



**INDIANS AND LEFTISTS  
IN THE MAKING OF ECUADOR'S  
MODERN INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS**

**MARC BECKER**



Indians and Leftists  
in the Making of Ecuador's  
Modern Indigenous Movements

*A book in the series*

LATIN AMERICAN OTHERWISE: LANGUAGES, EMPIRES, NATIONS

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Frontispiece: Dolores Cacuango, 1968.

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## About the Series

*Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define “Latin America” while at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped Latin American worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural, and economic intersections that demands a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and correspondingly demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

In his new work, Marc Becker provides a full and detailed account of contemporary Indigenous movements in Ecuador and their complex relationship with the Marxist left. Becker offers historical as well as cultural substantiation for the reader to understand that we are facing, in Ecuador and elsewhere in the Andes, the unfolding of a new phenomenon of “Indigenous Movements.” This new phenomenon represents a break with the past, because activists insist that more than a “movement,” they are and should be thought of as a “nation.” The entire debate and conceptualization of a “plurinational state” in both Ecuador and Bolivia today is grounded in this historical, political, and intellectual shift.

Becker’s well-informed account blends history with analyses of gender, class, and ethnic struggles. In the final section of the book he shows that we are no longer witnessing a romantic return to the past, an idealistic rehearsal of the image of the Indians. Instead he demonstrates that now we are witnessing the emergence of “Indianism” (rather than “Indigenism”) as a new articulation of the political through the insertion of a distinctive Indian actor that blurs the lines between “friend” and “enemy.” Indians were neither; they were outcast by the internal struggles among blanco-mestizos who totalized the political sphere, and have been forced to find new avenues for political action. With the rise of these new Indigenous movements, the “colonial revolution” of the sixteenth century has reached a point of crisis and decay—a radical shift, a “pachakutik,” that is reorienting five hundred years of imperial, colonial, and national history.

Solo los obreros y campesinos irán hasta el fin

—AUGUSTO CÉSAR SANDINO

Nayawa jiwtxa nayjarusti waranga waranqanakawa kutanipxa

—TÚPAC KATARI

Ñuca tierra es Cayambe,

y no me jodan carajú

Porque somos libres como el viento

libres fuimos, libres seremos

Todo manos, todos oídos,

todo ojos, toda voz

—DOLORES CACUANGO

Die Proletarier haben nichts in ihr zu verlieren als ihre Ketten

Sie haben eine Welt zu gewinnen

Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!

—KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS

# Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Chronology xiii

Acronyms xxiii

ONE What Is an Indian? 1

TWO Socialism 17

THREE Strike! 50

FOUR Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios 77

FIVE Guachalá 105

SIX Agrarian Reform? 123

SEVEN Return of the Indian 144

EIGHT Pachakutik 166

Notes 195

Glossary 251

Biographies 255

Bibliography 261

Index 293





## Acknowledgments

I arrived in Ecuador for the first time in June 1990, a week after a massive Indigenous uprising had shaken the consciousness of the country's elite classes. I was interested in leftist revolutionary movements and searching for new research material, and I had come to the country's capital city Quito as a participant in a study abroad program with Oregon State University. Earlier that spring, the Sandinistas had lost the elections in Nicaragua, an act that seemed to have stopped the possibilities of further popular uprisings in Latin America. Still, here in the South American Andes a historically marginalized group had risen up to challenge their exclusion from power, and this act stimulated the imagination of young idealists and political activists such as myself. Rather than using guerrilla warfare, the Indians in Ecuador used *armas de razón*; it was a battle of reason—a political and largely non-violent struggle. The protests I witnessed in the streets together with material I studied in anthropology classes under Marleen Haboud's direction at the Universidad Católica challenged my understandings of revolutionary movements and cast them in a new light. In emphasizing ethnic identities rather than a class consciousness, Indigenous peoples placed themselves at the center of a political struggle for control over their own destinies and identities. My intellectual interests were caught up in the euphoria of the potential of rural, Indigenous sectors in society redressing five hundred years of oppression and exploitation.

When I returned three years later to continue my research, John and Ligia Simmons, friends from Kansas, put me in contact with Ligia's brother

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cristóbal Galarza, who in turn introduced me to Marco Maldonado. Marco and Nancy Pinos welcomed me into their family in the canton of San Pedro de Cayambe, a rich agricultural area that straddles the equator about seventy kilometers northeast of Quito. Tourists and scholars often bypass Cayambe, which becomes lost between the capital city of Quito to the south and the attractive tourist markets of Otavalo to the north. Nevertheless, it has played a critical role in the history of twentieth-century popular movements in Ecuador. Leaders such as Jesús Gualavisi and Dolores Cacuango, who still figure prominently in the pantheon of Indigenous heroes, organized some of the country's first rural *sindicatos* (peasant unions) in Cayambe in the 1920s. Their political innovations deeply influenced the subsequent evolution of Indigenous and popular movements in Ecuador.

In many ways, Cayambe was a familiar place for me to learn about class, ethnicity, and the politicization of Indigenous rights movements. I grew up on a farm in Turner County, South Dakota, with an agricultural economy not unlike that of Cayambe. Hard-working farmers in both areas raised a broad array of crops, dairy herds, and other livestock. Over time, economic production became concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Today, multinational agribusiness corporations such as Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, and Monsanto increasingly make small family farms economically unfeasible. As such, the struggles in South Dakota and in Cayambe become the same and are depressingly similar to the difficulties that people faced in the early part of the twentieth century: A small elite controls an emerging global capitalist economy to the detriment of the rest of us. Our struggle continues to be to gain control over the society in which we live and to implement a more just social order. Both Cayambe and my home community in South Dakota possess strong ethnic heritages, and those traditions give us strength to face difficulties and to challenge injustices. Strong-willed women provided leadership as well as a historical memory, preserving language and cultural patterns longer than did the men. In both cases, the dominant society has slowly eroded ethnic traditions, food, dress, and language. But ethnicity is deeper than these external manifestations, and even though I do not speak Plautdietsch or eat zwieback, it does not mean that my heritage does not inform my values and ideology. Similar things could be said for the Kayambis.

In addition to John, Ligia, Cristóbal, Marco, and Nancy, I relied on the support and assistance of many people in writing this book. Mercedes Prieto graciously provided me with invaluable material and assistance from her

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

own research collection. Antonio Crespo and the late Eduardo Estrella cordially provided me access to the Junta Central de Asistencia Pública archival collections. Likewise, Ramiro Avila capably assisted with materials in the Fondo Bonifaz at the Archivo Histórico del Banco Central del Ecuador. Sandra Fernández Muñoz and Jorge Canizares kindly granted me access to the Private Collection of Leonardo J. Muñoz in Quito. The staff at the Biblioteca Ecuatoriana Aurelio Espinosa Pólit in Cotacollao provided professional research assistance with their collection. FLACSO-Ecuador granted me an institutional affiliation during numerous research trips to the country. Betsy Kuznesof, Charley Stansifer, Tony Rosenthal, Gail Bossenga, Kate Berry, Ronn Pineo, Cheryl Musch, Gina Castillo, Maarten van den Berg, Cynthia Radding, Karen Powers, Tony Lucero, Chad Black, David Cole, Jean Johnson, and others have read and commented on this manuscript as it evolved through various stages. Bob Schwartz efficiently and capably provided the index for the book.

Over the years, I have received funding from numerous sources that supported my research. These included a University of Kansas Summer Graduate School Fellowship, a Pearson Fellowship, a University of Kansas Dissertation Fellowship, five (three summer and two year-long) Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) graduate fellowships, an American Historical Association Albert J. Beveridge Grant, support from Gettysburg College, and a Fulbright fellowship. Most significantly, I received a two-year award from the Social Science Research Council of an SSRC-MacArthur Foundation Fellowship on Peace and Security in a Changing World. This award allowed me to expand and deepen this project, including spending a year as a visiting scholar at the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and as an intern at the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC) in Oakland, California. My experience at SAIIC profoundly deepened my understanding of Indigenous cosmology, and I would like to thank Nilo Cayuqueo, who made that experience exceptionally valuable. Without this support, I could not have completed this project.



## Chronology

**1578** Jumandi leads an uprising against Spanish colonists in the Ecuadorian Amazon

**1599** Legendary Shuar revolt in the Ecuadorian Amazon

**November 1777** A revolt against a census spreads throughout the northern Audiencia of Quito

**1791** Indigenous rebellion against a public works mita labor draft at Lita

**1803** Indigenous uprising at Guamote, Chimborazo, against diezmos

**May 24, 1822** Antonio José de Sucre defeats Spanish forces at the battle of Pichincha, leading to Ecuador's independence as part of the country of Gran Colombia

**1830** Ecuador separates from Gran Colombia

**1852** Ecuador eliminates slavery

**1857** Ecuador eliminates forced tribute payments

**December 1871** Fernando Daquilema leads a revolt in the central highland province of Chimborazo

**September 5, 1884** Alejo Saez leads an uprising against the payment of diezmos in his home community of Licto, Chimborazo

**1892** Foundation of the Sociedad Artística e Industrial de Pichincha (Artistic and Industrial Society of Pichincha), which subsequently provides logical support to Indigenous movements

**June 5, 1895** Eloy Alfaro leads the Liberal Revolution to victory

**August 10, 1895** Eloy Alfaro stops in Guamote, Chimborazo, where he elevates Alejo Saez to the grade of general in his liberal army

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1896** Junta de Beneficencia (Social Welfare Junta) formed in Quito
- January 12, 1897** Promulgation of Ecuador's eleventh constitution
- April 12, 1899** "Patronage Law" regulates but does not abolish the system of concertaje
- October 12, 1904** Ley de Cultos expropriates church-owned land
- December 23, 1906** Promulgation of Ecuador's twelfth constitution
- November 6, 1908** Ley de Beneficencia (better known as "manos muertas") passes control of church land to the Junta Central de Asistencia Pública
- January 28, 1912** Mob kills Eloy Alfaro in Quito
- October 25, 1918** The Reformas de la Ley de Jornaleros (Reform of the Laborer Law) theoretically abolishes the concertaje system
- March 1920** New agricultural taxes lead to uprisings in Cuenca
- May 1920** Revolts against taxes in Chimborazo leave fifty Indigenous people dead
- August 24, 1920** Uprising in Ricaurte, Azuay, against taxes
- May 1921** Uprising at Guano, Chimborazo
- November 15, 1922** Police massacre striking workers in Guayaquil
- September 13, 1923** The army kills thirty-seven Indigenous workers on Leito hacienda in Tungurahua
- November 16, 1924** Socialists in Quito form La Antorcha, which publishes a newspaper that supports Indigenous struggles
- 1924** Matilde Hidalgo de Procel is the first woman to vote in Ecuador
- July 9, 1925** A military coup leads to the Revolución Juliana (July Revolution)
- September 22, 1925** The Mexican diplomat Rafael Ramos Pedrueza organizes the Sección Comunista de Propaganda y Acción Lenin (Communist Section for Propaganda and Action Lenin), which later becomes the Ecuadorian Communist Party (PCE)
- January 1926** Jesús Gualavisí forms the Sindicato de Trabajadores Campesinos de Juan Montalvo (Peasant Workers Syndicate of Juan Montalvo), the first peasant-Indigenous organization in Ecuador; Gualavisí subsequently leads uprisings at the Changalá hacienda in Cayambe over land issues
- May 16–23, 1926** Leftists hold the founding congress of the Ecuadorian Socialist Party (PSE) in Quito
- October 1926–March 1927** The Kemmerer Mission visits Ecuador, which leads to the founding of the Banco Central
- 1927–1928** Ricardo Paredes visits the Soviet Union for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution and the Sixth Congress of the Communist International

## CHRONOLOGY

**February 1928** The army massacres fourteen Indigenous workers at Tisaleo, Tungurahua

**January 10, 1929** The military and police allegedly massacre hundreds of Indigenous workers at Colta, Chimborazo

**January 12, 1929** Ricardo Paredes gains control of the PSE at a meeting of the Central Committee and brings it closer in line with the Communist International

**March 26, 1929** Promulgation of Ecuador's thirteenth constitution grants the right to vote to women and provides for functional representation for Indigenous peoples

**September 29, 1929** Ten workers petitioning for an end to abuses and for lower work demands are massacred on the Tigua hacienda

**1930** Formation of El Inca, Tierra Libre, and Pan y Tierra peasant syndicates at the Pesillo, Moyurco, and La Chimba haciendas in Cayambe

**August 21, 1930** The Socialist Party creates Socorro Obrero y Campesino (Worker and Peasant Help) to defend Indigenous and peasant struggles

**December 1930–January 1931** Indigenous workers strike on the Pesillo and Moyurco haciendas in Cayambe

**February 1, 1931** Military repression prevents the Primer Congreso de Organizaciones Campesinas (First Congress of Peasant Organizations) from taking place in Juan Montalvo, Cayambe

**October 6–15, 1931** At its second congress, the PSE formally changes its name to the Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano (PCE, Ecuadorian Communist Party)

**October 20–21, 1931** Neptalí Bonifaz Ascásubi, owner of the Guachalá hacienda, wins the presidential election

**August 28–31, 1932** Bonifaz is prevented from assuming the presidency of Ecuador in a four-day war called the Guerra de los Cuatro Días

**January 1, 1933** Socialists reestablish the PSE

**December 14–15, 1933** José María Velasco Ibarra is elected president for the first of five times; Ricardo Paredes runs unsuccessfully as a candidate for the PCE

**1934** Jorge Icaza publishes *Huasipungo*, Ecuador's most famous indigenista novel

**September 1, 1934** Velasco Ibarra takes office for the first of five times

**February 1935** Indigenous uprisings on the Licto, Galte, and Pull haciendas in Chimborazo for better salaries and an end to abuses

**July 25–August 25, 1935** Seventh congress of the Communist International



## CHRONOLOGY

**November 5–7, 1935** Conferencia de Cabecillas Indígenas (Conference of Indigenous Leaders) is held in Quito

**December 25–29, 1935** I Conferencia Nacional del Partido Comunista Ecuatoriana (First National Conference of the Ecuadorian Communist Party) is held in Milagro

**1936** Founding of the Comité Central de Defensa Indígena (Indigenous Defense Committee)

**November 28, 1936** Páez suppresses the Communist Party as a legal organization after accusing it of participating in a coup against his government

**August 6, 1937** Promulgation of the Ley de Comunas (Law of Communities)

**August 5, 1938** Promulgation of the Código del Trabajo (Labor Code)

**September 28, 1938** Formation of the Confederación Ecuatoriana de Obremos Católicos (CEDOC, Ecuadorian Confederation of Catholic Workers)

**1941** Border war with Peru leads to the loss of half of Ecuador's territory

**January 29, 1942** Signing of Río de Janeiro Protocol

**September 14, 1943** Urban intellectuals establish the Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano (IIE, Ecuadorian Indigenist Institute) in Quito

**May 28, 1944** Victory of the Glorious May Revolution; Velasco Ibarra takes power for the second time

**July 4–9, 1944** Labor leaders found the Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador (CTE, Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers) in Quito

**August 6–8, 1944** Indigenous leaders found the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians) in Quito

**1945** Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare creates the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas (Department of Indian Affairs) and Junta de Cuestiones Indígenas (Council of Indian Matters) in order to supervise compliance with laws and prevent abuse in regard to land, water, and other issues

**March 6, 1945** Promulgation of Ecuador's fourteenth constitution

**1946** Indigenous leaders found bilingual schools at Yanahuaico, San Pablourco, Pesillo, and La Chimba in Cayambe

**February 8–12, 1946** Second FEI congress is held in Quito

**November 16–22, 1946** Third PCE congress is held in Quito

**December 31, 1946** Promulgation of Ecuador's fifteenth constitution

**1947** Establishment of the Junta de Cuestiones Indígenas y Campesinas (Council of Indian and Rural Affairs)

**April 19, 1947** The FEI organizes a Conferencia de Dirigentes Indígenas (Conference of Indigenous Leaders) at Quito's Central University

## CHRONOLOGY

- April 19–23, 1948** Third FEI congress is held in Quito
- May 1948** Uprisings in Cayambe end payment of diezmos and primicias
- September 1, 1948** Hacendado Galo Plaza Lasso inaugurated president, introducing the beginning of a twelve-year period of stability and economic growth
- August 1–7, 1949** Fourth PCE congress is held in Guayaquil
- September 1949** The FEI defends workers on Razuyacu hacienda
- November 18–20, 1950** Extraordinary FEI congress discusses responses to Ecuador's first national census
- July 24–28, 1952** Fifth PCE congress is held in Ambato
- August 1952** Fourth FEI congress is held in Quito
- September 1, 1952** Velasco Ibarra becomes president for the third of five terms in office, the only one he manages to complete
- July 22, 1953** An eight-month strike at Galte hacienda in Chimborazo ends with gains for Indigenous workers
- August 6, 1953** Massacre at La Merced hacienda in Pintag
- January 10, 1954** Police attack workers at Pitaná on the Guachalá hacienda, killing four people and injuring others
- September 1954** Formation of the Federación de Trabajadores Agrícolas del Litoral (FTAL, Federation of Coastal Agricultural Workers)
- 1954** First agrarian census
- September 1, 1956** The conservative Camilo Ponce Enríquez becomes president
- April 27–28, 1957** Conference of Campesinos from Pichincha, Imbabura, and Cotopaxi is held in Quito
- May 24–28, 1957** Sixth PCE congress is held in Quito
- January 1, 1959** Triumph of the Cuban Revolution
- 1959** Indians march on Quito and hold a ninety-day strike at Pesillo
- August 20, 1960** Uprising at Milagro
- September 1, 1960** Velasco Ibarra takes power as president for the fourth time
- October 15–17, 1960** The CTE organizes the Primera Conferencia Nacional Campesina (First National Peasant Conference) in Quito
- December 18, 1960** Uprising on the Carrera hacienda in Cayambe
- February 5, 1961** Uprising on the Columbe hacienda in Chimborazo
- September 13–17, 1961** The Local Association of Jívaro Centers is organized in the southern Amazon with the assistance of Salesian missionaries
- November 7, 1961** Fall of Velasco Ibarra; Vice-President Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy takes power

## CHRONOLOGY

**December 16, 1961** Twelve thousand Indigenous people from the FEI march on Quito for agrarian reform

**December 16–18, 1961** Third FEI congress is held in Quito

**March 9–13, 1962** Seventh PCE congress is held in Guayaquil

**March 1962** Workers take over the United Fruit Company's Tenguel hacienda on Ecuador's southern coast

**May 1962** Protests are held in Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, Chimborazo, and Azuay against the agricultural census; Indigenous workers strike at Pesillo for higher wages and for land for landless workers

**August 15, 1962** Salasaca Indians in Tungurahua demanding access to water are massacred

**July 11, 1963** Military coup overthrows the civilian government of Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy

**July 11, 1964** Military government promulgates agrarian reform law

**August 3, 1964** Approximately 150 Indigenous workers revolt on El Chaupi hacienda, Cayambe

**October 22, 1964** The Ministry of Social Welfare approves the statutes that formally establish the Federación de Centros Shuar (Shuar Federation)

**March 9, 1965** CEDOC founds the Federación Ecuatoriana de Trabajadores Agropecuarios (FETEP, Ecuadorian Federation of Agricultural Workers), which then becomes FENOC in 1968

**March 29, 1966** Military turns government back over to civilian control

**October 21–22, 1966** The FEI holds its fourth congress in Quito

**October 28, 1966** Indigenous workers take over the Pisambilla, Muyurco, El Chaupi, San Pablourco, and Pesillo haciendas

**May 25, 1967** Promulgation of Ecuador's sixteenth constitution

**1968** Strike begins at Pull hacienda in Chimborzo and spreads to neighboring haciendas, paralyzing production in the canton

**July 2, 1968** Land occupation at the Santa Ana hacienda in Canton Calvas in Loja leads to a massacre of eight arrimados and injury of twenty-two more

**August 4, 1968** Eighth PCE congress is held in Guayaquil

**September 1, 1968** Velasco Ibarra assumes presidency for the fifth and final time

**November 26–28, 1968** Catholics found the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinos (FENOC, National Federation of Peasant Organizations)

**1969** Formation of the Federación Provincial de Organizaciones Camp-

## CHRONOLOGY

esinas de Napo (FEPOCAN, Provincial Federation of Peasant Organizations of Napo), which in 1973 changes its name to the Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo (FOIN, Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo)

**February 15, 1972** Military coup led by Guillermo Rodríguez Lara removes Velasco Ibarra from office for the fifth and final time

**June 2, 1972** Activists organize Ecuvarunari (Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui, a Kichwa phrase that means “awakening of the Ecuadorian Indians”)

**June 17, 1972** Fifth congress of the FEI is held in Quito

**1972** The FEI, FENOC, and Ecuvarunari together with coastal groups organize the Frente Unido de Reforma Agraria (FURA, United Front for Agrarian Reform)

**May 17, 1973** Landlords kill Cristóbal Pajuña in Tungurahua, giving Ecuvarunari its first martyr

**August 18–20, 1973** FURA organizes the I Encuentro Nacional Campesino por la Reforma Agraria (First Peasant Encounter for Agrarian Reform) in Quito

**October 9, 1973** Government implements the second agrarian reform law

**November 15–18, 1973** Ninth PCE congress is held in Guayaquil

**September 26, 1974** Police kill the Ecuvarunari leader Lázaro Condo in Chimborazo

**January 11, 1976** Military triumvirate replaces Rodríguez Lara in power

**October 18, 1977** Massacre of hundreds of striking workers at Aztra sugar mill

**November 2, 1977** Police torture and kill Rafael Perugachi, a local Indigenous leader in Cotacachi

**April 8, 1978** The FEI, FENOC, and Ecuvarunari meet in Columbe, Chimborazo, to form the Frente Unico de Lucha Campesina (FULC, United Front for Peasant Struggle)

**1978** Kichwa, Achuar, Shuar, and Zápara peoples form the Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza (OPIP, Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza)

**August 10, 1979** Promulgation of seventeenth constitution gives illiterates the right to vote, thus extending citizenship rights to many Indigenous peoples for the first time

**August 10, 1979** Election of Jaime Roldós Aguilera as president transfers control of the government from military to civilian control

## CHRONOLOGY

**1980** Sixth FEI congress is held in Quito

**August 22–24, 1980** The Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana (CONFENIAE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon) is formed at the First Regional Conference of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon in Puyo

**October 16, 1980** Ecuarunari, FENOC, and FEI organize the National Peasant Indigenous March “Martyrs of Aztra” in Quito

**October 20–25, 1980** Meeting of CONFENIAE and Ecuarunari in Sucúa at the First Encounter of the Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador forms the Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONACNIE, National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)

**April 16–17, 1982** FENOC and Ecuarunari organize the First Peasant and Indigenous National Encounter in Quito

**December 2–3, 1983** First FEI provincial congress is held in Riobamba

**April 11–14, 1984** CONACNIE holds the Second Encounter of Indigenous Nationalities

**July 15, 1984** FENOC and FEI hold the Second Peasant and Indigenous National Convention in Quito

**July 27–28, 1984** Second FEI provincial congress is held in Riobamba

**July 27–28, 1985** Third Peasant and Indigenous National Convention is held in Chordelég

**November 13–16, 1986** Indians organize the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)

**August 10, 1988** Rodrigo Borja inaugurated president

**November 10–13, 1988** Second CONAIE congress is held in Cañar

**July 27–28, 1989** Seventh FEI congress is held in Quito

**May 28, 1990** Indigenous activists occupy Santo Domingo church in Quito demanding resolution of land disputes

**June 4, 1990** Nine-day CONAIE-led Indigenous uprising begins

**July 17–23, 1990** First Continental Conference on Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance is held in Quito

**April 11–23, 1992** OPIP leads a march from Puyo in the Ecuadorian Amazon to Quito demanding land titles and the declaration of Ecuador as a plurinational state

**October 12, 1992** Quincentennial of Columbus’s voyage to the Americas

## CHRONOLOGY

**1993** Amazonian Indians in Ecuador file a lawsuit in New York against Texaco for environmental damages to their lands

**June 1994** Peasant and Indigenous groups unify in an uprising called “La Movilización Por la Vida” (Mobilization for Life) in protest of a new agrarian law

**December 15–16, 1995** Eighth FEI congress is held in Riobamba

**May 19, 1996** Luis Macas, president of CONAIE, wins a post as a national deputy in the National Assembly on the Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik Nuevo País (MUPP-NP, Pachakutic Movement for Plurinational Unity-New Country) ticket

**February 5, 1997** Uprising evicts president Abdalá Bucaram from power

**June 5, 1998** Promulgation of Ecuador’s eighteenth constitution declares the country to be a pluricultural and multiethnic state

**January 21, 2000** Indigenous-military coup removes president Jamil Mahuad from power

**March 21–23, 2002** Tenth FEI congress is held in Quito

**April 20, 2005** Popular uprising forces President Lucio Gutiérrez from power



## Acronyms

AFE Alianza Femenina Ecuatoriana

Ecuadorian Feminine Alliance (founded in Quito in 1939)

CEDOC Confederación Ecuatoriana de Obreros Católicos, Central Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas

Ecuadorian Confederation of Catholic Workers, Ecuadorian Central of Classist Organizations (founded in 1938 by the Catholic Church and Conservative Party; changed name in 1957 and 1965 before adopting current name in 1972)

COICE Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana  
Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Ecuadorian Coast  
(coastal affiliate of CONAIE)

CONACNIE Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador

National Coordinating Council of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (forerunner of CONAIE founded in 1980)

CONAIE Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador

Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (umbrella group for Ecuadorian Indigenous organizations, founded in 1986)

CONFENIAE Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana



#### ACRONYMS

Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (umbrella group for Amazonian Indigenous organizations founded in 1980)

CTAL Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina  
Confederation of Latin American Workers (founded by the Mexican labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano in the 1940s)

CTE Confederación de Trabajadores del Ecuador  
Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers (founded in 1944; helped found FEI)

FADI Frente Amplio de Izquierda  
Broad Leftist Front (political party founded in 1977 to unify various leftist groups)

FEI Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios  
Ecuadorian Federation of Indians (founded in 1944)

FEINE Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos  
Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelical Indians (Evangelical Christian Indigenous organization founded in 1980)

FENOC Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinos  
National Federation of Peasant Organizations (Ecuadorian peasant organization founded in 1968; name subsequently changed to FENOCIN, Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras, or National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Negro Organizations)

FEPOCAN Federación Provincial de Organizaciones Campesinas de Napo  
Provincial Federation of Peasant Organizations of Napo (forerunner of FOIN founded in 1969 under the influence of Josefina missionaries)

FETEP Federación Ecuatoriana de Trabajadores Agropecuarios  
Ecuadorian Federation of Agricultural Workers (founded in 1965 by CEDOC; becomes FENOCIN 1968)

FOIN Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo  
Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo (founded 1973)

FTAL Federación de Trabajadores Agrícolas del Litoral  
Federation of Coastal Agricultural Workers (founded in 1954 by PCE and CTE)

FTP Federación de Trabajadores de Pichincha  
Pichincha Workers Federation

## ACRONYMS

- FULC** Frente Unico de Lucha Campesina  
United Front for Peasant Struggle (founded 1978)
- FULCI** Frente Unico de Lucha Campesina e Indígena  
United Front for Peasant and Indigenous Struggle
- FURA** Frente Unido de Reforma Agraria  
United Front for Agrarian Reform (founded 1972)
- IERAC** Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización  
Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization (agrarian reform institute formed in 1964)
- IIE** Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano  
Ecuadorian Indigenist Institute (Ecuadorian affiliate of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano [Inter-American Indigenist Institute, III] founded in 1943)
- JCAP** Junta Central de Asistencia Pública  
Public Assistance Coordinating Body (administered state-owned haciendas, later changed to Junta Central de Asistencia Social)
- OPIP** Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza  
Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (founded 1978)
- PCE** Partido Comunista Ecuatoriano  
Ecuadorian Communist Party (split-off from PSE; founded in 1931)
- PCMLE** Partido Comunista Marxista-Leninista del Ecuador  
Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador
- PSE** Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano  
Ecuadorian Socialist Party (founded in 1926; one of three “traditional” Ecuadorian political parties)
- PSR** Partido Socialista Revolucionario  
Revolutionary Socialist Party (radical leftist party in the 1960s)
- URJE** Unión Revolucionaria de Juventudes Ecuatorianas  
Ecuadorian Youth Revolutionary Union
- URME** Unión Revolucionaria de Mujeres del Ecuador  
Revolutionary Union of Ecuadorian Women



## What Is an Indian?

In June 1990, Indigenous peoples shocked the dominant *blanco-mestizo* (white) population of Ecuador with a powerful uprising that paralyzed the country for a week.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of protestors blocked highways with boulders, rocks, and trees and then converged on the streets of the capital city of Quito. Militants presented President Rodrigo Borja with a list of sixteen demands for cultural, economic, and political rights, insisting that the government address long-standing and unresolved issues of land ownership, education, economic development, and the Indigenous relationship with state structures. This Indigenous *levantamiento* (uprising) became one of the most significant events in the history of Ecuador's popular movements. The Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), a pan-Indigenous organization formed only four years earlier, used the uprising to force an ideological realignment within Ecuador's social movements. The Indigenous occupation of the public stage represented a tectonic shift with important consequences for the nature of popular organizing efforts across Latin America.

In a manner rarely seen in Latin America, Indigenous activism in Ecuador spawned an academic "Generation of 1990" with numerous articles, books, and doctoral dissertations on the subject of Indigenous politics.<sup>2</sup> Anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists analyzed the uprising and the ideological shifts engendered within the Indigenous world. Academics came to see the uprising, the organizational process leading to it, and the political



Map of Ecuador

negotiations following it as representing the birth of a new Indigenous ideology and organizational structure.

In contrast, as CONAIE's history of Indigenous movements in Ecuador observed, "Popular, community, syndicate, associate organizations, peasant and Indigenous movements do not appear overnight, nor are they the fruit of one or two people who meet and decide to create them. A movement does not appear because a group of leaders decides to call it by this or that name. A movement, a mass organization is the fruit of a long process of organization, of consciousness-raising, of decision making, of uniting many ideas. More than anything, it is the fruit of problems and contradictions that are produced between oppressors and the oppressed at a specific time and place."<sup>3</sup> The 1990 uprising was not the birth but the culmination of years of organizing efforts that introduced innovative strategies and discourses to advance Indigenous rights and preserve ethnic identities. A longer perspective reveals continual cross-fertilization between urban left-wing intelligentsia and rural Indigenous activists, and a fluidity in activist thinking that has consistently foregrounded economic needs as well as identity issues. This book examines how over the course of the twentieth century these factors influenced Indians and leftists who worked together to build the strongest Indigenous movements in the Americas.

## Long Histories

Although Ecuador has been studied less by historians than the rest of the Andes, it has a long history of Indigenous revolts. The Inkas incorporated Ecuador into Tawantinsuyu (their "Land of Four Quarters") only a few years before the arrival of the Spanish in 1534. For local inhabitants, both the Inkas and Spanish were outside invaders. As a result, the northern Andes endured from 1450 to 1550 a one-hundred-year Age of Conquests. This period of conquest was not a peaceful one: historians have documented seventy uprisings against Spanish colonial control of this region.<sup>4</sup> Most sixteenth-century revolts sought to expel the European invaders. In the seventeenth century, colonial abuses triggered complaints against the confiscation of lands as well as against tribute payments, labor drafts, and censuses. *Diezmos* (a compulsory tithe on agricultural products that functioned as an ecclesiastical tax) and *primicias* (the Catholic Church's claims to the first fruits of harvest) were particularly burdensome. Protests commonly targeted abusive individuals rather than the structures of Spanish

domination, and often involved tactics such as working slowly, breaking tools, or even committing suicide.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the largely individual acts of resistance in the seventeenth century, more than one hundred open revolts rocked the Andes during the eighteenth. This Age of Andean Insurrection culminated in the powerful 1780 Túpac Amaru II uprising. In a second, more radical phase, Túpac Katari articulated a vision of emancipation and self-determination. His last words, "I will return and I will be millions," were a prophetic statement that activists interpret as being fulfilled in subsequent Indigenous mobilizations. These calls to recover Tawantinsuyu did not resonate in Ecuador, and this fact has contributed to a myth of the passive Indian. Nevertheless, unrest also increased dramatically in the northern Andes. A 1777 census triggered one of most significant revolts, with Indians attacking estates and killing several whites.<sup>6</sup> Rather than accepting Spanish rule, active Indigenous resistance forced the elimination of abusive labor systems. Even after independence in 1822, Indians remained subjugated to an exclusionary regime. Protest continued; Hérnan Ibarra records forty-six "rural collective actions" against taxes, labor drafts, land, and water rights in the province of Tungurahua between 1815 and 1933.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1920s, Indigenous peoples began to form rural syndicates that fostered a mature political consciousness. In the 1930s and 1940s, activists made two failed and then a successful attempt to form a national-level organization to present their unified concerns to the government. Observers commonly characterize CONAIE as "Ecuador's first truly national indigenous organization."<sup>8</sup> Although CONAIE was a significant milestone in the development of Ecuador's Indigenous movements, this depiction is problematic. In the absence of a longer history, Indigenous peoples appear to move quickly from being subjects of governmental administration to actors who shaped those policies. This simplistic interpretation of complex relationships reflects Keith Jenkins's distinction between "past" and "history," with the past being what happened and history being how humans construct and remember those events.<sup>9</sup> Indians, as subalterns everywhere, have long been present in distinct ways in political debates. They did not exist passively outside broader processes of national development, but rather fundamentally altered the nature of state formation.<sup>10</sup> Recognizing this history, heedful scholars now note that "the Indigenous movement has its own deep roots."<sup>11</sup> Throughout the twentieth century,

activists drew on this history as they searched for new ways to make their presence felt on the public stage.

## Gendered Histories

Manuela León played a leading role in a December 18, 1871, revolt in her community of Yaruquíes, Chimborazo. Protestors captured and killed two government officials in charge of a road *minga* (labor draft) and another official who collected *primicias* and *diezmos*. This uprising, the most significant in the nineteenth century, is best known for the leadership of León's husband Fernando Daquilema, whom community members proclaimed to be king of Cacha.<sup>12</sup> As with Túpac Amaru a century earlier, the revolt spread quickly before the government cracked down on and executed the leaders. The traditional telling of these stories focuses on male leadership to the exclusion of key contributions by women. In Peru, Túpac Amaru's wife Micaela Bastidas was a shrewd commander and the revolt's chief propagandist. Like Bastidas, León chastised her male followers for their timidity. Both women were executed with their husbands as leaders of the revolts.

Luis Miguel Glave depicts female leadership as not unusual, and he claims that "women frequently egged men on to increasingly daring violence."<sup>13</sup> Rosalind Gow notes that "women often appeared to understand what was going on better than their husbands and also to be more radical."<sup>14</sup> In the 1777 protests, women prevented priests from announcing the census, threatened to burn a tax collector alive, and were executed together with men for their leadership. In 1803, Lorenza Avemañay mobilized women at Guamote, Chimborazo, in a revolt against *diezmos*, and was similarly executed along with three other leaders.<sup>15</sup> In 1899 at Pesillo in northern Ecuador, Juana Calcán led an uprising with her infant daughter Lucía Lechón on her back. Government soldiers shot her, and blood commingled with milk as young Lucía remained suckling at her breast.<sup>16</sup> As William Taylor notes for Mexico, "the entire community turned out for local rebellions." Women often led attacks and frequently were more aggressive than men.<sup>17</sup>

When activist women emerge in historical accounts, they are often cast in a more negative light than are their male counterparts. Mestizos have remembered both Avemañay and León as "a devil of an Indian."<sup>18</sup> Alfredo Costales described León as a crazy, dirty woman with a macabre presence who was "stupidly cruel" and burned villages with a "savage joyfulness." He





Woman wearing a rainbow scarf representing diversity at the 2004 Continental Summit of Indigenous Nations and Peoples of the Americas in Quito.  
Photo by Marc Becker.



Kayambi woman in the 2004 Inti Raymi (Sun Festival).  
Photo by Marc Becker.

contrasted her militancy with “Pacífico Daquilema” who was more reserved and rational.<sup>19</sup> Erin O’Connor notes that Costales wished to depict the uprising as just, and therefore he assigned any abuses to the irrational behavior of women. O’Connor argues that depictions of Indigenous women as alternatively submissive and savage are erroneous, and that their roles in rebellions grew out of their normal community functions. Willing to suffer and die for their beliefs, women directly confronted patriarchy.<sup>20</sup>

The gendered nature of Indigenous movements contrasts significantly with what typified relations in the dominant culture. Elite white women could exploit gendered stereotypes to their advantage. For example, perceptions of “women as innocents, incapable of deception and inappropriate behavior” allowed women during the wars of independence to work as spies and couriers.<sup>21</sup> Indigenous women, however, were not permitted the same privileges. Given that Indigenous women faced repression, imprisonment, and even executions, it is hard to envision strategic advantages in placing themselves in positions of leadership. Louisa Stark argues that rebellions are less frequent when strong relations exist between subalterns and the dominant class. Most of elite society’s interactions were with Indigenous men, which resulted in a weaker and less stable domination of women. While the government could regulate female activities in other realms, their active presence in “illegal” protests could not so easily be repressed. Furthermore, the fact that women enjoyed relative autonomy and equality within their communities led to recognition and respect for their leadership.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, as Muriel Crespi notes, “it was convenience and not a desire for equality that permitted women to occupy leadership positions.”<sup>23</sup> Women’s leadership thus often became a pragmatic issue rather than an ideological one.

Gender complementarity had long been part of Andean societies, with both male and female labor critical to survival strategies.<sup>24</sup> Although Andean cosmology assigned gender-specific duties, it did not privilege one gender over the other in the manner of Spanish-imposed patriarchy. Further, dominant society saw Indigenous men as children undeserving of the rights and responsibilities accorded to white men. As a result, O’Connor notes, “Indian peasants (unlike the state) more readily recognized these women’s productive and public . . . capacities and importance.” This “sometimes gave Indian women greater powers within their communities than state laws condoned.” Building on these social dynamics, Indigenous women placed themselves at the center of conflicts between Indigenous communities, landed estates, and the government.<sup>25</sup>