (2001, 126). How does practice challenge discourse and perceptions of social order? To what extent are social actors constrained by the received identities into which they are categorized? Like Weismantel, I want to highlight poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht’s question of whether “a particular kind of performance might actually change the people who witness it” (Weismantel 2001, 116).

I want also, however, to consider whether performance might actually change the performers themselves. Is it possible for Agua Blancan performers both to destabilize received categories of ethnicity for their audiences and to challenge their own embodied histories as expressed through dispositions within the social fields available to them? Answering this question requires a consideration of several interrelated theoretical approaches and concepts: Bourdieusian practice theory, Tanya Luhrmann’s concept of interpretive drift, Sherry Ortner’s “serious game” theory, and the perception of “suitability” or “appropriateness” outlined in various studies, from Bourdieu

to Mimi Sheller. I will try to outline some of these approaches here as prologue to the analysis of the particular performance that is the subject of this chapter.

In his introduction to Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power*, editor John Thompson presents a succinct overview of several of Bourdieu's concepts, including habitus, fields, dispositions, and capital:

The body is the site of incorporated history. The practical schemes through which the body is organized are the product of history and, at the same time, the source of practices and perceptions which reproduce that history. . . . But when individuals act, they always do so in specific social contexts or settings. Hence particular practices or perceptions should be seen, not as the product of the habitus as such but as the product of the relation between the habitus, on the one hand, and the specific social contexts or 'fields' within which individuals act, on the other. . . . One of the most important properties of fields is the way in which they allow one form of capital to be converted into another. (Thompson in Bourdieu 1991, 13–14)

Practice is our activity in the external world, activity that is often extralinguistic, taken for granted, based on cues we learned from watching others practice long before we could become aware of the implications of such practice in social terms. What Thompson highlights in the above quote is that, over time and through practice, we come to embody and put into practice particular identities that are associated with specific social contexts or fields of practice—identities that thereby come to appear suitable or appropriate within those fields.

Considering the convoluted relationships between consumer and consumed, subject and object, within the intertwined processes of colonization, commodification, and imagining of the Caribbean, anthropologist Mimi Sheller points to specific products whose consumption was undertaken by Westerners not only for its own sake, but also for its capacity to redefine the consumer in particular ways: "coffee was . . . generally recognised to stimulate the mind and arouse mental activity (Schivelbusch 1992, 110), thus contributing towards a certain kind of embodied 'habitus' suitable to a bourgeois disposition (Bourdieu 1984)" (2006, 85). Again, the production and reproduction of social realities occurs through practice. Practice is always situated—in landscapes, in bodies, in class hierarchies—much as the habits it produces are always similarly situated. In the above quote Sheller points to the process of acquiring a "suitable" disposition through particular practices (including consumption) which enable that disposition gradually to become embodied, part and parcel of the individual practicing within a field to which he or she is "suited." In other words, our perceptions of who belongs where in the social landscape have a great deal to do with how they practice—whether they act in suitable or appropriate ways. Suitability, here, might be defined as that which appropriately reflects discourse (expectations) through practice.

Furthermore, perceptions of suitability that are linked to the situated nature of practice guide perceptions of others, but also of the self and of place to begin with. We categorize ourselves and others through practice, through observing how specific bodies engage with specific settings. Because belonging and visibility are located in bodies, Foucault's concepts of biopower (1976) suggest that these constructions of identity through situated practice are also technologies of control that reinforce the concept of racialized geography.

Dominant groups in the Andes construct their own identities through practice, through consuming particular goods (including people-as-commodities, consumed via labor, marriage, and other processes) in particular ways calculated to produce the embodied habitus suitable to an upper class, white disposition. As we have seen in Chapter 1, those dominant groups also construct discourses about other groups and about the landscape such that particular subordinate groups only become effectively visible in the places they are imagined to occupy. In "white" spaces the majority (mestizos) are invisible in the productive (positive) sense, but other groups not imagined to be present are invisible in the restrictive (negative) sense. As Foucault suggested, these intertwined processes of social production also produce, or attempt to produce, docile bodies at all social levels—bodies that will act in ways that reproduce social hierarchies without reflection. By living in particular ways, by following a particular set of rules, we construct both the fields we play upon and ourselves as players, as well as the perception of what are suitable practices or *habiti* within those fields.

Practice is also context-dependent or relational (see Sampson et al. 2005, 23–25), which means that it is not entirely an unconscious choice. This suggests that the choice of practice and the subsequent construction of fields of interaction may be guided by discourse, but might also be changed, particularly with the introduction of new interlocutors, or what I would like to call *interpracticors*—those whose practice intersects with our own, both informing it and being informed by it. This realization means that the concept of interpretive drift is also relevant.

Anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann developed the model of interpretive drift, which she describes as "the slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone's matter of interpreting events as they become more involved with a particular activity" (1989, 312). Luhrmann conducted a study of modern-day witchcraft among upper- and middle-class individuals in England—lawyers, accountants, medical doctors, and others trained in Western logic and scientific paradigms—in order to address the question of how people participate in and internalize activities that apparently contradict the logical models of the world they have already learned. One of her more important conclusions is that changing the ways we view the world is a slow process, one that is not necessarily planned, and one in which changes in belief often follow (rather than precede) changes in action or practice. She shows not only that individuals can and do engage with conflicting logical systems, but also that people tend to feel more connected to the models that they put into practice in a supportive community.

In constructing Andean racialized geographies in the first place—in constructing spaces of situated practice that both produce and reflect socially relevant differences—colonizers' discourse on difference and suitability had originally to be reinforced, in a Gramscian sense, by coercion in the form of forced limitations on practice and on geography itself. Over time, ongoing practice of inequality led to a sort of interpretive drift in which individuals and groups (who may have initially protested markers of inequality) began to reproduce attitudes or dispositions, resulting in “naturalized” practice. In other words, over time and through interpretive drift, individuals seem to internalize the production of their own inequality through practice, even while they may still recognize the unfairness of the situation (see, for example, Goldstein 2003, 89; Ahern 2007, 6; Canessa 2012, 28).

As we have seen in the preceding two chapters, in many senses the Ecuadorian nation itself is constituted through the process of producing racialized geographies—geographies which are in turn comprised of perceptions of suitable fields, subjects, and modes of production. In other words, the perception of those geographies and their salience depend in great part on the kinds of labor imagined to take place within them, which in turn requires the perceptual production of laboring bodies. For example, as anthropologist Suzana Sawyer, historians Kris Lane and Allen Gerlach, and journalist Joe Kane have shown, some places within Ecuador's borders have been constructed as frontiers, as devoid of people, which enables Ecuadorians and foreigners alike to perceive the extraction of resources as appropriate within that setting (Sawyer 2004; Lane 2003; Gerlach 2003; Kane 1996). Other spaces have been constructed within the national imaginary as spaces of urban whiteness or rural agricultural production, of Afro-Ecuadorian beaches or colorful indigenous markets, again as noted in the previous two chapters.

As I have presented above, the central coast of Ecuador is a social space long invisible in the general Ecuadorian imaginary, one more recently constructed as home to faceless mestizo laborers. If we consider the central coast as a set of social fields, we can begin to consider how the particular bodies of Agua Blancans and their peers might appropriately reflect these received histories or imaginaries. In doing so we might realize how, once Agua Blancans recognize precisely which practices construct that appropriateness, such a realization might make it possible for them to perform challenges to those understood histories. Where might performing bodies breach expected silences? Are those bodies still repositories of incorporated history even within those moments of performance and challenge?

Thinking about this differently, how are those bodies produced in the first place? That is, what kinds of practice must at one point have been enforced to produce suitable dispositions within the fields of rural coastal Ecuador? What I am asking, in the end, is how embodiment of externally determined ideals can be produced through the intervention of external actors: how do non-rural Ecuadorians help produce the embodied culture of rural Ecuadorians? How does their shared history inform each group's bodily hexis? How have embodied understandings

of and practices generated through that shared history limited rural Ecuadorians' access to a variety of fields?

Although habitus may at times be an unintended result of certain practices (as in the case of socialization of infants), these questions reflect some of the ways that at other times the production of a particular desired habitus—a “suitable” embodied identity—may necessitate particular practices. Thus regulating behavior in accordance with embodied understandings of salient social categories (gender, ethnicity) can produce difference, rather than merely reflecting it. In essence this suggests that it is possible for human practice and discourse to create fields that in turn create specific kinds of players. This is very different from what “culture of poverty” studies usually imply—that the fields themselves create conditions that limit possible decisions. What I am suggesting is that agentic subjects—in this case, colonial Ecuadorian elites—may attempt to create those limitations through imposing perceptions of what is suitable in particular contexts. However, what this ethnography demonstrates, in part, is that the imposition of suitable habitus is never fully achieved. What *is* created effectively, however, is the stark reality of hierarchies and inequalities, as well as the gatekeepers that attend them.

The same questions also raise potentially productive possibilities, however. If fields are produced through practice, if dispositions are performed rather than merely held, if they are public and visible, how might the introduction of new players—and hence new fields—lead to the introduction of a new game, a new arena within which to develop new aspects of habitus, ones that might enable access to new or expanded forms of capital from which those rural Ecuadorians had previously been excluded—or forms which simply did not previously exist?

Furthermore, what is the role of interpretive drift, whether in producing received roles or in challenging them? Again, Luhmann's main point is that practice—especially actions performed collectively—can lead to changes in belief and worldview, even when people are originally skeptical of the belief system within which they start practicing. They may adopt new practices as a way of fitting into a community, but end up shifting their beliefs, internalizing the new way of looking at the world. What if, in performing, Agua Blancans can create interpracticors for whom their performance sets in motion interpretive drift? What if, through performing, they trigger their own interpretive drift? This is the sort of practice Sherry Ortner refers to as “serious games,” referring both to the ways humans play within cultural frameworks to achieve projects or goals and to how those projects themselves thereby gain agency (Ortner 2006, 129–30).

If the situated practice of racially, socially, economically, and politically different groups in the Andes is what produces those groups in the first place—if practice produces the racialized geography that enables categorizations of people, and if the category of Self is produced only indirectly through producing an Other who is spatially located and recognizable through his performance of suitable practice—then what happens if that Self is bypassed? What happens to an elite Ecuadorian Self that exists

in (geographical, practical, discursive) opposition to a rural indigenous Other—a Self produced *through* those practices and discourses—if the Other chooses to engage with other interlocutors or interpracticors? For regardless of the inequalities they reinforce, globalizing processes also include the introduction of new potential interlocutors with different agendas and dispositions, playing on different fields with different rules.

The rest of this chapter focuses on identity politics in coastal Ecuador, followed by an analysis of a particular performance of indigeneity by Agua Blancans. Consciously developed at a specific historic moment to meet clearly identified needs, the Festival de la Balsa Manteña (Manteño Balsa-Raft Festival) has shifted in both content and focus over time. Through the festival, I argue that Agua Blancans have accomplished several goals: creating new interlocutors, or as I will outline later in the chapter, interpracticors; identifying publicly the externally defined categories of identity which constrain them; destabilizing those received categories; and thereby destabilizing the accepted racialized geographies that sustain those categories. I find that they are effectively engaging different interlocutors, including international NGOs and members of the national (and sometimes international) press, as well as tourists. Furthermore, even though in most cases those interlocutors fail to comprehend the stakes of the serious game being played (Ortner 2006), the performances are effective precisely because Agua Blancans are supposed to be invisible, are not supposed to exist as indigenous people at all, but rather only as poor, rural, unintelligent laborers. Thus the fact that they are being engaged with *as* indigenous groups necessarily changes the fields of production.

Agua Blancan History within Coastal Identity Politics

With the exception of one family that migrated to the area from southern highland Colombia in the early 1900s, Agua Blancans appear to descend from the Manteño groups present during the Inca and European conquests of the Andean region, as well as from the groups who produced earlier material cultures. Within Agua Blanca's territory, which has been continually occupied for over 4500 years, lie remains of the Valdivia (II–VII), Machalilla, Chorrera, a variation of Guangala, and Manteño material cultures and peoples associated with them.

Over the past century, however, its organization has changed dramatically. At the turn of the last century most families in the area worked as peons for local hacendados, growing cacao and coffee in the higher rainforest regions and corn in the lower areas, and collecting *tagua* (vegetable ivory) from palm trees in the rainforest. Economic and political crises of the 1930s destabilized state control and provoked the flight of many foreign hacendados, resulting in the 1937 *Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunas* (Law of Communes). Previous hacienda lands were legally returned to community ownership, but the resultant landholdings were clearly designated as *comunidades campesinas* (peasant communities) rather than indigenous ones. In the case of Agua Blanca, the change from hacienda peons to comuneros was

for decades a nominal one. Lands appropriated from hacendados passed from one Ecuadorian entrepreneur to another (and even back to German owners for a period). While most of these provided jobs for locals, who felled hardwood trees and collected tagua for export, locals were nonetheless not in charge of the lands, although they did for the first time receive minimal pay for their services. Due both to the intensity of anti-indigenous sentiment in Ecuador and to the tenuous nature of their land tenure, Agua Blancans, like others in similar situations, chose not to challenge the designation of *campesino* (peasant). Nonetheless, being documented as campesinos, a category which does not preclude indigenous origins but which on the coast is generally presumed to denote mestizos without personal landholdings or other status markers, has only exacerbated the problem of coastal indigenous invisibility—or perceptions of inauthenticity when the question of recognition has arisen.

In 1964 just after the first Agrarian Reform was enacted, the comuna of Agua Blanca was finally able to gain legal recognition and elect its first *cabildo* (village council). From the 1970s on, however, there were several important shifts in Agua Blancans' everyday reality. First, a lengthy and severe drought (fig. 3.1) gradually forced more and more people to the cities to look for work; in this period entire families relocated to Guayaquil and other distant cities. Agua Blanca had lost nearly sixty percent of its population by the early 1980s. Second, Scottish archaeologist Colin



Figure 3.1. Archival photograph showing the extent of the 1970s drought. (Photo courtesy of Archives of the Museum of Agua Blanca. Photographer unknown)

McEwan arrived in 1978, providing for the next decade one of the few local sources of income through survey work and excavations. And third, the Ecuadorian government declared the area an important zone of cultural and natural patrimony, creating the Machalilla National Park in 1979. One of a series of parks envisioned by government officials interested in enhancing tourism in the country, and Ecuador's only proposed coastal national park, Machalilla was to offer both maritime and inland attractions—pristine beaches, rocky coastlines, islets with fauna similar to that of the Galapagos Islands, prominent breeding and calving zones for humpback whales, tropical dry forest, tropical rainforest, sulfurous lagoons, and spectacular birding opportunities—and would give the state both incentive and resources to develop basic infrastructure in this previously isolated region.

Since the onset of a strong governmental focus on the tourism industry beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, government ministries and national media have emphasized villages, towns, and park areas with what they consider a high potential for ecotourism and cultural tourism. Official representations of the country by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of the Environment, both created in the 1990s to oversee Ecuador's growing number of national parks and its tourism industry more generally, have changed frequently over the past two decades, highlighting different tourism venues and events. Agua Blanca's museum and tours would seem ideal for this sort of promotion. Nonetheless, at no time has either ministry's website mentioned Agua Blanca as an example of a cultural tourism site (something heavily promoted for tourists to Amazonian villages); in fact, neither ministry recognizes any indigenous presence in Manabí province whatsoever.

Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, official narratives about the Manteño-Huancavilca groups describe them as one of the most advanced civilizations in Ecuador, but as having disappeared in 1532. The Banco Central de Ecuador—the institution that over the past century has invested the most resources in researching, collecting, and displaying Ecuador's pre-Hispanic remains—describes the group as follows on their website:

Manteño-Huancavilca (ca. 500–1532 AD). This group was made of independent kingdoms (*señoríos*), with the kingdom of Salangome being the most influential of the Manabí coast. Its capital was the monumental site of Agua Blanca, which was probably both a ceremonial and administrative center. . . . The Manteño-Huancavilcas were great navigators, traveling the seas to Central America and Peru. Their principal exports were spondylus shell, cotton cloth, objects of gold, silver, and copper, and obsidian mirrors. (www.exploringecuador.com/espanol/museum_bce/mante.htm; accessed March 15, 2006)

After the Machalilla National Park was created in 1979, the government moved quickly to attempt to clear the area of its inhabitants. Agua Blanca, located amidst the archaeological sites that were the Park's cultural patrimony, was the focus of much of the pressure. Eventually comuneros asked for outside researchers' help in defending

their position and their land. In addition to presenting themselves as *el corazón del Parque* (the heart of the Park), a position that required opening their community to cultural tourism, locals began to train themselves as tour guides.

Archaeologist Colin McEwan and his team took this initiative a step further, raising funds to build a site museum that opened in 1985. From the beginning, the site museum allowed Agua Blancans a social space within which to allude to an indigenous identity. Within the museum's representations, the community of the present could be seen to be linked to the archaeological past, an image that could support the community in any future disputes over land claims, but one whose limited scope—reaching only the audience of archaeological or heritage tourists passing through the community—would not constrain Agua Blancans' self-identification processes in other ways, a point to which I will return later in the chapter.

As external pressures from investors increased, Agua Blancans began to realize that the fluidity generated through limiting the audiences for the message publicized through their museum and tours did not offset the negative effects of a more generalized invisibility. Despite increases in government promotion of cultural tourism in conjunction with the creation of the new ministry, Agua Blanca was never mentioned in Ministry of Tourism literature (and is still not mentioned on Ministry websites). Tourists arriving to the community expected remote archaeological remains, not structures located within a vibrant community, and several still voice surprise at discovering indigenous people in Agua Blanca. Thus Agua Blancans began to discuss new possibilities for increasing their visibility in the national sphere as a conscious effort to protect their communal territory.

Even in the current political climate in Ecuador, the most recent iteration of the official position of the Ministry of the Environment on Agua Blanca is as follows:

The human settlements within the Park and its buffer zone (*zona de amortiguamiento*) present particular ethnic characteristics defined principally by a traditional peasant way of life. . . .

The *comunas* do not see themselves as invaders or illegal occupants [of Park lands] since they claim ancestral rights, which derive from a “redistribution” of the territory among said communities. This right comes from considering themselves natives of the area and from having fought the haciendas to take over the land. . . .

A high percentage of the population of the Machalilla National Park can consider itself native, if “native” can be understood to mean born in the same place where one lives. Nonetheless, many of the precincts and localities are composed of a population that has arrived from other places in earlier generations. With this we corroborate the fact that the communities of the zone cannot consider themselves to be ancestral settlements or direct descendants of the Valdivia, Machalilla or Chorrera cultures; that is, even if we could speak of some cultural manifestations specific to southern Manabí or even of some particular physical characteristics [reflective of indigenous ancestry],

these arguments are not sufficient to [lead us to] believe that they are direct inheritants of the ancient denizens of the area. (Ministerio del Ambiente 2007, 30–31; my translation)¹

Clearly, the Ministry of the Environment does not wish to consider the question of indigenous status for residents within Park borders; just as clearly, this stance renders the communal landholding tenuous at best. Given the potential repercussions of such identity politics, Agua Blancans have found it necessary at the very least to engage with broader discourses about authenticity and indigeneity. In other words, in order to be perceived as legitimate denizens of otherwise public lands, Agua Blancans—who do embody their indigenous past through practice in various unnoticed ways—have felt it necessary to perform more recognizable forms of embodied indigenous identity.² Doing so for the very actors who have historically refused to recognize them, however, would accomplish nothing. Over the past two decades, Agua Blancans have learned to select quite consciously the venues and audiences for particular public performances of indigeneity.

Vessels of Legitimacy

In July 2002 community president Paúl invited me to help brainstorm possible funding sources for an upcoming festival. October 12 is the Ecuadorian national holiday known as Día de la Raza—what we call Columbus Day—but had been renamed locally. The Festival de la Balsa Manteña was hugely important in Agua Blanca, but its costs were beyond the community's means. I had to laugh when Paúl explained the greatest expense—transporting an enormous balsa raft from the inland community to the coast. During our conversation I had a number of questions for Paúl. Why had they chosen Columbus Day to hold a festival about local indigenous identity? Why were more aspects of the community's culture and history not highlighted in the festival? And most importantly, why focus the entire celebration on a balsa raft constructed miles from the nearest navigable waters? As it turns out, I was in great part missing the point, assuming the festival was first and foremost about internal pride and history. What I have learned in the past few years is that nearly everything related to the balsa-raft festival is a strategic choice by the local community. The primary audience the festival is performed for is not community members, but outsiders.

Changes in Ecuador's state government always result in shifts in nearly every bureaucratic office in the country, including the Machalilla National Park. The 1992 elections brought in new Park officials who proved amenable to outside investors' offers of support in exchange for the opportunity to negotiate directly with communities within Park boundaries. Indigenous communities began to be approached by representatives of international and local NGOs wanting anything from the chance to buy local crafts for resale, to permission to run excavations on indigenous land, to "rental" of land within Park boundaries for tourism-related services like hotels, restaurants, and, in one case, even an airstrip.

In the same year, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Tourism was created; national parks would henceforth be under its jurisdiction as well as that of the Ministry of the Environment. Tellingly, however, the legal background page on the Ministry's website claims that "the new Ecuadorian Tourist Law is designed to develop one of the most prosperous industries in the world and protect the tourist as the consumer" (www.vivecuador.com/htm12/engl/ministry.htm; accessed March 10, 2006). Clearly, in the reorganization of the Ecuadorian state the needs of outside investors and tourists were primary, while those of local communities could be ignored.

Of course, 1992 also heralded the Columbian quinquennial and saw the rise of indigenous coalitions in the Sierra and Oriente. Despite state-sponsored attempts to erase indigenous groups from the national picture, indigenous groups were increasingly successful in making their interests heard. Taking advantage of the increased visibility of and sympathy for indigenous groups raised by the quinquennial celebrations, in 1992 Agua Blanca's cabildo decided to invent a tradition: the Festival de la Balsa Manteña. As their inspiration they took chronicler Bartolomé Ruiz's description of the trading rafts of central Ecuador (Szászdi 1978), as well as later archaeologists' focus on the rafts as part of a local seafaring, trade-oriented kingdom centered at Agua Blanca (see, for example, Marcos 2005).

Over the next several weeks, Agua Blancans studied the chronicle drawings, as well as a replica in a Guayaquil museum, and began to design a raft and collect materials to build it. The fifteen or twenty people who agreed to participate also made costumes of various materials—cloth, leaves, dried banana leaves, and animal skins—but followed no particular model; each participant's costume was different. The cabildo arranged for the loan of a boat trailer to haul the raft from the community, nine kilometers inland, to the Park headquarters at Puerto López, fourteen kilometers away by road. They also set the date of the event for October 12, a day CONAIE had called for groups to participate in various activities to highlight the five centuries of indigenous oppression.

The first iteration of the festival was a resounding failure. The paltry group marched through the streets of López to launch a vessel that proved not to be seaworthy. Some remember being jeered at, while others were spat upon; the few spectators present laughed at their costumes and made fun of the raft itself as it broke apart in the water. Performing a very specific indigeneity in a public space perceived as mestizo and within a nation with strong anti-indigenous sentiment was clearly backfiring. Given ongoing pressures to forsake ties to their lands, however, community members recognized the need to find some venue for generating visibility.

In an essay on taboo, anthropologist Mary Douglas noted (following Lord Chesterfield) that dirt is merely matter out of place, something polluting the boundaries we have painstakingly set up to give order to our society (2002 [1970]). Within Ecuador, as analyzed in Chapter 1, some of the most salient boundaries are those of race/class. Reinforcing those boundaries, racialized geography cuts through the Ecuadorian landscape, governing both visibilities and practice in many ways. The question that this performance clearly raised was how Agua Blancans might challenge racialized geography through practice without being perceived as pollutants.

In recent years the community has gained the full support of Park and municipal authorities; nearly every community member participates, and the audience includes not only the majority of Puerto López's inhabitants and both national and international tourists, but also news media officials and visitors from towns as far away as Portoviejo, Manta, and La Libertad. Many more events have been added: regional universities and folkloric groups send dance troupes, officials make public speeches, and community members participate in public theater including ceremonial invocations and representations of local history. What led to the change in reception?

In the intervening years, Agua Blancans had made several visible changes in the way the festival was performed. While the balsa raft vessels, conveying their message of continuity with the local indigenous past, remained the primary focus of the celebration, other aspects of the festival became increasingly important. In particular the festival now presents a series of what I will argue are pan-indigenous elements. Among these are the incorporation of overt symbols of indigeneity into costumes, resulting in the display of what Beth Conklin has called "exotic native bodies" (1997, 716); the inclusion of representatives of recognized indigenous communities in some of the performances; the public performance of prayers and speeches directed to pan-American deities and to indigenous groups from North, Central, and South America; the central role of clay burial vessels; and the introduction within the public theater of a narrated, shaman-led Inca *capac hucha* (sacrifice) ceremony. Since the addition of these changes, most of the town participates.

The first and the most immediately obvious change is the inclusion of highly exoticized native bodies. One of the first decisions made by the cabildo after their early experience of rejection was to ensure that all the participants now dress similarly, clearly marking themselves in ways the public will immediately perceive as indigenous—through dress, body paint, headdresses, and beads (fig. 3.2). For the 1993 celebration community members carefully planned their costumes, taking inspiration from a number of different sources, including books from the Agua Blanca museum's collection on Mexican and Native North American ceremonies and indigenous Ecuadorian art; photo essays from national newspapers and magazines on Amazonian lowland groups; and ideas from a traveling caravan of Mexicans, Argentines, Chileans, Paraguayans, and Peruvians promoting community theater throughout the Americas.

The costumes themselves generally include four elements, as mentioned above. The dress itself can vary somewhat from person to person, but each participant wears a skirt sewn from banana leaves. The choice of materials is interesting in that banana trees are an introduced crop rather than an autochthonous one; still, plantain and banana trees are abundant in the valley and present the easiest source of material for costuming. Women and girls also bind their breasts with brown cloth in a similar tone.

Once garbed, Agua Blancans gather each year at the museum to add face and body paint to their costume. The colors are bright and the patterns generally quite simple, in striking contrast with the often intricate yet monotone homemade tattoos of pre-Columbian figures sported by some Agua Blancan men. Women and girls add paint to their faces, arms, and bellies, while men also paint their chests if the



Figure 3.2. Agua Blancans parading through Puerto López during the 2012 celebration of the Festival de la Balsa Manteña. (Photo by Emily Hecker)

latter are otherwise uncovered. Some also add designs to their legs. While the collective decoration is taking place, it is possible, at close range, to distinguish particular designs (a sun or moon, a snake). From the audience's perspective during the event, however, the effect of the paint is simply to draw attention to the expanses of naked skin. Headdresses made of found feathers and more banana leaves are added at the last minute, as are beads.

While most people don necklaces borrowed from local artisans who make them for sale to tourists, others' choices of adornment highlight just how effective Agua Blancans are at appropriating suitable dispositions and thereby embodying cultural heritage. The individual pictured here, Plinio, acts as shaman throughout the various iterations of the festival; his garb appears to include a beaded chest plate, something familiar to students of coastal Andean archaeology (fig. 3.3). However, a closer look reveals that the garment is in fact a beaded seat cover of the type used by professional vehicle drivers. In all the years I have seen or heard about the festival, no one seems to have noticed; the man has been described to me as "very authentic." Furthermore, while his original choice of dress had a mocking character, Plinio himself reports feeling a sense of confraternity with his forebears when enacting the rituals within this and various other performances.

The second change concerns participation in the event. While community members hold all the speaking roles in the main performance, representatives of recognized



Figure 3.3. Agua Blancans performing in the 2001 Festival de la Balsa Manteña, including Plinio dressed as a shaman. Note the beaded seat cover worn as a chest plate. (Photo by Douglas Ventura A.)

highland indigenous groups are also present, having been invited to participate, to help lead drumming and dancing, and to stand with Agua Blancans. Several iterations of the festival have included spontaneous moments of collaboration, such as a drum circle led by a member of a visiting community (fig. 3.4). The inclusion of these visiting groups is the first step toward a broad destabilization of identity that is achieved through the remaining changes.

The third change, the inclusion of public speeches and prayers invoking pan-indigenous deities and naming groups from throughout the Americas, sets the stage for all the rest. For this reason, I am here including a translation of the 2005 performance in its entirety as reference for the analysis to follow:

Doce de Octubre del 2005 (12 October 2005)

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (MC). Long live Agua Blanca! Long live Puerto López!
Long live Machalilla! Long live Salango!

My dear brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to find ourselves together on this beautiful day, one more day, in order to remember joyfully what occurred in 1492, as is written in our history, and to begin, this twelfth of October is simply a way to remember one of the most extraordinary encounters in the history of our planet, considering that two distinct worlds,



Figure 3.4. Drum circle at the 2001 Festival de la Balsa Manteña, including visiting members of highland indigenous communities. (Photo by Douglas Ventura A.)

two worlds with no knowledge of one another, came together in what was a renaissance on the one hand, the Europeans were well advanced in this renaissance, with thousands of years['] experience] conquering one another, for power or for glory, and [who now came to] conquer our indigenous brothers—a well-mannered people, a calm people, a mysterious people to them [the Europeans], a people who lived in a state of purity at the time of the encounter. It was simply a massacre,—an imposition of values, the extermination of entire villages and cities with a rich culture carried on since the times of our ancestors for more than 5000 years. Changes came, changes we are still feeling today, changes left to us by the Spaniards, and today we see them as examples of laziness, of corruption, in their abandonment of those [conquered] peoples damned since those days, but behold this message, in this glorious day for us, let us rise like the phoenix, rise all together, brothers, with one fist raised like those brave indigenous brothers, and reclaim what by right and by justice is ours.

Some days ago a national paper published a story that a [Spanish] galleon ship full of more than 80 tons of gold was found off a Chilean island. That gold is not the Chileans,' it is ours, gold of the indigenous people of Peru and Ecuador. What is it worth on the international market? More than a billion dollars. With just a little more we could pay off the national debt that our government leaders foist upon us even as they abandon us. Brothers, friends, more than a moment that happened 513 years ago, this is a reencounter, a

harmonious encounter, a [chance to] understand that we are here, dressed like this, not because we are ignorant, we are here dressed as our brothers who lived so many years ago, defending, salvaging our own identity, which is this one, and we should feel content and proud and not feel ashamed of ourselves, never, not in any place. Long live the kingdom of Salangome, damn it, long live Tusco, long live Salango, long live Salangome until eternal victory, dear brothers.

PRESIDENT OF AGUA BLANCA (PRESIDENT). This is something that has continued in our villages. Agua Blanca stands here with the Kingdom of Salangome. At this time we are going to present a dance, and so a priest of the Manteño people is going to enter to hand over the heat of the fire which is a sign of the unity of the people. The priest enters now with the fire, light of the aboriginal groups who developed [here], uniting the society through the Inca and the Kingdom of Salangome. The fire has been placed here, and around it we are going to hold a ceremony to which we are inviting each of you and all the peoples important to the Manteño people, our black brothers and those from the Ecuadorian highlands. This dance is offered in tribute to the harvest, to the labor of the women, the men, and the children, to the slavery we endured back then, that we now perceive as freedom but that we continue to endure.

SHAMAN/CACIQUE. From this important center, this town of Sercapez, a very important town in the time of the Kingdom of Salangome, this ceremonial center, I want to send greetings to Father Sun, to the seven directions, I want my companions [here] to accompany me . . .

[Directs others with his hand toward the east, where the sun rises.]

To the villages of the rising sun, to the spring, to infancy, to the villages of the Oriente, to the children of the yellow corn, to all the cultures near and far, may our blessings reach your hearts.

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

Ajó metakiashe

In the same way, let us give greetings to the south, greetings to the lords of the underworld, to the winter, to the guardians of death . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

Ajó metakiashe

Let us keep turning, [points west] to the peoples of the setting sun, to the autumn, to the ripe crops at harvest, to the children of the red corn, the peoples of Tawantinsuyu, the Isla de las Tortugas, the Isla de la Plata, Aztlán, the Mayans, the red peoples of America . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

Ajó

Greetings to the fourth direction, to the peoples of the north, to the cold regions, to the lands of snow, the children of the white corn, greetings to the summer, to the youth with their enthusiasm and their innocence . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

Now we are going to bend down toward Mother Earth, greetings to the fifth direction, to the heart of the Pachamama, mother of us all, she who warms us and nurtures us, where we come from and where we will return one day, I ask [blessings] for her mountains, her rivers, her oceans, her animals, her sons and daughters, everyone, without divisions of color or worldview, may our blessings reach their crystal hearts, may they hear us, may they keep beating . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

Thank you, Mother Earth . . .

Now we will face the sixth direction, greetings to the sixth direction, to the heart of the heavens, greetings to Father Sun, to Grandmother Moon, to the beings from other worlds, other stars, other suns, greetings to those who have already left us but who left for us their heritage, their understandings, those who gave us knowledge and love, our grandparents, our teachers, our heroes, may our blessings reach the heart of the sky so that the light of the universe may keep warming us . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

And now I want you to place your hand on your chest, for that is where our life resides, greetings to the seventh direction, the point where all the winds cross in our hearts, and from my heart greetings to each one of you, I ask blessings for your health, for your families, your friends, your peoples, your nations, may there be peace in your hearts, may there be peace in these lands, between neighbors, between women and men, between parents and children, may peace nest in each of our hearts and may peace spill over onto everyone else, let it be thus . . .

[Blows strombus shell three times.]

PRESIDENT. This kind of presentation represents the cleansing ceremonies our ancestors performed, in some way we are trying to recreate that sort of healing, with very important, millenarian, tools such as palosanto and tobacco, things that were fundamental in the development of these peoples, and that represented the art of exchange among the cultures who resided in these places.

MC. Long live Salango! Long live Agua Blanca! My dear brothers and sisters, on this beautiful afternoon it is a pleasure to exalt themes of real importance to our history and our culture and our ancestry, for October 12 is not just any day, not just some famous person's birthday, it is the day on which history was marked, a boundary stone in the history of the universe. The 12th of

October 1492, was the encounter, was the clash of two different worlds, of two cultures completely in opposition to one another. It was the encounter of the Europeans, the [onset of the] rule of those armed, bearded men pushing for the glory of conquest without considering, without remorse for anything they were doing, on the other hand our indigenous brothers were peaceful people, people who lived in community, in brotherhood, in solidarity, who lived under a top-notch organizational scheme, as history tells us. From that first impression when they saw our brothers they were astonished . . . to discover that we Indians, as they called us, lived almost in a pure state of nature, where there was no yours or mine, those magical, beautiful [ideas] that the Europeans lacked, but what happened was that all that rich culture our brothers had, passed down for thousands of years, practically disappeared over the next few centuries. The Europeans didn't care if they destroyed it, if it disappeared, and that legacy has remained until today . . . things like laziness, corruption, lies, trickery, demagoguery, those are what they left us from what they called colonization, the conquest, or what we call the destruction from which we are still suffering, 513 years of that history, but we are not here to lament the past, to cry, to ask why all that had to happen—those are boundaries marking our history. We are here to get up again, brothers, here to show them that we do know our heritage, that we are here every day, struggling, fighting, and we are here to salvage what is ours, to rescue our heritage, our customs, and to feel proud and content to be sons of this people, to be the legacy of a kingdom called Salangome, an exemplary people of the coast of Ecuador and America. That is why the twelfth of October should be celebrated, but as an integration, a celebration where what happened in the past no longer matters, no yours-or-mine, just all of us together working together to bring our people up to where we need to be. There are chronicles which tell us the Spanish captain Bartolomé Ruiz was so surprised when he was on a trip to our continent and he ran across some semi-naked men traveling on a balsa raft, just like the one we have here in front of us. They were navigating [on the raft and] he was surprised because he supposedly came from an advanced world with first-class technology, as we might say, and still our brothers on just a balsa raft were able to dominate the oceans of the American continent, those were the ones we call the sailors of the southern seas, and precisely now, remembering one more day in our history, we also recall the bravura of our brothers on the sea, the great navigators of the past who even now exist in these towns and who will forever be part of us. Brothers, long live the twelfth of October! Long live Salangome, until victory, brothers!

PRESIDENT. This is part of our history; so began the first concentrations or congregations of societies, the hunters and gatherers, the fishing villages, the artisans, all these cultures existed in great settlements where they developed

knowledge about the solstices and from place to place they followed the cycles of nature. That is how the great caciques, the lords, the governors, the warriors, the merchants, the navigators, the artists, the artisans, the peasants who work the earth, the astronomers, the priests and priestesses, each of them fulfilled a mission until the last day of their existence in the kingdom of Tuzco. [*The cacique of Tuzco comes out.*³]

Agriculture and hunting were insignificant in the development of these settlements; they developed their arts of pottery, jewelry making, architecture, and thus were able to shelter 500 to 600 people at that time.

COMMUNITY MEMBER 1. [*Gives a spondylus shell to the SHAMAN/CACIQUE*].

I am the fisherman, your vassal; day after day I pull the huayaipé, the bonito, the swordfish from the ocean; that is to say, I feed my brothers, my family, and there is no lack of fish, but I ask, what will become of my science when these beings arrive to our lands?

PRINCESS OF SERCAPEZ.⁴ Oblivion, ignorance, danger, acculturation, all those things, we all survived them, we will survive and we will be reborn upon remembering them.

COMMUNITY MEMBER 2. I am the farmer who guards the seeds of our mother earth and of our father, the water of the streams, the golden cornfields, and the other plants. I care for life to feed more life. I ask you, what will become of my science when these beings arrive?

COMMUNITY MEMBER 3. I am the hunter and woodsman, I care for our forest and maintain it, I keep it the same for our children and our families. Being the hunter, I open possibilities for the people, I maintain the forest because that way it stays for our families. We give much of what we have to others. What will become of our men and our families when these beings arrive to this place?

COMMUNITY MEMBER 4. I am the artisan and I carry here the sacred conch shell and the jaguar [hide]. I ask you, what will become of us when these beings arrive?

PRIESTESS OF TUZCO. Do not fear these men who vomit the fire of death, they attack and hide, hide and attack. Although they may lie to us each time we will fight, like the chameleon who takes on the colors of the hills. I hear also the cries of the gods, I hear the thunder of their selfsame cannons, the gallop of their very horses, but now we shall fire, now we shall ride across the plains, trying to raise a banner in flight, inviting our people, new but changed, to

renew ourselves, to reconstruct ourselves, to reunite and look for ourselves in the mountain, in the valley, in the beaches, and thus we will have a name, a land, and a face. Now we know we are not alone in the world. Now begins another history, in the world, with the world, and against the world.

COMMUNITY MEMBER 5. I am the navigator, the merchant, key to our society. I market our spondylus shells, sign of our brotherhood. I ask myself, what will become of me and of my science when these beings arrive?

COMMUNITY MEMBER 6. I am the defender of our customs, of what has been passed down to us, we know we will grow and we will never return. I ask what will become of our customs when these beings arrive to our home? In the end, we will change, but we will not die, and we will remember myths, stories, legends, and much more.

PRESIDENT. The priests were in charge of regulating civil and religious life and the people, based on their knowledge of the movements of the stars, the sun and moon. In this way they led the great ceremonies in the temples built for that purpose, on dates such as the changing of seasons, the start of the rains, the summer, the harvests, the eclipses, the full moons, the comets, the equinoxes and solstices. The dominion of the Inca empire stretched from 1450 to 1532, from the north of what today is Colombia and much of Ecuador and Peru, down the coast, to parts of Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. The Inca Huascar governed from 1425 to 1532 [*sic*]. For the solstice ceremonias, the custom was for the Inca emperor to send a messenger to all the regions of the empire to exact a tribute of noble children to celebrate the ceremony of the *capac hucha*, the ultimate sacrifice. Here comes the Inca messenger.

COMMUNITY MEMBER 7 (as Inca representative/*chaski*). Lord of Salangome, I come running from the capital of the world, Cusco. I come in the name of the son of the Inti, our Father Sun. I come in the name of all the kingdoms of the Inca Huascar. I have come to remind you that the time of the *capac hucha* ceremony has arrived. It is time to prepare the best children of your best kingdoms to be taken to the city of the Sun, the heart of Tawantinsuyo, to be presented to the Inca Huascar.

PRESIDENT. They chose pairs of young children, performing a symbolic marriage for each pair, and the lord of Salangome bid farewell to the children of his people who would travel to the Inca kingdom. These children were chosen from within the kingdom of Salangome to be taken to the Inca palace to celebrate the ceremony of the *capac hucha*. In this way the lord of Salangome was able to meet his sacrificial obligation and the noble children were received

by the Inca ruler, who later gave them chicha in abundance to intoxicate them and be able to perform the capac hucha ceremony. This kind of ceremony maintained the union between the kingdoms and the Inca empire.

The entirety of the community theatre piece, written by its participants, displays both a performative and a discursive positioning of the community within history, within the local landscape, and within the broader negotiations over identity and debates over authenticity and patrimony that are central to constructions of value more generally. The messages couched within the various levels of rhetoric are positioned to achieve very specific ends.

In the introduction to the presentation, the MC begins by welcoming the audience, which includes tourists, both national and international; representatives of various media outlets—television, radio, and newspaper—both local and national; residents of Puerto López, which is home both to the headquarters of the Machalilla National Park and to a number of expatriates from the United States, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Colombia, and the United Kingdom; and representatives from traditional communities—both indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian—from other provinces, who have been invited by the cabildo of Agua Blanca to participate in the broader celebration.

The opening of the speech is positive in tone: “it is *wonderful* to find ourselves together on this *beautiful* day . . . to remember *joyfully* what occurred in 1492 . . .” (emphasis mine). However, the MC, who introduces the events of the past positively as an “extraordinary encounter” and a “renaissance,” quickly shifts to a more structural presentation of those events as the “massacre” of a “calm” and “well-mannered” people who “lived in a state of purity,” framing the events as a an “imposition of values” leaving a legacy of “laziness” and “corruption.” Despite the rapid shift to a negative tone, however, the MC’s decision to preface the entire presentation by welcoming the audience as “my dear brothers and sisters” renders the divisions between Us and Them fuzzy at best. This is more than a discursive ploy to keep an audience engaged; it provides the framework for a broad destabilization of identities that the actors build upon throughout the performance. This destabilization is reinforced throughout this part of the presentation, as the MC repeatedly engages the entire audience through inclusive language: “Let *us* rise like the phoenix, rise all together, brothers”; “that gold is not the Chileans’, it is *ours*.”

The transcribed text of the event does not adequately reflect the adeptness with which the MC gauges the audience’s response and shifts his tone accordingly. On the one hand, his speech is quite incendiary, calling for people to “rise . . . with one fist raised like those brave indigenous brothers, and reclaim what by right and by justice is ours”—language that, in other Ecuadorian settings or spoken by representatives of other groups, might result in the immediate and forceful curtailing of the event. The setting itself is ambiguous in many ways, however. The presentation is not a political rally, but a staged performance; the MC shifts back and forth between a welcoming tone and a far more strident one; the location is neither a major political center nor

the home of the performers, but a tourist locale; many of the audience may not even speak Spanish. Furthermore, while all the other performers are dressed to evoke a sense of generic indigeneity located in the past, the MC is dressed in Western/global street clothes, again highlighting the ambiguities of how indigeneity might be defined, where the line between Us and Them might be drawn.

Following the introductory remarks by the MC the community members enter, guided by the president of the *cabildo* (who also sports street dress—with the notable addition of an iconic *montubio* hat).⁵ By referring both to the Kingdom of Salangome (which highlights the past-ness of the event) and the Inca, by welcoming “our black brothers” and the highland indigenous groups who have been invited to participate in other aspects of the festival, the president’s speech serves as a subtle reminder of the absurdities inherent in defining indigeneity in terms clearly demarcated in space and time.

At this point, the man acting as shaman enters, quite theatrically. His opening statement reinforces the idea that the presentation is located in the past: “from this . . . very important town in the time of the Kingdom of Salangome,” further calming the potentially incendiary rhetoric of the MC and enhancing the ambiguities raised by the performance. For the next ten minutes or so, the shaman/*cacique* leads the entire crowd in prayers to the seven directions, prayers that name the “peoples of the Amazon,” “sons of Tawantinsuyu,” “Aztlán,” the “Mayas” and the “red peoples of America” as well as the “peoples of the north . . . the youth with their enthusiasm and innocence,” intended as a reference to the tourists from the United States and Europe. Gods invoked include “Pachamama” and “Padre Sol,” both Inca deities. Toward the end of this part of the performance, the shaman also requests the blessing of Pachamama on “all her daughters and sons, all of them, regardless of their color or their ways of thinking.” This section of the festival in its entirety—the blessings and cleansings—revolves around a theme of pan-indigenous identity; the final phrases reiterate the idea that those present are all brothers.

Immediately following this, *cabildo* president Paúl returns as a sort of narrator, explaining briefly for the audience what is going on. By describing the “cleansing ceremonies our ancestors performed,” Paúl alludes to a more specific heritage, a direct lineage from the ancestral groups in the area to the current inhabitants of Agua Blanca, but the immediate shift back to the MC does not give the audience time to process the shift in tone.

The MC then revisits the idea of the encounter of the Spaniards and locals as a “boundary stone in the history of the universe,” reinforcing the idea that the groups were distinct historically and geographically, but also ideologically. This segment of the performance again ends with a masterful balancing of revolutionary speech (“we are here to rise up again, brothers”) with a more calming representation of the event as “a celebration where what happened in the past no longer matters.”

Here the MC introduces the narrative of the balsa raft, central to the festival, and the one symbolic element clearly linked to a very local past. He concludes by

emphasizing that through the event “we recall the bravura of our brothers on the sea, the great navigators of the past who even now exist in these towns and who will forever be part of us.” Paúl’s narrative immediately following this reinforces the claiming of a heritage—“This is part of our history”—but follows with an introduction of the next part of the performance, clearly located chronologically in the past: “each of them fulfilling a mission until the last day of their existence in the kingdom of Tuzco.” At this point, several of the community members who had been standing quietly toward the back of the performance area come alive, moving toward the central figure of the shaman/cacique. Each of them describes his duties within the kingdom—fisherman, farmer, hunter, artisan, navigator, kamayoq (custom-keeper)—and each laments the passing of his craft with the arrival of the Spaniards.

This is both the most subtle and the most powerful rhetorical moment of the performance. Each of the actors is dressed generically and very differently from how he would present himself in Agua Blanca. Each names a technology (a “science”) and an occupation that will perish under the domination of the Spaniards. Although the performance is located in the past, each actor names an activity that is clearly still part of the present reality of Agua Blanca, but not of the daily life of the majority of the audience members. Cognitive dissonance is introduced, both for the audience and, perhaps equally importantly, for Agua Blancans. What the performance accomplishes is to heighten the sense of destabilization of identity. Who is indigenous? How is indigeneity defined? What does heritage mean, and how might it play out? Where is indigeneity located, and by extension, can racialized geography exist?

Part of the power of the performance lies in its insistence on shifting constantly between an overt representation of the past and commentary in the present, between clear-cut identities and cognitive dissonance, between positive and negative emotions, between recognition of current perceptions and challenges to those perceptions. The priestess’s speech in the middle of this segment is the most poetic moment of the entire event:

Do not fear these men who vomit the fire of death, they attack and hide, hide and attack. Although they may lie to us each time we will fight, like the chameleon who takes on the colors of the hills. I hear also the cries of the gods, I hear the thunder of their selfsame cannons, the gallop of their very horses, but now we shall fire, now we shall ride across the plains, trying to raise a banner in flight, inviting our people, new but changed, to renew ourselves, to reconstruct ourselves, to reunite and look for ourselves in the mountain, in the valley, in the beaches, and thus we will have a name, a land, and a face. Now we know we are not alone in the world. Now begins another history, in the world, with the world, and against the world.

Through this performance the actress emphasizes not only the emotional turmoil of battle, the contrast between the two groups engaging in conflict, but also the real outcome of that encounter that the performance is meant to challenge—the loss of place

and therefore of existence as a recognized group: “inviting our people, new but changed, to renew ourselves, to reconstruct ourselves, to . . . look for ourselves in the mountain, in the valley, in the beaches, and thus we will have a name, a land, and a face.” In doing so, again, she is able to destabilize racialized geography and introduce cognitive dissonance into the audience’s perceptions of Agua Blancans, the “chameleon[s] who [take] on the colors of the hills.” She also reiterates that change is coming: “Now begins another history, in the world, with the world, and against the world.”

At this point the fourth and fifth elements added to the festivities are incorporated and intertwined: clay burial vessels (*vasijas de barro*) and an Incan *capac hucha* ceremony.

Yo quiero que a mi me entierren
 Como a mis antepasados
 En el vientre oscuro y fresco
 De una vasija de barro.
 —O. Guayasamín, “Vasija de barro,” 1950

I want to be buried
 As were my forebears,
 In the cool dark belly
 Of a vessel of clay. (my translation)

These lyrics are from a song often called the unofficial anthem of Ecuador. It was written by a group of artists and musicians on the night of November 7, 1950, in the house of famous Ecuadorian indigenista artist Oswaldo Guayasamín (www.hoy.com.ec/suplemen/blan107/byn.htm; accessed March 20, 2006). As with many other invented traditions, this repurposed element of patrimony gives multicultural Ecuador a sense of a shared past and a thread of continuity with which to bind the many strands of its present. Clay burial vessels are an important part of the archaeological tours through Agua Blanca; comuneros thus chose to incorporate this potent symbol not only of the indigenous past, but also of a nostalgic Ecuadorianness more generally, into their public performance in several ways, as I will detail in following description.⁶

The final segment of the public theatre involves the inclusion of a specific ceremony—an Inca *capac hucha*, or “great sin” (Elizabeth Benson translates it as “solemn sacrifice” [2001, 15]) ritual. According to several scholars, the *capac hucha* was one of the methods whereby Inca leaders integrated outlying, previously autonomous, kingdoms into the Inca Empire. Several of the groups incorporated into the Inca Empire sent pairs of children to Cuzco or other religious sites to be sacrificed to various local deities; in this way, local communities were integrated into the wider empire and showed their loyalty to the Inca, receiving elevated positions or other favors in return:

Various scholars have examined the *capac hucha* as a rite defining the sacred and political geography of the Inca empire and linking newer communities with

Cuzco and the old Inca realm (McEwan and Silva 1989, 181–82; Dransart 1995, 20–24). Duviols (1976, 29) views it as a system of social control and integration of the empire, and sees Cuzco as the sacred heart of the Inca empire, with a circulatory system of veins and arteries, through which blood flowed, metaphorically and literally. One link of the cultural whole was this sacrifice, which was thought to irrigate the land and nourish the realm. Earlier peoples had used child sacrifice to dedicate and ensure the sanctity and security of a building; the Incas used child sacrifice to ensure the stability of an empire. (Benson 2001, 17–18)

This is similar to the more detailed explanation the community president/narrator gives in the Agua Blanca ceremony:

They chose pairs of young children, performing a symbolic marriage for each pair . . . children were chosen from within the kingdom of Salangome to be taken to the Inca palace to celebrate the ceremony of the *capac hucha*. In this way the lord of Salangome was able to meet his sacrificial obligation and the noble children were received by the Inca ruler, who later gave them *chicha* in abundance to intoxicate them and be able to perform the *capac hucha* ceremony. This kind of ceremony maintained the union between the kingdoms and the Inca empire.

In the performance, this narrative description follows a speech by a *chaski*, a messenger of the Inca Empire. The individual playing the *chaski*'s role is Agua Blanca, notably, and in dress, ornamentation, and speech is indistinguishable from his co-actors, despite Agua Blancans' familiarity with the images of the Inca easily found in their own museum's library. Furthermore, importantly, he sacrifices the children by placing them into a *vasija de barro* that has been buried in the sand along the Pacific shore (fig. 3.5). While this is occurring the *comuneros* who are not direct participants in the drama sing the song written by Guayasamín.

With the increasing success of the festival in terms of both reception and effect, as I will discuss below, a sixth element has been added recently: the continuation of the festival in Agua Blanca. Once the parade, public theatre, and launching of the balsa raft have concluded in Puerto López, community members jump on trucks and lead a procession back to Agua Blanca, where the town center has been transformed for the celebration. Tourists now follow the community home and, once they arrive, a series of presentations commences, primarily involving local children and teens performing folkloric dance. Some of the dances are staged to highlight indigenous elements—dress (as above), music (from the Quichua-speaking highlands), and movement (fig. 3.6); others are based on colonial period dances and costumes (fig. 3.7).

After the public performances have ended, women and children return briefly to their homes to change clothes, returning to the central plaza to dance in dressier



Figure 3.5. Children being carried to the capac hucha ceremony. (Photo by Douglas Ventura A.)



Figure 3.6. Agua Blancan children performing a highland indigenous folkloric dance. (Photo by Emily Hecker)



Figure 3.7. Agua Blancan children performing an Afro-Ecuadorian colonial folkloric dance. (Photo by Emily Hecker)

outfits—jeans and sequined tops for younger women, tops or blouses and skirts for older women. The music is typical fiesta music—cumbia and merengue for dancing, followed later by older rhythms and later by “drinking music.” While the men, more intoxicated, often do not bother changing clothing, at this point it becomes clear that the performance of indigeneity is over.

Performing Indigeneity

In their recent work on ethnicity as a commodifiable product that “seems to *resist* ordinary economic rationality,” John and Jean Comaroff posit that “its ‘raw material’ is not depleted by mass circulation. To the contrary, mass circulation reaffirms ethnicity . . . and, with it, the status of the embodied ethnic subject as a source and means of identity” (2009, 20; emphasis in original). Nonetheless, as their own interlocutors point out, “if they have nothing distinctive to alienate, many rural black South Africans have come to believe, they face collective extinction; identity, from this vantage, resides in recognition from significant others, but the kind of recognition, specifically, expressed in consumer desire” (10). Agua Blancans find themselves facing a similar dilemma: long invisible *as* indigenous peoples, they would generally find it difficult to perform a public indigeneity either generative or reflective of authenticity. Furthermore, as analyzed in the first section of the book, they are loath to allow themselves to be trapped within the fixity of state-controlled definitions of ethnicity.

Distancing themselves entirely from indigeneity would also prove counterproductive, however. Situated as they are within a national park, Agua Blancans must also be able to position themselves as appropriate denizens of an otherwise public space.

Anthropologists currently debate the potential risks of the kinds of well-documented public theatricality performed by various Amazonian groups as a strategy for maintaining external interest in and support for their rights—or as Beth Conklin describes it, a “master[y] of the art of translating their struggles against state and corporate powers into . . . [Western] conceptual frameworks” (1997, 726). One concern is that, by playing into Western notions of what constitutes an authentic indigenous person, these groups will lose the ability to act publicly in any other (“non-authentic”) way. Similarly, Steven Gregory notes that the “overemphasis of performative repetition can risk dehistoricizing the contexts of performance and privileging the visual (often, the commodifiable) over other registers of practice and experience” (2006, 157). Another concern is that groups who do use visual indices of indigeneity close doors to other groups who choose not to adorn themselves authentically, for whatever reasons.

By contrast, the Agua Blanco example displays fundamental differences. Unlike those who travel to international colloquia, courts of law, and press conferences in native dress, Agua Blancans clearly demarcate these costumed performances from their daily lives, not only by hosting a public festival on one day of the year—Columbus Day—but also by self-reflexively stating within that festival what their motives are. Participants in the festival are not pretending that this is an accurate representation of their everyday life in the present. They are performing public theater with reflexive commentary. That representation has two goals: to reaffirm the specific past from which they came and to strengthen their ties to the broader past to which they are clearly linked, official state narratives and racialized geographies notwithstanding. The focus on the balsa raft achieves the first goal of resituating themselves within the local landscape. But perhaps more importantly, the *vasijas de barro* and pan-indigenous motifs go beyond a mere statement of local belonging.

For the duration of their performance, Agua Blancans are publicly inhabiting roles that expose the narrow ways racialized categories have been defined and mapped onto the landscape. The wide-ranging sources of the symbols used in this openly theatrical event only heighten the degree of instability Agua Blancans are introducing into the official geographies of race. Although all the symbols are clearly recognizable as indexing “indigenous,” none of them can be readily mapped onto the available geographic space of the Manabí coast, or even onto imagined Ecuador more generally. Temporal and spatial boundaries painstakingly set up through national narratives are complicated through this seemingly straightforward public presentation. Agua Blanco representations of expected categories of indigeneity in spaces officially constructed as mestizo effectively destabilize Ecuador’s racialized geography. Agua Blancans are attempting to transform the ways in which being indigenous is possible in Ecuador.

The Ecuadorian state, like many others, tends to link the idea of indigenous to narratives of glorious civilizations, predecessors to the modern nation but firmly lodged in the past—a shared patrimony turned into consumable objects, such as archaeological sites and museums, for the touristic gaze. Audiences tend to consume that message while also being aware of and able to recognize particular markers of indigenous identity, the “exotic native bodies” described by Conklin. By utilizing both of those discourses—and by contrasting public performances of those discourses with their own everyday life—Agua Blancans are able to highlight the ways in which those discourses are constructed, revealing the weak underpinnings of Ecuador’s racialized geographies and, in turn, of the static definitions of and careful boundaries around indigeneity.

Agua Blancans are, in effect, taking the silences in the intersections of those narratives of nationhood, patrimony, and authenticity, as well as of racialized geography, and using performance to draw attention to the cognitive dissonances therein. But while performances such as those in Jean Rouch’s infamous film *Les maîtres fous* (1955) display a mimicry that is merely the frustrated result of incomplete mimesis, of not-quite/not-White, Agua Blancan mimesis more consciously calls that colonial impossibility into question, while also commenting on the simultaneous impossibility of bounding indigeneity within the constraints of colonial definitions. In this case Agua Blancans are mimicking the category of indigenous—a category from which they have been excluded, one supposedly no longer existing in their geography. What they accomplish is to initiate the process of interpretive drift, both for their audience and for themselves.

In reproducing broader conceptions of patrimony through practice, Agua Blancans are staking claims to their own authenticity as an indigenous community, as well as asserting their own authority in determining when such iterations should become relevant and be put into practice in the first place. More importantly, by choosing to perform these challenges publicly they are creating a space for interpracticality.

Through the performance, Agua Blancans create a field on which to access new interpracticors, bypassing the state whose static definitions constrain or exclude them and engaging with representatives of international NGOs, members of the press, and tourists.⁷ The performances are effective precisely because Agua Blancans are not supposed to exist as indigenous people at all, but rather only as poor, rural, unintelligent laborers. The audience is transformed through the performance into interpracticors, witnesses to the existence of a group that, if not typically indigenous, is perceived as at least indian enough to perform in the way that they do—indian enough to mock the construction of indigeneity in the first place, and to invite other, more visible indigenous groups to perform with them.⁸ This means that Agua Blancans are shifting the fields of practice in particular ways that do call into question previous systems of value and evaluation. If racialized geography has been destabilized—if, in fact, anyone in any place might now be indigenous—then authenticity and, by extension, patrimony and the national imaginary are also destabilized.

For communities like Agua Blanca which are not always recognized either within the state or beyond its borders, one effective tactic seems to be to expose the constructed nature of the hierarchy itself, and to do so not through discourse, but through practice. Importantly, dispositions are performed, not merely held: they are put into practice. They are public and visible; dispositions presuppose the presence of others who will both perceive them and respond to them, whether positively or negatively.

By shifting their own dispositions, Agua Blancans enter a new space within which the accustomed rules no longer apply. Thus not only they but also the others on their shared fields of practice—their interpracticors—have to shift practice accordingly. In other words dispositions are not necessarily passive or a given; they can contain agency. In public spaces such as the Balsa Raft Festival, Agua Blancans are performing spectacular challenges to their own dispositions, bypassing the state to engage with global interpracticors, thereby disrupting the field: their audience no longer knows quite how to interact with them (see Weismantel 2001, 112, 126).

Through practice, then, the community members are producing their own interpretive drift; they are gradually becoming more aware of how they produce their own realities. While, like us, many of them are unable to articulate this process (because articulation involves directly confronting the cognitive dissonance that our practice enables us to side-step, as Luhrmann suggests), they are nonetheless shifting their dispositions and perceptions of suitability. If the rules of the game have changed, the field itself is different.

Appropriations and Interpretive Drift

Here I want to return briefly to the analytical framework outlined toward the beginning of this chapter and to outline one more concept from Pierre Bourdieu in his work on language, again paraphrased by Thompson: “the efficacy of performative utterances is inseparable from the existence of an *institution* which defines the conditions (such as the place, the time, the agent) that must be fulfilled in order for the utterance to be effective” (1999, 8). In other words, the efficacy—the productive reception—of performative utterances, whether linguistic or cultural, depends greatly on whether those utterances are perceived to be appropriate.

Cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafouris has analyzed Gregory Bateson’s description of the blind man’s stick as an example of a material object through which the blind man extends his cognition to the point where it becomes difficult to pinpoint exactly where cognition occurs—is it in the brain? The stick? The arm holding the stick? Malafouris uses this analogy to examine the ways we might extend our cognition—our ways of understanding and interacting with the world around us—through material objects, which, he believes, not only serve as extensions of our body, but also influence our perceptions such that the world as we experience it through a particular object cannot be experienced in that way in the absence of the object (2008). If we can consider material objects as an extension of our selves and of our

ways of knowing the world around us, then we can begin to consider how appropriating different dress can open new fields of practice. In other words, successful appropriation of an object entails the ability to extend one's cognition of the world through that object.

In his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault argues that we repress certain identities precisely by talking about them: by carefully outlining through discourse, through collective discussion and constant linguistic reinforcement of categories, precisely what is not normal, what is taboo. If discourse results in the reinforcement of oppression—if the question is really not “‘why are we repressed?’ but ‘why do we constantly say we are repressed?’” (1984, 297)—then what does it mean to put an appropriated identity into practice without talking about the repressions involved? What does that do to our perceptions of normativities? If Agua Blancans were to adopt indigenous dress, but continually talk about how they are not really able to do so, what would be highlighted would be the inappropriateness of the dress and thus of themselves, of their practice. By not talking about it but still adopting it in a mimetic fashion, however tongue-in-cheek, they render the specific material objects a sort of blind man's stick through which they can extend their cognition and know the world in ways previously off limits to them.

In this sense, appropriation does not imply that just anyone can take up just any material object, adornment, or item of clothing and wear it successfully. For an individual to appropriate a form of dress, as opposed to simply donning a costume, he or she must be able to successfully manipulate perceptions of existing institutions, as Bourdieu's position affirms. In a sense, then, successful appropriation creates a perceptive space that enables the appropriator to remain relatively invisible (in the Foucauldian sense) as an *individual* while simultaneously rendering visible (and hence negotiable) a *category* of being.

Agua Blancans' appropriation of indigenous dress in this setting provides a particular scaffolding that enables individuals to experience the world differently, to practice differently, and thus to participate in the creation of new performative fields in which different kinds of practice come to be perceived as appropriate or suitable, enabling interpretive drift to occur both for performers and for their audiences or interpracticors (see Miller 2010).

Knowing individuals within the community as well as I do, one of the most immediately striking aspects of the festival for me was witnessing their transformation from private individuals loath to speak publicly to consummate performers. Watching Agua Blancans participate in the festival highlighted the ways specific individuals were able to perform—acting, speaking publicly, dancing under the eyes of a large public—that they simply would not consider when not dressed in this way. Were they not appropriating this dress, and thereby extending their cognition in particular ways, their general discomfort with practicing in visible ways would otherwise render the performance ineffective. Talking to them after the performance confirmed this difference. Several community members expressed to me their feelings that since others

perceive them differently when they are costumed, they feel authorized to speak and act in certain ways that their everyday dress does not authorize.

Effects of performance and interpretive drift have extended well beyond the festival itself. By appropriating indigenous dress they are able to practice differently, which produces different perceptions of them as a group, the fields in which they can appropriately practice, and racialized geography more broadly. Furthermore, Agua Blancans have managed to effect these shifts without compromising their goal of maintaining fluidity in self-identification.

The Fluidity of Everyday Indigeneity

There is an embodiment and an emplacement to human life that cannot be denied. . . . How does one reconcile being-in-place and being-in-networks?

Arturo Escobar (2008, 7, 11)

UNIQUE AMONG ECUADOR'S SYSTEM OF protected lands, the Machalilla National Park offers visitors a stunning variety of natural and cultural settings, from rocky coastlines to coastal rainforest, tidal pools to extremely rare tropical dry forest, coral reefs to whale-watching opportunities to archaeological ruins. Its islands just offshore present several of the rare species noted by Darwin in his voyage to the Galápagos Islands, attracting many nature tourists on a budget. In addition, among the various ecological niches within Park borders, there live over 270 species of birds; several rare types of trees, orchids, bromeliads, and epiphytes; rare amphibians and reptiles; and an impressive variety of mammals including mantled howler and capuchin monkeys, agoutis, guantas or pacas, tapirs, wild boars, Andean porcupines, short-eared dogs, foxes, skunk, deer, armadillos, sloths, woolly anteaters, coatis, crab-eating raccoons, tayras, jaguarundis, margays, ocelots, and jaguars. Machalilla is the only coastal park in the country and, since the development of coastal highway E15, also one of the easiest natural areas to access from the international airport in Guayaquil.

Living within a heavily-visited sector of the Park and constantly negotiating interactions with government ministries and tourists alike, Agua Blancans cannot avoid the need to navigate within broader, often globalized, networks, yet neither can they afford to appear entirely comfortable within those networks. Many of the tourists' home societies, after all, have constructed an idea of national parks as spaces where wilderness is preserved, contrasting their naturalness with the destructive forces of culture and progress. For such tropes to be successful, any human presence within wild landscapes is either rendered entirely invisible or reframed as the persistence of isolated individuals or remote, nobly savage tribes, vestige of an earlier, not-quite-civilized kind of being (see Oakdale 2004, 63; see also Conklin 1997; Horning 2000; Tsing 2004; Viatori 2007, 2010). To echo Escobar's question above, if human life must be situated both within a body and within a setting, how do marginalized communities present themselves simultaneously as knowledgeable enough to promote and manage local tourism, yet authentic enough not to disrupt external expectations of the local landscape?

In confronting this conundrum, *Agua Blancans* at times choose to challenge existing perceptions overtly, as in the Festival de la Balsa Manteña analyzed in Chapter 3. Most of the time they prefer more subtle strategies—but strategies that rely similarly on fluidity, as suggested in a series of stories about *Tío Tigre* (Uncle Jaguar) and *Tío Guatuso* (Uncle Agouti).

Two stories about Tío Tigre y Tío Guatuso

Story #1

It was Tío Tigre and Tío Guatuso. Tío Tigre, as always, was large and powerful. He wanted to eat the weaker animals, and they all feared him.

So one day Tío Tigre was walking around the forest and he ran across Tío Guatuso and said:—Ah, this is exactly how I wanted to find you, alone, so I can take out all my anger on you.

—No—Tío Guatuso supposedly said to him.—I know we are enemies, but I love you dearly, Tío Tigre.

—Okay—they say Tío Tigre replied.—So what are we going to do? Do you have some good prey for me, so we can have a good time?

—No—he replied.—I'm not offering you food, I'm only offering a good dance so we can have some fun.

—Okay—supposedly replied Tío Tigre.—I'll accept the dance invitation. How are we going to do this?—he asked.

—Well, I'll play the guitar—says Tío Guatuso,—and you dance.

—No—says Tío Tigre to him.—But the problem is I don't know how to dance.

—Okay—then says Tío Guatuso.—So you play the guitar and I'll dance.

—That I'll accept—they say Tío Tigre replied.—And where is the guitar?

In the highest part of a tree, on a branch there was a long hornet nest. So Tío Guatuso supposedly said,—Look, you go up there to that tree branch, the guitar case is up there, that long thing.

Tío Tigre climbed the tree and sat next to the hornet nest.

—When should I start playing, Tío Guatuso?

—Whenever you like—he replied.

So Tío Tigre grabbed the hornets' nest with his sharp claws. All the hornets flew out and attacked him, as Tío Guatuso ran away laughing, getting his way, as he always managed to do.

(As told by L. Ventura, March 2004; my translation)¹

Story #2

One day in the forest Tío Tigre ran across Tío Guatuso. As usual, Tío Guatuso had done something bad and Tío Tigre wanted to catch him and take revenge.

Tío Tigre was going to eat him, but Tío Guatuso said,—Why are you going to eat me, if I have so little meat? I won't even fill you up. Look, why don't we make a deal? I'll help you to steal a cow from the rich townsman.

—How are we going to do that?—asked Tío Tigre.

—Don't you worry about that—said Tío Guatuso.—Just wait here, I'll send the cow this way and you grab her when she comes down. I'll warn you [that she's coming], but don't run away when she comes even if she's very big, because you'll have to kill her.

So Tío Guatuso ran up a hill. While Tío Tigre waited, Tío Guatuso started digging out a huge boulder. When it was finally loosened, Tío Guatuso shouted to Tío Tigre,—Here she comes! Get ready!

Tío Tigre opened his arms, closed his eyes, and seeing that, Tío Guatuso let loose the boulder, which rolled down and crushed Tío Tigre, who died. Tío Guatuso came out of it free and happy, laughing and getting his way, as he always managed to do.

(As told by L. Soledispa, July 2009; my translation)²

Before the days of electricity, one of the ways the community members in Agua Blanca entertained one another was through telling stories. A handful of Agua Blancans are still renowned for their storytelling ability, and their performances range from folktales about the various supernatural beings that live in the forests around Agua Blanca to accounts of the history of the village or its denizens, to humorous tales involving intricate plays on words and innuendo, and to fables. Some of the best-known stories revolve around the various animals of the rainforest like the two tales above. One might expect the jaguar—the indigenous symbol *par excellence*—to be the hero of each story, the local version of the King of the Jungle; in many cases, he is. The only animal unfailingly able to best the jaguar in these tales is the agouti, a small, unassuming rodent that looks a bit like an undernourished squirrel without a tail.

Of all the stories people told, these were some of the most fun. Otherwise reminiscent of Aesop's fables, they lacked the attendant moral—or more precisely, the moral was never clearly identified for listeners. Like the various forms of African-influenced tales of Br'er Rabbit, the overt point of the stories was to laugh, marveling at the many ways the little agouti managed to put one over on his mighty adversary.³

The more I thought about these tales in the context of everyday life, the more interesting they seemed, particularly in the context of a community that, until recently, kept very few physical documents, either personal or communal, but did utilize stories as ways of passing local history from generation to generation, and also of reinforcing cultural consensus and enforcing social censure. Oral traditions help communities maintain knowledge of landscapes and memories of people and events without codifying that knowledge in ways that constrain its usefulness. As in other places, in Agua Blanca stories change to suit the context of their telling. Characters might be added or omitted from a familiar tale, the better to allude to similar events in recent communal history; stories might be set in new locations to enable pointed commentary aimed at those who transgress boundaries of acceptable behavior (see Gottlieb et al. 1994; Basso 1996).

While tales might be adapted to suit momentary needs, or even to provoke more laughter, the stories of Tío Guatuso always emphasized his mischievous nature, mental agility, and—most importantly—his incomparable ability not only to sidestep sticky situations, but also to do so with a sense of humor. Tío Guatuso is the essence of fluidity, able to slip from Tío Tigre’s grasp at every turn, utterly at home in a kingdom presumably dominated by others. While the comparison was never openly made, the longer I stayed in Agua Blanca, the more I began to recognize the myriad subtle ways Agua Blancans’ quotidian activities—their emplaced, embodied practice—were able to evoke and facilitate that consummate fluidity.

Practicing Cultural Continuity

In her work among the Xavante of eastern Brazil, Laura Graham considers the role of *da-höïmanazé*, which she defines as anything the Xavante think of as relating to the ancestors; the use of the term connotes a sense of authenticity. Some examples she gives of practices and dispositions connoting *da-höïmanazé* include “unique forms of social organization . . . including age sets and age grades and traditional practices such as boys’ living in the bachelors’ hut, hunting, fishing, and collecting . . . traditional foods and postures as well as forms of architecture” (2005, 629). Graham makes the important point, however, that even while practices can reflect continuity they are also consciously used by Xavante to achieve particular political goals. Including anything *da-höïmanazé* within performances for external audiences means that authenticity can be readily objectified: “Given the absence of contextualizing information, non-indigenous audiences necessarily receive the cultural products that the community makes available for outsiders’ consumption as unmediated aesthetic objects” (635–36). Graham argues that many Xavante turn this to their advantage: “contemporary Xavante are using *da-höïmanazé*, ‘culture,’ in new and creative ways to exert a counterforce against . . . [the] pressure from an ever expanding Brazilian national society to give up their territorial space and . . . way of life” (636).

While Agua Blancans do not generally refer to practices as “authentic” or “inauthentic,” perhaps because of their ultimate goal of fluidity in self-representation, several aspects of their daily existence are nonetheless reminiscent of “traditional” practices of other indigenous groups in the Andean lowlands, or are reflected throughout the archaeological record.⁴ Importantly, many of these practices also form parts of the more quotidian performances that are the subject of this chapter, as I will outline below. Others are simply part of their shared experience and not marked in any particular way. All, however, reinforce a sense of community that is central to their internal sense of belonging in the local landscape.

Washing Clothes

One frequent out-of-house activity for women in Agua Blanca is washing clothes. The combination of large families and a predominantly outdoor life in a hot climate mean

that most women find it necessary to do laundry several times a week. Many prefer to wash smaller amounts daily or every second day, rather than letting huge piles accumulate that will be cumbersome to carry back home when wet. While a few extended families have water sources in their *huertos* where they bathe and do their laundry together, most do not. The women meet along the Buenavista River where three terraces of flat stones for washing have been arranged at the site of a mineral spring. Even when the river is dry in this lower section of the valley, this area always has water, and it is for the high concentrations of calcium and sulphur in the water that the town itself (*agua blanca*, white water) is named.

In addition to the household wash, women often do laundry for outsiders as a source of income for their households or for their own special projects: buying laying hens, children's clothing, or other items not within the reach of their usual budget. Before the advent of laundromats, families from other towns often sent their laundry to be washed here because, as any Agua Blanco will tell you, the mineral-infused water got clothes cleaner than town water, with less need for detergents or other additives.

Women often coordinate with their neighbors, sisters, daughters, or friends to walk together to the *pozos* (washing pools). After making an early breakfast for their families, they will gather the dirty clothes into a plastic washtub or feedsack. Twisting a towel into a rope, they form a circle which they place atop their heads to stabilize the heavy load of laundry, then lift the sack or tub to their heads and set off, meeting friends along the way (fig. 4.1). Arriving at the stones, each claims a spot and sits cross-legged at the edge of a stone, with the long part of the stone in front and the pool of water behind her. Reaching behind her with a gourd or plastic bowl, she fills it with water and in one fluid motion pours it on the item of clothing in front of her. Once it is wet enough, she rubs it with a bar of laundry soap, then begins to wash, adding water as necessary and slapping the item against the stone to push the soap through before rinsing, wringing it out, and tossing it onto a line behind her.

While men and boys often stop by to greet the women as they pass by on other errands, to bathe, or to help carry clothing to and from the *pozos* (using their arms rather than their heads), only men with no women in their households ever wash clothing, and even then only their undergarments, preferring to pay neighbors to wash for them. Thus the stones in front of the *pozos* are almost constantly occupied by women. Families sit together, although younger women and girls who are close friends often wash side-by-side and chat as they do so. This is a favorite activity precisely because it gives women a chance to get together, tell stories, joke, and discuss daily life. Walking on the road above the river, one cannot make out the conversation, but the sounds of laughter punctuated by the loud slaps of soapy clothing beaten on the rocks are a familiar sound and a comforting sign that all is well in Agua Blanca.

Younger girls often accompany their mothers to the pools and learn to wash by watching and then practicing on easier items like cloth rags or their own older shirts. This does not take long, and when they have finished, they play with friends, returning



Figure 4.1. Sisters on their way to the laundry pools. (Photo by Chad Chisholm)

to their mothers as needed to help hang items up to drip dry. When women finish the pile of clothes with them, they often help others with their pile, so that everyone will be done at more or less the same time and can walk home together. Before returning home, women will bathe and wash their hair, something that allows the clean clothes more time to drip dry. Married women will remove their tops, bathing quickly before donning clean clothing; unmarried women and girls wash through their clothing and change inside a sheet or towel.

Once bathed and changed the women gather their clothing, calling for their children playing nearby. Sometimes, if a person has an unusual amount of laundry, a son might calculate approximately how long she needs to finish and show up with a bicycle near the end of the washday to haul the load home. More often, each woman loads her bundle on her head, then returns home with her companions to start the

midday meal. The most impressive part of the entire feat, to me, is each woman's ability to negotiate uneven paths, conversations, stairs, stepping stones across rivers, and even wandering animals without dropping the load perched atop her head. Most women carry bags with soap or extra laundry in their hands; none uses her hands to balance the loads, and all are able to turn their heads quickly to respond to any who call out to them on their way home.

The first time I washed clothes there with other women, I noticed a stairway with a handmade *muyuyo*-wood railing leading down the opposite river bank into the woods, and wondered where it led. I soon found out, as a noisy group of tourists followed their guide down the steps to the riverbank. Rather than herding them quickly past us, the guide paused and gestured in our direction. Most of the tourists took out a camera to capture the scene. My first thought was to hope I was not too noticeable, since I assumed they wanted a typical scene; my second was annoyance that the tourists seemed not to register that the scene in front of them was composed of human beings rather than zoo animals on display.

After the tour group left, I asked the women around me whether it bothered them to be photographed like that, while doing chores, wet, and potentially in a state of undress. They laughed and said they never had their shirts off when tourists came and that they didn't care about the photos. Given the shyness of most, I wondered about this for years. Much later I realized that they were able to avoid untimely tour-group arrivals by paying attention to the deep, echoing sound of the conch-shell trumpets being played in the museum—always the sign of the group's exit from the museum to set off on the rest of the tour, and a sound indicating that they had about ten to fifteen minutes before the group would show up across the river. Furthermore, the photos were always taken at a distance; they were portraits of a setting, a broader context, rather than intimate shots of individuals. By simply tilting her head downward as she washed, a woman could render herself unrecognizable to any who did not know her well.

Even later I finally realized how important the whole endeavor might be for the community. Long serving as an emic practice constituting and reinforcing connections among women, whose conversation often served to negotiate a consensus on issues facing the community, since the advent of tourism, laundering clothing has become a metaperformance (see Urban 2001), constituting the community itself as part of the local landscape. In other words, rather than being bothered at being perceived as part of the landscape, the women recognize that the whole point of the performance and its inescapable visibility is to reinforce external perceptions of their appropriateness within the landscape. Tour guides could easily take a different path to the lagoon; the choice to lead groups right in front of the women is a conscious one with concrete goals.

While usually implicit, this point was overtly emphasized after an El Niño event that destroyed one of the community's central tourist trails. Needing to rebuild quickly, the museum group held a meeting to discuss expanding and changing

walking routes.⁵ Two younger men suggested that it would be much easier to follow the wooded trail farther before descending to the lagoon, bypassing the washing area entirely, but they were quickly outvoted by peers who considered the laundry sites one of the greatest attractions for tourists, many of whom often exclaimed at the authentic scene.

Mingas

Throughout the indigenous Andes one of the most frequent expressions of a general ethos of reciprocity is the organization of collective work-groups to complete tasks that correspond to and benefit the entire community. This process is known as a *minga*. Given the importance of the washing pools to everyday existence, I was not surprised to see that the most frequent *minga* was that of cleaning out the pozos. The mineral content of the water at the source caused a dark, claylike mud to accumulate at the bottom of each pool; over time, the mud significantly reduced the depth of the pools, and often ran from the top terrace to the bottom ones, leaving sludge that threatened to dirty just-washed clothes. Cleaning the pozos required stopping the flow of water from the springs, letting the upper terraces drain overnight, emptying the lower pozos by hand, then scooping the mud out with gourds or bowls, handing these along a sort of bucket brigade line to be dumped in the riverbed. The process was laborious and tiring under the equatorial sun, and yet this *minga* was also the most popular, drawing men, women, and children to spend a day outdoors, laughing and getting into occasional mudfights amidst fits of giggles (figs. 4.2, 4.3).

While cleaning the pozos inspires the broadest participation, *mingas* are organized to accomplish a number of collective tasks. Some kinds of *mingas* respond to infrequent but broadly shared needs: for example, on a return trip after a field school, two of my students were present for a *minga* to build and install a traditional clay oven for the elementary school (fig. 4.4). Others involve routine maintenance: clearing weeds from the cemetery or repairing the fence that keeps goats and other livestock from disrupting the graves within it; cleaning and whitewashing the church; clearing community boundaries to make them visible; cleaning out the spring that is the community's main water source. Many of the projects brought to the community also take advantage of this tradition, requesting a *minga* to complete the more labor-intensive parts of a project. When students in our field school decided to build an ecologically friendly playground in a shady grove of carob trees outside the elementary school, for example, the elementary students helped us clear the area of stones. Their parents then formed a *minga* to help us dig holes, pour cement, and erect the various structures. Similarly, we called for *mingas* to help clear fields for organic gardens and install wells or drip irrigation lines; others have donated funds for projects such as expanding the museum, expecting the community to provide matching funds-in-kind via *minga* labor (fig. 4.5).

Mingas enable the community to meet external impositions (like state mandates to provide elementary education in a community without an adequate building) when



Figure 4.2. Archival photo of a 1978 minga to clean the laundry pools. (Photo courtesy of Archives of the Museum of Agua Blanca. Photographer unknown)



Figure 4.3. Minga in 2009 to clean the laundry pools. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)



Figure 4.4. Minga in 2012 to build a traditional horno for the elementary school. (Photo by Emily Hecker)

the financial means for doing so are beyond the community's grasp—and beyond its desires. Through mingas, the community can show good faith without needing to engage completely in capitalist transactions. Perhaps more importantly, this is one of several manifestations of everyday indigeneity in Agua Blanca: a locally relevant (and enjoyable) practice that enables the community to maintain strong internal connections and an organic part of local practice. Unlike the overt performances of indigeneity described in Chapter 3, most mingas reflect an indigeneity *not* on display.

Young Men's Houses

Like most everyday aspects of life, the existence of young men's houses is something that no one ever remarked on to me; I noticed them only during my third long stay in



Figure 4.5. Construction of the addition to the museum. Labor in minga provided as the community’s contribution in kind to supplement grant funds for construction materials. (Photo by Chad Chisholm)

Agua Blanca, after the archaeological project was complete and I had time to sketch a quick schematic map of the community. I noticed that, in many cases, the main house was surrounded by smaller one-room structures; having never entered any of these I had earlier assumed that they were smaller homes built by families who later migrated elsewhere. Doing the sketch, however, I began to ask some of the older residents about the houses, thinking I would learn more about migration from the community. When several responded in an offhand manner, “Oh, that’s just where the boys live,” I

was slightly surprised, but thought this was probably a sensible response to having several children in a relatively small house. The openness of traditional structures meant that the experiential distance between parents and children would be perhaps closer than in an insulated home in the United States where parents and children often sleep on different floors.

What I did not realize until later was that these were not simply new bedrooms for children. Most of the people who slept in the huts were not directly related to the family in the main house—they were simply groups of young men around the same age. Particularly given the dangers inherent in the landscape after dark prior to the advent of electricity (see Chapter 5), young men who gathered to talk after their afternoon soccer match and trip to the lagoon often chose to stay wherever they had gathered. When I asked men about this experience, they described long nights of listening to music, talking or joking for hours, dozing off and on, returning home in the morning for breakfast. My sense is that most of them slept more during daytime naps than at night; most said they enjoyed both the company and the convenience of staying at these collective huts, and did so several nights a week.

Sleeping arrangements in Agua Blanca shift constantly anyway, depending on who is present in a house at any moment: visiting family, new babies, shifting alliances among siblings, guests, sons or husbands gone on hunting trips, all were reasons for people to move from one room or bed to another. A woman left alone when family traveled might return to her parents' home to sleep, or her own siblings, nieces, married daughters, or grandchildren might move in to keep her company (see Scheper-Hughes 1993). Men whose wives were away—visiting ill family, for example—generally returned to parents' homes to eat, and those whose wives passed away often took in nephews or grandchildren to keep them company.

While the construction of young men's houses has diminished gradually in the most recent years with the influx of tourism and the introduction of electric light, the ways they have been used highlight not only connections to other indigenous practices throughout the region, but also and more importantly, the fluidity of how family is perceived within Agua Blanca. Whether or not a person is considered a close relative or simply another community member often depends on context. Unlike most of Spanish-speaking Latin America where individuals use both last names to mark descent bilaterally through both the father and the mother, Agua Blancans tend to use only one another's paternal last name. As I discovered when attempting to wade through local genealogies, growing more and more frustrated at linear recording systems that did not account for individuals interrelated in multiple ways, using both last names would have meant that everyone was cousin to everyone else; in many cases, both last names would be the same. More importantly, however, the fluidity of reckoning kinship is also influenced by practice; terminology often proceeds more from comfort and familiarity than from actual genealogy. Many children in Agua Blanca refer to the female adult in the house where they spend the most time as "mother," and to their biological mother as "aunt," for example.

Local Celebrations

In addition to the Park's recently invented Festival de la Ballena, marking the onset of the breeding and calving season for humpback whales (and hence the influx of tourists to the local economy), the celebrations of the balsa-raft festival described in Chapter 3 and the Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in late June are the most visible cultural events in the southern coastal region of Manabí. While each is generally attended by Agua Blancans if they are present and not otherwise occupied, the tone of their participation in those events is one of conscious performance or, in the case of San Pedro and San Pablo, a welcome break from work where people can drink, dance, and relax.⁶ If people happen to be absent from these events due to travel, work, or other obligations, neither they nor other community members are troubled by that fact.

By contrast, two local events are universally celebrated and clearly important to the entire community. One is the New Year's Eve celebration described at greater length in Chapter 5; the other is the celebration of their patron saint, San Isidro Labrador, on May 14 and 15. Interestingly, the latter is known to all, not as the Fiesta de San Isidro, but rather as the Fiesta de Agua Blanca.

Emigrants return to Agua Blanca for the fiesta from all over the country and even from abroad. If people are planning a trip home from abroad, they almost always schedule it around this event, preferring it even to Christmas or the New Year. The fiesta is not included on the regional touristic calendar, however, and outsiders are not generally present unless they are particular friends of those who travel to the fiesta. All local baptisms take place during this fiesta; migrants' ties to the community are often reinvigorated through invitations to become godparents to the children being baptized, a commitment most take quite seriously.

While the fiesta is officially organized by a small, rotating committee, nearly everyone in the community contributes to a collective fund to pay for music, food, new paint for the church, decorations, and prizes for events such as children's games, election of the *reina* of the community, or the volleyball and soccer tournaments. Through their donations, each community member or family becomes a *prioste* (sponsor) of the fiesta; a local individual, especially one who is not married, usually donates about \$5, while a family donates between \$10 and \$20. Emigrants often also become sponsors, many contributing larger sums when they have the means to do so.

On the afternoon of May 14, the event opens with a volleyball tournament among teams from Machalilla, Puerto López, and Agua Blanca; everyone knows everyone else, and again, these communities are closely interconnected by marriage. That evening everyone gathers in the church for one of the few times a year the parish priest travels to the community to hold mass. Since San Isidro Labrador was a farmer, many people take agricultural products from their fields to be blessed during this first mass. After church, everyone gathers in the main plaza for the election of the *reina* (queen). Each year one of the less timid Agua Blancans serves as MC, and three judges, one each from Agua Blanca, Puerto López, and Machalilla, vote on the candidates. There are always three or four candidates, and each models a dress, often of her own design, and gives a brief speech describing what she hopes to accomplish for

the community. While one overall queen is chosen each year, every candidate receives some kind of recognition—one might be voted Miss Congeniality and another Miss Generosity, for example. Following the election, everyone dances until dawn.

After a brief nap, the community again gathers outside the school mid-morning for a soccer tournament. This time the competitors come from the entire region, and several teams represent Agua Blanca. The tournament is taken seriously, and businesses in Puerto López often donate cups as prizes. In the afternoon another tournament is held involving traditional games: sack races; races where each competitor balances an egg on a spoon held in the mouth; a jousting-like tournament where competitors must acquire a handkerchief threaded through a ring hanging on an overhead line by guiding a pole through the ring while astride a running horse; children's races; a *caña encebada* (greased bamboo pole) which competitors must climb to reach prizes at the top; and a *gallo despescuezado*, which is a rooster buried up to its neck in the earth that blindfolded competitors try to kill with a machete, thereby winning its meat for their family's dinner.

In the evening an even bigger mass in the church is held in which all the children born during the previous year are baptized. When all the baptisms are complete, and after families have returned home for evening meals with their extended kin who have returned for the event or served as godparents for the newly baptized children, everyone again gathers in the plaza for the election of the *madre símbolo*, an older woman who represents the community. There is a brief competition in which the older women dance for a few minutes with someone from the community, and then each gives a short speech. The winner receives a gift for Mother's Day and is invited to tell the story of her life to the rest of the community. Once the *madre símbolo's* narration is complete, the queen, elected the previous day, is formally crowned. She and the other candidates again give speeches accepting their joint responsibilities for the following year, which include representing the community or its members in other fiestas or sports championships and helping organize the following year's Fiesta de Agua Blanca. Everyone then dances all night long, surrounded by family, friends, and neighbors.

Unlike the balsa-raft festival or the Feast of San Pedro and San Pablo, where the goal is metacultural performance, the Fiesta de Agua Blanca is about reconnecting with community. Most events are collective and enjoyed together, such as the baptisms; even the majority of the competitions do not have clear winners and losers, sports events aside, but rather are a way to celebrate one's connections with others. Specific messages are not important; reinforcing the sense of community, even in the face of emigration and other divisive forces, is what matters.

Political Self-Positioning

On some occasions, however, the message does matter; Agua Blancans are occasionally forced by circumstance to claim a particular position, to interact in public encounters as representatives of a particular marked identity. What is noteworthy here is how,

regardless of the positions they may find themselves obliged to defend, Agua Blancans still manage to muddy the waters, slipping out from under the labels that might constrain others.

On August 10, 1979, a mere two weeks after the Machalilla National Park was established, Ecuadorian president Jaime Roldós took office. In his first year in office, Roldós enacted several measures designed both to achieve more economic equality within the country and to advance the cause of human rights throughout the continent, at the time still in the throes of the widespread Operation Condor. One of Ecuador's more progressive and populist leaders, Roldós had a strong following among rural and indigenous Ecuadorians. When peasant organizations marched in Portoviejo in 1980 to support Roldós's policies, Agua Blanca, at the time officially recognized as a peasant community, was asked and agreed to participate (see figs. 2.1, 2.2, 2.3).

Hesitant to present themselves under a specific banner, however, Agua Blancans marched as a *comuna*, without specifying what type of community. At approximately the same time, with the help of Scottish archaeologist Colin McEwan and the Ecuadorian anthropologist María Isabel Silva, Agua Blancans began to travel to other indigenous communities in the highlands and Amazonian lowlands, making acquaintances they would later draw upon to organize annual *encuentros culturales* (cultural encounters) in which members of other indigenous communities traveled to Agua Blanca and spent a few days in town participating in community theatre, telling stories, and demonstrating traditions. The events themselves were only initiated in the late 1980s, but the groundwork for them—the connection with indigenous groups throughout the country—was laid years earlier.

Essentialism and Antiessentialism

In recent years, and particularly since the 2003 publication of Adam Kuper's well-known criticism of indigeneity claims as political tactics, the debate over strategic uses by indigenous groups of external perceptions of essentialism has grown heated (see Barnard 2006; Escárcega 2010; French 2006; Hale 2006; Kenrick et al. 2004; Pelican 2009; Sylvain 2014). John and Jean Comaroff posit that the alienability of recognizable heritage, as well as its "capacity to conjure a collective imagining" of an exotic existence, renders ethnicity itself a valuable commodity for groups who can stake claims to it. In this context, essentialism functions as the tool with which to achieve that alienation of heritage—to identify, isolate, package, and market indigeneity as a commodity thereby accessible for external experience. But if intangibles such as ethnicity, heritage, and culture represent some of the most valuable commodities within globalizing processes, the implications for groups not perceived as authentic, and therefore unable to access those intangibles, are grim, as noted by several of the Comaroffs' interlocutors.

Furthermore, in many cases states themselves co-opt such alienated heritages in the processes both of marketing the nation to external investors and of constructing national narratives for internal audiences (Smith 2001). As Nicholas Thomas has

noted, “essentialism has a negative side . . . [it] fixes the proper identity of those peoples in their preservation and display of a folkloric and primitivised culture and denigrates and marginalizes urbanized or apparently acculturated members of these populations who speak [a non-indigenous language], lack ethnic dress, do not obviously conduct ceremonies and do not count as real natives to the same extent as those who continue to live in the bush and practice something closer to traditional subsistence” (1994, 30). In their construction of paths to agency within globalized settings, Agua Blancans are adopting practical tactics that, in contrast to the overly essentialized Ecuadorian state productions of indigeneity and authenticity, are markedly anti-essentialist in both nature and form. Like Tío Guatuso, Agua Blancans have developed effective strategies based on fluidity rather than alienable commodities with which to protect their rights.

Considering the historical construction of the concept of the mestizo as well as other racialized categories, Joanne Rappaport insightfully notes that “the central question before us is not ‘Who is a mestizo?’ or ‘What is a mestizo?’ but ‘When and how is someone a mestizo?’ That is, we should move our gaze away from the condition of the individual, toward the context of the naming” (2014, 4). In other words, throughout the early colonial period fluid categories of identity were the norm rather than the exception, and it was precisely to exert some control over that fluidity that castas paintings and other classificatory systems were devised in the first place. As Rappaport points out, fluidity means that context is central to perception; mechanisms of control—from castas paintings to census categories—remove individuals from their contexts of interaction with others and codify identities. Yet while codification may originally have been of paramount importance within the creation of perceptions of suitability, Agua Blanco strategies today manage to counter those perceptions, achieving fluidity and appropriateness within a landscape simultaneously.

Through subtle positionings of themselves both within the local landscape and within broader imaginings, through negotiations of belonging and connections, and through the maintenance of everyday practices that quietly reinforce emic experiences of the aspects of indigeneity that matter to them, Agua Blancans not only persevere, but also maintain control over how they live. Like Tío Guatuso, they emerge from every encounter “free and happy, laughing and getting [their] way, as [they] always managed to do.”

DISPOSITIONS *fear*

Ambivalent Attitudes toward Globalization

The paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people . . .
is that of staying in one place but experiencing the “dis-placement”
that global modernity brings to them.

John Tomlinson (1999, 9)

JULY 16, 2009. 8 P.M. We are halfway through a two-month summer field school, and the students are ready for a break. Eight of the students and I hike up the Buenavista river valley to celebrate the annual Fiesta del Carmen with community members in the subsidiary hamlet of El Carmen, where the remaining two students are housed. We arrive to see the usual configuration of tiny wooden stools, crates used as tables, and a DJ setting up the music. People crowd around a makeshift tienda set up between two huts, where a plank laid across tree trunks keeps access to the crates of beer somewhat restricted. Two men from El Carmen, laughing with their neighbors and visitors, sell the beer for a dollar a bottle.

The music is about to start, the usual compilation of cumbias with the occasional bachata or merengue thrown in. The more local music—old-school sanjuanitos and pasacalles, to which the older men will dance with their wives or younger partners, and pasillos, which accompany the later stages of drinking and to which occasionally men will dance with other men as they collectively sob out any frustrations—will not be played until much later in the night. As usual, no one wants to dance until they have consumed enough alcohol to lower their inhibitions and make them, if not completely willing, then at least not entirely averse to the momentary individual visibility accessed by those on the dance floor. No one wants to be first, to be the center of attention. Families sit together on their low perches in the darkness just outside the dance area, itself an open space distinguishable from the rest only by the naked bulbs strung sparsely and somewhat precariously overhead.

This year, however, one of the students staying in El Carmen shakes things up a bit. Calling together a group of local children, many of whom live in his assigned household or visit their grandparents regularly there, he coaxes them all into the center of the dance field and, Pied Piper–like, leads them in a parade of dance moves which they try to copy between paroxysms of laughter. Their favorite move is the dinosaur. Even the sternest of the adults present are won over by the end of this performance,

and when the next set of songs begins, a few couples head onto the dance floor hours earlier than they probably intended.

After a few dance sets, during which several other families arrive, I notice three of the older girls from El Carmen looking worried, nervously glancing around, biting their nails, fidgeting on their seats and then running into one of the houses. I look querulously at a friend from the community, who tells me the three girls have been rehearsing a dance routine. Sure enough, within a few minutes one of the organizers of the fiesta grabs the DJ's microphone and announces that *las señoritas del Carmen* have something prepared for the crowd. They emerge, dressed in provocative outfits—tight-fitting tops, short cheerleading-type skirts, and boots—and consult with the DJ, who is clearly prepared for this. They then take their places on a small stage area that had previously escaped my notice.

Each girl has her head bowed as the music begins—reggaetón, a newer rhythm introduced from Panama and Puerto Rico, growing in popularity on local radio and national television game shows, but until this point never played at local fiestas. They look at one another and begin dancing a routine they have undoubtedly been practicing for months. My first response is amazement that these three shy girls have chosen to do what Agua Blancans never do—to perform alone, under the eyes of all their peers, standing out on purpose. My second is surprise at their long braids, a hairstyle none of them ever adopts. My third is shock. To the beat of the music, each teenage girl slaps herself across the face several times, miming surprise and then acceptance of subjugation. The dance turns sexier. The audience pales. When the dance ends, no one comments; the girls reemerge half an hour later in their normal clothing to dance cumbias with their cousins and neighbors.

Given the reticence of the community to comment on the unusual performance, the young women's motivations took me some time to process. I began making connections to some of the broader representations of indigeneity beginning to appear in Ecuadorian media. Since the Ministry of Tourism was created in 1992, its efforts to increase tourist revenue in Ecuador have prompted the government to invest in basic infrastructure in the Machalilla National Park and other previously remote areas. Within Agua Blanca the repercussions of modernization initiatives range from the introduction of electricity and modern building materials, to increased access to specific kinds of global technology and to other places within Ecuador itself. One of the most obvious everyday changes, as elsewhere, has been the introduction of televisions. Since few channels are available given the distance of communications towers, however, soon after purchasing a TV most households also buy a DVD player.

Bootleg DVDs priced at a dollar each are everywhere in Ecuador. The market in Puerto López, visited by many Agua Blancans each day on their way to secondary school or to work either in construction of the various tourist locales popping up throughout Puerto López or as guides on whale-watching tours, has several eye-catching displays of DVDs. While subject matter ranges from recent blockbuster films to old kung fu movies to children's programming, by far the most prominent genre is

music videos. People pick them up to provide background music for everyday household chores. Children are drawn to these, and often sit in front of televisions watching wide-eyed as their parents are busy with other chores around the house.

Ubiquitously available and constantly consumed, these videos focus on otherwise visibly white (or white-mestizo) women dressed in ways that mark them as indian, often sporting pinned-on, beribboned braids of thick, dark hair and indigenous-style necklaces or lace blouses. Regardless of the type of music being played or the gender of the musicians, the performances involve hyper-sexualized, light-skinned, scantily dressed female dancers otherwise marked as indigenous: “a fantasy: the body of a white woman with the accessibility of an indian woman” (Canessa 2012, 251). Rather than perceiving the videos as examples of the commodification of indian bodies, however, the children viewing them see indigeneity as something suddenly valuable and desirable, breaking with their experience of its being incessantly devalued, marginalized, or even physically attacked. At precisely the moment when they are exploring the potential of individual identity, the spectacle of music video encourages them to try on this apparently accepted and desired form of indigeneity.

Unintentionally, however, in recognizing and reproducing the desirable qualities of indigeneity as marked (and, in many ways, mocked) through these music videos, children and teens are embodying not only that sexualized identity within and through an already-racialized body historically denoted as exploitable, but also the perception of indigenous as distinct from indian: the aesthetic hierarchies of globalization, normalized through practice.

But how did Agua Blanca get to this point?

Globalization and Tourism

In the recent past Agua Blanca and the Machalilla National Park have experienced rapid change. I first visited the community in 1998, out of a desire to see the archaeological remains I had only heard about. To achieve this took an extraordinary amount of effort, compared to much easier experiences visiting any number of cities or more visible tourist destinations elsewhere in Ecuador. Early one morning I spent a good hour asking around the bus terminal in Guayaquil to figure out how to get to that area at all. The consensus was that I needed to take a bus to one city, get off at a crossroads, then try to flag down another bus heading north. Armed with these vague instructions, I set off, arriving to the crossroads just before noon. After locating a store selling crackers and juice, it took me another hour to board successfully a second bus, one which in the end drove mostly on the beach rather than a road due to infrastructural damage from that year’s El Niño meteorological event.

I arrived in Puerto López in the early evening to find the Park headquarters already closed. Again, it took me some time to find anyone who knew of a hotel or boarding house. Locals seemed to have no knowledge of such a place, but luckily two fish buyers from farther inland overheard my queries and told me to follow

them, as they stayed in town frequently to buy the freshest fish from the morning boats. We arrived at a dilapidated building that offered rooms for a minimal fee; my own quarters included a cold-water shower within a tiled, curtained enclosure in the corner. About to enter it, I heard one fish-buyer's voice boom startlingly. It took me a minute to realize he was in his own shower a wall away—a wall that did not extend to the ceiling—and decided to postpone my ablutions until the following morning after they left.

Hungry, I headed out again to find food and negotiate the next leg of my journey. Asking around, I was guided to the bus stop where I had disembarked earlier. Of the three vehicles for hire people had mentioned, only one was present, a run-down blue truck whose driver was about to head home for the night. I asked him if he knew how to get to Agua Blanca, and we set a time and price for the trip the following morning. The ten-mile round trip would cost me triple my fare from Guayaquil. The driver insisted that he would have to wait there for me, since there was no way of contacting a vehicle for a return fare. Concluding our negotiations, I asked him where to eat. He chuckled and said few places would still have food available at seven in the evening, but pointed across the street at a lit room and told me to ask there. The owner, an older, bustling woman, said they were closed, but apparently reconsidered since I was clearly from out of town and told me to sit. Within ten minutes, she reappeared with some reheated rice topped with fried eggs and plantains, for which she refused to charge me. I ate quickly, thanked her, and headed off to bed.

The next morning, I hopped in the blue truck at eight. We set off, plodding along an extremely bumpy portion of the coastal road; the potholes were far worse since the El Niño event, reported the driver, and the road inland would be worse. After about half an hour, we turned onto a dusty path, one I heartily hoped would actually lead to the village. This trail was unpaved, and in some places had washed out entirely. Unfazed, the driver made cheery conversation throughout, heading down makeshift slopes into the riverbed when the road ahead seemed particularly precarious. The truck sounded as if it might be jolted into its component parts at any moment.

After about half an hour, the driver pointed to a tall pole, noting with some enthusiasm that Agua Blanca now had electricity. I asked when this had been introduced. He said it was a recent development, the result of a government initiative to promote tourism to less visited parks. When I inquired about the numbers of tourists who traveled here, he laughed and said I was his first tourist fare of the year—most tourists, he claimed, were highland schoolchildren or university students on break who arrived by bus. I must have looked concerned because he immediately reassured me that he did indeed know his way in, as he picked Agua Blancans up every Saturday morning to take them out to the Puerto López market. He then pointed out a small, overgrown cemetery, and, as we rounded the next bend, I saw the first of several bamboo structures that made up the village.

I include this scene because today Puerto López is a well-known tourist destination with dozens of hotels, restaurants, and tour agencies, and with easy and

often direct bus access from Guayaquil, Portoviejo, Manta, and even Quito, twelve hours away. Most of the tourists who arrive to the Machalilla National Park are well informed about Agua Blanca, its tours, museum, and attractions, and many of those do choose to visit. In 1998, I would never have predicted the stunning growth in tourism I experienced just a few years later. Although the Machalilla National Park was created in 1979, for the first two decades of its existence there was very little infrastructure within it to support extended tourism, and almost no advertising of what the Park had to offer beyond whale-watching. To encounter the community of Agua Blanca at all in those early years, a tourist would have needed to have previous knowledge of the Park and the existence of the archaeological sites at Agua Blanca, to be relatively adventurous and willing to take risks, and most tellingly, to be at least functionally fluent in Spanish.

The contrast between this early experience and everyday life in the Machalilla National Park today has led me to question how Agua Blancans themselves experience globalizing processes and projects—how they negotiate what I referred to in the introduction as the underpinnings of the postmodern world system. What are some of the arenas where frictions (Tsing 2004) arise between the local and the global, between agency in everyday life and participation in broader processes? To what extent do globalizing processes constrain agency, and in what circumstances might they enhance it? In many ways, Agua Blanca is emblematic of the increasingly familiar yet awkward negotiations of globalizing processes to which John Tomlinson refers in the opening epigraph. In other ways, however, Agua Blancans are finding unusual ways of reinforcing their sense of place while still actively participating within Tomlinson's "global modernity."

Conflicting Discourses

With the creation of the Machalilla National Park, as noted above, even Agua Blanca's basic infrastructure has changed significantly. When I first arrived via truck on that dusty, rutted road, very few houses were visible from the center of town. Most structures I could see, and the first place I lived, were airy, raised constructions with stripped logs forming the basic frame. Most of these, particularly those in low-lying sites, appeared to be on stilts; the main floor of each, made of either wood or split bamboo, was raised about six feet off the ground. The homes boasted split-bamboo walls and thatch roofing tied onto a scaffolding of wooden poles made of tall, quick-growing softwood trees easily harvested in the nearby river valley or on the way up to the rainforest. Though limited in variety of materials, the homes were all different. Some had balconies sporting fancy designs composed of shorter *muyuyo* branches culled from the omnipresent dry forest trees; others had fancy gables with shuttered windows to permit air and light into the rooms. The designs were perfectly suited for the environment where heavy rains alternate with periods of drought and tropical daytime temperatures with

much cooler nights. The stilt-like bases and unlined bamboo walls kept homes from flooding during the rainy seasons, ensured better air flow through the house, and kept mosquito breeding grounds to a minimum.¹ Thatched roofs provided quiet protection against rains and insulated well against both the hot equatorial sun during the day and the cooler night breezes coaxed inland by the mountains. During the hottest times of day, people could work, chat, or rest in the shade underneath their homes; household animals often took advantage of this agreeable microclimate as well.

Four buildings stood out in contrast: the elementary school, the church, the town hall, and one abandoned structure in the center of town. Made of bricks or cement blocks with aluminum-sheet roofs, these buildings seemed ungainly and obtrusive next to the diaphanous, fluttering edges of the thatched roofs nearby. Cinderblock, zinc, and similar materials are known in Ecuador as *material noble*, noble or high-quality material, which is contrasted in local discourse with *material tradicional*. Within architecture, materials considered noble might include cut stone such as granite, slate, or marble; bricks; hardwoods; glazed ceramic tile; and metalwork, among others. In Agua Blanca as in many other (post)colonial locations, however, the term refers more broadly to manufactured construction materials—materials not immediately available within the local environment.

In 2001, the year of my first long stay in the village, there were no homes that used any cement block at all; four used bricks, but two of these had thatch roofs or some walls of cane, so were less visibly outside the local norms. As tourism grew in the park, representatives of three separate development initiatives, one organized by an international NGO and two others by the Ecuadorian Ministries of Housing and Tourism, encouraged locals to apply for free building materials to build tourist cabins or tourist-ready rooms within their homes. Those who applied received bricks, sacks of cement, sheets of aluminum roofing, ceramic tile, and bathroom fixtures (sinks and toilets). Donors returned to the community months after the original donations to ensure that they had been used for their intended purpose. Discussions, not only of the programs themselves, but also of the changes realized, were firmly couched within the language of development discourse and modernization. The combination of power lines and cement seemed to signify the very essence of development for residents and promoters alike.

Eager for access to tourism as one of very few potential sources of income within the Park, most Agua Blancans chose to participate in these programs. Many tore down their existing homes to enable them to use the new materials, which would have rested precariously on the original stilts. Predominantly single-story structures with cement floors on the ground now dot the landscape. The houses themselves are only one aspect of the visible shifts in the community, however, and opinions about the process and results vary dramatically from person to person.

One effect of the changing building patterns has been to make different household economies more obvious. Since rustic materials were available for any who

wished to gather them, house design used to respond to individual preferences within the range of a particular aesthetic. Most homes were similar in size; when a family grew too large for their existing home, people either added rooms or built cabin-like “young men’s houses” nearby.² Given the high costs of purchasing and transporting noble materials, however, those with more money have been able to construct larger houses or add details, such as front gates and enclosed patios. More familiarity with external building styles acquired through labor-based migration has meant that those with the means to do so have introduced solid wood doors and keyed deadbolts, another notable shift from bamboo doors mostly left ajar throughout the day. These solid wood doors are frequently closed against the heat; people are less visible during the day because of this (see Mills 1999). Whereas people used to work, talk, and rest beneath their homes in plain view of others, they now have no cool, shady outdoor place for this, and thus close their homes against the heat, effectively keeping neighbors out as well.

Agua Blancans have disagreed about the change in construction types since they were first introduced. While some feel the newer designs and synthetic materials connote modernity (Mills 1999), others prefer the older styles, both for reasons of aesthetics and comfort. To make matters more complicated, tourism politics also respond to different governments, their priorities and tastes. Increases in tourism to the Machalilla National Park, as well as Agua Blanca’s growing visibility within it (see Chapter 3), more recently led Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa to negotiate funding from various NGOs and the National Institute of Cultural Patrimony to support the community. Projects to date have included a complete rebuild of the church in a traditional style: while it now has a raised cement floor to avoid flooding, atop that it sports cane walls covered in a thick, whitewashed *enquinche* (earth plaster), and a high, thatched roof over a similarly plastered ceiling supported by beautiful exposed hardwood beams. A second project involved an expansion of the existing museum in wood, cane, and thatch; meanwhile a third provided for a new bamboo and thatch tourist restaurant atop a hill just below the town center. The three structures now dominate views from the center of town; nearby are a few other houses whose owners never bothered adopting the new styles or materials (fig. 5.1). Currently, it is the *material noble* that appears out of place. Tourists frequently comment negatively on the decline of authenticity or simply on the ugliness of those structures.

Once again Agua Blancans find that the imposition of external systems of value highlights differences in potential agency located in, reinforcing, and limited by racialized geography: these are systems of aesthetic sensibility, or taste (see Bourdieu 1984), which locals have been able to follow, but never to guide. When rustic building materials were prevalent and valued locally, they were sniffed at by government representatives and tourists alike. Now that they have been removed at great cost from the landscape, the colonialist nostalgia for the past as a readily available commodity for consumption leaves Agua Blancans struggling to rebuild. Stifled



Figure 5.1. Constructions using traditional materials (bamboo, wood, palm thatch) in the center of Agua Blanca. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)

within their airless quarters, Agua Blancans find it easier to reflect on the concrete repercussions of globalizing processes and to become aware of their ambivalent feelings toward them.

Disenchantment

Desde que llegó la luz al pueblo ya no hay encantos.
(Ever since electricity came to town there are no more enchanted places.)

O. Tomalá, interview, July 2005

Infrastructural and structural changes are not the only shifts in local experience resulting from the introduction of industrial materials and electricity to Agua Blanca. Daily rhythms of life—waking before sunrise to prepare a meal for a long day's work; setting off at dawn to find wandering livestock somewhere within the 55,000 hectares of Agua Blanca's communal lands, check on stands of coffee and citrus trees high in the rainforest, dig deep burn pits for felled trees to be converted into charcoal, wash mountains of clothing in the river and carry them back atop the head, or harvest *tagua* or *barbasco* far from one's household plot;³ returning mid-afternoon for a late lunch and siesta; heading down to the center of town for a pickup game of soccer or a chat with relatives; wandering to the lagoon for a wash and then home for a

light evening meal before heading off to bed—have been transformed forever through many of the globalizing processes Agua Blancans have adopted or had thrust upon them. According to older community members, in particular, the superstructure has also been affected.

One of the reasons for the young men's houses mentioned earlier (see Chapter 4), as well as the general outline of daily activities noted above, was a healthy respect for the experiential differences between daylight and darkness, which on cloudy nights would have been nearly absolute in many areas of the community before electricity arrived. Homes are spread across the landscape, and walking from one to another often entails entering the dry forest, crossing a dry (or wet) river valley, or climbing down into a gulch and back out. During daylight hours, the journeys barely register within residents' minds, but during the hours of darkness, people were loath to leave their homes. Those dark places, I was told, often hid witches and demonic beings, the devil's familiars.

Recounting these events, storytellers often produced frissons of fear not only in their listeners, but also in their own bodies. On several occasions I noticed people surreptitiously crossing themselves or saw goosebumps appear momentarily on their arms. I also noticed that people tended to tell the stories in large groups by the light of day; evening stories were of other types: nostalgic remembrances of days past, bawdy jokes, or humorous tales of the animals in the forests (see Chapter 4). Both the tales of encounters and the beings encountered conveyed an eerie sense of unreality—unlikely animals in familiar places or human figures behaving in inhuman ways. Some told of running across a tall, heavysset black dog that watched them from a gully; their pace home was hastened by the occasional sound of panting just at their heels. Most were too terrified to turn around to see whether anything was there or not. Others claimed to have seen an enormous horse with a rider whom they presumed to be the devil. Still others claimed they heard a voice calling out to them or laughing demonically at them, but never saw the being making the noises. Some heard footsteps following them home or saw a flickering light behind them accompanied by audible footsteps. One person said he saw a large black cat with glowing eyes, easily three times the size of any house cat. Several people, particularly those who had imprudently chosen to walk home alone in the middle of a fiesta (when no one else was about), told of crossing ravines or sections of dry forest only to catch glimpses of a woman whose long, unruly hair covered her entire face.

While the disturbing and unnatural behavior of the *brujas* and *demonios* certainly provoke responses ranging from sharp discomfort to panicky fear, not all encounters with the unexpected or unlikely are perceived as wholly negative. There is a related body of stories concerning *encantos* (enchanted places), including the two that follow here.

The Treasure of Panchito Tomalá

Well, this is something that happened to my grandfather once. . . . Since he was walking around in the forest he had hunting dogs with him, and one day

his luck arrived. Along the base of a hill he found a huge, green gourd, and he stared at it. It was about ten meters below where he stood, [topped] with a thin little candle that was lit, but when he walked down and passed his hand [through the flame] it didn't burn him. On one side of the gourd a snake passed, on the other a porcupine, and on a third side a hen. He drew a cross on the ground and began to dig with his hands and machete. He found a clay pot full of money, the older bills, fives, tens, and twenties, all lightly burnt. He put a few of the toasted banknotes in his pocket and left with his dogs, and later he told his wife, but [as a secret] for her alone. They put the money in a trunk, and the next morning he left for Machalilla at dawn.⁴ He brought [back] lots of food and other things and still had money left over. The people in the market noticed the charred banknotes but didn't do anything about it.

When they needed [more], he went off to get more money out [of the pot] and later he ran into some friends.—Panchito, let's have a drink!

He paid for the drinks with a charred banknote. Everyone asked him where on earth he got the money from and he said he had been working. Later he returned home.

Another time he returned to the mine and took out more money but the pot was still full. He returned home and his wife hid it away, but told him not to go talking about it. On Saturday he again asked his friends to have a drink with him and they asked where he got the money (they were drinking in Calderón[s] bar) and he replied it was from work. But later, when they were more drunk, they made him tell them about his pot of money. The friends said,—Why don't we go get all of it at once?

They all agreed to go the next day with two feed sacks. His wife chided him for telling others about something intended just for him. In the morning he went with his friends and they looked for a way in [to where the pot was], but everything had grown up and they didn't find anything, not the pot of porotillo, nothing. His friends said he just didn't want to tell them where he was hiding his mine, but he couldn't find it. His wife again yelled at him that the luck had been intended for him, not for everyone.

Later, the authorities from Machalilla were looking for my grandfather, they wanted to throw him in jail, but they couldn't find him.

I didn't see that; people told me about it. (as told by O. Tomalá, June 2005; my translation)⁵

The Enchanted Cave

Once there was a man who came down from Pedro Pablo Gómez, past Julcuy, Piñas. . . . He always came down before dawn, because back then there weren't many cars, so he came down either on a horse or a donkey. So one day he came down along the road between Julcuy and Puerto López, passing by that place in Vueltas Largas just below [the settlement] where there are some holes in the middle of that mountain, so when he passed during the night, around four in

the morning, he saw that below the opening there was a beach along the river, totally covered in fruits, there was watermelon, tree tomato, cantaloupe. So he thought to himself and said,—I passed this place two weeks ago and this field wasn't here. It's so pretty. Tomorrow when I'm on my way back up I'll stop to buy some things.

So he went down to Puerto López and Machalilla and got fish since he always came down with lots of produce from [Pedro Pablo Gómez] like mango, fresh corn, plantain cakes (bollos) they made, and he came down to trade for fish from Machalilla and Puerto López. About three days later he headed back up along the same path and said,—I'll stop to buy food, I'll buy those fruits that were down there where I saw them before.

So he went to see the place where he had remarked on the plot of land and the crops but there was nothing there. Well, they say that there on that mountain there always was some kind of enchanted place in the top part, in the hole, the cave, because whenever people passed by at night, or at midnight during Holy Week they heard noises, and they always heard a cock crow from up there at three in the morning. (as told by A. Ventura, July 2005; my translation)⁶

Stories of *encantos* convey simultaneous sentiments of fear (because the otherwise familiar presents itself in a very unfamiliar way) and of desire (because hidden within the unfamiliarity is a source of something both difficult to access and able to facilitate personal change in some way: a windfall). Nonetheless, as with the *brujas* and *demonios*, the overriding sense is one of lack of control over the otherwise familiar landscape. *Encantos* represent an opportunity, but not one over which an individual has much control.

While the most frequent tales of encounters with demonic beings recount the experiences of individuals walking home alone in the middle of a *fiesta*, or leaving a family gathering to head home past dark, the discovery of an *encanto* seemed more likely to occur when one was alone or accompanied only by one's children in a remote location—hiking home from a neighboring village miles from Agua Blanca, or hunting alone in the rainforest, for example. Although everyone is familiar with the stories, both types are more often told by men than by women, probably because men are more likely to be traversing the landscape alone either far from the community or late at night.

Even in the relatively short time period between my first visit to Agua Blanca and more recent trips, however, I noticed that fewer and fewer people tell the stories as first-person accounts of experiences—now, these are anecdotal stories, often told about Agua Blancans who are no longer living. Jane Schneider noted something similar in Guatemala:

Between [June Nash's] first visit in 1957 and [a later one] in 1980, [highland Maya] villagers acquired electricity, paved streets, and cement block houses with

television aerials on them. In the same period, they lost their sense of control over local ancestral spirits whom they believed had abandoned them to take up residence in a non-Indian town. They also started to level accusations of witchcraft against innovative leaders and entrepreneurs, especially those who did not make generous contributions to the local fiesta cycle. (Schneider 2002, 78)

In his analysis of everyday life in a highland Bolivian community, Andrew Canessa similarly attributes shifts in experiences of the local landscape to processes of globalization and modernization: “In the words of one young woman, ‘[The mountain spirits] have left us’ and another young man said that they ‘are not powerful anymore’” (Canessa 2012, 200–201). Such changes not only affect the relationship of people to place, and of younger generations’ experiences to those of older generations, but also reflect changing patterns of interaction with the landscape more broadly.

The denizens of the *esteros* and forests appear to have been the result of an earlier experiential change in daily life—that associated with the arrival of Europeans. While in local ontologies the landscape has always harbored more creatures than are always visible or more broadly recognized, most of the autochthonous beings—such as *duendes* and *jibaros*—were said to shun human contact.⁷ They might be glimpsed running by, or one might encounter a footprint or other marker of their activity, but people did not fear them, nor do they recount direct interactions with them. The beings thought to haunt the local landscape in more predatory ways are always those associated somehow with Christianity—the devil, witches, or the various European animals that serve as their familiars. Like other indices of colonial encounters, however, *encantos* are described as potentially both lucrative and destructive—sources of both fear and desire (see Bhabha 1994; Smith 2001). The recent disappearances of all these beings from the experiential landscape, however, does not indicate the passing of colonial power structures, but rather an increasing sense of disconnection from the landscape effected through shifts in everyday experience.

Ecology and Globalization

Several of these shifts have been realized, not only through the introduction of technologies and related experiences to Agua Blanca, but also through changing parameters of interactions with a globalizing community and new discourses within which those interactions are increasingly couched.

Early 2001 was a bumper season for tourism in Ecuador. Whale-watching was at an all-time high, Ecuador was on the unofficial ecotourism list of Places to See and Be Seen, and the usual crowd of Americans and Western Europeans was joined by a growing number of young Israeli tourists. Local community members along the coast of Manabí were investing everything they could in tourist ventures; the number of hotels in Puerto López grew from six to approximately fifty in a six-month period.

After September 11, 2001, when iconic buildings in the United States were felled by hijacked aircraft and Western fear of global Others was not only present but increasingly encouraged, Ecuador's economy spiraled quickly downward. Dollarization had already swelled prices beyond what local economies could bear, even with the increased role of transmigrant remittances in the Ecuadorian economy. After September 11, many Ecuadorians abroad lost their service sector jobs and no longer sent money home. Ecuador's principal exports, flowers and shrimp, required rapid air transport, a commodity no longer readily available in the months after September 2001. Finally, international travel dropped sharply in late 2001 and early 2002. In an attempt to recuperate some losses, Ecuador's national park system began to implement new regulations. Local tourist guides were for the first time required to register with the state government, paying fees for official licenses that amounted to nearly an entire season's tourism-based income. The World Bank set up a microfinance initiative in the area, and locals were encouraged to borrow money for projects such as acquiring the license. Repayment, however, would require a successful tourist season, something no one was counting on.

It was during this time that I returned to Agua Blanca for a second long research period in 2002. My stay coincided with the arrival of various unexpected visitors. Several community members from Salango, an indigenous community five kilometers south of Puerto López, came to inform Agua Blancans that a well-known businessman had recently managed to acquire over half of Salango's land, including most of the access routes to the ocean—a critical change for the fishing village.⁸ A friend in Puerto López sent a warning that he had heard rumors that the same man had designs on Agua Blanca's river valley, the only place within hours that was flat enough to construct the airstrip onto which he planned to fly elite tourists into the Park area. The businessman had in fact sent Park-associated government envoys to test the waters, offering to build a new museum for the Agua Blancans in exchange for use of the valley, an offer the community quickly declined. The most disturbing part of this news was that Salango leaders had protested the transfer of their own lands in court, arguing that as indigenous lands they were communally held and could not be sold. The case was thrown out of court, however, when the businessman's lawyer argued that the Salango leaders could not officially document their indigenous status.

In the middle of this crisis, two other entrepreneurs arrived in a well-polished Jeep and equally shiny shoes to demand a private meeting with the community president. The president arrived, but insisted that per regulations all business in Agua Blanca must be conducted in a town meeting. After pressure from the visitors, an *ad hoc* council was formed outside the museum, where I had been catching up with tour guides. Taken for a tourist, I was able to witness the meeting, in which the two men made valiant attempts to raise local concerns about the quality of the plants in the area. The men were affiliated with GTZ, a German development group with tentacles all over the globe. Their stated goal was to collect seeds from *algarrobo* (carob) and a type of *ébano* (jujube) trees to improve them (*para mejorarlas*). After a rousing spiel in

which they explained the vast differences between “first-quality, second-quality, and third-quality” trees, asking the townspeople present if they were really satisfied with their third-quality trees, I asked them a number of questions, particularly concerning the patenting of germplasm and medical bioprospecting, but also about local rights to the improved seeds, and about whether these improved seeds would be able to withstand both droughts and floods, both common phenomena in the area. They quickly left after asking who I was.

Soon after this councilmembers called an emergency town meeting. One of the most vocal participants in the meeting was an older man, one of two Agua Blancans at the time who had managed to secure a position as an official park ranger within the broader Machalilla National Park. He spoke passionately about the dangers of genetic modifications, but also about what was going on in Salango and what he had heard from leaders in other communities at a conference. The most concrete recommendation he and others gave was to warn community members not to sign any documents, however innocuous they might seem.

More broadly, however, the conversation revolved around a growing recognition that situated knowledge and sense of place might be central to maintaining control over land, and the concomitant concern that shifts in how that landscape was experienced had a great deal to do with the introduction of the schools. Formerly, knowledge was transferred from parents or grandparents to children through activity within the landscape and tales about that landscape (see Basso 1996). As each community member lamented this loss of connection, my own memories of the tales I had been told about the places they were naming were reinvigorated, and I found myself picturing the ones I was familiar with and curious about those I was not. Some of the sites mentioned were El Depósito, where people used to leave felled hardwood for the hacienda owners; El Avión Caído, not just the physical location where a small prop plane had crashed, but also a reference to a popular cautionary tale about white greed; El Caballo Muerto, site of a moralistic tale where children, on their way to search for livestock a few days late, had passed the stinking corpse of one of those animals; and La Bola de Oro, a rounded hill where an enchanted source of gold was rumored to exist. Older community members knew the names, the stories, and the best way to reach each of them from any point in the vast communal lands; children often were unaware even of the toponyms.

The meeting ended with a discussion of the best ways to reinvigorate local knowledge, and a discussion of whether I might be able to help community members collect folktales, historical records, and other data for a communal archive, to which I immediately agreed. While Agua Blancans recognized the importance of schooling if children were to participate in their rapidly globalizing experience, they also expressed concern that the educational process as it stood was too focused on irrelevant information. As one of Andrew Canessa’s interlocutors put it, “it is not simply that children spend a lot of time in school learning very little at all, but they spend a lot of time *not* learning about other things” (2012, 200). Our hastily sketched plans to create a team

of archivists felt even to us like an inadequate measure to halt the changes globalizing expectations were inflicting upon the community. Perhaps the encantos, the devil's familiars, had not actually disappeared in response to the installation of electric light; perhaps they had merely grown more canny, and were simply presenting themselves in different forms.

Appropriate Knowledge

Salango's troubles were, after all, just the latest case of contested land rights for communities whose connections to their lands had been threatened almost constantly since the Spanish colonial period. In a slightly earlier iteration of the ongoing struggle over how lands were to be defined and access to them delimited, when the Machalilla Park was created in the late 1970s, government officials tried to oust the entire community of Agua Blanca from Park lands. In their struggle to maintain their land base, locals joined forces with Colin McEwan, an archaeologist conducting research in the adjacent river valley. With McEwan's help, Agua Blancans built an archaeological museum; took courses in botany, zoology, and tourism; and cleared and marked specific trails in order to be able to lead tourists through the more remote areas of the Park. Arguing not only for their right to the land, but also that they were the most suitable and best prepared tourist guides available, the community eventually won the battle and was granted permission to remain within the Park. As their traditional subsistence strategies were increasingly limited through the imposition of Park regulations over the next twenty years, community members learned to rely more and more on tourism—particularly ecotourism and archaeological tourism—as an important economic resource. By 2001 tourism had easily become the primary source of income for most local families.

One downside of Park tourism is that the income it provides is highly seasonal, and community members are often on the lookout for legal sources of income in the off-season, as well as participating in clandestine activities within the Park when they have no economic alternatives. One strategy has been to form professional organizations that can collectively seek funding. In the late 1980s, Agua Blancans teamed up with other local guides to form what was then known as the Association of Tourist Guides of the Machalilla National Park. The Association was originally given minimal financial support from local government coffers, but such resources have dwindled since the early 1990s, when successful uprisings staged by indigenous coalitions from the highlands and eastern lowlands forced the Ecuadorian government to focus resources on meeting some of their demands.

Having lost the already scant economic support of local and state government, local coastal groups began looking for alternative sources of funding. In recent years the number of NGOs in the area has increased dramatically, and many of them are interested in conservation issues. Local groups like the Association now present their funding proposals to these organizations, most of which have international

connections. Tellingly, the Association recently changed its name. It is now officially known as the Association of Naturalist Guides of the Machalilla National Park.

One day in August 2001, four Agua Blancans, an Ecuadorian archaeologist, and I were processing archaeological remains in the museum laboratory in Salango when the museum director poked his head into our ceramics lab.⁹ “There’s someone here to see you, Kimbra—a Wellington?” The five of us in the lab looked at each other—Wellington? But I went to the gate anyway.

As I approached, I could see that a member of the Association, Pablo, was the only person there. Curious, I asked him if he knew who had been looking for me. He held up a diskette and said, “Soy yo, no me reconoces?” (It’s me, don’t you recognize me?) “Of course,” I said, “but there’s been some mistake about the name.” He got very serious, almost annoyed, and continued in Spanish (translated here). “My name isn’t Pablo anymore. No one takes Spanish names seriously. Wellington is much better as a name, more professional, more scientific.” “What do you mean?” I asked, both amused and confused. “That’s the way things are,” he replied. “You have to be scientific.”¹⁰ He proceeded to explain the reason for his visit—he wanted me to proofread and translate a grant proposal for ecotourism.

Local communities in the Andes often seek ways to improve their general living conditions, particularly when the means they have relied on to support themselves are suddenly taken away—as when wildlife preserves, archaeological “intangible zones,” or national parks are created—and, as a result, control over land use is restricted for or denied to local groups entirely. The Ecuadorian state is not known for its generosity toward rural communities, so local groups often attempt to bypass or ignore the state in their search for economic and political support. Such communities have quickly come to understand the value of knowing how to match language to audience in their requests, and they have picked up much of this conscious framing from their state governments. In particular, many groups have learned that when the same old requests are couched in the language of science, they have a far greater chance of gaining economic support. Thus local communities now write grants for projects of archaeological preservation (rather than help in building a site museum that might bring tourist dollars), reforestation (rather than planting fruit trees for community use), or ecological education (rather than a way for tour guides to make money and keep busy in the off season).

Ecotourism, once the domain of foreign investigators and the state government, is now becoming an important arena of local cultural production. In spaces where the government has taken control of material commodities, such as national parks, knowledge itself becomes the commodity most widely marketed by local groups.¹¹ In many cases, this strategy is expanding and even driving Andean participation in processes of economic globalization. By defining their environments and themselves through the appropriation and application of scientific terms, local groups are taking control of their situations within national economies that do not provide for them, marketing their own diverse products (such as knowledgeable ecotourism guides, local

archaeological and ecological site museums, rainforest hikes, and whale-watching tours) on the Internet and by email to established contacts in the United States, Europe, and Latin America (see Comaroff et al. 2009).

Doing research on the Internet, as well as through the more traditional gossip grapevine, locals have also learned just how important language can be in presenting arguments calculated to improve one's position. For example, when I was working in Agua Blanca, locals there and in nearby Salango learned that a prominent Ecuadorian researcher who had done several years of work on a type of water reservoir known as *albarradas* had received an enormous grant—basically to publish the results of that earlier work. They managed to find a copy of the researcher's June 2000 application to the Global Environment Facility for funding \$750,000 toward a total cost of \$3.107 million—a sum that was quickly granted (www.aiddata.org/content/Project?id=40302687; accessed April 23, 2013). Several of them commented to me that the title was probably what resulted in the funding: *Albarradas in Coastal Ecuador: Rescuing Ancient Knowledge on Sustainable Use of Biodiversity*. This title combines a romantic view of the cultural past with a scientific eye to the future, linking colonial-nostalgic tropes of “rescue” and “tradition” with the popular eco-terms “sustainable” and “biodiversity.”

I also managed to find a copy of the proposal on the Web, along with a letter explaining the funding:

This three-year targeted research project will allow for the determination of the long-term use of the albarradas system and *assessment of their value as a relict [sic] of biodiversity* in southwestern Ecuador. . . . Research . . . will also permit [investigators] to *identify the history of sustainable biodiversity* associated with albarradas and may *provide historical vision of the traditional sustainable management of biodiversity* associated with albarradas and the areas' social reality that will feed basic information to programs for environmental management and agricultural development. (www.thegef.org [see endnote for full citation]; emphasis mine)¹²

After seeing this proposal, the local groups I worked with began to implement similar terms in their own grant proposals, such as the one Pablo (a.k.a. Wellington) brought to the door that day. In that particular proposal, not only are phrases such as “conservation and preservation,” “sustainable development,” “resource management,” “responsible ecotourism,” “protecting the environment,” “raising local environmental consciousness,” and “recovering fragile ecosystems” present in every paragraph, the header of each page is emblazoned with the new motto of the Association of Naturalist Guides of the Machalilla National Park, *Educamos para conservar*: “We teach to conserve.”

Thus in these contexts ecology became not only a (legitimizing) field of scientific knowledge and a marker of (fundable) technology, but also a framing discourse within

which arguments for the fulfillment of everyday needs could be couched to local advantage. Local community members saw the successful appropriation of scientific discourse as enabling them to choose when and to what degree to participate in both the Ecuadorian state and the global economy. They interpreted that discourse both as a marker of modernity and progress, and as a pragmatic strategy intended to increase local control over repercussions of globalized changes and state policies. In other words, local communities began to employ the idea and the image of science because they perceived such appropriations as able to facilitate simultaneous local participation in, and local separateness from, the state and globalization processes—thereby granting communities more control in defining their pasts, presents, and futures.

Nonetheless, Agua Blancans consciously recognize certain conflicts between this discourse of ecotourism and conservation and their own daily practice. Locals speak with pride of their reputation for self-reliance; they define themselves as poor, often desperately so, but are nonetheless certain of their tenacity, their ability to survive. As one local observed, “even when there is no money, we always find something to do. There’s always *carbón* (charcoal), we have our fruit trees and our livestock, we know how to go into the forest and harvest tagua nuts or palm thatch, those kinds of things” (conversation with M. Menéndez, June 30, 2007).

This living-off-the-land discourse of local knowledge, based on an intimate relationship with the landscape, contrasts with the discursive strategy of ecological conservation in problematic ways. The idea of a traditional local knowledge that is emphatically not romanticized but made everyday—that is, relying on knowledge of the landscape to enable one to maintain a nearly cash-free economy by utilizing available resources—conflicts with the globally legitimized paradigm of scientific knowledge harnessed to promote and facilitate the conservation and preservation of those resources. Although the discourses may seem at cross-purposes with one another in practical terms—with one emphasizing exploitation of the environment and the other conservation of it—both effectively support the broader goals of local autonomy and preservation of the community and its lands. Agua Blancans were adept at slipping easily from one discourse to the other in order to suit momentary needs.

Health and Modernization

Despite their perception of the potential utility of scientific discourse, in conversations many Agua Blancans also referenced their increasing dis-ease with the role of science in local life, particularly as it grew more and more entangled with ideas about modernity. One exchange I had with a local woman highlights this growing ambivalence. Doña Elisa Albán, Agua Blanca’s retired midwife, shook her head as she answered my question about why local women no longer stayed home to give birth, choosing instead to make the two-hour trip to the town of Jipijapa and its hospitals:

Es la química. There are so many chemicals (*tanta química*) in our food, in our lives. . . . We used to harvest good food from the land, all kinds of food, and

we were strong, people worked hard. Men didn't complain about working in *minga*, they were happy to work for the comuna, not tired all the time like they are now. Women worked until the day they gave birth and did not complain. The children were healthier, they didn't get sick all the time like they do now, and when they got sick they got better very quickly. Now they drink cola, they eat plantain chips and sweets out of plastic packages, nothing is real food, and they are so weak. And the mothers, at the first sign of pain they run to the hospital, they're too afraid to let the little creatures just be born the way God intended. *Sí, señorita, es la química.* (interview, June 20, 2002)

Advanced in years, Doña Elisa and the other local midwives had stopped practicing not long after the Park was created. Many of the first women to leave town to give birth died while doing so; hence a sense of fear came to be associated with childbirth more generally.¹³ Nonetheless, the discourses of science and modernity had already been introduced and, given the absence of local practitioners, these women, who almost certainly feared leaving to give birth and never returning, feared even more the prospect of dying at home—a prospect whose likelihood was predicted by the medical doctors overseeing their pregnancies.

Beyond lamenting local lack of control over what had previously been perceived as a familiar part of life for women, Doña Elisa's comments reflect a new ambivalence toward the myriad everyday manifestations of science and technology. While useful in discourse, in practice science had become doubly disturbing—it was coming to be perceived not only as un-natural, in the sense of running counter to a natural way of life, but also as antithetical to culture, something that might cause locals to abandon cultural practices and community involvement. In other words, even as Agua Blancans recognized the potential of framing arguments in the language of science, they also feared being trapped within its framework and vulnerable to its cultural and experiential consequences: losing fluidity in self-representation, losing access to a range of possible actions, losing control over daily life. While never named outright, this fear manifested itself in discussions of many common experiences whose trajectories—formerly familiar and, if not predictable in specifics, at least expected to fall into a range of expected outcomes—had become entirely beyond the control of Agua Blancan individuals.

Childbirth was one such experience, as Doña Elisa recognized. Over my years in the community, several women have revealed to me their experiences in childbirth. While many have been able to give birth successfully at a clinic in Puerto López—under the care of a doctor who, notably, has sought training in alternative medical knowledge and treatments, and who has known most community members their entire lives—those whose birthing process is stalled or appears to present complications that might not be easily dealt with locally are often sent to a hospital in a larger city, such as Jipijapa or Guayaquil, where rural health insurance is accepted. Many of these women have been sterilized after such births—some apparently against their will or without their conscious consent, as the operations are often decided upon by

their doctors and performed during the Caesarean sections deemed the more modern and safe approach to childbirth. Returning to their everyday life in a rural community soon after such a birth, many lament their submission to modern healthcare, finding it difficult to care simultaneously for their newborns, their households, and their own bodies after such major surgery.

In her work in northeastern Brazil, Nancy Scheper-Hughes describes another midwife's reaction to changing medical paradigms:

Norinha, a midwife of the Alto, explained the curse of Bom Jesus: 'I am seeing things in the world today that I never saw before in all my seventy years. I am seeing healthy women with only two or three living children. In days past they would have had eight or ten children. And before this time we always had good winters with lots of rain, and everyone's house was filled with fresh vegetables from their *roçados* to 'kill' their hunger. No one went as hungry then as they are suffering today. . . . Our lands have been 'eaten up' by sugar. This is a *castigo* [punishment] from God.' 'A punishment for what?' I inquired. She replied, 'For the evils that women have invented and forced on the doctors—abortions and tubal ligations.' Here Norinha links the 'sterility' of women to the 'sterility' of the cane fields. (1993, 32–33)

Norinha associates local changes in the geographic landscape with changes in the landscapes that are most familiar, those of one's own body. As in the Alto, globalizing discourses of modernity and progress also present Agua Blancans with ambivalences that are at once social, political, and moral.

Science and technology as concepts are strongly linked to those ideas of modernity, of progress, of an empowered participation in global flows and processes. The language of science is perceived as mediating between very disparate worlds in ways that do not automatically render local communities powerless. In this sense, local appropriations of scientific discourse reflect earlier uses of other introduced languages of power—including Spanish, Catholic religious language, and legal language—both in the ambivalence of local attitudes toward the power of those languages, and in the limitations of the appropriated discourses themselves to transform local life in positive ways.

Thus in its relation to local ways of life, science has passed from a transformative *discourse* to a transformative *process*, from theory to practice. Like those earlier authoritative discourses, science is viewed as a vehicle to accessing power, but also as a vehicle difficult to navigate. Local manipulations of language are attempts to engage with and reconfigure broader processes of nationalism, global economics, and development, a pragmatic strategy to increase the degree to which locals can participate as agents within their own lives. In the end, however, Agua Blancans worry that although this discursive strategy can be effective, its adoption also limits their potential fluidity; by employing it, the best they can achieve is only to mimic

introduced languages and technologies, rather than producing new, effective discourses of their own.

Bodies of Knowledge

As Doña Elisa's comments suggest, another repercussion of the changes in everyday life since the creation of the Machalilla National Park has been a shift in the ways local medical knowledge is transmitted. Traditional healers and midwives no longer train apprentices in healing practices, in part because that knowledge is denigrated outside the community, and in part because younger residents forced to work within the tourism economy simply do not have the time they would need to apprentice themselves to mentors. Access to much traditional healing has practically disappeared along with its practitioners; Agua Blancans with serious health conditions currently have few options for addressing those concerns. The combination of a perception of the high costs of Western medical treatment and a more general dis-ease with technology, invasive techniques, and bottled medicines lead many Agua Blancans to seek out other options. One of these, in the past decades, has been to turn to San Gregorio.

San Gregorio, as he is known in rural Ecuador, is a long-deceased Venezuelan physician, José Gregorio Hernández Cisneros. Gregorio has not officially been canonized, and in some places he is well known within the practice of *brujería* (malevolent witchcraft). Here, however, Gregorio is considered a saint of the rural poor; images and plaster busts of the saint abound in rural homes. Many who consider Western medicine far too costly an option are willing to part with similar sums of cash in exchange for spiritual operations, believed to be performed by the soul of the dead physician through his acolytes. Several Agua Blancans have traveled to a clinic in the nearby city of Manta to be treated by these spiritual healers.

Upon arrival supplicants to the saint enter a reception area with about forty seats, which several described as "always full." An attendant at a desk gives each new arrival a number, and indicates several small statues of San Gregorio around the room where supplicants are encouraged to light candles and pray together with their families, as their wait can be several hours. When a person's turn arrives, a male or female assistant—described as a nurse—takes him or her to a room. Some claim that one or two family members may be permitted to accompany the patient, but according to others the patient must be alone; this seems to depend on the general condition of the patient (the very weak or elderly are often accompanied).

One person's description is as follows:

They take you to a room and close the door. Then a man enters, saying that he has been granted the powers of San Gregorio to cure, but that you have to trust him and have faith for the procedures to work. He asks questions about what you are experiencing, then tells you how to prepare for the treatment—you

have to take certain teas or pills or eat certain restricted diets, everything at particular times of day—and a lot of these are things you can't normally find, so they sell them in a shop outside the clinic. You also have to pray in particular ways for a specified period of time before returning. He gives you a list of the preparations and prescribed foods, as well as printed copies of the prayers, which sometimes he says should be accompanied by *Our Fathers* or *Ave Marias* or other traditional Catholic prayers. Finally, he tells you to buy a set of white garments. He says to come back in eight days with the white clothes for the operation.

On the day of the operation you wait and pray and then they tell you to put the white clothes on and go into the treatment room. Family can come in and there is a separation in the room; when the treatment is actually taking place family has to go on the other side of the partition. He takes you into the secluded corner and sometimes actually touches the location of the suffering. When he touches you, sometimes you can feel the pain moving around inside you, like it's shifting place. When he's done family has to get you because you feel too faint or in pain to walk.

After that he recommends that you wear the white clothes for six or seven days and gives more prayers and dietary restrictions. He says that his spirit will visit you every night, say at midnight, but you have to say certain prayers for an hour before that in preparation. The spirit comes to see how you are doing. He also tells you to buy a San Gregorio figurine or image for your home, or borrow it from someone, and light candles to it and pray. He also says to return for a checkup after. Sometimes people do return and sometimes they don't. If they feel a little better they might return, but if they don't feel better, or if they're all better, they don't want to spend the money. (A. Asunción, interview notes, July 18, 2009)

Having heard this, I asked what typical visits might cost. Transportation aside—buses to Manta cost about \$3 each way per person, plus taxi fare in the city; seriously ill patients might require private transportation from their home, which would cost around \$40 each way—I was told that in 2002 or 2003, the first visit was \$10 plus around \$30 of prescriptions. The second visit (with the operation) cost \$40, plus the clothes and follow-up prescriptions which could add up to \$80 or more; follow-up visits were \$10 plus the cost of prescriptions. Thus one round of treatment might cost between \$250 and \$500, depending on transportation—at least as much as, and usually significantly more than, the cost of Western biomedical treatment for the same conditions. Given some of the stories about misdiagnoses—one woman, three months pregnant, was told she had cancer, for example—I wondered why people placed so much faith and so much of their income in the treatments. Experiencing another kind of medical intervention, however, I began to glimpse at least part of the answer.

Medical Brigades

At various times when I have been in Agua Blanca, I have been invited to serve as translator for international service groups visiting the community. Frequently, these have been groups of student backpackers wanting to experience life in a rural community for a few days, environmentalists hoping to support sustainable local agriculture or start tree farms, or groups interested in ecotourism. But in 2011, for the first time, an entire busload of students and one professor arrived in the center of town, their bus stuffed to the gills with boxes of gauze, tape, pills, and basic medical equipment. They introduced themselves, via an Ecuadorian college student from Quito, as *la brigada médica* (the medical brigade).¹⁴ Calling the community president and the *sindico* (town crier) into service, they asked that every community member be notified that medical services would be provided free of charge for the remainder of the week, in exchange for mid-day meals for the team. As soon as this had been arranged, they set to work.

Within an hour brigade members had commandeered both the recently renovated church, whose interior would serve as the dispensary and whose patio was deemed adequate for triage-type interviews, and the town hall, where plastic sheets were rigged up as impromptu barriers between cots where patients could be examined. Learning that eleven US students and one professor were in town for a field school, they also called us into service as translators. For the remainder of the week, we acted—at times quite uncomfortably—as the mediators between the mostly inexperienced brigade members and the community members being treated.

We were told that one of us would accompany each person seeking treatment through the process. The patient would first be directed to the church patio, where first-year medical students would record basic biometrics (height, weight, blood pressure) and conduct a brief interview, using us as translators, designed to identify the medical issue at hand. After this we would accompany patients to the town hall, where second-year students, overseen by their instructor, would conduct other analyses, discuss treatment options, and hand out medical scripts to be filled by the Quito student and his local assistants in the church.

What ensued contrasted sharply with the precision and efficiency of the initial setup of the medical camp. Within half an hour the frustrations of both community members and medical students were palpable. Several of the medical students had already commented to one another or to us their impressions that community members were whiny, needy, or taking advantage of the situation and inventing illnesses in attempts to get large supplies of drugs: if one really suffered from this condition, one would already have sought care elsewhere; if a person had not been to a doctor previously, either he was utterly irresponsible concerning his own health or he must be lying about the condition.

In short order the brigade imposed a new rule: patients were only allowed to describe three illnesses or complaints. Community members, sometimes already

made uncomfortable by having to answer questions about their health in front of us and mediated through us, were more confused when, after asking the questions, medical students appeared not to want the answers, curtailing replies and shooing people off toward the town hall once they hit the arbitrary limit of three complaints. Our students were also uncomfortable, first not wanting to bear witness to the responses to what they perceived as prying and personal questions, and then feeling even more helpless when told to translate replies and cut their hosts off in the middle of their narrated medical histories. We had our own cognitive dissonance; even knowing community members as well as I generally did, I had no idea they were experiencing so many symptoms any of us would have considered debilitating—after all, nearly every one of them worked from dawn to dusk each day without complaint—but their descriptions of their own conditions were clearly honest and, if anything, stopped short of encompassing the full extent of their experience.

Within the town hall itself, confusion also reigned. Students whose primary knowledge of medical conditions, examinations, and diagnostics derived from decontextualized biomedical texts were struggling visibly to reconcile the health indicators they had memorized with the human beings in front of them. When the lunch break arrived, rather quickly that first day, medical students poured out their frustrations to us, then left to eat in the local tourist restaurant as had already been negotiated. I met with our students and the town president. We all voiced concerns that ranged from maintaining individual privacy with respect to health conditions, to the medical students' apparent lack of awareness of what conditions were most likely to be present in the local setting, to whether this would ultimately prove beneficial or detrimental to the community. The president's position was that perhaps some would find relief for conditions that would otherwise go untreated—children could be treated for endemic parasites; adults could gain access, if not to long-term solutions for chronic conditions, at least to analgesics with which to treat momentary symptoms. He also dismissed our concerns about privacy, saying that everyone suffered from more or less the same range of maladies so no one would be too embarrassed (our students aside). He did, however, ask me to speak with the physician-instructor in charge of the group to explain some of the local context—even he was already aware that misdiagnoses were taking place. Finally, he asked us to remain present, both because he thought community members felt safer with a familiar face at their side, and because even given our students' unfamiliarity with medical terms, without us the language barriers would be insurmountable.

I then sought out the instructor. She was kind, and it was obvious that her goals included expanding her own students' horizons and awareness of the diversity of patients in the world, as well as doing service work to help others. She was also already somewhat frazzled, however, concerned that the supplies they had brought would not be nearly adequate to cover conditions, that Agua Blancans would not follow instructions concerning dosage or frequency of medications, and that they would not

follow up with regular biomedical care. I tried to give her a sense of daily life in the community—what activities were common under what conditions, what economic constraints were, what medical conditions were most prevalent (parasites, malaria and other mosquito-borne illnesses, hypertension, diabetes and its effects, arthritis, skin irritations from the humidity and hours spent sitting in wet clothing while washing a family's worth of clothing in a spring, infections). Many of these—particularly tropical diseases and parasites—had not even been covered in the medical students' texts. She agreed to pass on the information, but we were both clearly skeptical that this influx of information would help, given the students' lack of context for understanding it (see Hay 2012).

Misdiagnoses were almost a given, because biomedical doctors and medical students trained within the United States simply did not have the experiential knowledge to enable them to imagine the conditions in which people lived. Nor did their own experience give them an adequate basis for understanding the aspects of local behavior and decisions that so frustrated them as triage interviewers. Agua Blancans did visit medical doctors in Puerto López or elsewhere, but only under three limited kinds of circumstances: when a condition was sudden and clearly life-threatening (an injury, recognizable symptoms of malaria or dengue, snakebite); when it was chronic but isolable from other complaints and relatively inexpensive to treat (extreme high blood pressure); or during pregnancy and childbirth. Locals were generally unwilling to be treated for chronic ailments because of costs, and because it was rare for a person to have one isolable complaint. Who knew which symptom to describe to a doctor or when, if begun, the expensive doctor visits might end? Talking to Agua Blancans, they described their perception of what might occur as a sweater unraveling: pulling on one thread might make the whole thing fall apart.

In this context, then, motivations for visiting San Gregorio become far clearer. Spiritual healing, though similar in costs to biomedical treatment, seems far more cost-effective to Agua Blancans, since a spirit might be able to see to the root of all the problems, heal them all at once—and without the kinds of physical intrusions (such as surgery) that not only are in themselves potentially life-threatening, but also require significant time to heal, time that most simply do not have if they expect their families to eat.

La Suerte y la Muerte

One response to the need to feed growing families, yet finding traditional resources increasingly constrained—whether directly through Park regulations or indirectly through lack of time to plant and care for *huertos*—has been to migrate elsewhere. In March 2005, I was waiting for a bus at the tourist entrance control station along the main road outside Agua Blanca. Two tour guides were on duty, theoretically overseeing traffic in and out of the community and making sure tourists registered and paid the entrance fee but actually bored silly, as was frequently the case in the off

season. One of them launched into a story to pass the time. Recognizing it as one I had heard before and wanted to think about, I asked and received permission to record it.

La Suerte y la Muerte (Luck or Death)

This happened in the countryside, and in that place lived some very poor families, but this family had three sons. It so happened that they were already fed up with living there, because there was no work, they had no food, no house of their own, you could almost say they had nowhere to live. So one day the three brothers decided, saying,—You know, they say that in other places there's good work, good food, so today, let's leave our parents here and the three of us will go.

They came to an agreement and, well, they called their father and their mother, and said,—Well, we're ready to leave this place.

—Where are you going to go, boys?—their father said,—you, who are going so far away?—[because the city was very far from there]. Okay. The second son said,—Mamá, papá—he said,—we're going to search for either luck or death. [They say that's what he said.] That's what we're doing.

Well, the father and mother, what [could they do]? It wasn't death they wished on their children, so it must have been luck, right?

—Very well, sons—they said,—may you have good luck, and may you return.

The boys grabbed their clothes and took off; they began walking. They climbed a very tall, tall mountain, and in the distance they could make out a town, but very far away. So they began again to climb down the mountain when along the path came a very old man, who joined up with them and said,—Sons, where are you going, sons?

—Ah—one said [you see they didn't answer very nicely, instead they said],—today we here are going in search of either luck or death. [That's what they say the boys said, sort of rebellious, like that, and they passed that place and continued, walking on and on and on.]

The man said to them,—Well, from here try to make out a tree that looks very far off, a very leafy tree, and go toward that tree, because that's where your luck lies. Well, since you said luck or death, go there, because it might be there.

So they went walking on and on, on and on, until they reached the tree. But that tree they reached was a beauty, full of flowers, very big, and suddenly that tree that was there, suddenly its leaves began to fall. But when the leaves fell it was money that was falling, money, it was dollar bills that fell rather than leaves.

Then the oldest brother said,—Well, what are we doing here? Now we're rich, we have money, we're millionaires, here's our luck. But we haven't eaten, we have nothing to eat and we have money.

So one of them thought and said,—Well, we're really not far from town. But one of them was younger than the others, he was a little quiet, they said he

was a little dull, right? You know, he wasn't ambitious. So anyway, the oldest brother said,—Let's send my quiet brother, let's send him to get the food and we'll wait here.

But the two older brothers were planning something.—Okay, said one,—all three of us aren't going to be rich, right, we're not all three of us going back, we aren't all going home, why don't just you and I go? Let's do this. Since my brother is going over there [the youngest brother had to go bring food and some sacks to carry the money in], he'll come back to bring us food and when he arrives, well, what else can we do but kill him?

That's what they were thinking.

And the quiet brother who had gone to buy the food and bring the sacks was also thinking about keeping all the fortune for himself, saying to himself,—I'm going to kill my two brothers so I can keep all the riches for myself, all the fortune.

And so he said,—What I'm going to do is, I'm going to eat a lot of food there in the city, and I'll bring them back food, but I'll poison the food I bring them. Since they're hungry, when they go to eat, they'll eat the poisoned food and die.

Those were his thoughts. And that's just what he did.

When he returned to the tree, when he was there again, well, they took the sacks, they took the food, they filled the sacks with the money and everything because they were leaving, when, well,—A plan is a plan—they said.

So they grabbed their brother and killed him.

So they were left with the fortune, but guess what? They were hungry, and the food was right there. One of them said,—Okay then, we're ready, let's eat and then let's go with the fortune.

Just then they began to eat, more and more and more, when [all of a sudden] they fell down unconscious. They were poisoned.

So that's the story, they went to seek either luck or death. And they found both. (as told by G. Ventura, March 2005; my translation)

I first heard this story soon after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the United States. When those attacks occurred I was working in an archaeological laboratory near Agua Blanca and was only half listening to the news on the radio, which I assumed was a *War of the Worlds*-like narrative, rather than an account of lived events. My co-workers, however, all but one of whom were Agua Blancan, broke through my concentration on classifying pottery sherds, their deep concern immediately obvious.

At first I was touched, naively (and self-centeredly) assuming the concern was for me and my family in the United States. Over the next few days, however, through conversations and further news stories I began to understand how the events in the United States affected daily Ecuadorian life and larger economic processes in fundamental ways. The growing trade in perishable commodities like shrimp and

flowers suffered dramatically for months, sending Ecuador's economy into a tailspin. Contributing to this was the sudden downfall of what had been a burgeoning tourism industry, something that was palpably felt in the Machalilla National Park, where investors were still in the process of constructing hotels, restaurants, and other facilities to meet rapidly growing tourist needs.

Beyond this, however, I also began to understand just how many Ecuadorians were abroad—many of the workers who died in the Windows on the World restaurant atop the North Tower were Cuencans, and lists of the missing were published in Ecuadorian papers for months. In the midst of commentaries about the missing Cuencans, Agua Blancans began to talk about their own relatives who had migrated. At that time, none were in the United States, but several were abroad—in Spain and Venezuela—and literally hundreds were in cities throughout Ecuador.

Like the protagonists in the story recounted above, many Agua Blancans have left the community over the years. During the prolonged drought of the 1970s and 1980s, entire families left; while people still remember them, those families currently have no ties to Agua Blanca—no immediate family, no participation in community government—nor do they visit during fiestas. An individual may occasionally return for funerals or similar events, but for the most part Agua Blancans have lost touch with these families; as a result, I was unable to determine much about their whereabouts or current circumstances.

Since that time, however, dozens of other Agua Blancans have left the community; nearly every household in Agua Blanca has ties to other cities or countries, and during major local fiestas—New Year's Eve and the Feast of Agua Blanca in May—hundreds of people return to the community to reunite with family and friends.¹⁵ Several households can count more members outside the community than within it. Furthermore, those who leave the community to labor elsewhere often meet and marry outsiders; thus there are literally hundreds of children born elsewhere, but whose grandparents reside in the community, and households with at least one member born in Agua Blanca are more numerous outside the community than within it. By my last count, there are only fifty-three households located within the three sectors of Agua Blanca, yet in other Ecuadorian cities or abroad I have counted 153 households with at least one Agua Blancan member, and I am only considering households whose members return regularly to the community for visits.

Particularly during the post-drought period, before tourism projects were successful enough to serve as families' primary sources of income, many Agua Blancans perceived out-migration both as a strategy for economic survival, and as an attempt to progress (see Canessa 2012, 255; Mills 1999). The majority went to Guayaquil, the largest city on Ecuador's coast and one of the easiest to access by public transportation. A few families had migrated there previously and had established points of contact for newer migrants; broader communities of Agua Blancans began to form in areas near the bus terminal and along the route traveled by northbound buses, making visits home less logistically exhausting and expensive. Today hundreds of Agua Blancans

live in small areas within the northeastern Guayaquilean *barrios* of Mapasingue, La Florida, La Prosperina, Bastión Popular, and Los Pascuales, and in the nearby city of Durán, just across the river from the bus terminal.

As noted in Chapter 2, within the Ecuadorian imaginary, rural areas of the central coast are constructed as poor, backward, and sparsely populated by cholos or montubios. Local politicians, whether within the province, *cantón* (county), or *parroquia* (parish), treat Agua Blancans as poor, uneducated, naïve, underdeveloped, and lacking basic resources including even the means to assuage their own hunger. Within Agua Blancan narratives, by contrast, Guayaquil is construed as the center of Ecuadorian modernity and progress. The climate is similar to Agua Blanca's, as is the food, and people enjoy similar pleasures—the same soccer teams, music, and festivals. Guayaquil is at least rudimentarily familiar to most Agua Blancans, either because they have family there or because they have had to travel there for documentation, medical care, or as a waypoint en route to military service or a temporary labor position. Of Ecuador's large cities it thus receives the greatest number of migrants from southern Manabí. While cities like Manta or Portoviejo are much closer, they are also far more highly regimented in terms of social class and access; Agua Blancans feel much more exposed there than in the bustling, multicultural milieu of Guayaquil. From young girls hoping to find a position as a live-in maid or nanny, to young men willing to work as night watchmen or as packers for the various industries in town, to young families hoping to find better educational options for their children, many travel to Guayaquil in search of economic opportunities.

Ironically, for labor migration to work as an economic strategy for Agua Blancans, the community itself must continue to exist so that workers are not responsible for the costs of reproduction of the labor force (see Canessa 2012; Enloe 2006). Despite many Agua Blancans' affirmations that working in other places is necessary economically, it is clear that indigenous families living and working in cities still depend on their ties to local communities where family members supplement their food supply, support new mothers and their infants, and provide the space for workers to recover from illness or injury. Families in Agua Blanca also represent a more generalized fall-back position in case of job loss or other calamity; grandparents are frequently called upon to house, feed, clothe, and educate children when it is too expensive for parents to do so in town. Thus even some of the original incentives for out-migration—education, progress, opportunity—often prove beyond the grasp of Agua Blancans, given ongoing structural inequality.

Agua Blanca, and the coast more generally, may well be constructed within the region as poor, rural, underdeveloped, hungry—but family visiting from cities both want and expect resources to take back with them: huge, human-sized bunches of plantains or bananas; full sacks of oranges, clementines, limes, manioc, papayas, or mangoes; and even the occasional chicken, goat, or bucket of fish (see Scheper-Hughes 1993, 57). While a meal or small container of food might merely signify a nostalgic connection to home, the loads of food carted back to the city suggest a

more fundamental dependency; whether visiting for a funeral, a fiesta, or a close relative's birthday, Agua Blancans in town for a couple of days never leave empty-handed. While they may bring token gifts of their own—a small bag of grapes or plums, fruits difficult to find locally—the reciprocity is heavily imbalanced, as all participants recognize.

Agua Blanca also continues to serve other important needs for its emigrants. During one of my earliest visits to the community, I was living with a family in the lower part of town. As usual for a late afternoon, the family's children and I were sitting on the balcony as I helped them with homework. We looked down at the sound of a mototaxi stopping next door at their grandparents' home. One of the girls called out to her young cousin, who was about eight at the time, as he stepped out of the vehicle. He looked stunned, and we rushed over to see what was going on. As we climbed the steep steps to the front door, we could hear the grandmother's sharp intake of breath. The boy had passed over a duffel bag with a stillborn baby in it; the mother was too ill to travel back to Agua Blanca and had sent her son with the infant to prepare for its burial in the local cemetery. We helped the grandmother clear out a drawer in the dresser as a temporary resting place for the body, and one of the children went into town to find people to prepare a small grave and casket.

While shocking to me at the time, I now recognize that this scenario was unusual only in that the child traveled alone, by bus, with his deceased sibling. Nearly every Agua Blancan who dies elsewhere is transported quietly back to the community, usually in private cars hired for the day. Even the most recent arrivals to Guayaquil know all the other Agua Blancans in town and how to locate them, so in this sort of emergency a family will make calls to relatives, some of whom own cars used as informal taxis, others of whom have connections to friends with vehicles. Collections are taken up for those who cannot pay the \$40 to \$80 for the fare. Those sums, while large in comparison to family income, are still small compared to the potential costs of buying a *nicho* in a Guayaquilean cemetery, not to mention the costs of transportation for community members at home wishing to attend the funeral. Often other Agua Blancans in the city will pool their money and hire a truck; dozens of people pile into the back for an uncomfortable ride back for the funeral.

Thus the relationship, not only between Agua Blancans in the city and their families at home, but also between the rural and the urban more generally, is complicated. Constructed perceptions of the “natural” racialized hierarchy in Ecuador are reinforced through the kinds of labor performed by indigenous people in cities, and the effects of that labor are clearly inscribed upon and within their bodies—people literally embody the imagined indian who, once removed from the rural setting which imparts his noble savageness via images of bucolic pastoralism and archaic existence, becomes thereby corrupted, dirty, out of place (Gregory 2006; Douglas 2002 [1970]; see also Chapters 1–3 of this volume). Ecuadorian constructions of whiteness rely heavily upon this native foil; yet simultaneously, constructions of upward mobility among indigenous groups themselves rely upon the ongoing existence of rural

indigenous communities. However dissociated the two become from one another, the former cannot exist without the latter, even when its members might despise the connotations rural indigeneity implies.

Neither is this intricate relationship unidirectional. Rural indigeneity cannot exist in the imagination without the perceptions both of urban whiteness and of the urban pollutants that indigenous and black migrants embody. In her essay on pollution—again, defined as matter out of place—Mary Douglas takes as her starting point Arnold van Gennep's concept of society as a house with clearly differentiated rooms to which access is limited; passing from one room to another means being in a liminal space, and not all have the necessary keys to cross the threshold from one room to another. In Ecuador, racialized geography provides the house's internal divisions: "Movement from one place to another was highly charged with racial meanings" (Weismantel 2001, 12). But Douglas's main point is not that we never cross the threshold into rooms where our entry is not authorized; it is simply that we set up rites of passage as ways of marking, and re-marking upon, the essential nature of various rooms' distinctions from one another. It is not, for example, that immigrants never cross the border illegally, but rather that when they do, they are perceived as pollutants—matter out of place. They are constructed as not-belonging in particular social spaces because those spaces have been defined in ways that exclude them; rites of passage merely reinforce those socially constructed definitions, making divisions that have been constructed appear natural. In Ecuador, where cities are construed as spaces of modernity and whiteness, people of color, when acknowledged at all, are seen as pollutants.

Racialized geography may erase any overt recognition of urban indigenous people, but cannot do without their presence—leading to the sense of "uncanniness" to which Weismantel refers: "uncanniness . . . is an experience of the strange that is strangely familiar . . . not so much strange as estranged" (2001, 11). Urban indigenous communities are constructed as pollutants, expected to be invisible yet simultaneously ubiquitous; individuals from those communities, once migrated, are unable to be either fully urban or fully rural again. The ambivalence toward the supposedly universal values of progress and modernity find expression in this perpetual liminality, echoing the moral of the story above. Migration might occasionally prove a successful strategy—the exception that maintains the fiction, as noted in the introduction—but only because local connections remain. Thus the title of the story: rather than the either/or, high risk/high reward, luck-or-death stakes of Russian roulette, migrants tend to experience both the good and the bad at the same time, able neither to move forward nor to abandon their efforts at progress.

Everyday Life, Take 1: Reach Out and Touch Someone

Increased interactions with, and knowledge of, the values of a broader Ecuadorian social setting have resulted in other experiential changes in everyday life for Agua

Blancans, in part as a result of ongoing emigration, in part due to changes in local education. The effects of technology are not limited to expanded notions of how indigeneity might be constructed; newly introduced technologies, such as cellular telephony and motorized mobility, have affected how people interact with one another, their health, organization of activities, and constructions of self. In analyzing the two examples that follow, I consider the possibility that local responses to introduced technology are multivalent within Agua Blanca, rather than only negative or passive.

In response both to ongoing urban complaints about the infamously slow-to-install, expensive, and badly serviced land lines in Ecuador, and to the expectations of young global tourists accustomed to constant connectedness, Ecuador's cell phone industry has grown monumentally since 2004. Towers are now everywhere. Tourists laugh delightedly upon recognizing that the same smart phones that experience bad reception in dense urban areas or along major US highways display five bars of signal strength in the middle of Ecuadorian rainforests.

Given the numbers of out-migrants, otherwise known as missed family members and friends, today cell phones are as omnipresent and expected in Ecuador as in the United States. Even the most economically constrained households in Agua Blanca manage to acquire a phone; prepaid cell phones in Ecuador can receive texts even when they cannot send them, and one can send a gift of airtime minutes to a friend or relative simply by typing into one's own phone.

Cell phones are yet another marker of local ambivalence toward processes of globalization and the technologization of everyday life. While their accessibility theoretically enables locals to feel more connected to distant family and friends and safer in case of emergencies, what actually happens is that people become less connected locally and less healthy overall. Rather than running or biking to a neighboring house to check in with fellow community members, people find it more convenient—and perhaps more modern—to send a text message. Women in particular note that the combination of cell phones and motorcycles means that, while they still spend time with others washing clothes, they miss the closeness of walking to and from the river with friends and often no longer have the energy to hike to the homes of distant family.

Everyday Life, Take 2: Moto-Modernization

A related change with similar effects on health is the influx of motorcycles to the community. Ten years ago the only two people in Agua Blanca who even had access to a motorcycle were Park workers. Today nearly every family has one. In a place where a monetary economy has only recently become an aspect of everyday reality for people and where reciprocity and community are carefully protected values, families with few monetary resources nonetheless demonstrate an unusual willingness to pay off motorcycle purchases at exorbitant interest rates. Two moments in the process of

moto-modernization seem worthy of analysis: first, a particular iteration of a traditional celebration where motorcycle ownership played a significant role; and second, the first time a woman in the community bought and learned to ride a motorcycle. I will place each into a broader context and then show how these two events and community responses to them demonstrate both a growing ambivalence toward processes of globalization and modernization and changing strategies of navigating the associated cultural consequences of increasing social hierarchy.

New Year's Traditions in Ecuador

Walking through Quito's parks or riding buses through Guayaquil's busiest streets in December, one cannot avoid seeing thousands of what from a distance appear to be decapitated heads (fig. 5.2). Tied to racks, arranged on blankets, or hanging from the ceilings of stalls and shops are representations of everyone from the Ecuadorian President to recently notorious political, entertainment, or sports figures, as well as nondescript, "everyman" faces, which will be bought and modified slightly to represent infamous or unlucky community members. Every December Ecuadorians across the country buy the heads or make their own and attach them to scarecrow-like bodies made of a stick or wire skeleton covered with old clothes and stuffed with straw, leaves, sawdust, newspaper, rags, or other combustible materials. These



Figure 5.2. Heads of monigotes for sale in a Guayaquil market. (Photo by Alfredo Ventura)



Figure 5.3. Bonfire to burn the monigotes at midnight on New Year's Day. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)

figures, known as *años viejos* (old years), *viejos* (short for *años viejos*), or *monigotes*, are displayed on balconies, doorsteps, and sometimes even in huts constructed especially for them.¹⁶ They remain on display until the night of December 31, at which point they are fêted, danced with, mocked, beaten, and finally burned at midnight, either individually or in enormous collective bonfires (fig. 5.3).

Burning the monigotes is one of Ecuador's most colorful, widespread, and beloved traditions. In some parts of the country, children make the *años viejos*; in others, entire families construct the figures. In cities like Guayaquil and Cuenca, different neighborhoods hold competitions for the best monigotes. The results are intricate scenes displaying creativity both in their conceptualization and in their construction. In these competitions, the persons represented are usually so widely known that even outsiders know who is being socially chastised. Ecuadorians and researchers alike interpret the New Year's tradition as a social or political commentary. Ecuadorians explain that when political or public figures are represented and burned, communities, families, and neighborhoods are symbolically burning the bad luck of the previous year to start afresh. When prominent political figures are burned—and perhaps even more importantly, when their heads are sold throughout the nation in the weeks prior to the event—there is a sense of collective catharsis: we have identified the issue, made our interpretation of the event known, and are ready to move on.¹⁷

Year's-End Celebrations in Agua Blanca

The end of the year, and particularly New Year's Eve, is the second most important local celebration in Agua Blanca. Migrants within the country find it easier to take a few days' vacation during the seasonal holidays and many return home for the celebrations. Although Agua Blancans are nominally Catholic, Christmas itself is not really celebrated as a family event; children in the school put on a Nativity play, after which they receive gifts donated by a Puerto López businessman, but within most homes the only way Christmas is marked is with the installation of a crèche and perhaps a treat of hot chocolate and *panetón* (a sweet, dessert-like bread) at midnight on Christmas Eve.

The combination of the Nativity play and the crèches—and the absence of overt commercialization via the gift-giving and images of Santa Claus that have been adopted in Ecuadorian urban areas—might lead the casual observer to assume that locals are, in fact, devout Catholics who shun the nonreligious aspects of the holiday. Conversations with locals, however, reveal that the play is organized by the local teacher, who feels that the donated gifts reflect well on him, despite his having nothing to do with them. The crèches also bear closer examination. Most use curly moss as a base and background, often incorporating locally gathered twigs and small branches to create a sort of arched covering for the scene. As far as the Nativity itself, however, few if any families own a crèche set, and while several people are handy carvers in other contexts, no one seems to have gone to the trouble of fabricating a Holy Family. Rather, people collect figures from around their homes—discarded baby dolls, plastic animals, other children's toys, or small ceramic favors given to guests at wedding or baptismal celebrations—and arrange them within the crèche.

The result is often more than a little humorous. Two examples I have witnessed, while trying to maintain a straight face, include a crèche with a plastic dinosaur whose open mouth doubled as a handy toothbrush receptacle and another featuring a GI Joe doll army-crawling toward the crèche in an apparent attempt on the Holy Family's life. Whether the scenes are consciously planned or merely the haphazard results of having few resources from which to draw upon in creating them, the overall effect is that of a *bricolage* of kitsch and imposed activities and markers of globalization, one which could easily be read as yet another underhanded commentary on commercialization.

By contrast, New Year's Eve is a hugely important local celebration. Again, many migrants return home for the celebration, which includes a soccer tournament throughout the day, followed by a huge, all-night-long dance outside the church.¹⁸ During the dance particular moments are marked: a collective meal, the reading of monigotes' wills, and a dance with the monigotes prior to their demise in a bonfire just outside the circle of the dance at midnight. While the monigotes burn, locals form two concentric circles and go around hugging one another—any lingering tensions not addressed via monigotes' placards are released in this collective catharsis and reaffirmation of community ties. Many individuals and families begin preparing their monigotes weeks in advance of the event.

In small communities like Agua Blanca, monigotes are handmade, often with heads hand-carved from balsawood or with everyman heads bought in nearby markets and selected for their resemblance to particular locals. Rather than effigies of public figures, the puppets represent community members, usually those who have had a string of bad luck during the year—the woman with four toddlers who is again pregnant, the father who gained more weight than his wife during a pregnancy—or those who have committed some publicly-known misdeed—the husband suspected of infidelity, a local with too many ties to outsiders. The goal of the representation and burning of these monigotes is, in the first instance, to demonstrate solidarity with the person having the bad luck. It is a way of conveying an understanding that situations were not one's fault and that the community wishes the person better luck in the coming year. In the second case, constructing the monigote allows the community to make public commentary on the misdeed. Generally, however, the celebration has no coherent theme beyond that of a community that knows itself and its foibles.

Burning Desires

In 2006 something else was going on, however. My husband and I had traveled to Agua Blanca in late December to visit his relatives over the New Year's holidays and to set up a field school for the following summer. Upon our arrival we settled into the house with his father and grandmother, and the next morning we headed down to the soccer field to watch some local matches. As we approached, we noticed a group of monigotes set up next to the field—one behind a desk with a cardboard computer on it, one on a bicycle, and two standing up (fig. 5.4). Each had been made by a different family or group of friends.

As people showed up to play the community began to comment on the monigotes, particularly on the one in front of a computer—a prodigal son who had left the community only to return with political aspirations and an inflated sense of self (fig. 5.5). A placard around the monigote's neck, whose wording was changed several times over the next few days, originally read "I alone have the key," referring both to the password required to unlock the computers and the physical key to the computer center. This man was being parodied for attempting to control access to the local computer center recently built by foreign volunteers—something of a parody in itself, given that there was no internet connectivity in the village. The subtext of all this was that the man was trying to put himself above his peers, something highly frowned upon given the importance of collective values within the community.

Throughout the soccer games that afternoon, we both heard about and witnessed another change in the community—a few individuals in town with a little extra tourism income had decided to buy motorcycles, and spent the day roaring by with one or another family member holding onto the back of the bike. As both the soccer matches and people's comments continued, we noticed that one of the original viejos had been taken away, apparently to be repurposed. Upon its return, it was poised on a motorcycle, placed next to the monigote on the bicycle (fig. 5.6). Later that day and the next, when the tableau was moved to the front of the museum in the center



Figure 5.4. Monigotes on the soccer field. Note the figure second from the right on the bicycle. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)



Figure 5.5. Monigote of the man controlling access to the computer in Agua Blanca. Next to him is the monigote of the man still on his bicycle. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)



Figure 5.6. Monigotes in front of the museum on New Year's Eve. Note that most of the original monigotes have been "repurposed" and positioned on motorcycles. (Photo by Kimbra Smith)

of town where the collective celebration would later be held, several more monigotes were added. All of them, with the exception of the one on the bicycle and the computer operator, were now seated astride or standing next to motorcycles. Thus by the beginning of the festivities on New Year's Eve, the space in front of the museum was completely filled with monigotes, all in a line on their respective transportation, headed by the first figure at his computer desk. The sheer number of puppets on motorcycles heightened the air of absurdity of the scenario, situated as they were along the edge of a dusty plaza at the end of a five-kilometer dirt road.

Traditionally across the country whoever makes a monigote includes a *testamento* (will), a written document explaining, usually in a humorous way, just what the person has done to merit public attention and immolation, and dividing his or her worldly possessions for those who remain behind. The wills are placed on or nearby the viejos and are read aloud, by their authors or by a person selected or self-appointed to read all the wills, to the gathered community members before the monigotes are burned at midnight. This portion of the celebration draws the community together in a collective recognition of past mistakes, bad decisions, or political missteps. Again, amidst the broader drunken festivities of the end of one year and the beginning of the next, catharsis is reached.

In Agua Blanca monigote testaments are modeled after local understandings of the legal documents for which they are named. They list every single item a person owns, and the person chosen to inherit each, selections generally made either to enhance the commentary already being made by the person's inclusion as a monigote or for maximum comic effect. The irony of the entire event is deepened by the fact that, unlike many Ecuadorians in other parts of the country, local people neither leave wills nor inherit from others. As members of a traditional community, Agua Blancans cannot individually hold land, nor do they tend to accumulate other types of possessions beyond a few cows, goats, or chickens. Generally, rather than describing wealth, Agua Blancan testamentos allow everyone present to laugh at their common dearth of possessions.

This year, however, the placard around the neck of each monigote seemed to coordinate with all the others, collectively reinforcing two messages. First, it was immediately clear that people were aware and wary of the potential for hierarchy inherent in the sudden focus on acquiring motorcycles, something only five or six individuals had thus far been able to do. The decision to represent these individuals—again, in some cases repurposing monigotes originally intended to represent others—reflected a collective strategy community members employed both to comment on and to attempt to control or combat what they perceived as destructive foreign values, including the desire to consume and to compete with one's neighbors. In this sense, the cultural critique put forth through the celebration can be seen as a way of publicly defining and highlighting important (collective) cultural values, and of attempting to limit challenges to those values by displaying and mocking their antisocial qualities. The fact that all but one of the motorcycle owners had readily agreed to lend their bikes for the tableau emphasizes their own feelings of guilt at increasing the potential for social schism. The decision to leave one monigote representing a community member from the poorest sector of the valley on his bicycle reinforced the message that inequalities within the community could be exacerbated by these purchases.

The second message, however, demonstrated that the protest was not to be read as resistance to change or to the motorcycles themselves, but only to the introduction of hierarchies. Rather than a list of possessions, each monigote's placard named an activity that individual was known to perform frequently (visiting family, working in nearby Puerto López, even cheating on a wife). In essence Agua Blancans were rewriting the narrative of the motorcycles—they were not material objects denoting differences in access to wealth or power, but rather tools used to accomplish everyday activities more easily.

During the communal celebration on New Year's Eve, as every year, at the stroke of midnight these monigotes were danced off to a bonfire, where Agua Blancans symbolically burned the tensions of the previous year to start afresh. As we have seen, the tone of this particular celebration expressed tension and discomfort with the incursions of globalizing processes within community life. Since that December, however, most Agua Blancan families have acquired a motorcycle, shared generally by the male

head of household and his male children, or occasionally purchased by the male children within a household in a collective effort. Given the paucity of cash flow in a typical Agua Blanca household and the exorbitant interest rates charged by vendors, why are there now so many motorcycles in the village? In a sense, this can be read as one way not to permit globalizing processes to introduce foreign values or processes of competition between neighbors—rather than accepting those values, people prefer to sacrifice as individuals in order to re-produce a more egalitarian community.

Driving Motivations

Motorcycles have been central to negotiations over processes of modernization and globalization in other ways as well. In 2009 my husband and I were in Agua Blanca running a field school. One day soon before our departure the wife of a close friend of my husband asked if we could talk.

Nicknames are common within Agua Blanca, particularly for males but also often for females, to the degree that people sometimes have difficulty recalling one another's real names. This particular woman, Lucía, was known throughout the community by the nickname of *la niña de la selva* (the jungle girl). Alone among the younger generations of community members, she had been raised by her grandparents in the higher tropical rainforest area of San Sebastián, an area once inhabited by a few families but later abandoned by all but one couple, who took their granddaughter in to help them with everyday tasks. Lucía's nickname referred not only to her personal history, but also to her attitudes and physical practice, which were perceived as not quite within the norms of expected female behavior in Agua Blanca. Lucía gambled with the men, told raunchy jokes in mixed-gender gatherings, spoke up in public meetings, played soccer, and generally comported herself in ways usually read as male. Lucía had also participated in workshops for local crafts and had become one of the most prolific producers of sustainable jewelry for tourists, meaning that she had her own income.

As my husband and I walked with Lucía, she told us she wanted to purchase a motorcycle but did not want to negotiate a loan with any of the predatory businessmen in nearby Puerto López, who might refuse a loan to a woman anyway. We had to tell her that we simply did not have the amount she would need for the motorcycle. She said not to worry, that she would just keep saving.

When we returned in 2011, within hours of our arrival we heard a muted roar. Glancing across the balcony, we saw Lucía confidently astride one of the largest bikes in the village, her husband and three children riding behind her (fig. 5.7). Over the next few weeks, we realized that while both Lucía and her husband José used the bike for errands (including bringing her heavy loads of handmade jewelry from her home to the artisan's center almost two miles away), Lucía also used it as a way to negotiate the boundaries around local sensibilities and shifting perceptions of gender roles in a globalizing context. Since purchasing—and learning to ride—the bike, Lucía's nickname had been changed from “jungle girl” to “la vieja Lucha,” referring overtly to her change in age status (from girl to old woman—although she is only in her 20s), but also, more covertly, implying a certain continued ambiguity of gender.



Figure 5.7. Lucía on her moto. Note the abandoned tour boat in the background (see Conclusion). (Photo by Emily Hecker)

Perceptions of gender themselves have been deeply affected by globalizing processes and the related local shift to a tourist economy. Throughout the remembered and recorded history of Agua Blanca, until approximately the mid-1970s, women and men participated in communal events, public life, and even public office equally. Archived photos of the community show women present and participating actively in every aspect of community life. When I arrived to work in Agua Blanca for the first time in 2001, however, I rarely saw women. At the time I was excavating there at the behest of the community, interested in maintaining control of their lands within a national park growing fast in popularity.

Although we worked with ten excavators from the community, the other archaeologist, two student volunteers, and I lived in an empty structure near the center of the community but without immediate neighbors. For most of those first six months I spent there, although I saw children every day, women were all but

invisible. I had met a few—the wife of one of the Park rangers, the woman who cooked our meals, and one intrepid soul who joined our crew for the lab work, replacing her husband who was needed for a construction job—but I felt very awkward with the others I only occasionally met while walking from place to place in town. They averted their eyes, mumbled greetings, and continued on their way. In fact, it took me several months to realize that most of my crew members were married—women were not visible, not mentioned, and very rarely participated in town meetings or other venues.

What I learned over the next few years working in the community was that Agua Blancans were not only deeply aware of many of the discourses associated with globalization, but also originally perceived the adoption of those discourses and associated practices as a potential political tool, as a marker of the modernity they were so often discursively denied through racialized national geographies and gatekeeping definitions of indigeneity. Tourists expected to see men performing in particular ways; indigenous women were supposed to be silent and mostly invisible, perhaps glimpsed in their kitchens or hanging laundry. Aware of this, Agua Blancans began consciously to perform as they were expected to.

However, through what began as tongue-in-cheek performances of foreign discourses and practices, Agua Blancans were gradually re-socialized until the precepts of globalization formed part of local habitus. In the case at hand, the formerly gender-neutral community of Agua Blanca began consciously to promote a public image of itself as male-dominated in an attempt to secure, not only tourist interest, but also governmental support and international funding. Over time everyone got used to those roles and internalized them in yet another process of interpretive drift.

Motorcycle or no motorcycle, Lucía clearly does not fit within those internalized gender roles. She very consciously challenges each stereotype every chance she gets, even though she is too young to recall the earlier periods of gender equality. Despite her highly visible dispositions, however, Lucía is not only accepted, she gets along well with everyone and is a close friend of nearly every person in the community. People speak of her with admiration and even pride. Why?

Agua Blancans seem to recognize Lucía as essential to what Paulo Freire (1970) would have termed a process of “conscientization,” or effective pedagogy for social change—shifting what is perceived as everyday. Lucía is at the vanguard of the return of a more egalitarian indigenous ethos, one that was disappearing after three decades of an intrusive tourism-based economy that required acting within expected roles. Roaring through town on her bike, she heralds the return of powerful women within Agua Blanca.

Agua Blancans are still ambivalent about changes related to globalizing processes and are still not participating entirely on their own terms. However, their collective adoption of motorcycles helps them negotiate which parts of these processes they want to participate in and which they would rather reject, reinstalling a strong sense of place. Essentially, Agua Blancan motorcycles are vehicles for negotiating how “global modernity,” as Tomlinson puts it, will—or will not—dis-place them.

Conclusions

Since the Spanish colonial period, the concomitant sense of fear and desire evoked by the Other (see Taussig 1992; Bhabha 1994; Ferguson 2006; Ahern 2007) has been embodied within both labor hierarchies and racialized geographies. With the expansion of globalizing processes, as noted in the introduction, communities and individuals trapped within these practical identities have recognized globalization's potential to facilitate new forms of self-representation for novel audiences. At the same time, however, what is at stake has not changed: control, or lack thereof, over the most quotidian aspects of existence. Through many of the negotiations of globalizing processes described in this chapter, Agua Blancans have come to realize that while adopting relevant discourses may be of some assistance in achieving their goals, discourse alone is not sufficient to ensure the success of their projects—their serious games—and are learning to use spectacle and embodied practice as potentially more effective tactics. Whether consciously performing particular iterations of identity for selected audiences or simply participating in everyday life in new ways, Agua Blancans are coming to recognize both the benefits and the limitations of these new fields of practice.

Confronting Collective Fears

Discourse, Practice, and Interpretive Drift

The commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization.

bell hooks (1992, 31)

WITHIN BOTH DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE the cumulative effects of centuries of racialized geography have meant that, in many ways, Agua Blancans and other coastal indigenous communities have been erased from public perception within Ecuador. In response, as I have argued throughout this book, Agua Blancans have found ways to use both everyday and spectacular practice strategically to shift the fields of cultural production and spark interpretive drift, whether for themselves, for national actors within the institutions overseeing their lands, or for their global interpracticors.

In a recent article psychologists David Amodio and Kyle Ratner introduce a multiple memory systems model for analyzing the relationship between implicit social cognition and behavior—between how we unconsciously understand the social world in which we find ourselves and how we behave in navigating that world. They distinguish among three types of cognitive systems, located in distinct physiological substrates of the brain, which help shape our responses to social situations: classical fear conditioning, semantic memory, and instrumental memory (2011, 145). In anthropological terms, the latter two systems map fairly clearly onto the concepts of discourse—how we learn to perceive categories and situations through framing them semantically—and certain subsets of practice, or embodied cognition. Amodio and Ratner also consider the role of fear, however, which is not only learned far faster than the other kinds of cognitive stimuli, but is also much harder to unlearn and prone to reemerge in the presence of a trigger. They add that “fear-conditioned associations . . . are expressed independently of explicit awareness or semantic associations (Bechara et al. 1995)” (Amodio et al. 2011, 144).¹ In other words, our bodies can express fear even when we have learned to be explicitly aware of our biases and discourses; we

can react subconsciously and immediately to something we fear even when we have learned at a discursive level that there is nothing to be afraid of.

Fear has, of course, been central to the construction of race in the Andes, as in other colonial situations. Considering conditioned, bodily responses to otherness in the Andes, expressed through tropes of the *chola* (market woman of uncertain racial origin), and the *pishtaco* or *ñakaq* (white-skinned stealer of indian fat), anthropologist Mary Weismantel notes:

Market women exist, and pishtacos do not. But this common-sense statement belies the slippery relationship between myth and reality. The women who sell roast pork and boiled corn are real, but the notion of the chola—dark-eyed temptress, dirty Indian, and symbol of the nation—is almost as fantastic as that of the white bogeyman. And while ñakaqs might not exist, rural people have sometimes been provoked to real violence by their fear of them, turning upon those they suspect in gruesome acts of collective punishment. The unreal figures of the chola and the pishtaco hover above everyday life, distorting actual relations between people and recasting them in their own strange image. Under their influence, ordinary people seem alien: a woman with a pile of vegetables is monstrously eroticized as a chola, while a green-eyed stranger with a camera is perceived as a bloodthirsty ghoul. The consequences of such transformations are rarely benign. (Weismantel 2001, xxvi)

Given the similarly ambiguous status of Agua Blancans—after all, they are officially perceived as mestizo or montubio, not indigenous—I thought both about how that ambiguity might be productive in either a positive or negative sense within Agua Blancans' interactions with others,² and about what fears Agua Blancans themselves would have to overcome to achieve lasting interpretive drift.

Aside from death, disease, and natural disaster, Agua Blancans do not display fear under most circumstances, even ones that might be expected. Part of the way they control fear is by maintaining a united front: in a group whose continued existence depends on the ability to uphold community values before those of the individual, mechanisms that enable public commentary on actions that might endanger those values are necessary. Some of these mechanisms are quotidian, employed as necessary throughout the year; giving someone a teasing nickname is one of these, occasionally used as a more forceful reprimand, as I will describe below. Others are more spectacular, as in the case of the monigotes described in Chapter 5. The public commentary channeled through the monigotes' placards and attire is effective precisely because it is not seen as coming from an individual: in other words, commentary can be made public and help redefine acceptable actions without any individual's needing to chastise another.

In both functional and subversive roles (see Brightman 1999), monigotes are thus similar to *koshare* or *paiyakyamu*, the sacred clowns of the Pueblos. Koshares

are capable of both planned commentary and instantaneous response to whatever is occurring in their presence, making them more flexible. However, the monigotes also invite flexibility in interpretation, displayed as they are during the New Year festivities, when the entire community gathers and nearly everyone drinks, lowering individual and collective inhibitions. During the festivities, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the monigotes' wills are read aloud and commented on jokingly; in addition, men often grab monigotes for a dance, making comments while doing so. Thus the license granted to *koshares* in the Pueblos is here granted to the entire community for the limited occasion of the New Year's Eve celebration; anyone and everyone can use the monigotes as a vehicle for airing public concerns in a less serious venue.

Perhaps due to their effectiveness in maintaining social consensus and an ethos of equality, for the most part Agua Blancans seem not to be terribly apprehensive about life in general, even given the ongoing instability suggested by their disenfranchisement and unrecognized status. Most of the general situations I witnessed causing fear involved factors that were both unexpected and generative of immediate and significant risk beyond the control of an individual or the community: watching buildings topple during earthquakes, for example, or feeling a poisonous snake crawling onto one's body from a large bunch of plantains atop one's shoulder. Three instances of collective fear stood out to me, however, and I want to consider each within its broader context before discussing a technique we introduced during an applied field school to help Agua Blancans confront specific fears more effectively.

Misrepresentations

Anyone looking through the dozens of photos in the museum archives would quickly note that, while most community members are represented in the collection, one character appears over and over, present everywhere from archaeological excavations to *mingas* clearing boundary lines, from agricultural ventures to town meetings, from celebrations to political manifestations. Indeed, the person portrayed was one of the first people I met in Agua Blanca, an outspoken participant in community meetings, an enthusiastic tour guide, and an exuberant dance partner who helped keep certain older dances alive in the community. Popular as a tour guide, gently teased by his peers for always making up answers to any question, the man also frequently hosted short- and long-term visitors to the community in his own home or one of the structures surrounding it. I doubt that anyone who has been in Agua Blanca for more than a day or two would fail to recognize him. I had grown close to his entire family, his wife in particular.

A few years ago, however, I was confronted with an uncomfortable situation: within a few months, two separate individuals had come to me to ask for help. Volunteers from other countries, these women had been happily ensconced in his household until each met with a situation she did not know how to interpret, and to which she was not sure how to respond. Each told me that the man had offered to

provide a spiritual cleansing. Apparently after leading the woman to a large ceibo tree far from the community, he would ask her to undress, leaving only her undergarments on. He would then prepare a bowl of burnt alcohol in which he would dip a handful of *perlilla* leaves before rubbing them on the woman's extremities, back, and belly. This part of the ritual echoed the typical cleansing one would receive if diagnosed with *ojo* (evil eye). His treatment did not end there, however, nor was there a question of evil eye in either case. Both women claimed he then proceeded to pass the leaves over their bodies in areas that made them uncomfortable.

On my first occasion hearing of this unusual encounter, I was shocked: after all, I had known the man for years. Admittedly, I also wondered whether the woman had merely misread his intentions—her description of what had transpired was roundabout and vague, and I was unsure anything untoward had actually taken place. I had been the recipient of healing cleansings myself, although never from him, nor at a place distant from the community. Still, the experience was well outside the usual range of expectations for medical treatment in the US and might well surprise someone not prepared for it. Finally, I was not in Agua Blanca at the time; the woman had contacted me in the United States. I decided, after speaking with my husband, that perhaps the man had gone a bit too far but that since the woman was no longer there, and neither were we, there was not a good way to investigate further or to bring the matter to anyone's attention.

On my next trip back I had only been in town for a few days when a young volunteer I had just met asked if she could talk with me. She described her experience almost exactly as the other woman had done, adding that the man had touched the edges of her breasts and quite close to her genitalia. The volunteer was lodged in the man's household at the time and was torn about what to do, not wanting to damage her relationship with the rest of the family. She asked if this was simply a cultural difference, and I said that it was not, that Agua Blancans would be equally surprised to learn of it. After talking with her and getting her permission, I approached the town president, who was upset but who said that he could not do anything on his own—that we would have to bring the matter up at a town meeting and put it in the hands of the community. I felt constrained by my close friendship with his wife, not wanting to reveal information that might hurt her more, but at the same time recognized the potential danger of the situation both to young volunteers and to the community as a whole.

Never have I felt more uncomfortable at a town meeting. The man in question was not present, probably having heard rumors of what was about to transpire. The young woman had asked me to bring the matter up and said she would tell her story if asked. When the moment came, however, she sat there in silence, too embarrassed to say anything. Several of the man's relatives and in-laws angrily accused me of making up stories to harm the man's reputation—although others clearly realized I had nothing to gain, and much to lose, by doing so. Their position was similar to my own original one: that this was most likely a case of outsiders' misinterpretations of

a cultural practice. What finally convinced the angry family members, however, was my statement that, in each case, the man had specifically told each girl not to mention the event to me. Looking at the young woman next to me and seeing her nod her head in agreement, they sat down, deflated. I left the meeting at that point, but several community members later reported to me that they had talked about it for some time. After that meeting the community instated a regulation stating that no individual was to present him or herself as a traditional healer to any visitors, although curing for *ojo* and other illnesses would still take place as usual within the community. Furthermore, no one was to lead tourists to remote locations alone without registering the trip with the individuals in charge at the museum (since individual tourists often requested guided tours both within the community and to the rainforest nearby). Finally, the accused individual was prohibited from leading tours for young women traveling alone and from providing lodging for single women.

None of these limitations was immediately perceptible in everyday life—but from that day on, everyone teased the man, some gently and others less so, by replacing his name with a new nickname: *el curandero del ceibo* (the ceibo healer). Agua Blancans nicknames are one of the mechanisms of control mentioned above; they permit the community to comment publicly on activities or decisions that might threaten the stability of communal organization. The tone is a teasing one, but with a sharp edge: nicknames let the named individual know that others are aware of his or her transgression, and that further actions along the same lines are inadvisable. In other words, nicknames show social consensus concerning a transgression—everyone uses them in place of one's real name for quite some time—and remind everyone where the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable actions lies.

In this instance the man's actions had the potential both to discourage individual volunteers from returning and to result in more general legal sanctions against the tour guides and thereby the entire community.³ Had Park officials or local police been informed of the events, a ban might have been placed on tourism to the community for a time, something that would not only have had economic repercussions, but that might also have placed the community's claims to land rights within the Park in jeopardy. The importance of this particular situation was its potential to undermine ongoing strategies of displacing fear and creating interpracticors, as I will discuss in the conclusion to the book.

Health and Illness

The second circumstance in which I witnessed a majority of Agua Blancans expressing fear—not only through words, but also through stance, through facial expressions, through their very pores—related to health. Each time I have visited Agua Blanca in the context of an applied field school, town council members and I have communicated at length prior to the schools, discussing potential collaborations. We have always taken into consideration both local concerns and students' own experience and expertise in attempts to make our relatively short (two- to four-month) stays as useful

as possible. One of the themes we collectively identified for the 2009 field school was health. Our projects included rehabilitating an unused space within the artisans' center as a health clinic where community members could check and record their weight, temperature, blood pressure, fasting blood sugar, children's growth, and other indicators. Within the divided room was a desk with a computer on which we had placed information in Spanish on various medical conditions as well as individual, password-protected files where individuals could record their own health data; several wall charts and murals depicting everything from inner anatomy to nutritional content of various foods to healthy blood sugar and blood pressure levels; adult and infant scales and growth charts for children; and a curtained area with a cot, stethoscope, thermometers, and a cabinet of supplies ranging from first aid materials to blood sugar test strips and monitors.

Since within this particular field group we had several students who had served as emergency medical technicians (EMTs), wilderness first responders, and physician's assistants, we decided to provide a series of health fairs where students could present information on some of the most prevalent conditions experienced by community members (as reported by the town council), train interested community members in health monitoring—taking vitals and testing blood sugar—to help staff the center as needed (fig. 6.1), and provide examples of healthy meals using local ingredients. The cooking demonstrations generated a lot of interest, and people flocked to the scheduled presentations.

The first health fair, on the potential for diet and exercise to lower blood pressure, was well received (fig. 6.2). Children, excited to sample the foods prepared for the commensal event, communicated their enthusiasm to their parents and grandparents, and the airy meeting room above the central plaza was bursting with energy and laughter. We announced that the next meeting would be held in the town hall, however, as we had a film to show and it would be more visible in a dimly lit space.

On the day of the second health fair, community members entered the hall in their usual jovial spirits, greeting one another, talking, and laughing. Unlike the typical town meetings, attended primarily by men and a smattering of women, the health fairs brought out nearly every woman and child in town, as well as a number of men. As the hall filled we prefaced the event by talking briefly about *azúcar*, the local name for diabetes, mentioning the importance of checking blood sugar levels to identify prediabetic conditions, and the role of dietary changes and regular exercise in controlling the disease. Everyone was still chatting during this part of the presentation, quieting only slightly when we rolled down the blankets covering the windows and started the projector. One by one, the Spanish-speaking individuals interviewed by the filmmakers told their story—not of medical terms and explanations for the illness, but of how diabetes had affected their own lives and those of their families, of their fears, of the changes they had to make and the consequences of not making them (Cartwright et al. 2008). As I looked around the room, I saw not only that the film had everyone's rapt attention, but also that many were silently



Figure 6.1. Community members learning to monitor blood pressure in the new health maintenance clinic. (Photographer: Chad Chisholm)

crying, holding their neighbors' hands, or hugging their children tightly (fig. 6.3). For the remaining weeks of field school, the clinic was swamped as people came in to check their blood pressure and blood sugar levels, pick up pamphlets on healthy foods and the importance of family support, or simply talk to others about their fears. I later realized that it was this sort of fear—not of the medical condition itself, but of the potential inherent in its already present symptoms to devastate the community by sundering its internal ties—that made the unquestioning acceptance of the false healer described below possible.

San Gregorio

In the spring of 2011 I was once again planning to take students to Agua Blanca for a semester-long field school in applied anthropology. Community council members and



Figure 6.2. Community members participating in the first Feria de la Salud.
(Photographer: Chad Chisholm)

I were communicating frequently to ensure that our collective work in the field would address community goals. Their first priority was to find ways to effectively address the growing possibility of external threats to community lands from the petroleum companies prospecting in several regions of the country, including the coast. One project we collectively agreed upon was to start a local program in applied community theatre with two primary goals: first, to create a space within which community members could practice responses to external threats to their lands, and then critique and improve the efficacy of those responses; and second, to encourage women and girls to participate more vocally in communal decision-making processes. Applied theatre techniques would also give the community a chance to discuss potential responses to stressful situations and to experience, collectively, which strategies seemed more or less effective in achieving their goals.

Beginning in August, I had been communicating with councilmembers nearly every week. In October, however, I suddenly found I could not get through. I tried calling other people in town, with no luck. My husband, originally from the community, also began to call all his family members, but no one would answer their phones. Growing increasingly worried, he managed to locate a friend living nearby, and via instant messaging we were able to piece together the story of what had been occurring.⁴

Earlier that year a local man, otherwise healthy, had fallen inexplicably ill. Unable to discern the cause of the pains he was feeling, he spoke with his parents, who convinced him to travel to Manta and seek help from San Gregorio (see Chapter 5).



Figure 6.3. Community members watching the film on diabetes. (Photographer: Alfredo Ventura)

Upon his return, the man spent several days in near isolation, as instructed by the healers. Later, he claimed to have been visited during that time by the spirit of San Gregorio himself, who told the man that in gratitude for the loyalty of Agua Blancans to spiritual healers, Gregorio would permit the recovered man to heal his immediate family members; to do so, he would infuse the man's body with his own spirit. Over the next week the man, fully recovered, spoke quietly of this to his family, many of whom agreed to be treated. In a place like Agua Blanca, however, discerning where to draw the line between family members and others is difficult, at best, and people are not used to keeping secrets that, if told, might benefit others in the community. Word spread and soon others appeared to request treatment. Although he originally refused, within a short time the man apparently agreed to treat them; soon word of his powers spread throughout the region.

By October people were lining up around the patio of his parents' home (both a larger and more convenient location than his own home, and the place where he had supposedly received the vision while in recovery) before dawn every day in the hopes of finding relief. While nearly every community member attended this clinic at one point or another, two individuals suffered from particularly grave conditions. The first was the man's own brother, a community leader whose knees had swollen so severely and painfully that he could no longer walk. He moved into his parents' home for easier access to his brother's care, and was told to cease eating and drinking

until the poisons inside him were purged from his system. As the days progressed he became thinner and weaker; his joints, however, grew enormously. He was removed to an upstairs room so that the commotion downstairs would be less likely to interrupt his rest.

The other patient in serious condition was that brother's mother-in-law, who had suffered for years from advanced diabetes, traveling six hours three times a week for dialysis. In her own words, she was exhausted and ready to give up. She was also moved to a room in the healer's parents' house, and part of each day for the individuals gathered there revolved around prayers for the woman, who no longer left the community for dialysis. Eventually she entered into a coma, but rather than seeking outside help, the man insisted that she was simply going within herself in the final phase of her healing.

As the days passed and she did not emerge from the coma, the atmosphere in the room slowly grew heavy. At midnight one night, the man led everyone to the church and asked for them all to pray. Throughout that night several community members began speaking in tongues, and one woman claimed to be the Virgin Mary. Some left the church surreptitiously, suddenly frightened by the unfamiliarity of everything that was going on around them; many described this as waking up or feeling dazed, but also sensing that something evil was at hand.

Early the following morning the woman's other son-in-law, who had refused to attend any of the healing events, went to the house and demanded entry into the room where his wife's mother lay. The self-described healer denied him access. In a voice that carried easily to the church a stone's throw away, the son-in-law shouted that the woman must be dead, as he could smell her from where he stood, and that if he were not allowed entry he would call the police. The supposed healer retreated without unlocking the door to the room and hid in another room in the recesses of his parents' home. The son-in-law called the authorities in Puerto López; when they arrived and demanded entry, they found the corpse of the diabetic woman in an advanced state of putrefaction.

All of this transpired in the final weeks before field school. During this time we only received brief, disturbing rumors and snippets of information—clearly, everyone was afraid to discuss this by phone. Nonetheless, as soon as my husband and I arrived to make sure things were indeed sufficiently resolved for a field school to be safe for students, we heard more. One by one, people began telling me their individual versions of the story of the events, and I was taken into several back rooms where people played some of the surreptitious videos they had recorded during those days. From the earliest days of our arrival, everyone in the community referred to what happened in terms of performance.

Several of the individuals present had secretly taken advantage of the novel technology of cellphone video capture to record some of what was going on. When my husband and I arrived in Agua Blanca, some of the impromptu videographers invited one or the other of us to their homes, pulling him or me by the hand into back

rooms where, in hushed voices, they told us they had something they needed us to see. Separately, we viewed three or four such videos, each of which was deeply disturbing and hard to watch, given the unexpected behavior of friends and relatives. The deceased woman was my husband's aunt, and while in hindsight everyone recognized that she was already dead through much of the activity going on around her, it was also clear from the video that everyone present had placed trust in the supposed healer. The woman's own daughter was visible on several videos, flailing over her mother's body, speaking in tongues, passing her hands over her mother's prone body to heal her as guided by the man. He could be heard throughout, encouraging the family members in attendance to pray for her and to let themselves be filled by the healing spirit.

The aftermath of this incident can still be felt in Agua Blanca, not surprisingly, given that this represented a particularly potent instance of fear. For some time, however, I did not fully understand the source of the fear Agua Blancans felt. My own response to the events certainly incorporated fear, but mine was based on the uncanniness of the events: the sense that someone we thought we knew—*un hombre poco serio* (a joking man) with whom, in fact, my husband had grown up, played, worked, and interacted throughout his entire life—could be taken seriously as a healer in the first place; that all our friends and family had been so quick to participate; that the quiet community whose tranquility we took for granted could harbor something so seemingly sinister. Once we had seen the videos, we were even more unsettled. To us the most apt descriptor was creepy, a word we repeated to one another frequently over the first couple of weeks in the community before the students arrived. The source of our fear was the unfamiliar, the unpredictable, the unexpected.

The more we talked with people, however, and the more time we had to get past our original shock and reflect on what we had seen and heard, the more we recognized that our fears and those of Agua Blancans did not all proceed from the same source. Most people—nearly every single local community member, at some point, and many emigrants and others from the wider region—had, of their own volition, not only visited the supposed healer in search of relief from ailments, but also participated in the healing rites conducted for the benefit of the deceased woman. Many still displayed icons of San Gregorio in their homes and would probably consider participating in a similar experience if the opportunity arose. While the same sense of disbelief and uncanniness we felt certainly also affected Agua Blancans, other fears proceeded from the potential for concrete repercussions from the supposed healer's missteps, and the concomitant loss of control over how their community might be viewed by outsiders. In other words, the occurrence left the community susceptible to being publicly identified and publicly sanctioned, leading to a more general loss of fluidity in the ways the community could be perceived.

Immediately after the events described above, the police wanted to take the man to jail, something the community would have accepted. His parents, however, claimed he was mentally unsound and promised to keep watch over him. The

parents moved him out of the community to a relative's home for a few weeks while the woman's funeral took place and to give the community some distance, then brought him home, where he remained hidden within their house for several more weeks. When we arrived in January, he was still more or less in hiding; at that time, he was ostracized, physically shunned, and never spoken of, as if he were the person who had died. He hovered uncomfortably outside the town hall during a meeting soon after our arrival—three months after the events described above—and left after about half an hour, apparently realizing no one was going to acknowledge his presence. Even later, when we left the community in May, most people still looked through him as if he were not present at all. Those who did acknowledge him in some way usually did so only indirectly, speaking of him rather than to him, and referring to him as San Gregorio rather than by his name. At no point did anyone shun the man's parents, however, despite their decision to give him and his family shelter in their home. His wife had a harder time, given her active participation in the purported healing ceremonies, as I will detail below. Finally, immediately following the man's return to Agua Blanca after the funeral, he received word that he had been thrown out of the museum association, where he worked as a tour guide—effectively removing him from public view, as well as facilitating his ongoing ostracism.⁵

Acting Out: Applied Community Theatre and Interpretive Drift

As noted above, one of the projects field school participants had agreed to focus on was the development of an applied community theatre group. In the aftermath of these disturbing events, however, people in the community were extremely wary of any kind of public performance, and of one another. Close ties between community members had been sundered—suddenly, whether people had participated or avoided the center of town, whether they had performed actively or simply watched, whether they were related to the false doctor or not, all took on great importance, and community members had lost trust in the solidarity they had previously felt with one another. Parents did not want to let their children participate in theatre; adults were concerned that they or their spouses would be perceived as dangerous performers, as fabricators. For the first month of field school we focused entirely on other projects.

However, in late February, national processes of petroleum prospecting were rumored to be starting up again, and the council decided that theatre would be worth a try, simply as a medium through which shyer Agua Blancans could practice speaking publicly. The field school students and I delivered invitations, but on the first night of theatre group, only six of the seventeen originally interested parties showed up. One was the false healer's wife; others were close relatives of the woman who had died. We began with some breathing exercises designed to help participants learn how to project their voices and to feel calmer about acting, especially given the palpable tension in the room. The student leading the exercises called out, "*respira, respira*"

("breathe, breathe"), and suddenly everyone froze. The deceased woman's daughter muttered, "*sopla y respira*" ("breathe out and in"), and the man's wife ran out of the room in tears.

I learned that this phrase was one the man had used in the treatment process. Basic language was now capable of sending community members into emotional turmoil. We returned to theatre practice, cautiously, and everyone's first efforts were tentative, our own included. In the first two weeks participants varied enormously, and we were concerned that theatre simply was not going to work for us. But then two things occurred. First, there was another death affecting the community, this time due solely to health complications; second, the council received word that petroleum prospecting was reaching the coast, only an hour or so away from the community.

When we reconvened after the funeral period, the change in attitudes in the room was both palpable and contagious. One woman whose mother had recently died of diabetes-related complications asked the group to present something on healthcare to the community. Through field schools in the past, we had done several kinds of presentations, food fairs, and film screenings on health and preventive care, but it had always been *us* presenting *to* the community. This would be community members working out the importance of dietary changes, family support, exercise, and other issues for themselves.

Within two weeks we had collectively prepared a presentation for an event in town. In front of all their friends, relatives, and neighbors, four otherwise quiet community members acted out the parts of a mother with advancing diabetes, a father with no patience for dietary or other lifestyle changes, a son working in another city but home on a visit and very concerned about his mother's declining health, and a daughter whose attempts to finish high school were being negatively affected by her increasing responsibilities at home—situations the community members were familiar with, and ones with no easy solutions. By the end of their skit, everyone in the room was talking about what changes they should make to support family members who suffered from *azucar*, *presión*, or other common but serious ailments.

After the success of the first presentation, we had several new participants in our next theatre practice, including women and teenaged boys, usually the two quietest sectors of the community. We integrated several kinds of activities into the practices, from games to build confidence, flexibility, and trust, to values clarification exercises sparking honest discussions, to monologues. We worked together every night, finally as a cohesive group. The very process of acting had transformed us from a haphazard selection of people who seemed to be there under duress to a very close-knit group able, not only to talk openly about intracommunity tensions, health concerns, political issues, and other questions, but also to formulate plans to address those questions. Seeing that theatre was helping the community work through the tensions that had been dividing them, two community members took over, directing practice each night and producing more presentations for the community. More importantly,

members of the group began to attend the town meetings and speak up, both among themselves and to outsiders, about their concerns, opinions, and ideas.

Interpretive Drift

As in many indigenous communities in the Americas, Agua Blancans value communal approaches to problem solving; while the community elects a town council periodically, councilmembers do not have any greater access to power than their peers, much as Nuer leopard-skin chiefs had no real power beyond that of mediation (see Evans-Pritchard 1969, 172–77). Town meetings are run by the council, but their input is often actually less than that of their peers within the community, since no one wants to be perceived as trying to push others around. This of course does not mean that there are never conflicts or differences of opinion, but it does tend to mean that no one person gains in power over the others. Any perceived attempt at bypassing communal processes of decision-making for personal gain tends to result in public sanctions including nicknames, teasing, cautionary tales (see Basso 1979, 1996), or other means of calling out the individual.

This approach to communal government, however, means that any external threat is magnified, since each individual tends to follow what peers do. In other words, while an individual Agua Blanco may question the motives of a person proposing a project that is supposed to benefit the community, if peers do not say anything, he or she will not want to speak out because such an action would imply that the individual's opinion holds more weight than the stance of the group. In any town meeting, ideas presented are followed by what can be hours of seeming silence, as people look around the room to read body language, mutter to close friends and family members, and basically reach a bodily consensus that is perceptible before any vote is taken. When decisions must be taken individually, or an event requires a rapid response, however, this subtle system of decision-making breaks down, as it did in the false healer's case. Everyone becomes vulnerable.

What theatre accomplished, in this setting, was to allow individuals to represent roles of people other than themselves, bringing divergent ideas into the open and facilitating much deeper discussions of the pros and cons of specific decisions. Our practice sessions, where we listed the range of potential human responses to situations and then had individuals give monologues representing positions divergent from their own, fostered flexibility in people's discussions and allowed them to talk about their own positions without feeling that they were attacking their peers. Participants learned to speak up, and both the town council and the group of tour guides running the local museum asked the theatre group to help them practice responses to common problems. Despite the clear benefits of using theatre, and people's success in employing theatre techniques in confronting both everyday and unusual issues, however, people still expressed grave concerns with acting, which they still perceived as dangerous.

As noted in Chapter 3, anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann in her work on witchcraft in modern England describes a process she terms *interpretive drift*. In her analysis, practical engagement with new ideas through group practice enables people to absorb and reproduce habits that would otherwise provoke either cognitive dissonance or a stance of outright rejection of those habits. However, Luhrmann describes interpretive drift as “the slow shift toward belief,” and posits that “obviously action can be guided by belief. What tends to be less recognized . . . is that belief can be guided by action” (1989, 307, 310). What she is suggesting is that practice can shift the discourses that guide our interpretations of the world gradually and without conscious intent.

What I found in this case, however, was that the people in Agua Blanca who were *practicing* performance every night still felt uncomfortable when *talking* about it. Their practices on a daily basis had clearly shifted—formerly silent individuals now spoke up in all kinds of circumstances, and theatre was helping the entire community work through the tensions that the healer’s performances had provoked—but their underlying beliefs that acting was dangerous, dishonest, and destructive of community ties were still very consciously held.

What the current case suggests is, first, that applied community theatre can be an exceptionally effective technique for shifting practice, working through community tensions, and helping individuals recognize themselves as reflexive agents able to speak out, produce positive changes in daily circumstances, and thereby gain more control over their own lives. Second, however, it suggests that the relationship between practice and interpretive drift may be complicated when fear is present; discursive shifts and changes in explicit awareness may occur far more slowly, if at all, if participants have experienced significant fear. Thus the possibility of cognitive dissonance is enhanced, emphasizing community members’ need to address fears more directly for shifting practice to be maintained over time.

All these examples of significant fear have as their common denominator a loss of control over group practice, visibility, and self-determination. In other words, in all cases, the necessary conditions for interpracticality were being obstructed. Interpracticality relies on interpretive drift—those participating shift their practice collectively, thereby changing their dispositions and, ultimately, the rules of the game guiding their interactions on a social field. As these examples show, however, when significant fear is present interpretive drift becomes more problematic to produce; it is in a sense less immediate. One of the great productive strengths of interpracticality as a methodology of decolonization is that it is not necessary for every participant—every player on the Bourdieusian field—to be consciously aware of shifting practice, precisely because interpretive drift is a form of practice that gradually changes people’s dispositions and discourses. Again, as Luhrmann defines it, it is the “slow, often unacknowledged shift in someone’s matter of interpreting events as they become more involved with a particular activity” (1989, 312). When the “slow shift toward belief” is hindered through fear, Agua Blancan projects of decolonization are themselves threatened, leading to even greater fear and intracommunity tension.

INTERPRACTICALITY

*displacing
fear*

Invisible, Inc.

Many subaltern struggles can be seen today in terms of place-based yet transnationalized strategies—or, more succinctly, as forms of place-based globalism.

Arturo Escobar (2012, 15)

WHEN I WAS IN AGUA BLANCA for my first lengthy stay, co-leading an archaeological excavation with an Ecuadorian archaeologist and a team of community members, several times each week I would hear a knock on my door in the evening and open it to find someone from the community council, asking that I help with a new letter. I must have typed and printed dozens of letters during the months I was there, directed toward everyone from the Ecuadorian Minister of the Environment to the Minister of Culture to the Mayor of Portoviejo to heads of NGOs, people with whom it would never have occurred to me to correspond under normal circumstances. Some letters requested materials to build barbed wire fences around various archaeological areas; others expressed concern about recent Park activity. The majority that year, however, outlined the circumstances surrounding the *fibra* (a fiberglass boat with an outboard motor), more aptly described as a sort of beached whale in the center of Agua Blanca.

Prior to my introduction to the community, Agua Blancans had begun to complain to Park officials that they ran many tours but could never make ends meet, while the Park itself posted significant revenues. Perhaps to quell the incessant barrage of letters, Park officials had agreed to grant Agua Blancans permission to use the boat to run whale-watching tours and make more money that way; however, the community members were never given papers of ownership to the craft. Originally used by Park rangers for trips to the Isla de la Plata, where the Park maintained an interpretive center, the boat was old and barely working. Although designed to have two outboard motors, the vessel had somehow lost one, while the other was not functioning at the time of its presentation to the community. Using their own funds, tour guides in Agua Blanca paid mechanics to fix the motor. They patched holes in the boat, painted it, and rented a storage space for it in Puerto López. After a few trips, however, the motor gave out entirely; at this point, mechanics told Agua Blancans it was unfixable.

In essence, then, Agua Blancans ended up paying money to fix Park equipment to which they had not been ceded ownership; rather than earning more money from tourism, they had lost a significant sum. When I arrived they were in the midst of

negotiating with the head of the Instituto Ecuatoriano Forestal y de Areas Naturales y Vida Silvestre (INEFAN, the Ecuadorian Institute of Forestry, Natural Areas and Wildlife) for both money to fix the boat and the documents of ownership. To this day that case has not been resolved; the fibra is ensconced in weeds at the edge of Agua Blanca's plaza, testament to the inequalities inherent in the distribution of Park resources. While the letters I typed on the community's behalf proved fruitless, they did nonetheless give me some insight into the local *modi operandi*, suggesting that I pay attention to how both conflict and externally imposed limitations were handled at the local level.

Official and Unofficial Justice

Sovereignty implies "space," and what is more it implies a space against which violence, whether latent or overt, is directed—a space established and constituted by violence.

Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974], 280)

French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's stance on sovereignty assumes that borders are neither neutral nor silent, but emerge as the result of contestations over territory, and that territory (as opposed to land) cannot be perceived as such in the absence of borders—so without violence, we would not have a sense of rights to a particular space. It makes sense, then, that in constructing a sense of communal territory, Agua Blancans would pay particular attention to how to deal with violence and to selecting appropriate parties to witness or otherwise acknowledge what are, in effect, their affirmations of sovereignty (see Erazo 2013, 5).¹

Agua Blanca's territory, while communally held, officially lies within the jurisdiction of Machalilla parish. Additionally, of all the neighboring communities and towns, the fishing village of Machalilla maintains the closest connections to Agua Blanca, through marriage ties, collaborations on fiestas, political gestures, and other events. In theory any legal or public safety issue in Agua Blanca should be dealt with by the authorities in Machalilla. Nonetheless, I have never discovered a single case where Agua Blancans actually have appealed to the police or the justice system in Machalilla. Machalillans are, after all, extended family to Agua Blancans. As they are unlikely to commit violence against Agua Blancan territory or to challenge prevailing sovereignty, there is no reason to involve them in disputes. As with the letters to officials in national and regional governments described above, Agua Blancans tend to "jump scales" (see Ferguson 2006, 174) when addressing violence within their territory.

This strategy becomes more obvious when considering it in contrast with Agua Blancan responses to internal strife. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, community members generally resolve conflicts involving fellow Agua Blancans either indirectly, through mechanisms for rendering indiscretions public such as making a monigote or

inventing a nickname, or directly, through confrontation in a town meeting or even, under unusual and more personal circumstances, a fight. On occasions when outsiders are involved, however, two distinct strategies may be employed.

In circumstances where time is of the essence, a community member who discovers something going on will raise an informal group of Agua Blancans who then address the situation. Membership in the informal group is based simply on who is present and available on short notice. For example, on a few occasions robbers from other areas have visited the Machalilla National Park to take advantage of tourists traveling in small groups. After any report of robbery on the road to Agua Blanca, community members track and confront the interlopers, after which they turn them over to the police in Portoviejo. On one occasion, the situation was more severe: in 2003, a man from Puerto López tried to rape a woman who (somewhat inexplicably) had decided to walk alone to the rainforest. She escaped and informed the museum members on duty, who proceeded to track him, capture him, and take him to the town meeting house, where they locked him in for two days before handing him over to the police.

The strategy of taking matters into their own hands first has several advantages. First, in practical terms, it ensures that the situation is dealt with while a capture is still possible; by the time police could be informed and could organize to address a situation, perpetrators could easily escape. Since Agua Blanca's economy is now so reliant on tourism, it behooves them to ensure the safety of their visitors. Second, however, the strategy visibly underscores Agua Blancans' autonomy, as well as their ability to protect their lands; by turning criminals over to authorities in Portoviejo or Puerto López, Agua Blancans are also able to remind those authorities of their presence and their bravura.

And yet at other moments Agua Blancans prefer not to jump scales, choosing instead to deal with a situation entirely on their own, whether through resolving it or through denying knowledge of it. In one example, in 2007, members of a different community within Park boundaries were felling old-growth trees on Agua Blancan lands, using clearly audible chainsaws. Agua Blancans walked to the community to deal with the parties involved directly, but never took the matter to authorities. In this case, maintaining relationships with their neighbors while still demonstrating their knowledge of the situation and their control over it—their response to potential violence that might disrupt their sovereignty—was paramount. On a far more visible occasion in 1992, the state-owned petroleum company, Petroecuador, was clear-cutting a line between La Libertad and Manta to transport refined petroleum. Due to geographic constraints, the line had to traverse Agua Blancan territory, a decision made without any local input. In response Agua Blancans blocked the road into their community and took control of some of the heavy machinery until the company would negotiate with them, demanding reforestation of the land to be clear cut. In the end, after several months of negotiations with Agua Blancans, the company paid for trees and water, not only for Agua

Blanca, but also for the neighboring communities of San Isidro and Machalilla, both linked by marriage to Agua Blanca.

In a third example—the most striking of the cases—a private plane crashed into the rainforest on Agua Blancan lands in the late 1970s, during the time when Agua Blancan land tenure was beginning to be threatened through the creation of the national park. Someone from the community of Las Piñas had been hunting in the forest, heard the crash, and went to investigate. When the man found the plane only its pilot was still alive, but was injured and trapped in the wreckage. The pilot begged the man to help him get to medical attention, offering him large sums of money for the service; fearing this would not be the case, the man killed the pilot and searched the plane for the money. The police later found the plane and the bodies, but were never able to identify or punish the perpetrator. Every Agua Blancan knows this story as well as the location of the crash (now known officially as *El Avión Caído*). Those living at the time also knew the perpetrator but, in a rejection of the jurisdiction of external authorities within Agua Blancan territory during that period of extreme vulnerability, refused to turn him in.

How do these strategic choices play into or affect the fluidity of Agua Blancan self-representation? Are these spectacles enacted to create particular arenas within which certain messages become visible or might be perceived as appropriate?

Iterative Accumulation Versus Spectacular Accumulation

Heritage, of course, is culture named and projected into the past, and, simultaneously, the past congealed into culture (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 149). It is identity in tractable, alienable form, identity whose found objects and objectifications may be consumed by others and, therefore, be delivered to the market (cf. Howard 2003). Its alienation . . . has the curious capacity to conjure a collective imagining and to confer upon it social, political, and material currency—not to mention ‘authenticity,’ the specter that haunts the commodification of culture everywhere. If they have nothing distinctive to alienate, many rural South Africans have come to believe, they face collective extinction; identity, from this vantage, resides in recognition from significant others, but the kind of recognition, specifically, expressed in consumer desire.

John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (2009, 10)

In their recent *Ethnicity, Inc.*, anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff argue that the alienability of recognizable heritage, as well as its “capacity to conjure a collective imagining” of an exotic existence, renders ethnicity itself a valuable commodity for groups who can stake claims to it. If intangibles such as ethnicity, heritage, and culture represent the most valuable commodities within globalizing processes, however, what are the implications for groups not perceived as authentic and therefore unable to access those intangibles? Given the Comaroffs’ contention that perceptions

of authenticity result from the ability to alienate and commodify particular aspects of one's heritage, we might expect the construction of fields where certain groups are unable to access those intangibles to be oppressive: groups "believe . . . they face collective extinction," as noted in the epigraph above. What the Agua Blancan case suggests is that the construction of inauthenticity may indeed be oppressive, but may at the same time be productive of strategies that enable those communities to bypass their current fields of practice.

In analyzing the question of why some highland Bolivian groups are considered indigenous—while others who may live, dress, speak, and act similarly are not—Andrew Canessa argues for a model of iterative accumulation, in which a particular social location (identity) is "produced over time as a result of numerous small social interactions, rather than an exaggerated sense of agency that might be suggested by 'performance' . . . each iteration reinforces or undermines a particular identity, but any single act is unlikely to have a major effect" (2012, 27). While I find the concept of iterative accumulation compelling, this formulation raises two specific issues that, jointly, might themselves produce important insights that allow us to expand the model. First, I do believe that expressions of identity are performed, whether or not they constitute a conscious performance (see Butler 1988; Weismantel 2001). They are dispositions put into practice and, as Canessa's description suggests, both dispositions and practice can shift over time, resulting in different external (and internal) readings of one's identity.

Second, however, it seems to be possible for two individuals or groups to make the same choices, engage in the same "small social interactions," yet never to be perceived similarly; conflicts over gender expression provide a relevant case in point. As Canessa argues, indigeneity or any other identity is produced through iterative accumulation. Still, just as not every human body can unproblematically produce external perceptions of itself as clearly fitting within one gender identity, neither can every human group access the possibility of indigeneity equally, regardless of the context, content, or quality of their social interactions.

The factors curtailing those possibilities seem to have to do with whether or not a group can produce an appropriate or suitable identity, whether it can practice on a field in specific and expected ways. In the Ecuadorian case, as we have seen, for the nation to exist—and specifically, for the nation to exist as mestizo—Agua Blancans and similar communities also need to exist, in the form of the laboring bodies that have long supported and enabled (racially, geographically, and through both the products and the process of the work itself) the "suitable bourgeois dispositions" of the Ecuadorian ruling classes.

If, on the other hand, we compare iterative accumulation—everyday practice that reaffirms or detracts from perceptions of particular identities—with what Tsing has called "spectacular accumulation," new possibilities emerge. In discussing her concept of spectacular accumulation within the Indonesian economy, anthropologist Anna Tsing notes that "*performance* here is simultaneously economic

performance and dramatic performance. The ‘economy of appearances’ I describe depends on the relevance of this pun; the self-conscious making of a spectacle is a necessary aid to gathering investment funds. . . . In speculative economies, profit must be imagined before it can be extracted; the possibility of economic performance must be conjured” (2004, 57).

Her insight is not only relevant to the study of emergent economies, it also plays into the concept of appropriateness, of suitability. In order for something to become suitable, it must first be able to be imagined; thus imaginability is, perhaps, the essential prerequisite for the success of a venture, whether economic or cultural. Something becomes imaginable when we have adequately framed it through discourse; it becomes a spectacle when we render it tangible through performance. Spectacular accumulations are most relevant and most effective within economies where intangibles—knowledge, ethnicity, heritage, taste—accrue the greatest exchange values, because in the end those intangibles become tangible only through spectacle.²

How, though, does spectacle help make the invisible visible, and how does this process inform constructions of belonging? In an analysis of Derek Walcott’s post-colonial play *Pantomime*, Megan Ahern notes that

subversive mimicry . . . troubles not only the hierarchical arrangement of identity categories by the colonizer, but also the very dependence of colonialism upon these categories in the first place. . . . Mimicry’s complex dynamics involve both the desire of the colonizer ‘for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite’ ([Bhabha 1984], 126), and the agency of the colonized to reflect and subvert that desire. . . . In other words, mimicry disrupts the colonizer’s monopoly on representation. . . . The actual presentation of subordination is displaced by a mirror image of the problematic imperialist desire for it. (2007, 8, 11, 12, 19)

Similarly, in his ethnography of the experience of globalizing processes in the Dominican Republic, Steven Gregory relates how Dominicans relegated to working in the informal economy use what he calls “spectacles of transgression” to draw attention to the problematic imperialist desire for subordination (2006, 48). In both these cases, as well as in Agua Blancan spectacular performances, groups are jumping scales, creating spaces for their own appropriate utterances by calling attention to the doxic structures that exclude them.

Perhaps it is precisely the combination of imaginability and spectacle that can shift the ways we perceive appropriateness, that which embodies a suitable disposition in an appropriate field: in other words, it is that very combination that may be capable of producing the kind of interpretive drift described by Luhmann.³ This suggests that Agua Blancan self-representation neither is, nor is likely ever to be, stable or coherent. Through both iteration and spectacle, Agua Blancans are creating spaces

where they are able simultaneously to destabilize doxic discourses and structures and to revalorize their own appropriateness within a particular landscape.

Private Practice

Given racialized geography and the structural and systemic inequalities it has facilitated for centuries, one would expect Agua Blancans to enter periodically into panic upon realization of the relative weakness of their position: they are first constructed as indios, lowest of the national categories because mestizo is recast as *blanco* in class terms, then denied even access to that visibility. Essentially Agua Blancans were until recently members of an unrecognized indigenous group, campesinos whose land lay in a remote, infrastructurally disconnected area that was not part of the national imaginary. Once the Machalilla National Park was created, they were then positioned both spatially, within an area under national jurisdiction, and legally, within restrictions capable of denying them even the ways they have constituted their own appropriate identities as laborers. Ultimately Agua Blancans should, structurally speaking, have a great deal of fear.

What has always struck me about Agua Blancans, however, is that they *do not* have fear—or at least not about these things. Outsiders who care about Agua Blanca and its people panic on their behalf, but they themselves do not. They keep going about their everyday activities, and it is through those activities that they *do* create our perceptions and embodied understandings, our gut responses or feelings or senses of their appropriateness as *autóctonos*. This is an appropriateness that does not necessarily rely on genetic arguments: it does not seem to matter, in the end, whether Agua Blancans are or are not indigenous. They are autochthonous in terms of sense of place: they are perceived literally as of the land, as belonging with, to, and on the land. We cannot imagine the place without Agua Blanco people, nor the people without the place—the very definition of appropriateness.

How do they accomplish this? In the past dozen years during which I have lived in Agua Blanca for a total of thirty-two months, I have attended over two dozen day-long community meetings, many of which involved presentations by outsiders interested in initiating research, development projects, or volunteer work in the community. In every case—even when those of us with longstanding ties to the community return with a new project—we are required to present our proposals formally to the council and an assembly of interested Agua Blancans in the town meeting hall. In every case the minutiae of our presence in the community must be hammered out, negotiated, and agreed upon before any work can begin.

The meetings themselves always focused overtly on short-term utility. For a long time I misunderstood, thinking they really were about seeing what benefits Agua Blancans could extract from the interactions. I could not have been more mistaken. What matters, ultimately, is never really the number of people employed, the wages

negotiated, or the material objects to be left behind. What matters is the ongoing relationships. No matter what else is negotiated, everyone coming in has to work with Agua Blanca people and live in the village. In other words, we all end up bearing witness to everyday life in Agua Blanca.

In the end we are useful, not only as witnesses, but also as practitioners. While the possibility of long-term advantages per stated project goals exists, those long-term goals are always secondary for Agua Blancans. In their eyes the primary long-term utility of projects is that they create a space for visitors to become interpracticors. Through projects and our own practice, visitors validate external perceptions of Agua Blanca appropriateness and, in the process, undergo our own interpretive drift. Even when people create projects without really considering Agua Blanca at all—when, for example, biologists choose to work there because it provides a convenient location within the Park, tourism students are stationed there because of the Park's connections with the Ministry of Tourism, ecotourists decide to stay on as volunteers out of a desire for spaces of natural beauty, or archaeologists perceive it to hold sites of a dissociated past—Agua Blancans get us to shift, via discourse and practice, and ultimately to perceive them as *belonging* there regardless of labels.

In other words the projects are all successful, just not in the ways their proposers might have intended (see Rivera 2003). No one I know of who has ever gone into Agua Blanca with a project has left without caring about Agua Blanca. Those who enter the community take with them memories, often solidified via photographs, of traditional chozas in the fields, Agua Blanca women washing clothes in the river, children rounding up goats, and men dragging bamboo or hauling tagua through the village—but also of people on motorcycles, women playing cards as they sell crafts, and tour guides sitting at the entrance to the museum. All leave with an experience of a particular place, one they cannot imagine devoid of Agua Blanca people. Thus we visitors, we researchers, we purveyors of projects, end up serving as interpracticors, collaborators in the production of suitabilities that benefit Agua Blancans, people with a vested interest in the continuation of the community. Visitors end up holding the burden of fear that Agua Blanca will cease to exist; meanwhile, Agua Blancans' primary objectives of protecting their lands and their rights to live on them are achieved without any visible effort on their part.

Performing Dispositions

Be a hair in the flour," he explains. . . . A hair in the flour is a disturbance of everyday subservience and routine. A hair in the flour ruins the legitimacy of power.

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2004, 206)

Very few effective strategies of protesting the ongoing production of inequality are available to indigenous communities. Those communities that are internationally

recognized often end up trapped by the very markers of identity that grant them such recognition in the first place, as I argue in greater detail in Chapter 3 (see Conklin 1997). For communities such as Agua Blanca, however, that are not always recognized either within the state or beyond its borders—communities which therefore have less to lose, as it were—perhaps the most effective strategy is the one Agua Blancans have chosen: to expose the constructed nature of the hierarchy itself, and to do so not through discourse, but through practice.⁴

We tend to approach practice theory as if habitus were very similar to Durkheim's collective consciousness, in the sense that it is necessarily an unconscious process of production. What the evidence in the first section of the book suggests is that the framework for the production of particular habitus can be selected or imposed and that, through interpretive drift, the practices resulting in their production can become naturalized, taken for granted. Since the Spanish colonial period, as we have seen, elites within Ecuador have both espoused discourses and embodied dispositions that have delimited the appropriate fields of production for indigenous groups (and thereby for themselves).

Something we perhaps do not tend to realize about Bourdieusian dispositions, however, is that they are performed, not merely held—they are put into practice. They are public and visible; it is precisely through that visibility that we can perceive them and respond to them accordingly. The interactions of socially situated actors disposed toward particular goals are what constitute a field. While we may act (that is, practice) without articulating our goals, and perhaps even without being able to articulate them, we still have those goals. Some goals are inherited or imposed; these are in most cases oriented toward the constitution of an appropriate habitus for a given group.

Every habitus likely to be perceived as appropriate is situated within a field that helps define that habitus. Most of the time our fields of practice are invisible to us precisely because, even though different actors may hold different positions with different resources on those fields, all the actors on a given field at a given moment understand the overall rules of the game and play according both to those rules and to their appropriate habitus. One implication of this is that our habitus is constructed through interactions with others: we are never alone in our practice. Dispositions presuppose the presence of others who will both perceive them and respond to them, whether positively or negatively.

Because they are the arenas where we practice within our appropriate habitus on a daily basis, our habitual fields—our appropriate spaces of social belonging—tend to shape our goals. Occasionally, however, our habitual fields do become visible; we experience cognitive dissonance and we shift our dispositions, in a sense creating new goals for ourselves, thereby changing the fields. In other words, we enter a new space within which our usual rules do not apply and, not only we, but also the others on our shared fields of practice—our interpracticors—have to shift practice accordingly. Once individuals become aware of their own agency, once they recognize the connections between practice and fields, they can choose to act in new ways, producing

new fields and therefore new *habiti* through practice. Furthermore, it only takes a few consciously aware people to do this; the rest can occur through interpretive drift.

Thus dispositions are not necessarily passive or a given; they can convey agency. As I have tried to demonstrate throughout the ethnography, dispositional agency can be couched both in spectacle and in iteration. In public spaces like the Festival of the Manteño Raft described in Chapter 3, Agua Blancans are performing spectacular challenges to their own dispositions, jumping scales and thereby disrupting the field: their audience as interpracticors no longer know quite how to interact with them (see Weismantel 2001, 112, 126). In private spaces—in the more intimate everyday interactions with others within the space of Agua Blanca—their iterative practice also creates interpracticors, displacing Agua Blancans' fear and ensuring that they are indeed perceived as utterly appropriate within this particular space.

Can the Subaltern Act? Globalization and Methodologies of Decolonization

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.
They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but
they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

Audre Lorde (1984)

Racialized geography and its related constructions of subalternity are central to understanding why globalizing processes become so important within the Agua Blancan methodology of decolonization. All Ecuadorian audiences—from the socially white elite to the mestizo majority to indigenous and black subalterns—have been socialized to read rural coastal landscapes as predominantly empty, home only to uncultured mestizo laborers. Precisely because those landscapes have effectively been rendered invisible—unimagined in the Andersonian sense—they are able to be reinscribed with meaning for external audiences, those who visit them without preconceived notions of who might be appropriate within those landscapes. The expectations and grand narratives of these new global audiences are different; it is the longstanding romantic expectation of finding traditional peoples, peoples whose narratives are violently fractured by modernity, that provides the perceptual space for the Agua Blancan methodology.

The emphasis on blatant markers of a generic indigeneity within spectacular performances creates a mental space within which the more quotidian displays of actions that can be perceived as traditional practice are sufficient to reinforce audience suspicions that “Yes, real Indians do still exist, but their existence is threatened by encroaching modernity.” In this context, rather than creating a space of cognitive dissonance, the presence in Agua Blanca of markers of modernity—cell phones, computers, televisions, motorcycles—may be perceived as symptoms of that spreading disease. Thus external audiences are persuaded to fight to preserve what they perceive as a disappearing authenticity, but what might more accurately be described as their own

nostalgic trope of the noble savage untainted by modernity. This recognition of signifiers from their own tropes entices global audiences to engage with Agua Blancans, at which point interpracticality can commence.

This is precisely why Agua Blancan tactics of interpracticality are so effective. While drawing on existing colonial discourses to set the scene for performances, because it shifts to and even more fundamentally relies on embodied, shared practice, interpracticality as a methodology of decolonization represents a new set of tools that, within a context of globalization, enables unrecognized groups to bypass the master's house entirely. Rather than dismantling existing oppressive structures with the master's own tools, Agua Blancans are engaging directly with their audiences to co-construct their own fluid, antiessentialist terms of existence. Through both spectacle and iteration, Agua Blancans are able to effect interpretive drift for their interpracticors as well as for themselves. As a result they push us to question and thereby to destabilize received notions of racialized geography. Collectively, we reimagine what indigeneity, authenticity, and belonging might be able to mean; collectively, we take the first steps toward a paradigm shift.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

Epigraph. www.pitt.edu/~ccapubs/books/uc054.html; accessed July 28, 2013.

1. Historian Michel de Certeau analyzes the ways individuals, as participants within social systems they themselves do not produce, use what he calls tactics to maneuver through the strategies put in place by the producers of those systems. According to de Certeau, systems are created according to a “master plan,” but one whose rules and internal logic may not be used per the producers’ original intentions. That is, participants take shortcuts through those systems by employing tactics they have discovered to be useful (de Certeau 1984).
2. We should also note that the nation is in many senses a failed corporation (at least in the United States) because many of the voting members are not “stockholders” (thanks to Greg Downey for discussion of this concept). In Latin America, however, voting members do tend to be stockholders—thus those who are landless become invisible within the system because they cannot enter into legal contracts.
3. Two excellent analyses of this process can be found in Gregory 2006 (especially chapter 2 on difference and 4 on masculinity) and Ferguson 2006 (especially chapter 7).
4. Note that the concept of producing external perceptions of indigeneity as a political maneuver is not meant to imply that groups who employ this tactic are not indigenous; the majority might well be considered indigenous by themselves and/or others (see Garrouette 2003). What I am suggesting is that it is not necessarily productive to view indigeneity in any of those terms, precisely because they are not obvious, visible, or provable.

CHAPTER 1

1. For a detailed analysis of the concept of “suitability” or “appropriateness,” see Chapter 3.
2. For example, in some castas series, a child with one great-great-great-great-grandparent of African ancestry and the rest indigenous was labeled a *lobo-torna-atrás* (wolf-throwback); that person’s children, assuming the second parent was indigenous, was labeled *tente-enel-ayre* (hold-yourself-in-midair). Artist unknown. Accessed January 10, 2012. Image viewed at faculty.smu.edu/bakewell/BAKEWELL/images/enel-ayre.jpg.
3. See also the discussion of Mary Douglas’s concept of pollution in Chapter 3.
4. Despite the care taken in the castas paintings to distinguish clearly among the various marked categories of race, other sources indicate much more fluidity in their interactions, as well as the fear this provoked within the colonizing community. For example, in 1585 a letter from the rector of the Jesuit college in Cuzco to the Spanish King warns of the dangers of the interconnectedness of those same castas:

Throughout this realm there are many blacks, mulattoes, mestizos and many other mixtures of people, and every day their number increases. . . . These people grow up with great vices and [excessive] liberty, without working nor having any trade; they eat and drink without manners and are raised with Indians and they can be found drunk and

engaging in witchcraft. . . . Those [Spaniards] who reflect on this matter with care, fear that in time the number of these [castas] will become much larger than that of the children of Spaniards born here (who are called criollos) . . . they will easily be able to raise a city in revolt; and if they so raise one city, an infinite number of Indians would join them, since they are all of one casta and are related, and understand each other's thoughts because they have been raised together . . . and if so many joined together, it would be easy for them to take all the cities in this realm [Peru] one by one. (Teruel in AGI, Lima 316, folio 11)

5. Another way this was achieved, both visually and in literature, was by establishing the symbolic equation of indigeneity with femininity, fertility, and passiveness (see Weismantel 2001; Canessa 2012, 244–46).
6. *Ladino* is a common term in Central American nations whose meaning is similar to *mestizo*.
7. I will expand this discussion later in this chapter.
8. While Weismantel considers primarily stories told by Andeans, to (and for) Andeans, a similar racialized geography governs representations of the Andes for external audiences—tourists, investors, representatives of foreign governments, global media voices—as I will discuss below in this chapter.
9. Again, as noted in the introduction, this in part proceeds from the interconnectedness of many of the narratives and tropes within globalizing processes.
10. As I will analyze in greater detail in Chapter 2, the representative activity of the “montubio culture” is the drunken oblivion of a young man, alone in a hammock in a “primitive” cane structure; he wears the cast-off clothing of the Western world. These depictions are neither innocent nor harmless.
11. Current versions (2012–2014) of websites for the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of the Environment include links to news stories, opportunities for local communities, lists of Ministry personnel, and calendars and photos of touristic, cultural, and other promotional events. They appear scattered, are difficult to navigate, and lack a coherent narrative beyond the overall slogan linking all three: “Ecuador: Love Life.”
12. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Culture was split into two separate ministries, one for each of its component parts. Note that the figures from Manabí and Guayas provinces, along the central coast, are shoeless mestizos in work clothes, differentiated only by skin tone.
13. In Chapter 3, I will discuss a tactic whereby Agua Blancans effectively reintroduce cognitive dissonance into otherwise racialized geography in response to this ubiquitous problem.
14. Nor are all groups who “self-identify” recognized equally, as I will discuss in Chapter 2 and throughout the book.
15. “Valorar la diversidad de culturas del Ecuador a partir del estudio de su origen, localización y de la identificación de sus características (lengua, vestimenta, gastronomía, entre otros) fundamentales” (Ministerio de Educación 2010b, 63).
16. Interestingly, the region of the Galápagos Islands is not described beyond the brief text accompanying the photo, which reads, “In the Galápagos nature is enjoyed in various ways (*En Galápagos se disfruta de la naturaleza de diversas formas*).” The other photo depicts four individuals—a woman, a man, and two children—with long, straight black hair and red face paint, sitting in a doorway of a structure with peeling paint; the woman seems to be grooming the man's hair. He wears beaded necklaces and armbands; the others are dressed in Western clothing (Ministerio de Educación 2010b, 63).
17. Original text from the Ministry of Education:

Los Andes nos dividen en regiones naturales y nos definen adentro. Nos cobijan y dan alimento y también nos trasladan un poco de su nostalgia, de la soledad de sus páramos. En los Andes, hombres y mujeres entierran sus manos en el suelo y se abrazan a la tierra. De esa

relación nacen sus dioses, y las señas que la Pachamama les entrega, definen qué hacer y qué evitar. El hombre de los Andes, es indio pero también es negro, blanco y mestizo. Porque el corazón de las montañas es grande y recibe a todos los que habitan en ellas. En ocasiones el andino titirita de frío, en otras ríe, al compás de la música que sale de sus instrumentos de viento.

El mar tiene su magia. Es un dios bueno y poderoso. Nos da de comer y nos canta. En las costas, los hombres y mujeres tienen el mar adentro. Por eso su alegría es única. Por eso sus pies descalzos nunca dejan de bailar. Y es que como el mar, la mujer y el hombre de la costa no tienen más muelle que aquel en que descansa su corazón. Ese es su hogar. En las costas vivimos de puertas afuera. Nuestra alma se abre de par en par como lo hacen las ventanas de nuestras casas. Hombres y mujeres heredaron de las aguas su hidalguía. Su voluntad de poder. Allí habitan el montubio, el negro, el blanco y el mestizo. A los ojos del mar no existen los colores. Su regazo es tan grande que todos encuentran cobijo.

La Amazonía es un espacio privilegiado por su diversidad natural. El amazónico tiene la fuerza del jaguar y la paciencia de los primeros árboles. Los hombres y mujeres de las tierras del Amazonas somos seres que dominamos el tiempo. Muchos hemos estado aquí desde siempre. Otros llegamos hace poco a labrar con nuestras familias un futuro distinto. En la Amazonía se lucha con lanzas cuando se atenta contra árboles y ríos. Somos gente de antigua tradición guerrera que en tiempos de paz tenemos el corazón y los brazos abiertos. En la Amazonía somos blancos, mestizos, indios. Usamos penachos, gorras o sombreros, pero al final todos somos uno en el río que nos baña. (Ministerio de Educación 2010b, 63)

18. “existen ecuatorianas y ecuatorianos que se consideran de una raza a la que no pertenecen” (Ministerio de Educación 2010, 48).
19. See Chapter 2 for further discussion of this issue.
20. To be more precise, inaugurations of democratically elected governments after regular elections have since 1979 taken place on 10 August. In recent decades, both unusual events and protests by sectors of the Ecuadorian populace have forced several changes in government mid-term, resulting in other inaugural dates for certain presidents (Oswaldo Hurtado, Rosalía Arteaga and Fabián Alarcón, Gustavo Noboa, Alfredo Palacio, and Rafael Correa [first term]).

CHAPTER 2

1. See also Chapter 5 and Chapter 3, note 2.
2. This festival was modeled on Agua Blanca’s balsa-raft festival described in Chapter 3. At the time, I had never seen the latter and was unaware of the reason for Salango’s celebration—an attempt to respond to the Bredthauer problem by raising awareness of local cultural continuity and authenticity.
3. Zoonyms include zarigüeya, cachicambo, cochucho, guatuso, guanta, sahino, cosumbo, chalalaca, culemba, cucuy, and guacharaca; phytonyms include muyuyo, guachapelí, guayacán, guasmo, guarumo, bototo, jaile, jigua, and jolote; toponyms include Jipijapa, Julcuy, Paján, Picoazá, Charapotó, Jocay, and Salango.
4. See epigraph in the Introduction.
5. According to those I interviewed in Agua Blanca, Salango, and Puerto López, participating communities included Agua Blanca, Salango, Puerto López, Río Blanco, El Pital, Puerto Cayo, Las Tunas, Ayampe, Olón, San Lorenzo, San Pedro, Valdivia, Loma Alta, San Mateo, Joá, Cantagallo, Membrillar, Río de Caña, Aromo, Pacoche, Montecristi, La Pila, Sancán, Curia, Colonche, Barcelona, San Vicente, El Real, and Chanduy.

6. The Yasuní-ITT initiative was a proposal wherein the Ecuadorian government would agree not to develop petroleum reserves within sectors of the Yasuní National Park inhabited by the Huaorani and other indigenous groups if the international community would agree to put up 50 percent of the projected value of the reserves over thirteen years. Originally proposed in 2007, it was adopted in August 2010. In August 2013, however, Correa officially rescinded the initiative, claiming it had not demonstrated economic feasibility and placing blame on the international community for being unwilling to provide funding to preserve the biodiversity and indigenous communities of the area. Nonetheless, Petroecuador, the state petroleum enterprise, has been developing the infrastructure to exploit the reserves since at least 2009 (see Marchán and Vallejo 2013), suggesting the duplicity of Correa's Sumaq kawsay conservationist campaign itself.
7. In 2010 Agua Blanca was invited to send a delegation to Guayaquil to meet with Correa himself and his Minister of Tourism to receive a small grant for tourism development. While the community did decide to send representatives and to accept the award, the representatives chosen were peripheral to the community—men who were rarely or never chosen for cabildo positions, and from whom the cabildo at the time could dissociate itself if necessary. While the representatives were proud to be recognized, and display photos of themselves with Correa in their homes, other Agua Blancans have compared this to the PRODEPINE initiatives of the 1990s. PRODEPINE (the Project for the Development of Indigenous and Black Peoples of Ecuador) was an initiative co-sponsored by the World Bank, the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the Ecuadorian government. Communities could apply for development funds, but in return for those funds, had to agree to accept an on-site observer from the World Bank. This initiative has been widely interpreted as a thinly veiled attempt to surveil indigenous communities that were not fully integrated into the highland and lowland coalitions responsible for organizing the uprisings of the 1990s.
8. montubio, -bia 1. adj. y s. amer. [Campesino] de la costa. 2. amer. [Persona] montaraz y grosera (accessed June 16, 2011, www.wordreference.com/definicion/montubio).
9. "Montubio. Vive en el interior de la costa y es el símbolo del hombre bravío frente a la naturaleza tropical del Ecuador. Su asentamiento habitacional es disperso en la montaña o formando poblados a la ribera de los ríos o junto a las carreteras. Se viste como los integrantes de otros grupos mestizos de la costa, con ropa simple y ligera y sombrero de paja. Lleva siempre su machete. Arroz, yuca, plátano, frutas, además de la caza y la pesca, componen su alimentación. La agricultura es actividad principal, generalmente monocultivos para exportación: cacao, café y banano. Ha desarrollado también la ganadería. Trabaja artesanías. . . . Cuentos y leyendas sobre creencias y costumbre pasan de generación en generación." (read April 25, 2011 as the display description in the Museo Pumapungo)
10. "le gustan los gallos de peleas y potros de doma; ama la música y las tradiciones orales mágicas."
11. "Al principio del siglo XVIII, la Costa era una región con muy pocos habitantes, reducida producción y poblaciones muy pequeñas. Pero comenzó un gran crecimiento por la elevación de las exportaciones de cacao, el fruto del que se hace el chocolate. En la provincia de Guayaquil crecieron las haciendas cacaoteras de los terratenientes del puerto, donde trabajaban pardos (zambos y mulatos), otros mestizos costeños e indígenas que venían de la Sierra. Junto a las haciendas había pequeñas propiedades de campesinos que producían tabaco, plátanos y otros alimentos." (MEE 2010a, 64)
12. Original text: "En Esmeraldas habitan los pueblos awá, épera, chichi y una gran población de afroecuatorianos. Sus formas de ver el mundo son diferentes. . . . En Manabí se concentra el

pueblo montubio. La cultura montubia da cuenta de la forma de vida de los campesinos de zonas rurales. En Los Ríos, Guayas y El Oro la mayoría de la población es mestiza. En Santa Elena se concentra el pueblo wankavilka.”

13. Formally recognized as a separate province in November of 2007, Santa Elena had previously composed part of Guayas province, which includes the nation’s largest city and most important port, Guayaquil. Only a month earlier, the nation had recognized another new province, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, formerly part of Pichincha, seat of Ecuador’s capital, Quito.
14. According to Ecuador’s National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), of the just over fourteen million Ecuadorian citizens in 2010, approximately 33 percent live in rural settings, a higher percentage than in any of the surrounding Andean nations. In Manabí province, the percentage of residents living in rural areas is even higher at nearly 38 percent, and in Cantón Puerto López, rural population is nearly 40 percent of the total (INEC, email correspondence June 14, 2010). While these numbers are high, the majority of Manabí’s residents are still urban.
15. Additionally, the text here uses the older (Hispanized) spelling of Huancavilca, whereas the third-grade text uses the spelling derived from Quechua transliterations, Wankavilka.
16. The incredible surge in indigenous visibility and concomitant efficacy in organizing broad movements led by CONAIE and affiliated groups in the 1990s has diminished, largely through fragmentation in the past decade and a half. The apex of positive visibility of Ecuadorian indigenous coalitions was perhaps former president Lucio Gutiérrez’s 2003 landmark inclusion of indigenous leaders as heads of national ministries—CONAIE’s then-president Luis Macas as the Minister of Agriculture and lawyer and Member of Parliament Dr. Nina Pacari as Ecuador’s Foreign Minister. However, their subsequent joint resignations only months later due to disagreement with Gutiérrez’s neoliberal policies marked a downward turn in public perception of indigenous groups in Ecuador (see Martínez Novo 2010, 6). As Carmen Martínez Novo (2010) has argued, current president Rafael Correa has further significantly curtailed indigenous autonomy both overtly, through policies placing many indigenous territories and state institutions (such as bilingual education) under the authority of Ecuadorian government ministries including the Ministries of the Environment, of Culture and Patrimony, of Tourism, and of Education (12), and more covertly, through direct financial support of individuals and promotion of alternative groups and organizations that effectively “co-opt the grassroots, bypassing CONAIE” (7). These and similar policies have led to fragmentation of the formerly well-organized indigenous coalitions in Ecuador. They have also led to a resurgence, among many indigenous individuals, of a reluctance to self-identify as indigenous, as such labels have diminished in both political expediency and cultural capital.
17. Original radio script; my transcription: “¡Soy montubio! ¡Tengo identidad! Desde la profunda realidad cultural de mi costa bella, soy montubio, ¡sí señor! Y a caballo y sombrero, esas son mis raíces. Por Alfaro, por mi abuelo y mi tierra, en el próximo censo nacional me auto-definiré montubio.”
18. Elected vice president under President Jamil Mahuad on August 10, 1998, Noboa was installed when, after a week of protests by the CONAIE over severe economic crisis, the military successfully overthrew Mahuad’s government in January 2000. In office during the collapse of the majority of banks and financial institutions in Ecuador, Mahuad was responsible for adopting the US dollar as Ecuador’s official currency, as well as for signing a peace treaty with Peru after a century of conflict over their shared border. Noboa was responsible for installing the Heavy Crudes Pipeline (Oleoducto de Crudo Pesado, OCP).
19. endógeno, na 1. adj. Que se origina o nace en el interior, como la célula que se forma dentro de otra. 2. Que se origina por una causa interna: infección endógena.

20. From the volume *Esperanza y desesperanza del montubio manabita* by Horacio Hidrovo Peñaherrera, a colleague in Portoviejo sent me the following quote, attributed to Angel Felicísimo Rojas: “El montubio es el resultante de todo un proceso histórico que se teje a través de tres etapas como son: cultura indígena, cultura blanca y cultura negra. La proporción se da de la siguiente manera: 60% indio, 30% negro y 10% blanco” (The montubio is the result of a long historical process woven through three stages, which are: the indigenous culture, the white culture, and the black culture. The proportions are the following: 60 percent indian, 30 percent black and 10 percent white)—about which my friend retorted that “only God and the Virgin know how he came up with those numbers in the 1950s and 1960s.” Genetically impossible numbers aside, this quote is also interesting in its conflation of stages (time periods) with cultures, as well as the emphasis on the statistical dominance of the indigenous and black contributions to the mix (Santiago Pérez Suárez, personal communication, June 13, 2012).
21. See Becker 2008 for a cogent and insightful overview of many of these processes.
22. See Chapter 1 for a longer discussion of imperfect mestizaje.
23. See Chapter 3 for an example of this argument within recent government documents.

CHAPTER 3

1. Original text:

Los asentamientos humanos del interior del parque y de su zona de amortiguamiento presentan características étnicas particulares, definidas principalmente por un modo de vida campesina tradicional. . . . Las comunas no se ven a sí mismas como invasoras u ocupantes ilegales pues reclaman un derecho ancestral que parte de una “repartición” del territorio entre las comunas señaladas. Derecho este que nace de considerarse nativos del área y de haber luchado contra las haciendas para hacerse de la tierra. . . . Un gran porcentaje de la población del Parque Nacional Machalilla puede considerarse nativa, si entendemos “nativo” como nacido en el propio lugar en que se encuentra su lugar de vivienda. Sin embargo, muchos de los recintos y localidades se componen de una población que ha llegado de otros lugares en generaciones anteriores. Con ello se corrobora el hecho de que las comunidades de la zona no pueden considerarse como de asentamiento ancestral o como una continuidad directa desde las culturas Valdivia, Machalilla o Chorrera, es decir, que si bien se podría hablar de unas manifestaciones culturales propias de la zona sur de Manabí e inclusive de unos rasgos físicos particulares, no hay argumentos suficientes para pensar que son herederos directos de los pobladores antiguos de la zona. (Ministerio del Ambiente 2007, 30–31)
2. Some of the many possible examples include the fabrication and use of clay ovens very similar to those found in archaeological sites throughout regional history; recipes such as tortillas baked on the sides of those ovens; fabrication of charcoal in underground burn pits; maintenance of a vertical archipelago (Murra 1972); the construction of what in the Amazon have been called “men’s houses”—one-room structures where males in late adolescence gather and where they generally sleep; laundering techniques using flat stones similar to others found in local archaeological contexts; self-tattooing; general attitudes of reciprocity, including the organization of communal *mingas*, or work groups; local forms of government; etc.
3. According to chronicles and to the history received from archaeologists, Tuzco is one of the four parts of the kingdom of Salangome, corresponding to the modern-day village of Machalilla.
4. Sercapuz is another of the four parts of the kingdom of Salangome, corresponding to the modern day town of Puerto López.

5. As seen in Chapter 2, the montubio hat is a woven cowboy hat, similar in materials to a Panama hat, but wider in brim. The inclusion of this article of dress is of particular interest for several reasons. Paúl, the wearer of the hat, never wears any headgear on other occasions, even as part of the uniform when he is on museum duty; thus its inclusion is obviously conscious. The hat itself is, as noted above, an iconic indicator of a montubio identity; the use of street clothes and a montubio hat by an individual referring to “our ancestors” further enables the actors to play with and destabilize external readings of Agua Blancan identity. Finally, given government attempts to label coastal groups as montubio, the palpable sense of incongruity and discomfort emanating from this particular individual in this particular hat underscores the constructed nature of that relationship.
6. See Fischer’s similar argument on symbols within Maya activism and performance: “epigraphic and iconographic data show that intentionally polyvalent symbols have long been employed by the Maya for strategically political ends” (2002, 195).
7. Anthropologist James Ferguson terms this strategy “jumping scales”—bypassing the national in appeals to more globalized audiences (2006, 174).
8. Although he does not take his analysis in the same direction, nor does he use the same terminology, political scientist José Antonio Lucero alludes to the productive potential of the process of interpracticality as well:

it makes more sense to view authenticity not as a characteristic possessed by one group or another, but rather as a product of the interactions of a variety of authenticators—actors who arbitrate, validate, and legitimate competing claims for authenticity (Warren and Jackson 2004). . . . A representative Indian must conform in some visible ways to social expectations about what Indians look and sound like. However, this is best understood intersubjectively, as indigenous actors shape those expectations in dialogue with existing notions that are held by other actors in international and national civil societies. (2008, 155)

Other studies of similarly disenfranchised indigenous groups seem to suggest that they may also rely on a decolonizing methodology of interpracticality. Speaking with Toba individuals on the establishment of mission compounds within Toba lands in northern Argentina, anthropologist Gastón Gordillo (2004) notes that the San Andrés Toba themselves requested that missionaries “come and live among them.” When Gordillo asked why, one respondent replied that the Toba “suffered too much,” “had no peace,” so they wanted to “search for ‘a father’ . . . as an explicit strategy” (75). Gordillo adds that Grubb and Leake, the “fathers” of that first mission, interpret the attitude (per Western paternalistic discourse) as an expression of the Toba need for protection: “It appears that their idea of a mission is first and foremost a protector . . . they seek a champion to plead their cause and to fight their battles” (75).

This could potentially be reinterpreted as a strategy of creating interpracticality: “the hope that attracting a new actor into their lands would aid them in reasserting control over their territories.” External perception of San Andrés as a community worthy of entering suggests the community has a recognized history of land tenure, one that is externally recognized. Interpreting this as a tactic of interpracticality would suggest that the Toba decision may have been less about needing a “protector” than about wanting to externalize their own arguments, to “jump scales,” as Ferguson put it (2006, 174), and thereby create interpracticalors much as Agua Blancans have done.

CHAPTER 4

1. Original transcription: Era Tío Tigre y Tío Guatuso.

Tío Tigre como siempre era grande y poderoso, quería comerse los animales más débiles, y todos le temían. Entonces Tío Tigre un día iba caminando por el bosque y encontró al Tío Guatuso y le dice, Ah, dice, así era que te quería encontrar, le dice, solo, para poder sacar toda mi furia contra ti, dice. No, dice que le dijo Tío Guatuso, sé que somos enemigos, pero yo lo quiero mucho, Tío Tigre, dice. Jamás quiero estar peleado con usted, yo sé que usted es el animal más poderoso, le dice, sólo quiero que seamos buenos amigos y nos alegremos, dice. Bueno, dice que le dijo Tío Tigre, y ¿qué vamos a hacer? ¿Me tienes alguna buena presa para podernos alegrar? No, dice, no le estoy ofreciendo comida, dice, yo le estoy ofreciendo sólo hacer un buen baile, dice, para divertirnos, dice. Bueno, dice que le dijo Tío Tigre, te acepto el baile, le dice. ¿Cómo vamos a hacer? le dice. Bueno, le dice, yo toco la guitarra, le dice el Tío Guatuso, y tú bailas. No, le dice Tío Tigre, pero es que yo no sé bailar. Bueno, entonces le dice Tío Guatuso, entonces tú toca la guitarra y yo bailo. Ahí sí te acepto, dice que le dijo Tío Tigre. Y ¿dónde está la guitarra? En la parte de arriba de un árbol en la rama estaba un nido de avispas cubo, dice que le dijo Tío Guatuso, Mira, te subes arriba a la rama de este árbol y allí está la guitarra, esa parte larga. Tío Tigre trepó el árbol y se sentó junto al nido de avispas cubo, y le dijo, ¿A qué hora toco, Tío Guatuso? Cuando tú quieras, dice. Entonces Tío Tigre agarra el nido de avispas cubo con sus afiladas uñas y todas las avispas cubo le atacan a él, y Tío Guatuso sale corriendo y riéndose, y saliéndose con la suya, como siempre lo sabía hacer.

2. Original transcription:

Un día por el bosque Tío Tigre encontró a Tío Guatuso. Como siempre, Tío Guatuso había hecho algo malo y Tío Tigre lo quería coger para vengarse. Se le iba a comer, pero Tío Guatuso dijo,—¿Por qué me vas a comer a mí, si tengo poca carne? Ni te voy a llenar. Mira, ¿por qué no hacemos un trato? Yo te ayudo a robar una vaca del rico del pueblo.— Pero ¿cómo vamos a hacer eso? le pregunta Tío Tigre.—Tú no te preocupes por eso, dijo Tío Guatuso,—nada más espera aquí, que yo voy a mandar la vaca para acá y tú la coges cuando baja. Yo te aviso, pero no te vayas a apartar cuando venga, aunque sea muy grande, porque la tienes que matar. Entonces Tío Guatuso subió una colina corriendo. Mientras que Tío Tigre esperaba, Tío Guatuso se puso a excavar una piedra enorme. Cuando ya estaba suelta, Tío Guatuso le gritó a Tío Tigre—¡Ya va! ¡Alístate! Tío Tigre abrió los brazos, cerró los ojos, y, viendo eso, Tío Guatuso soltó la piedra que rodó hasta aplastar a Tío Tigre, quien murió. Tío Guatuso salió libre y feliz, riéndose y haciéndose la suya como siempre lo sabía hacer.

3. Several scholars have collected similar tales in Esmeraldas among Afro-Ecuadorian communities, and relate them to the larger body of animal stories influenced by West African traditions, brought to the Americas by the enslaved individuals who told them (Sparrow 2009; Randall 1995). Still others write of a Central American storytelling tradition with similar content (see Ruiz, 2008). The point is not the origin, as Agua Blancans have participated in cultural encounters for decades and pick up stories everywhere; the point is the focus on a weak creature who nonetheless is always able to outwit the powerful, not only surviving, but also laughing while he does so.
4. See Chapter 3, note 2.
5. The museum group was composed of all the Agua Blancan tour guides, and was in charge of regulating local tourism as well as maintaining the museum, trails, and other facilities.
6. Since the transformation of the Festival de la Balsa described in Chapter 3, Agua Blancans have been invited to perform in other Park events such as the whale festival, marching in parades while in costume, walking on stilts, having children present folkloric dances to audiences, or performing shamanic ceremonies. Interestingly, all of these are consciously learned performances that originated elsewhere: the stilt-walking was introduced by a traveling

theatre troupe; the dances are from other regions of the country, which one woman learned through watching videos of other communities and then taught to the children; and the shamanic ceremonies respond to external perceptions and expectations of local authenticity, but neither of the men performing them has been trained in any way, nor does either perform similarly within the community.

CHAPTER 5

1. A more fundamental issue resulting from these architectural changes has been an increase in tropical disease vectors; lack of drainage and lower constructions without airflow present prime conditions for mosquito breeding. As a result the Ecuadorian and provincial governments have on several occasions distributed DDT-infused mosquito nets to each household in an effort to prevent outbreaks of malaria and dengue. Side effects of breathing DDT each night have not been investigated by the Ecuadorian government, to my knowledge.
2. See Chapter 4 on young men's houses.
3. Barbasco is the fruit of a local tree (*Jacquinia barbasco*) that in other settings, including the Amazon region, is used to anaesthetize fish in rivers; affected fish float and are easily collected for consumption. Used locally as an antiseptic soap for clothing as well as for human and animal bodies, the fruit is also collected for sale to commercial shrimp farmers, who consider it a natural cleanser for the large breeding tanks.
4. A nearby fishing village to the northwest of Agua Blanca, with strong ties by marriage to Agua Blanca.
5. *El tesoro de Panchito Tomalá:*

Bueno, esto es algo que le pasó una vez a mi abuelo. . . . Andando así en el monte tenía perros cazadores, y un día la suerte le llega. De un bajo encontró un mate grande, verdecito, se quedó viéndolo, quedaba unos diez metros más abajo de donde él estaba, con una candela finita con luz, pero cuando bajó y pasó la mano no lo quemaba. Por un lado del mate pasó una culebra, por otro un puerco espino, por otro una gallina. Él puso una cruz en el suelo y comenzó a cavar con manos y machete. Encontró una olla con plata, con billetes de antes de a cinco, de a diez, de a veinte, tostaditos. Se echó un poco de billete tostado a su bolsillo y se fue con sus perros, luego le contó a su mujer pero para ella solita. Pusieron la plata en un baúl y al día siguiente él se fue a Machalilla de madrugada. Trajo mucha comida y otras cosas y todavía le sobró plata. La gente en el mercado se dio cuenta del billete tostado pero no hicieron nada. Cuando necesitaban se fue otra vez a sacar plata y luego se encontró con sus amigos, Panchito, vamos a tomar un puro, y él lo pagó con un billete tostado. Le preguntaron de dónde pues tenía plata y él les dijo que estaba trabajando. Luego se fue a su casa. En otro momento volvió a la mina y sacó más plata pero la ollita seguía llena; volvió a su casa y la mujer se la guardó pero le dijo que no ande conversando. El sábado vuelta pidió a los amigos acompañarlo en un trago y se preguntaban de dónde tenía plata—estaban en el Calderón tomando—y él contestó que del trabajo. Pero luego, más borrachos, le hicieron contar de su olla de plata. Los amigos le dijeron, Por qué no lo vamos a sacar, y quedaron en ir al día siguiente con dos sacos. La mujer le regañó por contar algo que era sólo para él. En la mañana se fue con los amigos y buscaban por donde entrar pero todo había crecido y ya no encontraron nada, ni la olla de porotillo, nada. Los amigos le dijeron que no les quería contar en dónde tenía su mina, pero él no pudo encontrarlo. La mujer vuelta le regañó que la suerte había sido para él y no para compartir. Luego las autoridades de Machalilla querían sacarlo a mi abuelo y meterlo preso pero ya no lo encontraron. Yo no vide eso, me lo comentaron no más.

6. *El encanto de la cueva:*

También una vez había un señor que venía desde Pedro Pablo Gómez . . . de la parte de Julcuy, de Piñas, todas las . . . él bajaba siempre en la madrugada, pues era en la época en que no había mucho carro, entonces él bajaba, bien en caballo o en burro. Pues bajó un día por la carretera que conduce de Julcuy a Puerto López, pasando por el lugar de Vueltas Largas más abajo que hay unos huecos en el medio de ese cerro, entonces cuando él pasó en la noche como a las cuatro de la mañana él vio que abajo del hueco había una playa de un río y estaba totalmente cubierta de muchas frutas, había sandía, tomate, melones. Pues dijo, él se preguntó entre él mismo y dijo, yo pasé aquí hace unos quince días y no había nada de este huerto, y está tan bonito y dice, mañana que ya regreso pa' arriba ya paso comprando. Entonces él se fue a Puerto López y Machalilla y consiguió pescado porque siempre bajaban con muchos productos de allá como mango, choclo, hacían bollos, y venían a cambiarlo con pescado a Machalilla y Puerto López. Y de allí como a los tres días subió vuelta por el mismo sector y entonces dijo, ahora voy comprando, dice, voy comprando los frutos que había en el sector que vide antes. Entonces el señor se fue a ver donde había dejado visto que había estado el huerto y la parcela donde cultivaban y entonces ya no encontró nada. Pues dicen que allí en ese cerro siempre era como en encanto en la parte de arriba, de ese hueco, de esa cueva, porque siempre cuando las personas pasaban en la noche, o a las doce de Semana Santa escuchaban ruidos, y siempre escuchaban a las tres de la mañana cantar un gallo.

7. According to Agua Blancans, *duendes* are small, hairy beings with tiny, backward-facing feet. They are quite shy and hide themselves from humans in most cases; their presence in the local landscape is often only visible through the footprints in the dust that mark their passage—footprints whose orientation is opposite the direction of movement indicated by broken plants or other disturbances. *Jibaros*, in local lore, are gamekeepers and protectors of forest animals. They are human-sized or larger and can sometimes be spotted running after groups of deer, dantas, capybaras, agoutis, armadillos, coatis, collared peccaries, or other game. Sometimes, when hunters were chasing groups of deer or other game, the game would suddenly and inexplicably disappear; at times, enormous footprints could be seen along the ground in the direction where the game had fled, and these were attributed to the *jibaro* who was taking care of his animals. Notably, *jivaro* is also the name of an Ecuadorian indigenous group from the eastern lowlands—one of the groups described in colonial (and modern urban) documents as “least civilized.” I have not found any information on whether or how the terms might be related.
8. For an overview of this case through 2007, see the open letter to the President of Ecuador (“Abusos Contra el Pueblo Manta-Wankavilka en Salango”) sponsored by CONAIE and signed by the president of Salango, accessed April 23, 2013, www.llacta.org/organiz/coms/2007/com0187.htm. See also INREDH’s account of the process through 2012 at www.inredh.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=318 (accessed April 23, 2013). The case remains unresolved; its resolution would represent a significant legal precedent in land rights for indigenous communities (*pueblos*) whose nationality has not been granted official status by the Ecuadorian government.
9. Lamentably, neither the Ecuadorian archaeologist nor I was aware of the centrality of the museum to the land tenure conflicts in Salango when we negotiated use of the space for two months to process archaeological remains.
10. In his work on indigeneity versus indianness in the Andes, Andrew Canessa quotes a rural Bolivian’s comment that the surname Condori “is a name of poverty . . . such names are

not acceptable in universities . . . and the high ranks of the army” (2012, 220)—the two institutions through which Bolivian indians might potentially access a higher ethnic status or achieve a degree of what Peter Wade (1995, 1997) and others refer to as *blanqueamiento* (whitening).

11. The commodification of intangibles—the process whereby intangibles, such as knowledge, identity, ethnicity, heritage, or taste, are converted into things with market value, things that can be bought and sold—that has become so prevalent within globalization raises interesting questions for Marxist distinctions between use-value and exchange-value. In the case of intangibles, exchange-value is what imbues them with use-value; in other words, it is only the desire to acquire or consume those intangibles that gives them a quantifiable use-value for their communities of origin. See also O’Sullivan (2012). I consider the implications of this argument more fully in the conclusions.
12. The full URL accessed April 23, 2013, is www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/gef_prj_docs/GEFProjectDocuments/Biodiversity/Ecuador%20-%20Albarradas%20Coastal%20Rescuing%20Ancient%20Knowledge/Council%20Letter%20Ecuador%20Albarradas.pdf. Note also the emphasis on potential profitability despite the nostalgic and knowledge-for-knowledge’s-sake framing.
13. It appears that many of these deaths may have resulted from what Western medicine would identify as preeclampsia, itself provoked by the dramatic change in diet that accompanied the institution of regulations on farming within Park lands. Many Agua Blancans today suffer from diabetic conditions.
14. Recent emphasis within the United States on the importance of service learning has prompted medical schools around the United States to send groups to impoverished or remote tropical locations during their spring breaks. The overtly militaristic terminology—medical brigade—seems to be common to most, if not all, of these experiences, underscoring the central importance of both the goal of efficiency and the model of the normalized biological body central to Western biomedical diagnoses (see Lock and Nguyen 2010, 1).
15. It is noteworthy that Agua Blanco migrants do not return for the Festival de la Balsa Manteña described in Chapter 3, highlighting its greater utility as a staged performance than as a moment of communal gathering.
16. The Spanish term *monigote* can have several meanings: puppet, dummy, stick figure, rag doll, paper doll, etc. Each implies some sort of caricature of a human. A snowman is often called a *monigote de nieve*; a straw man is a *monigote de paja*; and in the United States, cartoon characters are sometimes also referred to as monigotes. Interestingly, the word can also mean “a nobody,” “a stooge,” or someone with a weak character or little personality—a two-dimensional figure.
17. In recent years, monigotes for sale in markets have also included popular icons such as Spiderman or SpongeBob SquarePants. While this might merely reflect such icons’ widespread appeal, it is also possible to read their inclusion as another case of “we’re ready to move on”—social commentary on the blandness, the two-dimensionality, of popular culture that has resulted from commercialization and other globalizing processes.
18. This celebration is also notable as the only event during the year where men refrain from drinking for the first few hours, serving drinks instead to the women of the community. Men say that women will feel more relaxed and enjoy themselves more if they know someone is going to put the children to bed and make sure they get home safely themselves. Once the women are asleep, men continue drinking, dancing in a group, or just talking all night long.

CHAPTER 6

1. The implications for implicit social cognition, according to the psychologists, are that rather than focusing solely on unlearning implicit semantic associations or generating explicit awareness of aversion when attempting to address intergroup bias, researchers might benefit from using the substantial extant literature on fear conditioning.
2. I will return to this question in the conclusions, considering the role of ambiguity both in enabling ongoing strategies of fluidity, such as those discussed in Chapter 3, and as productive of outsiders' healthy respect for Agua Blanca autonomy.
3. This is not an idle fear. I have recently learned of another case in which a female researcher who had intended to launch a long-term project in Agua Blanca instead decided to go to another part of the country after her experience. She states that she will never return to Agua Blanca because of her encounter with this man.
4. While we received enough information to make basic sense of what had been occurring in the community, most of the following account comes from interviews community members gave spontaneously upon our arrival.
5. I should note that the woman who had claimed to be the Virgin also received that moniker as her nickname. She was apparently also originally shunned, but apologized publicly and emotionally to the community, stating that she had no idea what had happened to her, after which she was again embraced by the community, if cautiously by some. By the time we arrived the nickname was used jokingly; although she clearly still felt its sting, she was also able to laugh at herself by that point.

CONCLUSION

1. In the fifth chapter of her recent work on indigenous governance and territorial sovereignty, Juliet Erazo considers conflict mediation as one of what she terms "everyday forms of territory formation." While conflict mediation also helps Agua Blancans iterate their control over their own lands, and while conflict with outsiders does similarly tend to goad Agua Blancans to "present a united front against threats to their territory" (Erazo 2013, 171), one significant difference between the two settings seems to exist. In Agua Blanca leaders themselves do not gain in status as a result of mediating internal conflicts, or indeed of heading those united fronts against external threats (Erazo 2013, 178). However, Agua Blanca is a much smaller community that still relies on everyday personal connections among all its members.
2. See Chapter 5, note 11.
3. For a more detailed overview of the relevance of the concept of interpretive drift, see the Introduction, Chapter 3, and Chapter 6.
4. This strategy in no way implies that Agua Blancans have achieved equality or visibility, but rather that they are using invisibility productively, as a strategy of destabilization, a way of provoking interpretive drift. Equality of access to recognition, economic prosperity, and political voice is still lacking; there is neither a broadly accepted space for reproducing local values nor access to education that would facilitate participation in mestizo political-economic systems.

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