

# RELIGION, AUTHORITY, AND IDENTITY: Intergenerational Politics, Ethnic Resurgence, and Respect in Chimborazo, Ecuador\*

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*Abstract: This essay examines the ambivalent interaction between liberation theology and notions of 'respect' among Quichua speakers in highland Ecuador. It focuses on three ways that notions of respect rooted in local history inform and transform current Catholic practice and ethnic politics. First, indigenous Catholic activists and mestizo priests appeal to respect for elders to argue for ethnic and religious loyalty. Second, the memory of hacienda-era discipline partly underpins current models of community authority and "indigenous law." Finally, many villagers bring expectations shaped by hacienda prayer meetings to the Bible reflection that liberation theology promotes. This complex interaction contributes to local redefinitions of modernity.*

The province of Chimborazo in the central Ecuadorian Andes has been a stronghold of both Catholic liberation theology and indigenous ethnic resurgence in recent decades. The longtime local bishop, Leonidas Proaño, became known in the 1960s as "el Obispo de los Indios." During this period of intense agrarian conflict in the province, the Catholic Church in Chimborazo divided up its haciendas and attempted to position itself as an ally of the Quichua-speaking peasantry that formed the majority of the population of the province. When indigenous people throughout the Ecuadorian highlands staged a massive but peaceful "uprising" in June 1990, Bishop Víctor Corral was selected to mediate between the national indigenous leadership and the Ecuadorian government, a sign of both his

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position as Proaño's successor and the strength of the indigenous mobilization in Chimborazo.

The spirit of liberation theology was much in evidence in the ceremonies on Good Friday in the parish of Pangor in March 1991. Indigenous residents of Catholic villages in the parish, Spanish-speaking mestizos from the little town of Pangor, and a Bolivian nun who lived there all gathered that morning in Palapud, an indigenous community atop the long, narrow basin constituting the jurisdiction of the parish.<sup>1</sup> After a ceremony inside the chapel, the celebrants walked outside in a procession reenacting the Stations of the Cross. At each station, a man read aloud a commentary provided by the nun that connected the persecution of Jesus to historical and contemporary issues: the Spanish Conquest, human rights, the bleeding of the Ecuadorian economy through its foreign debt, recent attacks on the diocese for its commitment to the poor, and the struggles of highland and Amazonian indigenous peoples for land and territory.

My only glimpse that day of how Holy Week used to be celebrated before Vatican II, liberation theology, and the agrarian reform came from an offhand joke. After the Stations of the Cross, the celebrants sat in clusters on the grass, waiting for lunch to be served by the host community. Aurelio Condo, catechist of a neighboring indigenous community in whose house I lived, pointed up from where we were sitting to a man standing nearby and said with a smile that he would whip me for my sins. In the old days, Aurelio explained, indigenous farmers would take guinea pigs and other gifts to the house of a respected elder on Palm Sunday or the following Monday. Kneeling before him, they would confess their sins, listen to his admonishments, and then lie face down to receive a lashing, followed by the elder's blessing. This custom, called *pascuanchina*, was one of several types of ritualized moral instruction and discipline through which young persons learned to respect their elders.

This article examines religious change, relations of authority, and ethnic resurgence in Chimborazo by analyzing the concept of respect, its past and present meanings, and associated practices. Notions of respect figure prominently in local talk about religion, ethnicity, authority, and change, and the broad and varied ways in which indigenous people talk about respect can serve as a guide to these issues and the links among them. As a verb, *to respect* (*respetar* in Spanish, borrowed in Quichua as *respetana*) means to show deference to and heed the instruction of social superiors such as parents, elders, and landlords. The word may also refer to amicable proper behavior toward spouses, neighbors, or others and sometimes to proper behavior toward the divine or other entities. *Respeto*, *de respeto*, and *respetado* (all used in Quichua) refer to a quality associated with persons, sometimes meaning both respected and respectful. More abstractly, *respeto*

1. Palapud is a pseudonym, as are Caparina and Rumipamba.

seems to refer to the moral code in general and its obligatory nature. "This is respect," one informant recalled elders saying as they concluded their admonishments and raised the whip or belt to lash a junior in pascuanchina. Most broadly, *respeto* means a general state of social harmony and moral order. In this article, the term *respect complex* refers to the way that the fiesta system, ritual discipline, and norms of everyday behavior wove these notions of respect into the social and cultural fabric of the hacienda era.

The liberation theology current of the Catholic Church has played a large role in the abandonment or modification of some local religious practices associated with respect, while the church has also promoted new religious practices and new versions of respect. In examining respect, therefore, this essay also examines the local character of liberation theology. My argument steers a course between accounts of liberation theology as essentially a creation from below (such as Lancaster 1987) and analyses that take liberation theology as a set of ideas and practices presented by pastoral agents to lay Catholics to assimilate or reject (such as Burdick 1993).<sup>2</sup> These approaches yield distinct implications for the relationship between liberation theology and preexisting forms of popular religion. If liberation theology is basically a popular creation, then one can expect to find continuities with popular religion. For example, older forms of popular religion express a redemptive vision that liberation theology elaborates on more explicitly, and in practice popular religion and liberation theology may be combined in complementary roles (Lancaster 1987). The "top-down literature," in contrast, commonly stresses the obstacles that popular religion poses to accepting liberation theology. For example, lay veneration of the saints, preoccupation with personal morality and sin, and a "magical view" of the sacraments lead many Catholics to view priests espousing liberation theology as having deviated from their proper clerical role (Burdick 1993, 182–89, 204–5).<sup>3</sup>

Despite the apparent contradiction between these approaches, both have proved useful, and both could find some support in Chimborazo. But the approach taken here differs. Although the Good Friday ceremonies in

2. I admire Burdick's account in several ways. His idea of a "religious arena" leads him to place the liberation-theology-oriented base community in the context of other competing movements and to draw many insightful comparisons between them. Yet this same idea remains close to a market model of religious choice (despite Burdick's disclaimers), and it inhibits him from exploring in depth how the consumers contribute to reshaping the product, especially for the base community itself.

3. These various positions in the scholarship on popular religion and liberation theology recapitulate debates within the liberation theology movement over whether popular religion is alienating or potentially liberating. Theologians and pastoral agents have also seemed ambivalent about whether to represent themselves as the bearers of a prophetic tradition within the Catholic Church ratified by Vatican II and Medellín—a top-down image—or as simply encouraging and systematizing popular reflections on the Bible in the light of popular struggles.

1991 gave the impression of a radical disjunction between the old and the new ways of celebrating Holy Week, this article will show how old notions of respect have been brought right into the fora created by liberation theology. In the process, indigenous notions of respect and pastoral agents' practice of liberation theology have been transformed. This case exemplifies the need for scholars to pay close attention to the ways that practices and meanings are locally negotiated in the complex interaction between lay Catholics and pastoral agents. Neither popular religion nor liberation theology is a fixed entity, and they change in the course of this interaction. Such an approach will account for the development of local expressions of liberation theology out of popular religion without ignoring the role played by pastoral agents in the process. This approach will also analyze the distinctive agenda and influence of pastoral agents without assuming that their agenda is unchanging or their influence unilateral (compare Warren 1992, 197; and Montoya 1995).<sup>4</sup>

Beyond markedly religious contexts, the practices and meanings associated with *respeto* have also played an important role in indigenous people's relationship with landowners, the state, and other nonindigenous and extralocal institutions and influences. Under the hacienda system, rituals of respect linked indigenous authority and hacienda authority. In the last decade, the memory of the old rituals together with current notions of respect have influenced indigenous ethnic politics, the redefinition of indigenous identity, and the political self-assertion of indigenous communities. The relationship between indigenous people and nonindigenous institutions revolves in part around ambivalent and competing visions of "modernity," and as a result, the changing meanings of respect will provide a good window on the ways in which modernity is locally promoted, resisted, and redefined. The article will thus address broadly the recent trend in scholarship toward examining indigenous culture and ethnic identity in the Andes and elsewhere in Latin America as an ongoing historical process. It will take into account the complex relationship between historical experience and the selective and creative nature of memory in redefining identity, placing the interaction with nonindigenous forces at the center of this process rather than viewing indigenous culture and identity as simply the survival of pre-Columbian forms (Rappaport 1992, 1994; Rasnake 1988; Urban and Sherzer 1991; Warren 1992).

4. No less than the approaches just described, my own argument here has its counterpart within Catholic theology, particularly among pastoral agents in places like Chimborazo with significant indigenous populations, in the concept of *inculturation*. As will be explained, this term refers to the process by which the Gospel takes on a specific cultural form. I would argue that indigenous and clerical understandings began to interact and influence one another in the Andes long before the development of the modern theology of inculturation. Nonetheless, modern pastoral agents' notions of inculturation help make the interaction much more apparent and somewhat less asymmetrical than has historically been the case.

While considering the interaction between indigenous and non-indigenous influences, this essay will also examine internal community politics. The rhetoric of respect plays a complex and often paradoxical role in intergenerational tensions surrounding religious change and ethnic identity. What other scholars have found concerning “custom” or “community” in Mexico, Guatemala, and the Andes is also true of the concept of respect in this case. What seems to be a sign of moral consensus regarding proper social relations is actually a contested term, sometimes used to argue for various perspectives that conflict with each other, at other times used to gloss over tensions through the appearance of consensus (Grandin 1997; Mallon 1995; Nash 1995; Smith 1991). *Respect* is a prominent term in the current discourse of ethnic resurgence precisely because of its salience in intergenerational relations, as well as its breadth and elasticity. Thus by exploring the redefinition of identity through a focus on respect, this essay offers a strategy that may be useful in other ethnographic areas as well. Given that identity so often rests on images of the past and previous generations of ancestors, scholars seeking to understand changes in collective identities should find it fruitful to look at the ways in which such images articulate with intergenerational politics and the practices of intergenerational authority embedded in everyday life and remembered experience.

A few words are needed to detail the location and scope of the research discussed here. Fieldwork and archival research were conducted in Chimborazo from 1989 to 1992 and more briefly during the summers of 1995 and 1996. The *parroquia* of Pangor encompasses a stretch of land on the outer slopes of the western cordillera, from the peaks more than four thousand meters high down about halfway to the coastal plain. My fieldwork was based in the community of Caparina, formed by former laborers of the hacienda Rumipamba, near the high end of this stretch. The diocese acquired Rumipamba in 1880 and rented the estate and its resident labor force of twelve to twenty families out to private landowners until the early 1960s. Some informants had lived on other haciendas in Pangor and the central Chimborazo basin. While social relations on haciendas varied according to ecological conditions, private or institutional ownership, and other factors, a hierarchy of respect based on religious feasts, linked to the hacienda chain of command, and supported by ritual discipline appears to have been a widespread feature of hacienda society in the region (Lentz 1986; Lyons n.d.).<sup>5</sup> As occurred on many haciendas, the laborers of Rumipamba gained ownership of portions of the hacienda in the 1960s and 1970s and established themselves as an autonomous community. Caparina remains almost wholly Catholic, although some residents of nearby communities have con-

5. Minus the links to the hacienda, some similar patterns seem to have pertained in “free communities” as well. Many comparative insights could be gained through research on changing patterns of authority in old freeholding communities and non-hacienda areas.

verted to evangelical Protestantism. In researching the current relationship between indigenous people and the Catholic Church, I attended village and parish meetings of catechists, other lay indigenous Catholics, and pastoral agents throughout Pangor and occasionally in other parishes as well as diocese-level meetings of pastoral agents and indigenous Catholics in Riobamba, the provincial capital. This article thus presents a perspective on phenomena that are in some ways province-wide (if not broader), but it specifically looks within and from the vantage point of a former hacienda community and its parish in central-west Chimborazo.

I will first take a brief look at what I call “the respect complex” under the hacienda, roughly from the early decades of the twentieth century to the early 1960s. This step will prepare for examining how indigenous people draw on and rework the memory of hacienda-era respect as they create and respond to local versions of liberationist Catholicism and ethnic resurgence in the 1990s.

#### RESPECT IN THE HACIENDA PERIOD

The houses forming the administrative center of the hacienda Rumpamba included a room that served as a chapel. Its main fixture was a wooden frame about three feet high on a stand holding an image of a fair-skinned, rosy-cheeked woman cradling a child in her arms: Santa Rosa de Lima, the patron saint of the estate. A visitor to the hacienda chapel would probably have found several candles in front of the image. Laborers would place them there after rubbing them over their animals to commend them to Santa Rosa’s care. In the planting season (from September to December), an early morning visitor might also have seen laborers setting small piles of seed potato in front of this image and asking Santa Rosa for her blessing. To secure her blessings, the laborers celebrated an annual feast at the end of August. The sponsors hired a priest to say Mass, carried the image in a procession, and supplied abundant food, drink, and entertainment, all in honor of Santa Rosa.

As in much of rural Latin America prior to Vatican II, local religion in Chimborazo revolved around calendrical fiestas, especially feasts honoring local patron saints. At the top of the fiesta hierarchy in the Pangor area were the long-term positions of *fundador* and *regidor*, which were held by respected indigenous elders in each hacienda community. The *fundadores*, husband and wife, supervised the fiesta honoring a particular saint, named the annual sponsors, engaged in ritual reciprocal exchanges with them, helped them fulfill the burdensome sponsorship, and hosted a feast for them and the community during the fiesta. Fundadores gained their position by acquiring a saint’s image and “founding” the local feast to the saint, or more generally by inheriting the position from previous fundadores and sponsoring the fiesta themselves initially. Newly married cou-

ples became full social persons worthy of respect and demonstrated their respect for their elders by sponsoring a fiesta under the guidance of the fundadores.

Similarly, *regidores* supervised the annual fiestas of Carnaval and Corpus Christi, designating *alcaldes* each year to sponsor the fiesta. The regidor was chosen by the parish priest and also acted as the priest's representative within the village, with responsibility for maintaining standards of upright behavior. For example, with the alcalde's help, the regidor would pressure young lovers to marry promptly.<sup>6</sup>

Male fundadores and regidores were prominent among the respected elders who administered pascuanchina, the ritual admonishments and whipping, to their juniors. The positions of fundador, regidor, and hacienda overseer were often held by the same individuals. Indigenous fundadores, regidores, and overseers worked together with mestizo *hacendados* and hacienda stewards to maintain social order and inculcate respect. In discussing respect in the hacienda period, indigenous informants referred to indigenous and mestizo hacienda authorities alike as elders (*mayores* in Spanish, *yuyaccuna* in Quichua).

Once a week, all the hacienda residents gathered in the chapel for obligatory early morning prayer, known as *doctrina* and led by an indigenous *rezachidor* or prayer leader. The doctrina was also a forum for moral instruction, conflict resolution, and ritual discipline. Indigenous and mestizo authorities instructed the hacienda residents verbally in standards of proper behavior: the need for spouses to live together harmoniously, for young people to respect their elders, for hacienda residents to greet each other and especially elders with respect, for all to comport themselves amicably. Quarrels were brought before the elders to judge the conflict and ritually discipline the guilty. As in pascuanchina, ritual discipline in doctrina combined verbal admonishments with prayer and three lashes. The elder invoked the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, giving one lash as he named each member of the Trinity.

Today former hacienda laborers bitterly criticize many aspects of the hacienda system, especially the excessive demands on their labor, the harsh violence used to enforce these demands, the landlords' stinginess, the fines for loss of animals or grain, and the verbal and sexual abuse. Common responses were foot-dragging, pilfering, and other forms of covert resistance. Occasionally, laborers took more risky countermeasures such as physical retaliation or flight. Nevertheless, hacienda bosses gained a measure of legitimacy as authorities through their cooperation with indigenous elders in resolving conflicts among their subordinates and enforcing respect. The

6. The regidor's authority was thus somewhat broader than the fundador's, but it is not clear to me why Thurner categorized regidores as "civil" and fundadores as "religious" (1993, 53). Both are treated here as positions of religious authority.

legacy of the hacienda is thus a deeply ambivalent one. As remembered today, the hacienda is associated with an immoral and oppressive labor regime but also with a sort of moral order among hacienda residents in which juniors respected their seniors and quarrelsome behavior was controlled. Indeed, the same coercive powers that landlords and their delegates exercised as tools of oppression, even the fear that they instilled through violence are now viewed as having played a positive role in the context of ritual discipline to support that moral order.<sup>7</sup>

#### REMEMBERING THE ELDERS, REDEFINING RESPECT

##### *From Hacienda to Community*

The agrarian reform initiated in the 1960s radically transformed the social landscape of the Pangor valley and Chimborazo. The haciendas that formerly monopolized the land in Pangor and much of the province shrank, often retaining a core area of prime valley land but occasionally disappearing altogether.<sup>8</sup> Indigenous people who had lived on hacienda lands as dependent laborers gained property titles to family plots, often along with communal title to upland meadows. This change is frequently described in local historical narratives as a transformation from haciendas to communities.

In the same period, the Catholic Church in the province also underwent radical change from the impact of Vatican II, local pressures, and a charismatic bishop. The church shifted from a socially conservative, otherworldly theological orientation focused on salvation of the soul through the sacraments to a discourse first of development and then of liberation. Church leaders came to view much of popular religion, including the saints' feasts, as not only superstitious but alienating and oppressive. The Catholic Church supported indigenous land struggles and divested the institution of most of its landholdings, including the bulk of Rumipamba.

Since the 1980s, the theological concept of "*inculturación*" has joined that of liberation at the center of the Chimborazo church's definition of its long-term project: true liberation is seen to depend on the incarnation of the Gospel and the Catholic Church in indigenous forms, within indigenous culture. According to this theology, God planted the seeds of Christianity within every culture, so that each culture has its own integrity that mis-

7. This assertion has been documented, and its implications for theories of consent, coercion, and hegemony explored in Lyons (n.d.), which offers a much fuller examination of religion and authority in the hacienda period. See also Lyons (1994) for a fuller discussion of indigenous resistance.

8. Korovkin has provided figures and a useful discussion of the agrarian reform in Chimborazo (1993, 9–10, 16–25). She noted that the land redistribution was greatest in Cantón Colta (including Pangor). See also Thurner (1993).



sionary work must respect.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-1980s, the diocese of Riobamba responded to the desire of some indigenous catechists and lay missionaries for more intensive and formal training and to the local hierarchy's dream of forming an indigenous clergy by establishing a "*seminario indígena*," the Centro de Formación Indígena (CFI). The CFI is a centerpiece of the project of constructing an indigenous church: one faithful to the universal Catholic Church but having its own liturgy, theology, and social role based on indigenous culture and headed by indigenous leaders.

One young man from Caparina studied in the CFI for three years. More important, local catechists frequently interact with CFI students and graduates around the province in diocese meetings, and CFI graduates have gone to Pangor for local meetings and celebrations. Given that CFI study is easiest for those with some prior formal education and a degree of freedom from family responsibilities, CFI students and graduates tend to be fairly young, from their teens to around forty, and mostly male. In this essay, "indigenous Catholic activists" refers to CFI students and graduates as well as to village catechists. Almost all indigenous Catholic activists continue to engage in agriculture and derive at most a supplemental income from their part-time religious activities. "Pastoral agents" refers in contrast to full-time religious specialists. Although a small but growing number of CFI graduates have a steady income associated with full-time work for the Catholic Church, for the purposes of this article pastoral agents may be thought of as mestizo or foreign priests, nuns, and lay missionaries.

Religious life in indigenous villages has also changed. The old system of fiesta sponsorship directed by regidores and fundadores has lapsed. There are no regidores or alcaldes anymore, and fundadores have little role left. In their place, the Catholic Church has promoted the selection of indigenous catechists in each village, who receive church training and are charged with leading Bible study and preparing villagers for the sacraments. Again, the need for a catechist to be literate generally excludes the oldest villagers from this role. In Pangor in the early 1990s, the oldest indigenous catechists were men like Taita Aurelio in their forties, while many others were in their twenties or thirties. Catechists are often the sons or grandsons of regidores, fundadores, or doctrina prayer leaders. Unlike the

9. The notion of culture in the theology of inculturation is both influenced by and in tension with the traditional anthropological concept of culture. Several pastoral agents in Chimborazo have received anthropological training, and a pastoral interest in indigenous culture contributed to the welcome that I received among pastoral agents. The tension has to do with the assumption that the Christian Gospel and the Catholic Church are in principle universal and transcultural phenomena whose seeds are divinely implanted within each human culture. The issue is especially acute with respect to groups not previously Christianized, as in the Amazon. A good source for Catholic discussions of inculturation is the journal *Iglesia, Pueblos y Culturas* (published in Quito). For anthropological discussions, see Shapiro (1981) and Orta (1996).

regidor or fundador, who often was also an overseer whose authority in resolving disputes was supported by the hacienda, the catechist's authority is primarily spiritual. It is supported to some extent by the prestige attached to literacy and the catechist's role as gatekeeper to the sacraments. Catechists may enhance their authority by helping their community obtain material resources from the diocese or other institutions for projects such as a new chapel or communal livestock production. Civil authority in indigenous communities is held by the community assembly and the community officers elected each year.

In contemporary local accounts, regidores, fundadores, pascuanchina, and doctrina are all associated with the hacienda era, and their demise with the hacienda's demise. The hacienda did not dissolve in an instant, however, and the waning or transformation of the associated respect complex has been an uneven process. In the case of Rumipamba-Caparina, the transformation from hacienda to community lasted fifteen years, from the end of the last rental period (circa 1961) to the transfer of high pasture lands to communal ownership (in 1976). Before the last regidor-fundador died, others agreed to take over the role of fundador, but there was no one to continue as regidor. The position of regidor was more vulnerable than that of fundador to the withdrawal of clerical and hacienda support because part of the regidor's function was to serve as intermediary with the priest. Being regidor was probably economically more burdensome than being fundador because it entailed responsibility for two annual fiestas rather than one. These fiestas, Carnaval and Corpus Christi, were bound up more closely with hacienda authority and less with local agricultural fertility and identity than the fiesta of the patron saint.<sup>10</sup> The fundadores continued to select sponsors for the feast of Santa Rosa but encountered increasing difficulties in finding candidates who would accept. They finally turned over responsibility for the fiesta to the community around 1986. A modest fiesta in honor of Santa Rosa continued to be celebrated in the 1990s, largely under collective sponsorship. Even older residents are no longer interested in undertaking the traditional burdens of fiesta sponsorship, but the difference between those who have done so in the past and those who have not remains a source of intergenerational tension.

It is probably impossible to fix the demise of pascuanchina in Caparina, as different households must have practiced their last pascuanchina at different times. It is still practiced in other parts of Chimborazo province, at least in the early 1990s. As for doctrina, hacienda administrators in Caparina probably discontinued obligatory attendance and ritual whippings in the 1960s. Yet villagers still view meetings as doctrina in some ways.

Given these radical if uneven changes, how do indigenous people

10. The Carnaval celebrations were in part a ritual expression of reciprocity among landlords, stewards, overseers, and laborers (Lentz 1986, 199–200; Lyons 1994, chap. 4.1.3).

today remember the authority patterns of the hacienda period and assess respect in the present? Aurelio Condo's joking allusion to pascuanchina on Good Friday in 1991 expressed an ironic attitude toward the old respect complex rooted in his own personal history, but it also revealed some of the issues that indigenous people confront as they recall the past and ponder the meanings of respect today. Despite Aurelio's father's heavy investment in fiesta sponsorship, his mother died when he was a child, an event Aurelio views as contradicting the conventional connection between saints, fiestas, and blessings. His father migrated to the lowlands, leaving the boy to be raised by his grandparents on a Pangor hacienda. Redemptorist missionary priests seem to have recognized his quick intelligence and took him along on some of their visits to various haciendas. Looking back, he compared his own childhood religious knowledge to that of the elders, with some disdain for the latter and for their efforts to enforce respect:

Those priests loved me, and I went around with them. . . . I learned quickly. . . . Those big elders, those . . . so-called overseer-wives, those grand big mouths . . . , they were just good for talking [criticizing others]. . . . When we didn't greet them quickly . . . , they would greet us first, beating us to the punch, . . . and call us "insolent." But when they were asked about God, they didn't know where God lives, nothing. So during that old-style missionary visit, those priests . . . would come. All the Runa [indigenous people] would kiss their hands and call them "God" (*taita amito* or "Little Father Lord").<sup>11</sup>

For Taita Aurelio, respect was based on illusion and was bound up with indigenous peasants' ignorance and humiliation by mestizos. He analyzed the authority structure in the hacienda era as a way that priests and landlords co-opted the brightest and most assertive indigenous people by placing them at the top of an ultimately vacuous prestige scale. In turn, these leaders taught other indigenous people to respect them and their overlords. In his retrospective account, at least, Taita Aurelio's religious knowledge allowed him to see through the elders' pompous façade.

This learning was the beginning of a lifelong thirst for religious understanding. As an adult, Taita Aurelio learned to read and began to study the Bible, first with a Protestant missionary. Later he associated himself with Catholic liberation theology, becoming one of the leading local catechists as well as a political leader in the 1980s and 1990s. Religious learning has continued to be associated for him with challenging social hierarchy: only when indigenous people understand God, the Bible, and the doctrine and symbols of the Catholic Church will they be able to gain equality alongside nonindigenous people nationally and internationally within the Catholic Church and in the world at large. For Taita Aurelio, knowledge—especially of books and the Good Book—is power.

Aurelio Condo sometimes acknowledges the importance of respect

11. Author's interview with Aurelio Condo, Caparina, Aug. 1991.

for elders, even while pointing out its limitations as a guiding central value. Most indigenous people in Pangor are less overtly critical of respect as a value than Taita Aurelio, although the term often arouses mixed feelings. Some even refer to the respect of the hacienda period with nostalgia. I now want to explore the sources and uses in the present of this nostalgia, the complex ways that memory is mobilized in the service of contemporary projects as well as the role that notions of respect with broad appeal play in a changed social and religious context.

*Respect for Elders, Cultural Identity, and the Indigenous Pastorate*

As a single young woman in 1990, Amelia Amancha was accustomed to wearing mestiza-style shawls and skirts, rather than the indigenous *bayeta* and *anacu* worn by her mother and most of the women of Caparina.<sup>12</sup> Her mother told me, as if it were the most natural connection, that Amelia had stopped wearing the *anacu* because she had learned to read. But after Amelia married a young man in Caparina that same year and went to live with him in his parents' house, she went back to the *anacu*. Continued use of mestiza dress could have been interpreted as a sign of disrespect toward her husband's mother, a statement that Amelia considered herself better.<sup>13</sup>

Amelia's case illustrates the possibilities (some would say, the temptations or perhaps pressures) for indigenous youth now to take on the symbols of mestizo identity. The situation also exemplifies one way that notions of respect for elders constrain young people to maintain an indigenous identity.<sup>14</sup> Indigenous children in Pangor today attend primary school, something that was the exclusive prerogative of mestizos just a few decades ago. Adolescents and young married adults often work in the cities, sometimes for several years, especially males and those with little

12. The *bayeta* is a solid-color cloth, embroidered around the edges, worn as a shawl. The *anacu* is a navy blue or black cloth with embroidery along the bottom edge, used as a wrap-around skirt. The *anacu* typically covers more of the legs than a mestiza skirt.

13. Why was Amelia's mestiza dress not disrespectful to her mother? It could have been interpreted in the same way, but her mother apparently supported or at least tolerated Amelia's decision to wear mestiza skirts, perhaps out of pride in her. Amelia could not expect the same indulgence from her mother-in-law, whose authority Amelia was expected to recognize unambiguously. A discussion with Rebecca Tolen helped me understand the significance of this incident.

14. I dichotomize mestizo and indigenous identities as an either-or choice in this discussion because that is the way they are construed locally. Anthropologists have pointed out that ethnic and racial labels in the Andes vary contextually, and some migrants no doubt present themselves as mestizo in some urban contexts but indigenous back home in the village. Yet no one has elaborated a local discourse according to which one could actually be both. Rather, migrants would be judged as "hiding" their true indigenous identity in the city and as hypocritical in their indigenous self-presentation in the village. The migrant is indigenous, born

land. As they perfect their Spanish in the cities, they are exposed to a scale of values in which everything urban, mestizo, and “modern” is preferred over anything rural, Indian, or “old-fashioned.” They may also be discriminated against for the traces of their rural and indigenous background that they continue to display. When these migrants return to their villages to visit or live, they sometimes favor Spanish over Quichua and wear jackets and sunglasses instead of ponchos and hats, or skirts and slacks instead of anacus. Some young men and women have their hair curled. All these choices are understood and often meant as a claim to having crossed over from an indigenous identity to a mestizo identity, or at least to having become less Indian and more modern and urban. As a display of preference that accords with the prevailing ethnic hierarchy, such a claim also implies superiority to villagers who continue to display the markers of indigenous identity. One of the most common complaints of indigenous villagers is that returned migrants fail to greet peers and especially elders respectfully, as if their ethnic self-transformation has canceled out the obligations of respect and deference they would have as indigenous youth.<sup>15</sup>

In response to this phenomenon, indigenous villagers are engaged in a contemporary version of what Steve Stern called “a struggle for solidarity” in colonial Peru (Stern 1983). They pressure each other and especially those who might be wavering to maintain their indigenous identity, to share in the common lot. In contrast to Stern’s Hispanicized indigenous elite who were tempted to convert a privileged position in the native hierarchy into greater power and wealth on Spanish colonial terms, today’s primary-school graduates and young migrants are not a particularly privileged group. Their peers and elders are asking them to accept a position of relatively low status and power within the village. Yet it would be too simple to view the concern over youths’ self-presentation and ethnic identification as merely an assertion of elders’ power over their juniors. At stake ultimately is whether indigenous people, young and old, will be able to respect themselves and each other as indigenous people or only by becoming mestizos. At stake also is whether indigenous people can continue to use their identity as the basis for vigorous political self-assertion, as they did in the 1990s.

The defense of this historically stigmatized identity is often charged with ambivalence. Sometimes it takes the form of cutting down someone’s

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of indigenous parents, but “wants to become mestizo” or “makes himself out to be mestizo” (*“mishu tucusha nin”* or *“mishu tucushca”*). Moreover, it is the relative stability of ethnic self-presentation across contexts—specifically of mestizo markers—that provokes the tensions discussed here.

15. Joanne Rappaport cited a tale from southern Colombia about a young man who is drafted into the army and later returns to his village (1994, 35–36). He does not (or pretends not to) recognize such staples of rural life as fava beans, cheese, and guinea pigs. Similar stories in which the city replaces the army barracks are popular among both mestizo and indigenous peasants in central Ecuador.

pretensions to a superior social status, without necessarily challenging the underlying hierarchy of prestige. Consider the case of a young woman, Rosa Lema, who went to Quito as a teenager and returned to Caparina some eight or ten years later in the late 1980s. In one of her first jobs in Quito as a servant, she said, her mistress obliged her to switch to “decent” mestiza dress. She got used to wearing skirts and continued to do so after her return to Caparina. Back in the village, however, she was criticized as foolish for displaying her dark Runa (Indian) legs. These comments did not cease until she went back to wearing the anacu. This ridicule was based on the assumption that dark skin is ugly, and it did not keep her from recalling with a tinge of pride that she had dressed like a mestiza during one period in her life. The campaign succeeded nonetheless in forcing her to re-identify herself through her dress as an indigenous woman.

In this context of ambivalent struggles over identity and respect, Catholic activist discussions have generated a rhetoric aimed at persuading individuals to continue displaying markers of indigenous identity. This rhetoric explicitly associates ethnic markers with respect for elders, building on the implicit everyday association exemplified by the case of Amelia Amancha. That is, catechists and other activists argue that respect for one’s parents and grandparents demands maintaining the dress, language, and identity that they have passed down.

Beyond the defense of markers of ethnic identity, indigenous Catholic activists have helped create and diffuse a narrative that affirms the continuity of that identity over time and roots it in the pre-Columbian period. The participants in a 1994 diocese-level meeting asked themselves, “Who are our elders?” Their answers encompassed not only “our grandparents” but also the pre-Columbian peoples of Ecuador, such as the Puruhaes of Chimborazo, and (ambiguously) the Incas. Even under Spanish domination and the hacienda system, they affirmed in their report, “we indigenous people preserved in hiding our culture, our religion, our [way of] life.” In Pangor at least, this explicit recognition of descent from pre-Columbian peoples is something new. The term *Puruhá* (and the plural *Puruhaes*) dropped out of common currency long ago, probably in the colonial period.<sup>16</sup> Local Quichua oral traditions predating the last few decades tell of indigenous people being created along with mestizos in an epochal cataclysm associated with the appearance of Jesus Christ in the world.<sup>17</sup> Like contemporary indigenous political discourse elsewhere in Latin America, the new narrative of indigenous identity shows a variety of influences out-

16. The word *Puruhá* is now being revived. The Quichua broadcasters on the Catholic radio station in Riobamba began to use the term as a designation for Chimborazo indigenous people in 1992.

17. Some CFI students initially found it disturbing and insulting to be told that their ancestors were not “Christian” because *cristiano* is commonly used as a virtual synonym for

side local oral tradition, including academic anthropology and history. In this case, these influences have largely been mediated through pastoral agents at the Centro de Formación Indígena (compare Diskin 1991; Moody 1988; and Rappaport 1994, 117–21).

This narrative provides Catholic activists with a charter to extend the argument concerning respect for elders widely to customs and beliefs defined as constituting an indigenous cultural inheritance, yet without endorsing wholesale a frozen vision of their culture exactly as practiced by their own parents or grandparents—and while arguing for changes. The concept of an indigenous culture maintained “in hiding” under domination implies the need to distinguish among what is authentically indigenous and should be conserved, what in the practices of ancestors might need to be revived, and what is alien and historically imposed. For example, pastoral agents and indigenous activists often portray indigenous tradition as economically “communitarian.” They urge communities to maintain communal land tenure where it exists, to continue or revive communal labor practices, and to initiate communal productive projects.<sup>18</sup> Some indigenous activists have been collecting and sharing accounts of local “sacred places,” recognizing that although these places have often been Christianized through stories of apparitions, they also fit into a longstanding Andean religious topography. At the same time, activists commonly dismiss the images of patron saints and fiesta sponsorship as having been imposed by priests and landowners. Here the narrative of domination and clandestine cultural resistance allows activists to remain true to “our elders” while rejecting the means by which their parents or grandparents gained respect and showed respect for their own elders.

This situation places the current generation of elders in a highly ambiguous position. On the one hand, the Catholic activist discourse construes these elders as links to an authentic indigenous past whose experience and guidance should be valued. On the other hand, this discourse conditions the elders’ authority on the cultural authenticity of their beliefs and practices, as assessed by the Catholic activists, their juniors. Elders’ status, traditionally based on their service to the saints, is thereby demoted implicitly in favor of ancient Puruhá ancestors. Some elders fail to see this demotion as a form of respect, and consequently, *respect* has become a term of contention, a value that individuals can appeal to equally to protest or to defend recent changes.

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human being. I was told that in one of their discussions, some students pointed to me as an example that one could be a normal human being without being cristiano (I am Jewish).

18. While communal land tenure (especially of pastures) and practices of reciprocity are common among indigenous people in Chimborazo, the image of an essentially “communitarian” economy also draws on a romanticization of “the indigenous community” that has a long and complex history in indigenist discourse in the Andes. Some pastoral agents and indigenous activists in Chimborazo began to question this portrayal in the mid-1990s.

Older religious traditionalists can take some comfort in the fact that both pastoral agents and indigenous Catholic activists also construe respect for indigenous elders as entailing loyalty to Catholicism. Given that Catholicism was imposed on indigenous Andeans, this view may seem paradoxical. Such an interpretation of respect must be understood in the context of more intense competition between Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism, a growing movement among indigenous villagers in Chimborazo since around 1960 (Muratorio 1980; Santana 1990; Tolen 1995). While redefining and reinforcing indigenous identity in its own way, evangelical Protestantism demands a sharp break with the past as a time of ignorance, idolatry, drunkenness, and degradation. It also rejects a broad range of popular beliefs and practices from folk medicine to the customary burning of household sweepings and old grains at Pentecost.<sup>19</sup> Padre Carlos, the mestizo priest in charge of Pangor and the Pastoral Indígena in the diocese, made the counterargument at a course for Pangor catechists in 1992. It is true, he conceded, that the elders had some faults, but that does not justify rejecting them and their cultural inheritance wholesale: "They taught a very beautiful respect; they were good workers; they taught beautiful customs. . . . Nonetheless we cast blame, saying that they were drunks,<sup>20</sup> saying that they did bad things; for that we get angry and deny them. But not for one or two sins should we forget them. We have to remember our fathers and mothers, we have to love them, we have to learn about them."<sup>21</sup> Padre Carlos asserted that "the forefathers and indigenous culture" were the first cornerstone of the Pastoral Indígena. In other contexts, especially Holy Week celebrations, Padre Carlos sometimes invites villagers to ask for instruction and blessings from their elders, leading the way himself by kneeling before an elderly indigenous man or woman. He thus uses ritual language adapted from pascuanchina to endorse indigenous respect for elders and to display his own (and by implication the Catholic Church's) respect for indigenous culture (compare Warren 1992, 199–200).

Still, the recognition that Catholicism was historically imposed on indigenous people could threaten the legitimacy of Catholicism and indigenous culture, each from the standpoint of the other. Priests such as Padre Carlos and indigenous Catholic activists mitigate the potential con-

19. Despite this sharp break, more continuity may exist in some respects than is commonly recognized. Numerous personal conversations with Rebecca Tolen, Riobamba, 1989–1990.

20. Evangelical prohibition of alcohol is one of the most salient distinctions between indigenous Evangelicals and Catholics. Converts who return to Catholicism may mark their re-conversion by drinking. Religious affiliation in mixed communities is sometimes inferred on the basis of whether the individual has recently been drinking or not.

21. The first-person plural here, in which the speaker rhetorically includes himself with his audience is a common feature of local Quichua and Spanish oratory, one not limited to pastoral agents.



tradition through a classic missionary and Andean Catholic strategy of drawing parallels between Catholicism and precolonial Andean religious traditions. The modern theology of inculturation leads them to expect such parallels. For example, Inca names of deities are interpreted to correspond to the Catholic Trinity. Padre Carlos construes Andean mountain spirits as intermediaries between indigenous believers and God, much like saints in orthodox Catholicism. Thus instead of opposing each other, Catholicism and the culture of indigenous ancestors can validate each other (compare MacCormack 1985 and Klaiber 1992).

Finally, one should consider the continuities in many villagers' conception of the elders as well as the change that contemporary ethnic and religious politics have generated. In the hacienda system, indigenous elders were part of a hierarchy of respect that extended up the ethnic-racial ladder, and in the context of ritual discipline, mestizos could also be viewed as elders. Villagers today still kneel sometimes before a mestizo priest or bishop to receive his blessing, which is viewed as especially efficacious—a hierarchy of respect spanning the ethnic boundary is not altogether gone. It is a source of frustration to indigenous catechists and lay ministers that many villagers continue to consider their religious authority minor compared with that of mestizo priests. In current Catholic activist rhetoric, in contrast, the conception of the elders is at once extended in time back to the pre-Columbian ancestors and ethnically circumscribed: the sources of wisdom, of moral examples to be emulated are “our indigenous elders,” “our ancestors.” The next section will examine how along with this changing notion of respect for indigenous elders, contemporary indigenous political rhetoric is reworking the notion of respect between indigenous people and mestizos into a demand for reciprocal respect.

### *“Indigenous Law” and the Reconstruction of Communal Authority*

Over the last four and a half centuries, indigenous political structures throughout highland Latin America have been reshaped through interaction with the state, and much of what is now seen as indigenous tradition is actually a product of colonial or republican legislation. The formal community structures of contemporary Ecuador derive from legislation such as the 1937 Ley de Comunas and are subject to government oversight. Yet indigenous peoples have used these community structures as well as parish and higher-level federations built on them to press for their own goals. Thus communes, cooperatives, and other republican and colonial forms of organization have served as important tools in indigenous land struggles in Ecuador, as elsewhere. Tanya Korovkin (1993) has argued that contemporary indigenous ethnic politics in Chimborazo can be interpreted in part as a movement by communities and federations to gain control over local development policies in order to challenge capitalist models. Com-

munity and federation assemblies and leaders were instrumental in mobilizing the mass protests of June 1990, dubbed the Levantamiento Nacional Indígena (Cornejo 1991; Field 1991; Zamosc 1994). The communities mobilized again in 1994 to protest proposed changes in the agrarian reform law. Indigenous communities have thus become the building blocks of the contemporary indigenous political movement.

A relatively underreported and unanalyzed aspect of this movement is the effort of communities and community federations to strengthen their role in resolving conflicts and punishing offenses to the point of contesting the monopoly of law enforcement by the state (or by other state organs not under indigenous control). This effort will be examined here from the vantage point of a parish formerly dominated by haciendas as a transformation of the respect complex of the hacienda era. Two aspects of conflict resolution should be considered. The first concerns conflicts within the community: like hacienda authorities, community assemblies and leaders sometimes take a role in handling domestic quarrels, disputes between neighbors, alleged theft, accusations of witchcraft, and other kinds of disagreements. The second aspect concerns offenses that are committed by outsiders within community boundaries against community members. Animal rustling is a particularly volatile issue. At least since the late 1980s, one hears and reads in Ecuadorian newspapers of highland indigenous communities or parish-level federations (or sometimes spontaneous associations of communities that form around specific incidents) detaining, investigating, and punishing alleged rustlers. This practice too has precedents in the hacienda period, when landowners sometimes acted as a law unto themselves in conflicts with outsiders that involved their property or resident laborers.

The communal pastures, periodic communal labor, suspiciousness of outsiders, and occasional communal justice that characterize many indigenous communities all contribute to a perception among mestizo peasants and others that indigenous communities are united and strong. Yet indigenous villagers in communities like Caparina frequently lament their divisions and their own lack of respect for the authority of the community assembly or president. They compare their contemporary internal politics less with mestizo peasant communities or urban neighborhoods than with the authority and order of the hacienda. By that comparison, contemporary communal authorities are indeed handicapped in maintaining order and enforcing compliance with their decisions.

Individual landownership and a worsening ratio of residents to land have created sometimes bitter conflicts over boundaries and inheritances. Analogous conflicts over usufruct plots sometimes occurred on the hacienda, but the local landlord was the ultimate authority for resolving them. In contrast, legal authority for resolving conflicts over private property is now located outside the community. More fundamentally, with the

land subdivided under private ownership, no one is beholden to the community for his or her livelihood. Community presidents are not also supervisors of work, as most of the hacienda elders were. Neither do community presidents have any special religious authority, as did fundadores and regidores. Nor do indigenous community authorities wield the strong influence over the state that ultimately backed both everyday violence on the hacienda and the landlords' authority to resolve conflicts. The landlords could "demand" that the parties to a conflict respect the resolutions given on the hacienda, as Agustín Paca recalled in his comments (cited below). Community presidents, in contrast, can do little to prevent a dissatisfied party from taking his or her case to the government-appointed *teniente político* (the civil parish authority) in Pangor or other authorities in town. A community leader who tried to interfere with this process would risk legal troubles of his own. The risks are even greater when communities attempt to impose a settlement or punishment on outsiders, such as suspected rustlers. Thus while the community has occupied part of the local political and legal space vacated by the hacienda, the state has also expanded into that space and strengthened its role in rural areas.<sup>22</sup>

One of the consequences is increased litigiousness and litigation costs. Yet few Ecuadorians of modest means, indigenous or mestizo, believe that the legal system is impartial. The common perception is that judges are subject to personal influence and bribery. The general reputation of lawyers is not much better. Lawyers for opposing sides are rumored to conspire with each other and with judges, dragging out cases to extract more in fees and bribes. The common saying holds, "La ley es sólo para el de poncho" (the law applies only to those who wear ponchos, meaning peasants and Indians). Almost everyone seems to know of instances of criminals who were caught in the act but quickly bought their way out of prison. Cultural and ethnic factors add another twist to the alienation of indigenous people, who generally have little or no formal education but must deal with the urban legal system based on written documents in Spanish and run by mestizos.

In this context, the memory of moral discipline on the hacienda administered by hacienda bosses and indigenous elders offers a model for strengthening the contemporary indigenous community and its disciplinary authority. An excerpt from a conversation with Agustín Paca illustrates this point. A man in his fifties, Taita Agustín grew up on one of the neighboring Pangor haciendas and married a woman from Caparina. In re-

22. Guerrero (1990) described an analogous dynamic in nineteenth-century northern Ecuador. Members of freeholding indigenous villages sometimes brought their disputes over land before local officials of the state such as the *teniente político*, thus contributing to the growing power of the state and state law at the expense of the indigenous ethnic hierarchy and indigenous customary law.

cent years, he has been embroiled in a conflict over land with his wife's half-brothers, one of whom he believes hired a shaman to make him ill. Although these problems were presented at various points before the community assembly and the authorities in Pangor, the matter dragged on without resolution for several years. Taita Agustín was telling me about the unjust and arbitrary violence associated with the hacienda, a context that makes his contrast of the moral order that the landlords enforced with the moral anarchy of today all the more striking.

It's good that we're free now of the lords [*amucuna*, meaning landlords, masters, powerful mestizos]. . . . In the old days, there was a lot of mistreatment. . . . They beat people excessively. Sometimes they "bathed" people in cold water. . . .

On the other hand . . . , there is a need for those lords to provide a good moral example like in the old life, to instill respect. They are missed. . . . Now, just among ourselves, there is a bit of disrespect. . . . [T]he people . . . don't heed each other. . . .

Right now, there's a bit of a problem here. If the oldtime lords were around, if someone brought that problem to them, there would be some settlement. . . . There wouldn't be legal battles. . . . That was good. . . .

The landlords . . . , the stewards, the overseers . . . were just like a public authority in the old days. So . . . people didn't go as they do today to the public authorities to make a judicial complaint or look for a settlement. . . .

Some of the older people . . . would tell the lords what had happened . . . , who was fighting . . . , what the quarrel was about . . . , or that someone had beaten his wife. . . . The landlords or the stewards listened to what the overseer told them, and they said, "Go, bring them. . . . I want to know why that happened." . . . The lords . . . had them each tell their side, face to face, and punished both sides. . . . So then . . . there was proper respect, in the old days. . . .

That . . . does not exist, now. . . . They [the community presidents] don't have that authority. . . . [N]ow there could be, with someone who was really an elder. . . . If people didn't go to the *tenencia* [public authority in town] at all but stayed within the community itself. Remembering the oldtime stewards and landlords, the elders would say, "Why do you set this bad example?" Or if both sides were to blame, they would make them lie down face down, admonish them, and take up the lash. . . . And they could lock them up at least—at least for twenty-four hours. . . .

If they took that idea from those oldtime lords, now too there would be good respect. If there was any [trouble], there would indeed be punishments. Someone would indeed give moral instruction. They would get three or four strokes of the lash. Why wouldn't people have a little bit of fear in that case? Instead of going to the *tenencia*, the offenders would instead be locked in the community house and lashed there, made to spend the night and a day there. Then . . . everybody would have some fear.

But that ended along with the oldtime lords. Now that doesn't exist. With these community presidents it's just verbal, just talk . . . , and they don't pay attention now. . . . They don't even have just a little bit of respect. . . . That's why those lords are a bit missed now. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Taita Agustín's recollection of the past is typical of the older genera-

23. Author's interview with Agustín Paca, Caparina, Nov. 1992.

tion in its ambivalence, at once sharply critical of the hacienda's excessive violence yet nostalgic for its moral order.

While community authorities do not routinely apply physical punishments, as Taita Agustín laments, the memory of hacienda discipline and the desire for enhanced community authority constitute a powerful social force. Although Taita Agustín's family conflict remains unresolved, his community together with neighboring communities physically punished the man he thought had had him bewitched after several others also implicated this man in witchcraft and animal theft. Some of the punishments applied in such cases—whipping or forced immersion in cold water—recall common hacienda punishments.

At the same time, it should be noted that contemporary ambivalence toward the hacienda era, combined with other factors, has produced some changes with respect to punishments. The memory of arbitrary and excessive violence on the hacienda creates fertile ground for a discourse of "human rights" drawing on the Ecuadorian Constitution. This discourse has been diffused locally via the radio, courses for village leaders sponsored by the Catholic Church and other organizations, probably indigenous involvement with the legal system during agrarian struggles, and other means. Such discourse is sometimes invoked to support a sense that punishments should be regulated and moderate. Although Taita Agustín's comments centered on the memory of hacienda discipline and the lash, he also suggested that people could be locked up. This form of punishment was not used by haciendas in the Pangor area,<sup>24</sup> to my knowledge, but is employed by the *teniente político* in Pangor. The most frequent and broadly accepted form of internal discipline in indigenous communities may be monetary fines. In dispute settlements inscribed in the official record of community resolutions (the *Libros de Actas*), each party commits himself or herself to paying a large fine if found to have repeated the offense or renewed the quarrel. This practice too is probably borrowed from the *tenencia política*, whose archive contains similar documents from the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> The use of fines to replace the lash evidences increased unease with physical punishments. Young and middle-aged parents likewise report using less physical punishment in child-rearing.<sup>26</sup>

Another significant development is an apparent tendency to secu-

24. Some large haciendas in other parts of the province had private jails.

25. In contrast, the use of fines to back up communal labor obligations is probably borrowed from the hacienda.

26. Parents sometimes lament that youth today lack respect, but they also say their own parents punished them much more harshly than they do their own children. Memory may distort, but a number of considerations make it plausible that parental discipline is becoming more moderate: the belief that physical punishment can disable children's minds for formal education; parents' fear of losing their children to labor migration at a young age (children as

larize punishments. As religious authorities, catechists are sometimes called on to help resolve domestic quarrels and give moral instruction. They, however, have been taught in church courses that they represent a loving, liberating God who addresses his word directly to the individual conscience (*conciencia*), respecting human liberty. They do not represent the God of the hacienda era who routinely used punishments to remind individuals of their obligations. Moreover, catechists are not usually viewed as elders who might give a lashing as God's deputies. Villagers say, "There are no elders anymore," meaning not some dramatic rise in mortality among the elderly but that there are no *regidores* or *fundadores*, no one with the authority to administer punishment as a sacrament. Community presidents receive a certain degree of respect as the personification of the community. But the community is conceived of as an association of equals (equal men or equal households, in particular), and the presidency rotates each year. The rituals associated with the formal community structure and its authorities are essentially secular. For example, there is no special tie between the community president and the patron saint, whose significance is now much diminished. In accord with the democratization and secularization of communal authority, some punishments used, such as fines or imprisonment, avoid subjecting the offender personally to another individual. These choices also show that the community models its judicial practices after those of secular civil authority as well as the hacienda. Further investigation will be needed to determine the extent to which the lash, when used, continues to be infused with religious symbolism.

While the memory of the hacienda and the model of local civil authority both influence community practices, in Catholic activist and ethnic-political ideology, the indigenous community is a prime expression of indigenous culture and identity. The last section showed how the new narrative of identity and a historically expanded, ethnically circumscribed notion of "our elders" provide a charter for redefining and authenticating aspects of the remembered past as "indigenous culture." Admonishments and punishments by elders or communal authorities fit into this narrative as "indigenous law." At the 1994 meeting of indigenous Catholic activists, participants were first asked to discuss in groups the social organization, laws, economy, religion, politics, and culture of "our elders." The report documented these responses:

Before the conquest, our peoples had their own form of organization. . . . They admonished the young people and helped in marriage; within the family group, they admonished the person who was on the wrong path. . . .

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young as thirteen or fourteen sometimes run away with friends or relatives to the cities); and the demise of the hacienda with its routine violence, which was sometimes recycled within the family.

They had a general governor, *regidor*, *alcalde*, *rezachidores*. They were the authority in our communities. . . . They had their own laws to obey, so that things were controlled . . . , and so there was respect among all. . . . The elders admonished and punished for one's own good. . . .<sup>27</sup>

Under the heading, "ourselves and our children," the report cited these comments:

The mestizos have filled our heads with ideas that are not our own. We do not have our own laws, made with our own ideas and thoughts.

Yes, we do have laws; the problem is that we are not taking them into account.

What are our laws?

When they catch a thief, they punish him, putting him in jail, they make him "bathe," and they whip him and strike him with nettles so that he doesn't do it again. . . .

If a married couple in the community is not living together well, they give them a lashing. They also make a written resolution, and they punish them with a fine.

Our law is oral, but it is obeyed. The elders don't let the young people learn bad vices, for example, they don't like them to get drunk. . . .

It is a law to respect the elders and get along with each other.

To punish, the community gets organized; they bring a tank of water, nettles, San Martín to punish them severely, and the elders admonish them. All that helps the structure of marriages, and it is a lesson from the elders. (CFI 1994, 7–9)

Again, a contrast is evident between mestizo ideas and indigenous laws. Elders play a prominent role in indigenous laws. In discussing the participants' project for the future, they similarly appealed to the image of the elders and ancestors: "Taking into account our elders, continuing to value the laws, the admonishments; this way we will be able to live . . . the way they lived" (CFI 1994, 16).

The detention of a suspected animal rustler in the Pangor area in 1992 provides a dramatic example of the role of indigenous law in local practice. A moderately wealthy mestizo who had become notorious in other parts of the province for allegedly stealing cattle and mistreating his indigenous neighbors had bought some land at the top of the Pangor basin. Following a series of animal thefts in various local communities, most of the communities in the area united to detain him. They seemed to have strong evidence implicating him in the rustling. As the condition for his release, the indigenous leaders demanded that he agree to leave the area, that his land (allegedly used as a base for shipping stolen cattle) be turned over to the communities, and that the cattle found on his land be used to compensate those whose cattle had been stolen. Several weeks of fruitless negotiations with the man's family and Ecuadorian government authorities

27. See the anonymous 1994 report entitled "Primer Encuentro Provincial de Servidores de la Pastoral Indígena," in-house report of a meeting sponsored by the Centro de Formación Indígena, Santa Cruz (Riobamba), 4–5 April (CFI 1994, 6–7).

followed. One Pangor leader was captured in town and charged with kidnapping. Under the threat of army intervention, the Pangor villagers finally turned the suspected rustler over to the government authorities. From their point of view, their distrust of mestizo justice was confirmed when the man was released after a brief detention, while their own leader was imprisoned for two years. It is clearly difficult for indigenous communities to assert extralegal authority over powerful outsiders, although some areas in Chimborazo with strong parish-level federations have reportedly been successful in eliminating animal rustling by imposing their own punishments.

It is beyond the purposes of this article to assess this case from a legal standpoint or to explore the difficult practical and moral dilemmas the case posed to those involved. What is relevant is that in local meetings, leaders constructed the collective effort rhetorically as an assertion of “indigenous law.” Just as indigenous peoples have had to respect *mishucuna* (mestizos in Quichua) and their law (that of the state), so too, they argued, the *mishus* must respect indigenous law in this issue vital to local indigenous livelihoods. The notion of indigenous law was a banner under which a broad and politically complex coalition of indigenous communities and leaders—some Catholic, some Protestant, some affiliated with leftist political parties, others associated with rival community federations, some from different parts of the Pangor valley and even beyond the parish boundaries—could all, at least temporarily, unite.

To argue that contemporary notions of indigenous law are a recent construction is not to suggest that they are not authentic. Catholic activists and ethnic militants are by no means mistaken in perceiving continuities with old traditions, even precolonial Andean customs (Lyons n.d.). If their public discourse tends to obscure the role of nonindigenous others in reshaping indigenous law, it is no more selective than most public historical memory. If indigenous people choose to define certain practices that they have long participated in as “indigenous,” then those practices become indigenous (Jackson 1995, 19–20).

At the same time, the kind of historical analysis engaged in here can serve a useful critical function. For some journalists and many of those associated with the official legal system, cases like the detention of the suspected rustler in Pangor appear to be the expression of an atavistic mentality of primitives who simply do not understand that a modern state requires citizens to give up private justice and subject themselves to the universal rule of law. Most of those involved in the Pangor case would like nothing better than for the state to live up to its claim of representing the rule of law. They will no doubt continue to see a legitimate role for local community authority in conflict resolution, and their perspective on the operation of the official law will continue to be shaped by the particulars of their historical experience and culture. But if they had had a reasonable degree of confidence that their accusation against the suspected rustler would



be processed efficiently and impartially through the official legal system, with appropriate punishment if sustained, they probably would not have undertaken the burdens and risks of detaining the man themselves. The concept of indigenous law expresses longstanding Andean sensibilities, but it also arises from an ongoing relationship with nonindigenous others and is therefore responsive to changes in that relationship. It is not simply a fixed or mindless tradition.

*Bible Reflection as Doctrina and the Ambivalence of the Written Word*

I turn now to the continuing significance of respect in the contemporary religious arena per se, specifically in relation to the Bible. One of the most important features of Catholicism since Vatican II and liberation theology (and one shared by evangelical Protestantism in Chimborazo) is the new stress on popular access to the Bible. Among Catholics in Chimborazo, the liberation theology movement has promoted a new religious activity called *reflexión de la palabra de Dios* (Reflection on the Word of God). It begins with someone reading aloud a Biblical passage, either the passage of the day according to the Catholic liturgical calendar or one selected by the pastoral agent or person leading the meeting. Usually the passage is read first in Spanish. If a Bible in Quichua is available, it is then read in Quichua as well. Generally, the reader is a catechist or other literate male villager who stands while reading, taking off his hat (as do the listeners). He concludes with the phrase, "That is the Word of God." The leader then invites other participants to reflect on the passage and apply it to reality—to interpret it and to draw out the lessons it suggests for their lives and the larger society. At the end, the leader often summarizes and expands on others' comments.

It has become standard practice to include Reflection as part of the Mass, at the opening of meetings of Catholic religious activists, and at the beginning of meetings of organizations such as the Directiva Central in Pangor, a parish-wide federation of communities formed under guidance of the Catholic Church. Catholic pastoral agents also encourage (and sometimes pressure) indigenous communities to hold regular meetings for Reflection, to include it in the agenda of their community assemblies, or to engage in it during the lunch break in communal labor. Reflection is likewise a central part of *misiones*, in which pastoral agents and lay activists (mestizo and indigenous) go as individuals or in small teams to communities for several days to visit families, sometimes participate in communal labor, and hold daily religious meetings.

Liberation theology views the Bible as a message of liberation addressed above all to the poor and oppressed, who therefore possess special interpretive authority. The Word of God is an active force that helps the oppressed to understand oppression as a consequence of sinful social struc-

tures and moves them to act as historical subjects to transform the world in accordance with God's plan. This idea finds institutional expression in the ecclesial base communities (or Christian communities) that have sprung up around Latin America, described by many observers of the liberation theology movement (Levine 1986, Burdick 1993, Mainwaring and Wilde 1989). In indigenous villages in Chimborazo, base communities do not generally exist as a distinct institution, even though Reflection on the Word of God is practiced in various public contexts (compare Romero 1989, 266–67).

The commentaries that indigenous participants make in Reflection often express ideas that liberation theologians anywhere in Latin America would recognize as their own. For example, in the Corpus Christi Mass in Pangor in 1992, the Reflection was based on I Corinthians 11:23–26, in which Jesus instructs the disciples to eat the Eucharistic bread and drink wine “in memory of me.” Asked by the pastoral agent leading the Reflection for what purpose Jesus wants to remain with us (through the Eucharist), one catechist responded: “[So that we continue] searching for justice, for love, for understanding, for peace, as brothers, indigenous people and mestizos, as Jesus taught us and gave us his example; demanding justice and equality.”<sup>28</sup> Exposure to the Bible and the guidance of liberation-theology-oriented pastoral agents in interpreting it certainly contributed to indigenous Catholics' political consciousness in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Yet indigenous interpretations of the Bible are more complex and varied than simply expression of a kind of folk liberation theology, as pastoral agents are aware. It should not be assumed that they consider this complexity a problem. The need for the Gospel, the Catholic Church, and pastoral agents to be “inculturated”—to assume the specific culture of each group being evangelized, even as the Son of God took on a particular cultural identity in incarnating Himself as a Jew—is a key concept in contemporary Catholic discourse about indigenous cultures. It is expected that God's Word will reveal and express itself somewhat differently in each culture, but without compromising the essential truths. In practice, tensions arise among mestizo pastoral agents and indigenous Catholic activists over different understandings of inculturation. But pastoral agents themselves, especially those most involved with liberation theology and the Pastoral Indígena, encourage indigenous people to value and maintain or revive at

28. In contrast, in the mestizo middle Chimbo valley in the neighboring province of Bolívar, which has no strong community organizations apart from the official civil parish structures, bands of criminals engage freely in nighttime rustling and sometimes break into houses to rob them. Residents may use firearms in self-defense, and neighbors will sometimes get out of bed to answer each other's call for help. In the light of day, however, fear of reprisals and the lack of confidence in the legal system keep victims from taking action against the criminals, despite general knowledge of their identity. Thus peasants have reason to view their choice not as one of private justice or the rule of law but as communal justice or none at all.

least some of their elders' customs. Pastoral agents sometimes guide Reflection toward this message. It is consequently not surprising that traditional notions of respect inherited from the hacienda period inform contemporary indigenous views and interpretations of the Bible.

For example, indigenous people, especially among the older generation, often refer to Reflection as *doctrina*. In their eyes, both are formal meetings in which religious knowledge is explicitly taught or sought. More significant, the fundamental purpose and effect of the *doctrina*, as older people remember it today, was to inculcate respect. To call Reflection "*doctrina*" is to imply that Reflection has (or should have) the same purpose and effect. If asked to assess either one, older people are likely to say, "It's for our own good," the same thing they say about instruction and discipline by which people learn proper behavior. From this perspective, what has happened in the shift from *doctrina* on the hacienda to Reflection is that while coercion has disappeared, the Bible has been drafted in its place to reinforce respect.

For a week in December 1989, villagers met every day in the Caparina chapel for a *misión* led by a longtime Quichua missionary, a middle-aged indigenous man from another part of the province. The theme one day was "How should we educate our children?" The missionary divided the participants into groups of five or so and had each group read and comment on Luke 2:41–52. In this passage, twelve-year-old Jesus, having accompanied his parents to Jerusalem for the Passover festivities, stayed behind without their knowledge. When his parents found him three days later in the temple, he asked, "Why did you look for me? Don't you know that I must be with my Father?"

A semi-official Catholic interpretation of this passage is found at the foot of the page in the Spanish-language Bible distributed through the Catholic Church in Ecuador and used in meetings like this one. This edition was translated in Chile in 1972, and the commentary was written in the post-Vatican II spirit with strong echoes of liberation theology at many points. According to the commentators, this incident was "Jesus' first demonstration of independence," a radical declaration of liberty for which Jesus "did not feel guilty." The commentators explained,

After this, he would continue obeying [his human parents], but he had shown them that he knew very well who he was, and that he was capable of any sacrifice or breach in order to serve his Father in the manner that seemed good to him. In reading this text, it is appropriate to reflect on the respect that parents must have for their children's path [*vocación* or calling] and the effort that parents must make to understand them when they begin to be independent. Instead of speaking of the lost child, it would be more accurate to say that the adolescent Jesus has found himself. (Ricciardi and Hurault 1989, N.T. 100–101n)

In this analysis, Jesus' behavior is taken not simply as an indication of his exceptional divine nature but as a model for the adolescent search for self

and need for independence. Like Jesus, every adolescent has received some sort of calling from God. Parents must therefore respect their children's attempts to discover and follow their own calling.

In contrast to this individualistic and anti-authoritarian interpretation, the indigenous commentary at the meeting in Caparina stressed the importance of parental guidance and punishment in shaping children into good people:

"Why have you done this?" Jesus' mother said—these things that you should not have done. He was a bit disobedient to his mother.

When a child goes to a fiesta he has to go home with his parents, not stay behind playing. We have to instruct them not to do that, not to misbehave and do whatever they want.

When a child is insolent, we must punish him, and when he is big, we must not teach him bad words, but teach instead the Word of God, put him in school, and teach him not to be insolent.<sup>29</sup>

According to this view, not even Jesus—whatever his sense of his divine mission—is exempt from the duty of obedience and respect to his parents.<sup>30</sup> Parents' task is to instill respect. The last comment implies that the Word of God can help in teaching children "not to be insolent." This coupling of "the Word of God" with school suggests that the speaker views not only the Bible but education in the written word more generally as reinforcing respect.

Yet even while indigenous commentators call the Bible into the service of reinforcing respect, the relationship between the written word and the traditional respect complex is profoundly ambivalent. Priests were among those who traditionally imparted moral instruction, purification, and discipline. Their authority in this regard was associated with their command of esoteric sacred knowledge. The Bible now symbolizes this sacred knowledge. Indigenous Catholics sometimes say of their new access to the Bible that the priests have begun to let them in on knowledge that the priests formerly kept to themselves. In this sense, Bible Reflection represents, as liberation theology would have it, a democratization of moral authority in relation to ethnic and ecclesiastical hierarchies. In reading a message of respect out of the Bible, indigenous interpreters are assuming a role formerly reserved for priests (who were almost invariably mestizos).<sup>31</sup> Still, for many or most indigenous people, obstacles of language and illiteracy make it difficult to gain a sense of mastery of the Bible. For this reason, the

29. Fieldnotes, Dec. 1989.

30. Oral tradition casts Jesus as a mischievous child. Stories of his childhood mischief perhaps reinforce the idea that parental guidance is always necessary to mold moral character. According to David Frye, these stories may descend from medieval European sources. Personal conversation, spring 1994.

31. Delfin Tenesaca, a mestizo with an indigenous paternal surname, was told to use his Spanish maternal surname when he was in seminary in the 1950s—a priest could not be

demand that they interpret the Bible seems to leave some participants feeling more intimidated than empowered (compare Burdick 1993, 75–80).<sup>32</sup>

From another angle, it is instructive to compare the authority offered by the Bible with the traditional authority of indigenous elders. Respect was traditionally instilled in an interpersonal transaction between an elder and a junior. The authority of indigenous elders, including to some extent the legitimacy of overseers as elders, was based on their accumulated personal experience, their comportment, their service as *fundadores* or *regidores* to saints, God, and the community, their history of fiesta sponsorship and success in agriculture, and their kinship or godparent relationships with specific juniors. The Bible, like the written word generally, offers a very different kind of authority. Like other modern forms of authority, command of the written word is formally independent of personal histories (aside from schooling) and relationships. Catechists are “experts” insofar as their authority is based on knowledge accessible in principle to all, cultivated through institutional training (church courses and meetings), rather than on personal relationships, life experience, or signs of divine grace. In the hacienda era, only the weak authority of the *rezachidores*, based on memorizing standard prayer formulas, was somewhat similar. Traditional shamanic healers (*yachaccuna*, or knowers) deal in specialized knowledge but are not experts in the same sense as catechists. A person is selected for a shamanic career by God, saints, or mountain spirits who initially appear to him during grave illness, after striking him with lightning, or in dreams.<sup>33</sup> What training the shaman receives is through personal apprenticeship to another shaman, and he will continue to rely on personal relationships with mountain spirits or saints in healing.<sup>34</sup>

Fiesta sponsorship entailed a series of ritual exchanges between sponsors and *fundadores* or *regidores*, as well as with others in a couple’s

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named Tenesaca. By the time he finished seminary, Leonidas Proaño was bishop and permitted him to be ordained as Tenesaca. Author’s interview with Delfín Tenesaca, Dirección Nacional de Educación Bilingüe, Quito, Oct. 1992.

32. Again, I wish to acknowledge the extent to which pastoral agents in Chimborazo (a thoughtful lot, in my experience) reflect on the consequences of their pastoral methods. They could point out that despite the difficulties, some indigenous persons have gained a sense of familiarity and self-confidence in interpreting the Bible, and that as catechists, they translate their understanding into terms accessible to others. This process is arguably an empowering one in the long run. Also, following dissatisfaction with an earlier translation (Sociedad Bíblica Ecuatoriana 1989), a committee including several graduates of the CFI is retranslating the Bible into Quichua.

33. Because the accounts I have heard of shamanic selection in Chimborazo refer to males, I am not sure whether this statement would apply to females or not.

34. For more on shamanic healing in Ecuador, see Sánchez-Parga and Pineda (1985). Tausig suggested an interesting contrast between commoditized *magia* and shamanic healing based on reciprocity (1987, 259–73). My notion of “experts” here is clearly related to classic sociological themes such as functional specialization and differentiation, bureaucratization,

social network who helped with fiesta preparations and expenses or participated in the festivities with their own bottle of alcohol in hand to share. A traditional career of religious service depended on, intensified, and displayed the sponsors' engagement in local webs of reciprocity. The subjects of such a career were a couple, wife as well as husband, who called on their social networks for aid and gained prestige from their religious service. The career of a catechist, in contrast, takes the catechist outside the community and perhaps the parish for church courses and meetings with other catechists and pastoral agents. The catechist's authority rests in part on the knowledge the catechist brings back from this training. The catechist is an individual rather than a couple, and indigenous catechists are usually male and sometimes unmarried (males are more likely to be literate, enjoy more freedom of movement outside the house and the community, and wield a greater voice in community meetings). If a spouse is said to "support" the catechist, it is in the limited sense that she does not complain about his travels or the time and money required. Similarly, the community may "support" the catechist by granting him leave from communal labor obligations and perhaps contributing toward his travel expenses. Little else is required of the catechist's local social network.

The subversive nature of the authority of the written word *vis-à-vis* intergenerational hierarchy can be appreciated on noting that primary schools began to be built on the former haciendas only in the 1960s, and most of those born before the middle to late 1950s cannot read. Those in their twenties and thirties are the ones potentially empowered by access to the Bible. Use of the Bible to reinforce respect is thus fraught with ambivalence and contradiction. Although Biblical passages can be interpreted as lessons in the need for respect, reliance on the Bible, which represents youth's access to forms of knowledge formerly restricted to mestizos, threatens young people's respect for the wisdom of their elders.

In a broader sense, Bible Reflection can be seen as part of the post-conciliar church's project of constructing a new kind of religious subject, one guided strongly by *conciencia* (meaning conscience or consciousness) where faith and respect used to be sufficient. The Catholic requirement that persons wishing to receive one of the life-cycle sacraments for themselves

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and rationalization, and it differs from definitions that focus on the role of science in the discourse of modern "experts." Nikolas Rose, for example, has written that experts "specify ways of conducting one's private affairs that are desirable, not because they are required by a moral code dictated by God or the Prince, but because they are rational and true." Experts thus define what is considered normal (Rose 1995, 218–19). Rose's discussion illuminates an important aspect of modernity, but his definition excludes the possibility of any distinctively modern kind of expertise focused precisely on morality and God. A concept of religious experts that might allow scholars to compare and connect religious modernity to the modern rise of experts in other domains would seem to require a broader definition, focused less on the contents of discourse than on the credentials involved.

or their children first take a preparatory course with a catechist (a requirement adapted directly from Vatican II) represents a demand that lay Catholics gain an explicit understanding of the doctrine and symbolism involved in the sacrament. In such courses and in priests' explanations of the sacraments, the traditional notion that sacraments effectively bring God's grace and blessings down on those who receive them—cleansing the baptized baby of original sin and turning him or her into a Christian, or helping the married couple to live a healthy and harmonious life together—now tends to be deemphasized. What is stressed is that the sacrament expresses a commitment to a code of behavior, for example, to raise the baby as a good Catholic and to act according to the baptismal formula as “priest, prophet, and king” (with a special accent on the prophetic struggle for justice). The preparatory course aims to ensure such a conscious commitment. In diocese meetings, pastoral agents and catechists lament the prevalence of social motivations for undertaking the sacraments: social obligations, social pressures, shame, or the desire for ritual kinship (*compadrazgo*). They contrast these reasons with what they consider more authentic religious motivations such as “mature faith” and conscious commitment.

As a replacement for *doctrina*, Bible Reflection is relatively individualistic in a similar way. Pastoral agents and lay activists stress that Biblical Reflection is a communal or collective activity, contrasting it with an individualistic Protestant approach to the Bible. This collective setting certainly shapes the Biblical interpretations that emerge. But whereas attendance at *doctrina* was obligatory, attendance at Reflection meetings depends on each person's *conciencia*, a fact that some in the older generation note uneasily as another factor in the decline of respect. A central part of *doctrina* was the collective rote recitation of prayers, a form of respect for God that helped secure His blessings, whereas Reflection calls on each participant to struggle for an intellectual understanding of the message contained in God's Word. In *doctrina*, elders instilled respect through moral instruction and ritual punishment, but Reflection was designed in part as a tool of *concientización* (consciousness-raising). *Conciencia* cannot in principle be transmitted from elder to junior, as is possible with respect.

Both the use of the Bible and the associated ambivalence can be perceived in another *misión* in Caparina led by two nuns in August 1991. In the opening meeting, villagers expressed their hope that the *misión* would address what they referred to as the lack of respect today. They cited the need to bolster the authority and unity of the community and more broadly the need among community members for education, meaning moral instruction and respectful behavior. One speaker assessed the state of “the organization,” meaning the community as a formal entity with political and economic functions: “In our organization, we are disunited. We don't think well. We don't go forward. . . . We don't heed anything, as if we were

deaf. . . . Because we don't have respect among ourselves, we do not move forward."

In response to these concerns, the nuns chose for the first Reflection session I Corinthians 12:12–21, 27, in which the Christian community is described as the body of Christ, all of whose members must work together for the body to function. A middle-aged catechist from a neighboring community alluded to a recent quarrel between two Caparina men in his comment: "Each person is important and merits respect and consideration, so let's not speak those [swear] words. The community is a body. . . . When such words are spoken, and even more, when there is drinking, it leads to fights. Even when the parents do not know how to read and write, the children know, and they must take the Word of God and correct their parents."<sup>35</sup> This literate catechist's image of children admonishing their quarrelsome illiterate parents, Bible in hand, illustrates the perceived power of the Bible to teach respectful behavior and at the same time to subvert the generational hierarchy traditionally associated with respect.

A comment made in a later Reflection on Ephesians 6:1–4 during the same *misión* provides an interesting contrast. The passage calls on children to obey their parents and on parents to "educate [your children] using the admonitions and warnings that the Lord may inspire" (Ricciardi and Hurault 1989: N.T. 372). "From the time our children are little, we have to teach them . . . to greet, to be educated [well-behaved]. Not just hand them the Bible and say, 'Read it yourself.' . . . We must teach them. . . ."<sup>36</sup> This speaker chose to underscore the insufficiency of the Bible in inculcating good behavior independently of parental guidance.

Other comments on the same passage linked respect for parents to the preservation of indigenous customs and ethnic markers. Taita Aurelio, for example, argued that rejecting traditional practices like weaving and grinding grain by hand with stones "is a way of not heeding what our parents have taught us." He criticized youth who change from indigenous dress to mestizo styles and curl their hair, and he lamented the failure of modern education to teach *educación* in the traditional sense of proper behavior: "In the old days, they gave a good whipping, they punished people. Now, we put our trust in the school, that it will educate the children, but that is not true. It only teaches letters, but not education."<sup>37</sup> This ironic wordplay on the ambiguity of the word *educación* is commonplace among the older generation. Probably no one would openly place the written Word of God in the same category of "letters," opposed to moral "education"—certainly not Taita Aurelio, a catechist who leans on the Bible for support in preparing villagers for marriage or their children's baptisms.

35. Fieldnotes, Caparina, 19 Aug. 1991.

36. Fieldnotes, Caparina, 20 Aug. 1991.

37. *Ibid.*



But Taita Aurelio was selective in defending the elders' "customs." In other contexts, he appealed to the Bible in rejecting some practices and beliefs traditionally associated with saints' feasts, and he told me that he does not believe in mountain spirits because he has been unable to find support for such a belief in the Bible. The Bible thus occupies an ambiguous category of its own, more broadly assumed to bear a message of respect than secular "letters" yet also potentially subversive of respect.

One option for indigenous communities and elders faced with this contradiction is to accede formally or opportunistically to pastoral agents' pressures to engage in Biblical Reflection while devaluing it and the authority associated with it. Communities tend periodically to revive the practice of holding weekly Reflections, either in the enthusiasm sometimes generated by a *misión* or when a community has a special interest in gaining pastoral agents' goodwill.<sup>38</sup> Villages may then let Reflection lapse after some weeks or months.

When a church-sponsored meeting is held in a community, it seems to be common for nonattendees—especially among the older generation—to comment dismissively, "They're not going to provide anything to eat."<sup>39</sup> On one level this could be interpreted simply as a statement that one's time is better spent attending to one's crops and animals. The comment might also be interpreted as pointing to a contrast with the *fiesta* and the edifice of authority built on it. Central to the *fiesta* was the distribution by sponsors and fundadores of massive amounts of food, and the belief that through the *fiesta*, participants would gain the goodwill and blessings of the saint and God for their crops and animals. No one ever made this comment to me or in my hearing, but it was reported to me various times in a disapproving way, always as someone else's comment. Those reporting it would distance themselves by proclaiming the need to set aside time for the things of God, not to devote oneself exclusively to things of the flesh. At the time, I tended to interpret this comment unreflectively in secular terms as an expression of anti-intellectualism. Yet it could also be interpreted as a refusal to contemplate that religious authority could be generated outside the sort of exchange cycles associated with the *fiesta*. It is ironic that this criticism of Reflection cites material concerns, while the defense of Reflection is couched in terms of the opposition of "matter" to "spirit" that liberation theology attempts to transcend.<sup>40</sup>

In reality, the authority of catechists tends to be rather weak. They

38. Pastoral agents control various material resources of interest to communities. They sometimes condition access on community participation in church-sponsored organizations and activities, believing that such participation will enhance the effective use of these resources.

39. The host community generally serves lunch.

40. It is unclear whether indigenous defense of Reflection in dualistic terms comes out of a traditional popular religious rhetoric (despite the conjoining of spirit and flesh in the implicit

persistently complain that their fellow villagers do not respect and support them. Couples wishing to marry or baptize a child find ways to circumvent the catechists' authority as gatekeepers to the sacraments. Community presidents do not allow time for Reflection in community assemblies. Communities refuse to grant catechists leave to attend church courses and meetings on communal work days. Again, these patterns can be interpreted as resistance to the growth within the community of religious authority based on mastery of the written Word.<sup>41</sup>

There are other more subtle, perhaps unconscious ways within Reflection that some individuals subvert the power of the written Word. Alberto Shagñay, son of a regidor and fundador of Palapud, married into the Hacienda Rumipamba, sponsored the fiesta of Santa Rosa, and acceded to the requests of fellow laborers to serve as godfather at their children's baptisms. His son is a longtime catechist in Palapud, while his son-in-law is a leading catechist near Caparina. Taita Alberto is a pious man who speaks of priests and nuns with great respect. He talked at length about the respect that reigned when he was a young man and his dismay at the lack of respect among youth today, such as their failure to greet others properly.

Taita Alberto regularly attends misiones or other church-sponsored meetings in Caparina, and he speaks up in the Reflections. His contributions are consistent, regardless of the content of the passage being discussed. He may draw a tenuous connection to the specific passage at the outset, but he often leaves it far behind. He reiterates the importance of respect for God and among members of the community, the need to devote oneself to agriculture with faith that God will provide, the need for people to greet each other properly, to avoid ugly speech and quarrels, and to cooperate with each other in the community.

Taita Alberto's rhetoric in Reflection does not simply duplicate what the elders might have said in doctrina on the hacienda thirty-five or forty years ago. Its nuances reflect his own current preoccupations and current issues in the community. Yet the similarity to doctrina goes beyond the message of respect. In doctrina, the oral recitation of formulaic prayers lent

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theology of the fiesta) or is derived from the contemporary rhetoric of pastoral agents. In arguing that villages should support their catechists or stressing the need to pursue both material and spiritual concerns, pastoral agents often use a metaphor attributed to Leonidas Proaño. They draw a picture of a man with a poncho, one leg labelled "spirit," the other "flesh": just as a human needs two legs to walk, humans need to attend to both the spirit and the flesh. While this image expresses a change from preconciliar teachings that denied the legitimacy of "fleshly" concerns, it continues to represent spirit and flesh as two distinct, albeit now complementary, concerns.

41. Catechists sometimes ruefully compare their own position with the much greater authority that they perceive that evangelical Protestant communities grant to their pastors. Pastors similarly tend to be literate men born no earlier than the mid-1950s. Many of them are former Catholic catechists, and Biblical exegesis is an important part of their role. A comparative study would no doubt be illuminating.

a sacred frame to moral instruction, itself understood as the expression of the elders' life experience, not as exegesis of the prayers. Taita Alberto seems to use the oral reading of Biblical passages similarly as a frame for moral instruction, without letting the passage determine or restrict his message. Like others, he ends by saying, "That is what I have understood," indicating his recognition that Reflection is ostensibly Biblical interpretation and invoking the authority of the passage. But the substance of his reflections constructs that authority as one of sacred frame, not as the fount of wisdom. Given that Reflection in any event calls on participants to draw both on the reading and on personal experience in formulating their comments, Taita Alberto's comments might be taken as a limiting case in which convictions associated with a lifetime of experience almost completely overshadow the particulars of the reading.

That these ways of responding to the Bible speak to current conflicts within the community—albeit usually in a generalized, somewhat oblique manner—is confirmed by the tensions that occasionally become manifest. In one *misión*, some young men finally expressed resentment at the repeated comments by their elders on the younger generation's lack of respect. The young men had also had to listen to criticism directed at some of their peers who played volleyball outside rather than sitting in the *misión* session. The players later agreed to suspend their playing during the rest of the *misión* sessions, and in the last session, the younger people were able to point to a favorable comparison between their own attendance and that of the older generation.

Neither such skirmishes nor the moralistic language of respect employed in Reflection reveal the underlying sources of conflict, which also have to do with the desire of young people—especially married couples—for access to land in their own right. During the agrarian reform, much of the best land of Rumipamba was distributed to new communities of land-poor settlers from the central Chimborazo basin. Given the general population growth, population density on the former hacienda is higher than ever before. In 1991–1992, a group of young men formed a separate *Organización de los Jóvenes* in competition with the older Caparina community structure. The new organization obtained the bishop's permission to work as a group on a section of the former hacienda still belonging to the diocese, despite the objections of older Caparina leaders.<sup>42</sup> The new organization was helped by the fact that two or three of the young men were already catechists and others began to attend parish-level church meetings and courses in neighboring communities. They impressed the local pastoral agent with their espousal of a vision of working collectively under the

42. The older Caparina leadership argued that the new organization's request threatened their longstanding use of one of the hacienda buildings. Some may also have been nursing dreams of securing the land in question for the community.

guidance of the Word of God, their ongoing practice of Reflection in their own meetings, and their attendance at church meetings. She wrote the bishop to support their request. Here Biblical Reflection can be seen functioning as a kind of counter-doctrina, a means by which a group of young persons have reinforced their challenge to the older generation and claimed religious sanction for that challenge.

## CONCLUSION

A historical perspective is vital for understanding the contemporary interactions among indigenous persons, Catholic pastoral agents, and the state. Although liberation theology has reshaped indigenous religious consciousness and practice in Chimborazo, an active historical memory continues to influence contemporary religious thinking, and part of that reshaping necessarily takes the form of reinterpreting the past. Thus local expressions of liberationist Catholicism are creative and distinctive: mestizo pastoral agents kneel before indigenous elders, drawing on an old ritual language to make a novel argument for indigenous loyalty to a changing Church; indigenous Catholic activists join with pastoral agents to develop a new narrative of conquest, resistance, and religious and cultural continuity with pre-Columbian peoples, and they condition elders' authority on cultural authenticity; and villagers look to the Bible for support for communal harmony and youthful respect for elders. These expressions are much too complex to be accommodated either by top-down models of liberation theology as a finished product of pastoral agents or by bottom-up models of liberation theology as a spontaneous popular creation. Instead, researchers need to analyze such manifestations as the product of interaction between various actors: pastoral agents, indigenous Catholic activists, and other indigenous persons of various generations and stances toward the Catholic Church, favorable and otherwise.

Out of the interactions among indigenous people and the church, the state, and a changing social and economic environment, a discourse and a politics of indigenous ethnic resurgence have also emerged. In Chimborazo as in many parts of Latin America, when indigenous people mobilize on the basis of ethnicity, a notion of "indigenous culture" becomes central to their self-definition and political vision, and thus they are led to attempt to define this indigenous culture more explicitly than they needed to before. In this context, rituals and notions of respect for elders have become salient yet problematic memories.

Beyond the general association of elders or ancestors with cultural authenticity, another reason may explain why in Chimborazo so much of the discussion of indigenous culture is framed as a matter of "what the elders taught us." Andean indigenous culture generally does not cultivate a great deal of metacultural discourse, meaning talk explicitly about culture

(Sánchez-Parga 1988; Mannheim 1991, 94–96). Moral instruction in elder-junior relationships thus stands out as an occasion when rules of behavior have been explicitly formulated and enjoined, making it a logical template for contemporary ethnic-political reflection on indigenous culture.

At the same time, the old respect complex is problematic because of the ways that intergenerational hierarchy was integrated into the broader one in which “Indians” were subordinate to mestizos and also because the same changes associated with ethnic resurgence have tended to undermine the authority of current elders. The system of fiesta sponsorship and the associated positions of religious authority broke down in the wake of the agrarian reform. Members of the younger generation today seek social and economic advancement in ways that sometimes set them at odds with their elders. Catholic and political activists have reworked the notion of respect and associated definitions of the elders to integrate them into a discourse of ethnic pride, mobilization, and resistance. Even so, some indigenous youth find the pressures and temptations strong to opt out of an indigenous identity.

One theme here has been the various ways that projects of “modernity” are ambivalently promoted, accepted, resisted, and reshaped in the interactions among indigenous people, the Catholic Church, and the state. Pastoral agents of liberation theology can be seen as advancing a Catholic version of “modernity,” in some ways consciously and wholeheartedly but in other ways almost in spite of themselves. Their sympathy with the Enlightenment is fairly straightforward in their egalitarian belief in socio-political “liberation,” their encouragement of community efforts to improve material living conditions, their human rights discourse, their view of religion as a voluntary ethical commitment, their de-emphasis of the automatic efficacy of ritual, and their faith in the transformative powers of explicit discursive knowledge. Pastoral agents may be less conscious or more ambivalent about the individualizing effects of their pastoral methods, their endorsement of the power of writing and forms of authority that depend on literacy, and their withdrawal of support for personalistic forms of mediation and cycles of reciprocity between humans and the divine associated with the saints and their feasts. While advancing the liberation theology project, Catholic pastoral agents must contend with previous versions of official and popular Catholicism but also with a competing project of ethnic redefinition and adaptation to modernity represented by the indigenous evangelical movement. Catholic liberation theology differs from classic and mestizo nationalist visions of modernity in attempting to reconcile a universalistic religious faith with the celebration of cultural diversity and in viewing communitarian folk traditions as an alternative to capitalism. These features of liberation theology recall the Romantic response to the Enlightenment and contribute to pastoral agents’ interest in cultural anthropology as a tool for understanding indigenous culture.

The Ecuadorian state over the last several decades has enthusiastically espoused its own vision of development, progress, and modernity. Yet the state has had difficulties, along with some successes, in implementing this vision. The spread of formal education in rural areas has been a notable development, with ramifications examined here for intergenerational relations. The agrarian reform—not a unilateral initiative by the state but a process in which the state was a major actor—dissolved servile forms of land tenure and labor on the large estates. Former hacienda peons were reorganized into legally recognized communities under state oversight that are capable of interacting directly with state administrative and development agencies. The agrarian reform also extended the reach of civil authority and the law into areas formerly under the personalistic authority of patriarchal landlords. Yet the state and its agents have not seemed capable of vigorously and consistently implementing the universal rule of law or of convincing indigenous peasants that that is what they represent. The state has also been forced by the indigenous ethnic movement in recent years to shift its discourse from one that identified modernity with the integration of indigenous groups into a mestizo nation to an acceptance of Ecuador's multiethnic future.

While no one in Caparina misses the oppression and arbitrary violence of the hacienda era, their contemporary situation as indigenous peasants in a mestizo-dominated state and capitalist society occasions other forms of ambivalence. Indigenous peasants are free not to be "Indians" anymore, but they must choose among living with a stigmatized identity, attempting to redefine that identity as a source of pride, or abandoning it and becoming mestizo. As they try to redefine their identity, difficult questions arise. Can forms of knowledge and authority historically identified with mestizos be used to strengthen indigenous culture? How can one root a positive identity in a history of oppression? As the young use their new access to literacy and the Bible to strive for equality with mestizos, do they necessarily leave behind their elders, respect, and even indigenous identity? These are not abstract philosophical questions. Young persons migrating back and forth between the village and the city face the contradictory pressures of the two milieus, while their peers and parents in the village must deal even there with conflicting notions of prestige and respect. These struggles are present in everyday decisions about how one dresses, what language one speaks, how one greets and interacts with others, and what cultural guidelines one follows in everyday life (Weismantel 1988). Similarly, as villagers deal with domestic quarrels, disputes with neighbors, or animal rustling, they are forced to confront another series of questions. Does the landlords' disciplinary authority, gone forever, have to be replaced with a more culturally alien and frequently corrupt set of representatives of the official legal system—or with moral anarchy? Or can the indigenous community reestablish mechanisms for dealing with conflict and

disorder that are effective in the absence of the landlords' coercive power, that can be reconciled with contemporary attitudes toward punishment and human rights, and that will be respected by the state?

Out of the complex interactions among these ambivalent actors has emerged a new set of discourses and practices that appear quite modern in contrast with the respect complex of the hacienda period. Discipline tends to be stripped down to secular punishment, addressed as deterrence to a rational, calculating subject, and thus loses its ritual character of interpersonal transmission and sacramental purification. Moral instruction, severed from punishment and ritual purification, attempts to persuade the conscience and increasingly leans on the impersonal universal authority of the written Word of God. The saints' images have been replaced by the Bible; cycles of reciprocity and redistribution manifest in the *fiesta*, by collective Reflection on the Word of God; authority based on the *fiesta* and ratified by the landlords, by authority based on mastery of the written Word. Yet many villagers use the Bible to support what continues to be an anti-individualistic message, one meant to reinforce the authority of parents and other elders. Catechists find that mastery of God's Word gives them only weak authority in the eyes of fellow villagers. Meanwhile, the memory of respect on the hacienda and the desire for respect from mestizos fuel the self-assertion of the indigenous community as an important political and judicial entity—one created and regulated by the state in a sense, but one that challenges the state on various fronts. A strong indigenous ethnic movement, based on a redefined ethnic identity, insists that if Ecuador is to be a modern state, it must recognize the distinct cultures and political organization of indigenous peoples (Zamosc 1994).

The conditions of the interactions among indigenous people, the Catholic Church, and the state are subject to rapid changes with consequences hard to predict. Civil authority in largely indigenous parishes is increasingly held by indigenous *tenientes políticos*. At the county, provincial, and even national levels, indigenous candidates and the *Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik–Nuevo País*, an alliance that included the national indigenous confederation CONAIE (the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*), made major gains in the 1996 elections. *Pachakutik* has continued to be an important political force at the turn of the century. These developments suggest that the current sense of opposition between indigenous communities and a mestizo-dominated state may someday be transcended. In the Catholic Church, while conservative retrenchment continues at the higher levels of the hierarchy, in Chimborazo graduates of the CFI are claiming a greater role in the diocese. A growing number of indigenous parishes operate under the authority of indigenous lay ministers. At the village level, as catechists and other literate villagers age and gain life experience and their school-educated children mature, the significance of literacy as a distinction between genera-

tions will diminish. The bilingual education curriculum being implemented in indigenous village schools may also help change the relationship between indigenous people and the written word. Over the next few decades, those who came of age since the demise of the hacienda and the fiesta-sponsorship system will become elders, at least chronologically, and the terms of contention between generations will necessarily change. Yet through these changes, an active historical memory and evolving notions of respect will most likely continue to play significant roles in indigenous culture, community politics, and interactions with nonindigenous others.

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