REINVENTING THE COMMUNAL TRADITION:

Indigenous Peoples, Civil Society, and Democratization in Andean Ecuador*

Tanya Korovkin
University of Waterloo

Abstract: Most studies of civil society in Latin America have focused on urban social and political actors. In the Ecuadorian Andes, however, civil society has crystallized around the institutions of indigenous rural community that developed historically in opposition to white-meztizo urban administrative centers. This article explores the evolution of indigenous communal institutions in relation to local government and national politics by focusing on the canton of Otavalo in northern Ecuador. It is argued here that over the past thirty years, Andean communities in Ecuador have played an important role in the national processes of democratization and decentralization.

By all accounts, the concept of civil society is a rising star on the academic horizon. The growth of civil society is now considered a precondition for successful democratization. It is also perceived as a way to enhance citizen participation in public policy making and to ensure a meaningful process of decentralization.[1] Some analysts have suggested, however, that Latin American civil society is a predominantly urban phenomenon, born out of the political mobilization against military dictatorships or in response to the inadequacy of urban infrastructures (Schönwalder 1997, 753; Vellinga 1998, 17). Most studies on the subject barely touch on organizational processes in the rural areas, especially those populated by indigenous peoples. This omission is a significant one. In Ecuador indigenous peoples consti-

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1. The relationship between the growth of civil society and the process of political democratization has been discussed by White (1996), Fox (1994), Hadenius and Uggla (1996), McIlwaine (1998), Pereira (1993), Kozak (2000), Escobar and Alvarez (1992), and Alvarez et al.

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tute approximately a third of the national population (FLACSO 1994, 15). Moreover, they have evolved communal forms of organization that represent an interesting experiment in communal democracy. Yet little is known outside indigenous organizations and concerned NGOs about the communities' role in the processes of democratization. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining indigenous peoples' quest for communal governance in the *cantón* of Otavalo, located in the province of Imbabura in northern highland Ecuador.

Most of Otavalo's rural inhabitations live in Quichua-speaking indigenous communities. The majority of them combine subsistence agriculture with work for wages, a situation typical of the Ecuadorian Andes. What differentiates Otavalo is the presence of artisan communities with a long history of trade. These communities gave rise to local indigenous elites: mostly traders but also urban-based professionals and intellectuals, many of whom have played an important role in the indigenous movement in Otavalo and Ecuador. The specificity of the Otavalo case should not be overemphasized, however. In the 1970s and 1980s, other parts of the country also witnessed the rise of new indigenous elites, although on a smaller scale. Otavalo indigenous leaders were able to influence and accelerate these processes through the emerging nationwide network of indigenous federations and bilingual schools. Thus Otavalo, even though not necessarily representative of all Andean cantons and provinces, offers important insight into the nature of Ecuador's indigenous ethnic resurgence and its implications for the rise of civil society and democratization.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in the middle and late 1990s with the participation of seventeen of the fifty-one officially recognized indigenous communities in the canton of Otavalo.[2] Without addressing issues specific to individual communities, this article will explore their efforts to change the state and civil society in ways that combine the indige-

(1998). The role of civil society in the process of decentralization has been analyzed by Schönwälder (1997), Fiszbein (1997), Reilly (1995), and Fisher (1998). In the case of Ecuador, these issues are addressed in COMUNIDEC (1992), RIAD (1998), Bustamante (1996), Carrión (1998), Real López (1998), and Ojeda Segovia (1998).

2. The fieldwork was conducted in two stages, as part of two independent research projects. The first was carried out in 1993–1994, over a period of sixteen months, with the participation of the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI). The project involved semi-structured interviews focusing on local economic, social, and political history. Interviews were conducted with members of fourteen of Otavalo's indigenous communities: San Francisco de Cajas, San Agustín de Cajas, Pijal, Huaycopungo, Tocagon, Cachimuel, Chuchuqui, Malespamba, Monserrat, Peguche, Iluman Bajo, Carabuela, Gualsaqui, and Cutambi. Four of them—Huaycopungo, Peguche, Iluman Bajo, and Carabuela—are predominantly artisan communities, while the rest rely on a combination of subsistence agriculture and migratory work for wages. The interviews were taped by two research assistants (members of two of the communities) and me. The research process afforded me an ample opportunity to participate in community mingas, assemblies, and celebrations. I also conducted interviews with

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nous cultural tradition with the exigencies of modern politics. I will argue that these efforts contributed to democratization in at least two ways. First, Otavalo communities laid claim to national citizenship and were able to achieve it in significant ways without abandoning their ethnic identity. Second, they assumed some governmental functions, expanding institutions of democratic governance in a sometimes controversial but generally accepted way.

The article is divided into three parts. The first provides a theoretical discussion of the role of indigenous communities in the context of the rise of civil society and political democratization, with the focus on the Andean region. The second part will analyze changes in the relations between Otavalo communities and the state over the past three decades. The third part will examine the nature of decision-making processes in Otavalo communities in the 1990s. The article ends by reflecting briefly on the significance of Otavalo's communal governance for democratization.

INDIGENOUS ANDEAN COMMUNITY, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The concept of the Andean community as a kinship-based land group that originated in the pre-Columbian *ayllus* and was reconstructed through subsequent interactions with the white-mestizo state and society was developed largely in reference to what is now the Peruvian part of the Andes.[3] As such, this concept was heavily influenced by studies of the Inca imperial

Otavalo provincial indigenous leaders, members of the Consejo Municipal de Otavalo, the Consejo Provincial de Imbabura, and the Dirección Provincial de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, members of the provincial office of Ecuador's Instituto Ecuatoriano de Obras Sanitarias (IEOS), former *tenientes políticos*, and members of local NGOs (the Centro de Estudios Pluriculturales or CEPCU and the Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agropecuarios or CESA). The second project was conducted over a four-month period in 1998 in collaboration with CEPCU, an indigenous NGO with close ties to FICI. This time, the research team conducted and taped interviews and collective discussions in three Otavalo communities that had not participated in the previous project: Caluqui, Gualacata, and Mariscal Sucre. All three are agricultural and migratory communities. We focused here on the use of natural resources and community governance. Between 1993–1994 and 1998, I visited the Otavalo area for shorter periods of time, combining participatory research with teaching in the Trent University program in Ecuador. These projects generated not only scholarly articles (Korovkin 1998a, 1998b, 2000) but two community publications: *Nuestras comunidades ayer y hoy: Nucanchic aillu llactacuna naupa, cunan pachapash* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 1994) and *Sapi: Sabiduría comunitaria* (Quito: Imprenta Nuestra Amazonia, 1999). *Nuestras comunidades* was authored collectively by twelve participant communities and distributed locally among communities and bilingual schools. *Sapi* was authored by the participant communities and CEPCU. It was also distributed locally and has been used by CEPCU in community development work.

3. The white-mestizo state and society were a product of the highly asymmetrical interaction between the European and indigenous cultures, with the mestizo population heavily influenced by European cultural values (Whitten 1981).

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legacy and hacienda-peasant relations.[4] Inca influence was less pronounced in the Ecuadorian part of the Andes, however, which had been dominated prior to the Spanish Conquest by decentralized and autonomous ethnic chiefdoms (Salomon 1986; Ramón 1993).[5] Moreover, while the hacienda system played a significant role in the evolution of Ecuador's indigenous communities, in areas like Otavalo, this role was limited by the growth of indigenous commercial crafts and the rise of new indigenous elites. These factors explain in part the relative strength of local ethnic identities in the Ecuadorian part of the Andes (Salomon 1981; Field 1996; Korovkin 1998a; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999).

The role of local ethnic identities in the Ecuadorian case was compounded by the capitalist transformation of Andean agriculture (Sylva 1986; Guerrero 1983; Korovkin 1997). This process resulted in the gradual disappearance of institutions and practices rooted in peasant agriculture, such as family-labor exchange and agrarian festivals. In contrast, the political communal institutions, represented by communal assemblies and councils (*cabildos*), were clearly on the rise.[6] The number of legally recognized communities in Ecuador with elected cabildos (known as *comunas*) more than doubled from 1,078 in 1960 to 2,400 in 1993 (Ramón 1994, 63). A similar process was taking place in Peru, where the number of communes grew from 2,700 in 1976 to 3,400 ten years later (Glave 1990, 144). Thus despite the growth of agrarian capitalism, indigenous Andean communities seemed to maintain their vitality, spinning off a network of formal political institutions. Moreover, in Ecuador they developed in a context of relatively strong local ethnic identities and gave rise to powerful provincial and national indigenous federations, including the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI) and Ecuador's Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas (CONAIE), with which FICI affiliated.

Can indigenous communities and federations be considered part of Ecuador's emerging civil society? To a large extent, this question is definitional. In the Anglo-American liberal tradition, civil society has generally been defined as an intermediate realm between the individual and the state, composed of plural voluntary associations: community organizations, trade unions, women's groups, cooperatives, and business and professional asso-

4. For a general discussion of the Andean community, see Matos Mar (1977), Halperin and Dow (1979), Orlove and Custred (1980), and Mobrucker (1989). The Andean community in Peru was discussed by Plaza and Francke (1981), Molinie-Fioravanti (1986), Glave (1990), and Mallon (1983), among others. For the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, see Chiriboga (1986b), Sánchez Parga (1984, 1986, 1993), Albó (1987, 1990), Rivera Cusicanqui (1990), and Strobele-Gregor (1996), among others.

5. It has been estimated the Incas had ruled what is now the Ecuadorian Andes for only thirty to forty years (Salomon 1986, 146).

6. *Cabildos* were first introduced during colonial rule. For a discussion of colonial administration in the core Andean region, see Spalding (1975), Yambert (1980), and Mörner (1985).

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ciations (White 1996, 179; Hadenius and Uggla 1996, 1621). Some analysts hesitate to include indigenous organizations, despite the fact that they are generally community-based. First, the liberal view envisions civil society as a collection of associations with voluntary and overlapping membership and a limited scope of action. A community-based indigenous movement does not easily fit into this definition. Generally, individuals are born into or marry into indigenous communities. Furthermore, communities claim their members' undivided loyalties, which could turn into hostility toward other members of civil society (Hadenius and Uggla 1996, 1626). Second, indigenous organizations may be rooted in precolonial and colonial structures of governance and may assume some of the functions of local government. Harry Blair's recent study of Bolivia views indigenous organizations as quasi-governmental bodies that perform the role of civil society but are not exactly part of it (1997, 3, 12–13). Blair readily admits, however, that the line between civil society and governmental institutions is fuzzy. Gordon White has also pointed out the vagueness of the existing definitions of civil society, but he believes that the "primordial" ethnic, nationalist, and religious organizations should be considered as legitimate members of non-Western civil societies along with "modern entities" such as trade unions or professional associations (White 1996, 179).

Although the kinship and ethnic underpinnings of indigenous organizations are perceived as an analytical liability by at least some liberal scholars, they appear to be an asset in the new social movements perspective, which has been adopted with qualifications in this study. Most analysts using this perspective are interested in urban social and political actors, but they are willing to admit that rural-based indigenous organizations, with their strong sense of identity, tight interpersonal networks, and long history of resistance, constitute a significant representative of new social movements (Slater 1985; Escobar 1992; Alvarez et al. 1998). According to this view, indigenous activism arose from the same historical contradictions—the failures of state-centered development strategies and later the tension between political democratization and economic neoliberalism—that gave rise to other new social movements (Yashar 1996, 87).

While pointing to important factors behind the indigenous movements, such an explanation downplays their historical specificity. After all, indigenous peoples laid claims to cultural and territorial autonomy long before the rise of state developmentalism or economic neoliberalism. Contrary to the characterization of participants in urban-based social movements as "new faces in old masks" (Calderón et al. 1992, 20), indigenous organizations, building on the indigenous legacy of resistance, exhibit old ethnic features in the new masks of democratic struggles. Old features, but how old after all? Many indigenous leaders emphasize the ancestral elements of their culture as opposed to "modern" and "Western" influences. While that emphasis strikes a positive chord among nonindigenous an-

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thropologists writing in the essentialist (or "cultural survival") perspective, a growing number of scholars are conceptualizing ethnic identity as the ever-changing product of a continuous interaction between indigenous and nonindigenous cultures (Field 1994).[7] Kay Warren has proposed in this connection that strategic essentialism has been deliberately used by indigenous leaders in their quest for ethnic resurgence (Warren 1992). Thus reconstructed ancestral values and practices, when strategically deployed in the context of modern politics, form a distinctive feature of indigenous movements that sets them apart from the rest of Latin America's new social movements.

Curiously, neither liberal scholars analyzing civil society nor students of new social movements have paid much attention to another peculiar characteristic of indigenous organizations: the practice of communal governance, the main subject of this study. Deborah Yashar has admitted the need to include indigenous communities and organizations in the process of decentralization, taking into account their ethnic identity and territorial claims (Yashar 1996, 103). But she says nothing about the institutional arrangements presumably involved in this process. Communal governance, albeit in an admittedly limited form, is already an everyday institutional practice in many indigenous populated areas. Indigenous community leaders often view themselves as performing functions similar to those of the government, the main reason for their interest in the right to self-determination.[8]

Decentralization, as pointed out by Yashar (1996), is often perceived as a way of increasing the efficiency of public administration and levels of citizen participation in policy making and implementation.[9] This undertaking, however, is no easy task. Historically, local governments in Latin America have been closely associated with social and economic power groups represented by large landowners, traders, and clergy. In the Andean region, they also exhibited an unmistakably urban and white-mestizo bias

7. The term *cultural survival* is borrowed from Les Field. Reassertion and redefinition of indigenous identity in Latin America have also been examined by Nash (1995), Grandin (1997), Warren (1998), Watanabe (1995), Nagengast and Kearney (1990), Rasnake (1988), Albó (1991), Klein (1992), and Strobele-Gregor (1994). For the case of Ecuador, see Ramón (1993), Field (1996), Selverston (1994), and Lentz (1997). Cultural change in Otavalo was discussed recently by Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999).

8. Indigenous demand for the right to self-determination in Latin America has been examined from various angles. See Van Cott (1994), Urban and Sherzer (1991), Varese (1996), and Brysk (1996). The demand for self-determination in the Ecuadorian case has been discussed by Maldonado (1998), Ramón (1993), Sánchez Parga (1990), A. Ibarra (1992), León (1994), and Selverston (1994).

9. Decentralization policies in Latin America are analyzed in Nickson (1995) and Lowder (1992a). The crisis and transformation of the Latin American state in the 1980s and 1990s have been examined by Grindle (1996) and Vellinga (1998). For a discussion of state reforms and decentralization initiatives in Ecuador, see Salgado (1989), Carrión (1998), and Lowder (1992b).

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(Javet 1985; Burgos 1997). In the 1960s and 1970s, when many Latin American governments embarked on developmentalist programs, municipalities lost part of their power to provincial branches of the centrally controlled development agencies, such as ministries and national institutes. The subsequent crisis of the developmental state and government efforts to decentralize offered municipal governments a chance to regain some of their former power. The results are mixed, however. Schönwalder (1997) has pointed out that Latin American decentralization programs have spurred citizen activism effectively. Ariel Fiszbein (1997) has arrived at a similar conclusion regarding Colombia. But Stella Lowder and David Slater have pointed to a general failure on the part of Latin American governments to implement meaningful decentralization policies (Lowder 1992a, 192–94; Slater 1989, 523). Although various factors have contributed to this alleged failure, the strength of local elites and the undemocratic nature of local politics almost certainly played a role. It is plausible that effective decentralization requires local political democratization and an active civil society.

Not all scholars view an active civil society as invariably beneficial to political democratization.[10] It is generally agreed that in Latin America, civil society played an important and positive role in the transitions from military rule to democracy. But democratic transition is only one uncertain step in the direction of full-fledged democracy. Many problems and challenges remain. Some authors have warned about the dangers of political instability (Whitehead 1989). Others have pointed to the weakness of new democracies in terms of government accountability, the rule of law, and the effective exercise of citizenship by all sectors of the national populations (O'Donnell 1994; Lowenthal 1997; Varas 1998; Cammack 1994). Civil society can help in dealing with at least some of these issues. It can reinforce democratic values, strengthen structures of citizen participation and representation, and improve the quality of democratic governance. But civil society may also exacerbate conflicts over the distribution of power. While students of new social movements consider these conflicts an inevitable step on the road to democratization (Alvarez and Escobar 1992), liberal scholars fear that they may destabilize new democracies (White 1996; Schmitter 1997).

Indigenous community movements occupy a prominent place in this controversy. Historically, Latin America's indigenous peoples have been consistently denied effective citizenship. Consequently, the advancement of their individual and collective rights can be seen as a litmus test for democratization. José García Aguilar recently suggested to the contrary that indigenous peoples' demands for the right to self-determination may be destabilizing politically (1999). Donna Van Cott also mentioned that many nonindigenous

10. For contrasting perspectives on democratization in Latin America, see Diamond et al. (1997), Mainwaring et al. (1992), Pastor (1989), Jelin and Hershberg (1996), Agüero and Stark (1998), Peeler (1998), and Becker (1999).

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government officials and political leaders view such demands as threats to national unity (1994, 13). Curiously, this view downplays the fact that few if any of the Latin American indigenous organizations have secessionist aspirations, unlike those prominent in ethno-nationalist movements in other parts of the globe. In effect, Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Van Cott have pointed out that self-determination is often defined in terms of greater control over local decision making and more effective participation in national representative structures (Stavenhagen 1996, 157; Van Cott 1994, 13). Some students of indigenous movements have argued that no inherent contradiction exists between indigenous communities' claim for national citizenship and their aspiration to maintain their identity (León 1994; Degregori 1998).

Recognition has also been growing in at least some Latin American countries of the legitimacy of indigenous claims. Recent constitutional reforms in Colombia and Bolivia as well as Bolivia's Ley de Participación Popular indicate that indigenous claims can be processed and accommodated within existing democratic institutions (Degregori 1998; Van Cott 2000). In this connection, the indigenous political protest in 1999–2000 in Ecuador was caused largely by the government's neoliberal economic policies, which are also opposed by major sectors of the national population (Larrea and North 1997). That protest demonstrated indigenous peoples' interest in national economic and social issues as well as their willingness and ability to build alliances with nonindigenous members of civil society.

THE FALL AND RISE OF THE OTAVALO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The Otavalo case offers illuminating insight into the nature and implications of local-level indigenous movements. The political history of Otavalo communities, rooted in pre-Columbian ayllus reveals decline and resurgence spanning several centuries. After the Spanish Conquest, the surviving hereditary ethnic lords (*curacas*) were placed under the control of the Spanish Crown and given a limited territorial jurisdiction. As a result, they lost much of their autonomy to make decisions and derived their power and prestige instead from collaborating with the colonial state. Even so, curacas continued to exercise political power within certain territorial boundaries.

The situation began to change in the seventeenth century. The curacas' authority was eroded by the declining budgetary importance of colonial tribute, continual fiscal crises, and the growth of private haciendas (Spalding 1975; H. Ibarra 1988; Ramón 1987; San Felix 1988). Following independence, republican governments abolished the tribute system, which had legitimized indigenous jurisdictions, and allowed communities to subdivide and sell their land. The new governments also introduced a national political and administrative structure that left no room for vestiges of indigenous territorial autonomy (Guerrero 1989). Ecuador was divided into

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provinces, cantons, and parishes, each with its own set of elected and appointed officials. At the lowest level (the parish), the "elected authorities" in charge of economic and social welfare were organized into parish councils that represented urban white-mestizo families. The appointed officials in charge of public order were *tenientes políticos* who also acted as heads of local police and performed some basic judicial functions with respect to the indigenous population. They were appointed by their immediate superiors in the canton, *jefes políticos*, who were in turn appointed by the provincial governors and the Ministerio del Interior. Cantons and provinces also had their own elected councils, with municipal and provincial elections held simultaneously with the national elections. Indigenous communities, in contrast, had no official status in this new administrative-territorial structure. Monolingual speakers of Quichua were also denied the right to vote, which required literacy in Spanish. In practice, indigenous communities found themselves under the control of tenientes políticos who generally collaborated with hacienda owners and Catholic priests, leaving not even a remote opportunity for redressing indigenous grievances. While indigenous communities managed to preserve and reconstruct many of their local cultural practices, they effectively lost the right to manage their affairs within the communal boundaries without obtaining in return a right to participate in national politics.

The first signs of resurgence came in 1937. Influenced by progressive liberal ideas, the Ecuadorian national government passed the Ley de Comunas as part of larger social legislation that included labor and cooperative laws (Hurtado 1997, 101, 145, 257). This law bestowed legal recognition on freehold communities with elected councils (cabildos), newly created institutions rooted in colonial and precolonial practices but influenced by trade-union and cooperative principles. Such legally recognized communities or communes were entitled to government assistance. Because elections and operation of community councils were supposed to be supervised by tenientes políticos and the Ministerio del Bienestar Social (later the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería), some observers interpreted the Ley de Comunas as another attempt on the part of the white-mestizo elites to impose their control over indigenous communities, now with the help of patron-client relations (Iturralde 1980).

The reality was more complex, however. Between 1937 and 1957, thirty-nine Otavalo communities (out of the fifty-one communes registered in 1997) availed themselves of the new legislation.[11] The immediate reason for communities' interest in obtaining legal status was to protect their lands against the encroachment of whites and mestizos, called *mishu* in Quichua. Legal status also allowed communities to start rebuilding their political institutions, a process that did not happen overnight. Official recognition, essen-

11. Archives of the Ministerio de Agricultura, Quito.

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tially a protective measure designed to keep the intrusive mishu outside communal boundaries, did not necessarily result in active cabildos. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, Otavalo communes continued to be controlled by white-mestizo tenientes políticos who appointed indigenous *alcaldes* to assist them.[12] The institution of hereditary curaca survived in a modified form. Despite their loss of official status, curaca families were able to maintain at least part of their former economic clout. They held much of the community land and played a prominent role in local trade. They also hung onto some of their former prestige, which enabled them to remain largely in charge of settling internal disputes, a function that they had previously performed with the support of the colonial state. Tenientes políticos sometimes appointed members of curaca families as their alcaldes. Similarly, when the first cabildos were elected in compliance with the Ley de Comunas, members of curaca families often found themselves community presidents.[13]

Thus if the legalization of freehold communities and the election of community councils can be interpreted as signs of ethnic resurgence, they were very modest signs. Much of the commune legislation was never enforced. Moreover, although it offered minimal protection for community land against hacienda owners, the legislation did nothing to change the relations between indigenous communities and urban administrative centers. These were based on the practice of unpaid indigenous labor (*faena*), similar to the colonial *mita*. One of the main tasks of tenientes políticos was to mobilize, with the assistance of their alcaldes, indigenous communities to do urban and infrastructural work: building roads and bridges, repairing pavement, mowing lawns, sweeping streets, and collecting garbage. Sometimes, entire communities were transported in trucks to areas where workers were needed. Those who failed to show up risked losing their livestock, tools, or equipment. Their belongings could be confiscated by tenientes políticos as "pawned goods" (*prendas*) and held at police headquarters until their owners had "paid the fine," which usually involved performing another task without pay.

Unpaid labor and gifts were also demanded by civil servants as prerequisites for delivering a service, such as issuing a birth or death certificate. Such favors were expected as well by local judges or tenientes políticos for attending cases that involved community members. In a similar vein, usury and the alcohol trade (both important sources of urban income) were often accompanied by the extraction of unpaid indigenous labor. Borrowing and alcohol consumption were boosted by annual religious festivals, which were encouraged by Catholic clergy. The Catholic Church, in turn, collected tithes (*diezmos* and *primicias*) among the indigenous population and often transferred the right to do so to urban white-mestizo families. This

12. For a discussion of similar practices in the province of Chimborazo, see Lentz (1986).

13. A similar practice was mentioned by Butler (1991).

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elaborate system of extortion was predicated on the power of tenientes políticos and the collaboration of their indigenous appointees. Numerous cases occurred of evasion, confrontation, and even open rebellion, as in 1957, when Otavalo's municipal council decided to build a tourist hotel on community land. Overall, however, the Ley de Comunas failed to change relations between indigenous communities and white-mestizo authorities.

A more significant wave of communal ethnic resurgence started in the 1970s, after the local power structures started to crack under the combined effects of the capitalist transformation of agriculture, migration, the growth of formal elementary education, and the spread of Protestantism. This process was accelerated by two rounds of land reform that destroyed what was left in Otavalo of the traditional hacienda system.[14] At the indigenous household level, these changes were manifested in the erosion of traditional patriarchal relations. In the 1940s and 1950s, unmarried sons and daughters in Otavalo communities had no independent income and few opportunities to work outside the communities. In most cases, they were expected to enter a prearranged marriage and continue living for several years with their parents, "serving" them as best as they could. The older male head of the household might assign them some land and livestock at the time of the marriage, but the young couple would not be allowed to dispose freely of these assets until after they moved out of the parents' house. The household patriarchy was reinforced by the authority of curacas and alcaldes. Both groups played prominent roles in upholding the institutions of marriage and family: alcaldes by enforcing Catholic marriages, and curacas by conducting indigenous marriage rites and later mediating family disputes, with whip in hand if necessary. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, household and community patriarchal relations were increasingly questioned by a new generation of migratory workers and traders who had greater exposure to nonindigenous cultures and relied less on their parents' economic resources than had the previous generation. Many of them (mostly men but also women) were elected as community councillors despite their youth, largely because they had useful literacy skills and urban experiences.

Outside their communities, the new generation of leaders challenged white-mestizo authority. In the mid-1970s, some Otavalo communities refused to allow white-mestizo families to collect tithes, chasing the intruders out of the fields. Others refused to perform faenas in local towns. At a meeting with the teniente político, one indigenous leader suggested that urban residents should organize their own community work, a suggestion that provoked an outraged response: "¿Vos, indio, me vas a ordenar?" According to the leader who made the suggestion, this was the last time the teniente político

14. Various aspects of these processes in Otavalo have been discussed by Korovkin (1998a, 1998b, 2000). For a discussion of similar processes in the province of Chimborazo, see Thurner (1993), Korovkin (1997), and Lentz (1997).

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called him "indio." Alcohol dealers became another target for indigenous mobilization. Communities complained to the Ministerio de Salud Pública that the alcohol dealers violated health regulations by adding to the chicha (corn beer) potentially toxic substances like bones or urine to abet fermentation. Finally, in many cases usurers who had seized by legal or illegal means landholdings inside the communities were banned from communal land, and the holdings reverted to their indigenous owners.

The Otavalo indigenous mobilization increasingly took on the proportions of a peaceful uprising and reached its peak shortly before the national transition to democracy. In 1978 a provincial indigenous federation was formed known initially as the Federación de Comunidades Campesinas de Imbabura (FCCI) and later as the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI).[15] Most of its leaders and active supporters came from Otavalo communities. By the mid-1980s, urban labor duty and tithes had been abolished, while trade in alcohol and usury had been curtailed.[16] After this victory, Otavalo communities tried to distance themselves from the white-mestizo towns. This strategy proved to be short-lived, however. As indigenous leaders increasingly realized that they could make the white-mestizo state work to their communities' benefit, they started a new political offensive, this time designed to obtain better access to public services.

The Otavalo indigenous uprising came on the heels of more than two decades of populist and developmentalist national policies, especially far-reaching during the periods of military rule (1963–1966 and 1976–1979).[17] In addition to land reform, these policies involved a large-scale investment in infrastructure and social services. Between 1952 and 1972, Ecuador's public spending in constant currency grew eightfold. Over the following decade, it more than doubled (Salgado 1989, 259, 266). As part of the populist and developmentalist strategies, the national government augmented the budget of the ministries of Obras Públicas, Educación, and Salud Pública. It also promoted bilingual education in indigenous communities, sponsored integrated rural development projects, and created a number of public corporations or institutes, including the electricity corporation (the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Electrificación or INECEL), the hydraulic resource corporation (the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Recursos Hidráulicos or INHERI), and the pot-

15. The historical origins of the indigenous movement in the Ecuadorian Andes are analyzed in CONAIE (1989), Ramón (1993), Chiriboga (1986a), and A. Ibarra (1992).

16. The decline in the alcohol trade and usury in Otavalo was also caused by greater Protestant influence and the rise of the progressive Catholic Church. For a discussion of religious changes in the Ecuadorian Andes, see Muratorio (1981), Santana (1990), and Padilla (1989).

17. Ecuador's populist and developmentalist policies are analyzed by Lefeber (1985), Salgado (1989), Hurtado (1997), Quintero and Silva (1991), and Isaak (1993). The land reform is discussed in Barsky (1988) and Zevallos (1989). For a biting critique of Ecuador's development programs, see Black (1991).

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able water and sanitation institute (the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Obras Sanitarias or IEOS).

The growth of centrally controlled agencies in charge of development programs was welcomed by Otavalo indigenous communities. Led by their new and assertive cabildos, they could now appeal to the provincial offices of the ministries and institutes and thus bypass the local government. Furthermore, the 1979 return to democracy combined with the extension of electoral franchise to monolingual Quichua speakers had transformed indigenous Otavaleños into prospective voters. This development in turn increased the municipal and provincial councils' willingness to listen to communal requests. Consequently, local roads were usually built by indigenous communities in collaboration with the provincial and municipal councils. Potable water systems were developed in collaboration with IEOS and managed largely by community-based water commissions (*juntas administradoras de agua potable*). Given the shortage of funding and personnel, IEOS provincial offices encouraged the organization of water commissions in rural and poor urban neighborhoods as a low-cost way of expanding their coverage. According to Imbabura officials, this initiative turned out to be especially successful in indigenous rural communities, where water commissions were elected by the communal assembly along with the community council. No more than two of their five statutory members—the operator-technician and sometimes the treasurer—received modest wages. The rest of the commission worked without pay.

Roads and potable water systems were built and maintained mostly through unpaid community work, or *minga*. Community minga in Otavalo has eclectic origins. Influenced by the practice of urban faenas with their focus on infrastructural works, it was rooted in the centuries-long indigenous tradition of family-labor exchange, used mostly in farming and building houses. Community mingas, however, were organized by community councils (or water commissions in the case of the potable water systems) who could fine nonparticipants. Even so, as with family-labor exchange, participation was expected according to indigenous norms of exchange and reciprocity. Described in the literature on the Andean community as part of peasant culture, these norms had a clearly ethnic overtone in Otavalo, even more pronounced in the context of peasant differentiation and rural-urban migration. The norms were also evoked repeatedly at communal assemblies and province-wide meetings by the new indigenous leaders as part of their campaign to build a new ethnic identity. This task and the organization of mingas were facilitated by the introduction of bilingual education.

The bilingual system of education was developed in Ecuador in the late 1970s and early 1980s, at the initiative of the Centro de Investigación y Educación Indígena (CIEI) of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), which counted at that time a significant number of Quichua-speaking students and researchers. Run jointly by the Ministerio de Edu-

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cación and indigenous federations, the center was designed to contribute to the rise of a new ethnic culture, blending what were considered Western and indigenous values. While the effects of bilingual education on the actual use of Quichua are mixed, the introduction of bilingual education strengthened the new ethnic identity and helped erase the social stigma attached to indigenous cultures by nonindigenous sectors of Ecuadorian society.[18] It also lowered social barriers between white-mestizo teachers and indigenous students, their families, and communities. Although most teachers in Otavalo bilingual schools came from urban white-mestizo families, the fact that they had been placed under the supervision of the bilingual board of education, run by indigenous professionals, forced them to become more attuned to indigenous communities' needs.[19]

Equally significant was the fact that indigenous families formed community-based parents' associations that, along with community councils, attempted to monitor teachers' performance. Attendance and class hours became especially thorny issues, given that most teachers lived in urban centers. In many cases, they had to take a decrepit local taxi or simply walk in their crisp urban clothes, sometimes for hours on end, to reach their schools (no excuse, according to the parents). Bilingual teachers were also expected to participate in mingas and other communal undertakings and to assist community councils in their work. Many teachers complied, willingly or not. When transferred or promoted, they had to ask the community council for a letter of recommendation for the bilingual board of education. These and other new rules stirred numerous conflicts and muted antagonisms. Teachers' and parents' grievances were vented at communal assemblies and provincial gatherings, such as the 1994 forum in Mariano Acosta, which brought together indigenous provincial officials, bilingual (mostly white-mestizo) teachers, and indigenous parents.

Most nonindigenous teachers and indigenous community members, however, seemed to agree on the need for collaboration. It was especially

18. For analyses of Ecuador's system of bilingual education, see Moya (1988), Cotacachi (1988), Sánchez Parga (1991), Quintero and de Vries (1991), and de Vries (1988).

19. The predominance of nonindigenous teachers in Otavalo's rural bilingual schools reflected a severe shortage of indigenous educators. After the introduction of bilingual education in Quichua-speaking communities, white-mestizo teachers already employed in many of them were simply transferred under the supervision of the provincial board of bilingual education. The number of indigenous teachers in Otavalo was growing, but at a snail's pace. The reasons were mostly economic: relatively few indigenous individuals could afford to complete high school, let alone teachers' college. At the same time, the career of rural school teacher did not to appeal to young persons from well-off indigenous families, who could make a better living by engaging in relatively lucrative crafts and trade. As a result of these and other factors, white or mestizo teachers continued to do most of the teaching in Otavalo's bilingual schools, even though most administrative positions in Imbabura's provincial offices were filled by indigenous educators.

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visible in community-based cultural events (*encuentros culturales*), which increasingly replaced the religious festivals of the 1950s and 1960s. Such events were often cosponsored by bilingual schools, community councils, and FICI. The largest festival, Inti-Raimi (formerly San Juan), was accompanied by an election of *sarañustas* (indigenous queens), who often had to give a speech about their communities in both Spanish and Quichua. The traditional gift of thirteen live roosters, a typical feature of Inti-Raimi in Otavalo, was also offered sometimes by bilingual schools to community councils or vice versa, depending on whose turn it was to express their symbolic recognition and gratitude. Thus bilingual education became closely associated with the growth of communal political institutions and celebration of the new indigenous culture.

The communities' increased control over infrastructure and education within the communal boundaries led to their taking a more active role in maintaining public order, a function performed in the 1950s and 1960s by tenientes políticos. In those days, the most common problem in the communities was alcohol-related violence, which provided officials with an apparently unending source of unpaid labor. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, this problem almost disappeared, partly as a result of the indigenous political campaign against alcohol traders and partly because of the spread of Protestantism.

At the same time, burglary and cattle rustling were on the rise. The widespread perception in the communities was that this crime wave was caused by flawed operation of the national police and justice systems.[20] Frustration with the local and state institutions gave rise to a community system of justice, which ranged from shaming and fines to flogging and incarceration. Shaming, the commonest mechanism for restoring law and order in the communities, was widely employed in both family and community settings, either alone or in combination with other sanctions like fines or physical punishment. Fines were generally charged by community councils for damage inflicted to individual or community property (such as letting livestock graze on neighbors' fields, burning the highland pastures, or damaging community infrastructure) or for nonparticipation in mingas, which became more common as community members engaged in migratory work.

Physical punishment was generally used as the last resort in cases of burglary or cattle rustling. For those viewed by the community in question

20. According to a 1993 survey conducted by *Cambio*, 64 percent of the respondents expressed little faith in Ecuador's judicial institutions (cited in Schuldt 1994, 13). For a discussion of Ecuador's institutional crisis, see Bustamante (1996). The practice of consuetudinary (customary) justice in Latin America has been discussed by Stavenhagen (1990). Community justice in the Peruvian Andes has been examined by Pena Jumpa (1991) and Starn (1992). The system of punishment on Chimborazo's haciendas was analyzed by Lyons (1994).

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as brazen criminals, punishment might end up in death. In the 1980s and 1990s in rare cases, persistent burglars or cattle rustlers died at the hands of community members. Such outcomes were generally preceded by numerous attempts to prevent ongoing burglary or cattle theft by other means, including appeals to local police. Even though the system of community justice degenerated occasionally into spontaneous and violent acts, the overall trend was moving toward institutionalization. Thus in the 1990s, sanctions were often imposed by elected cabildos in consultation with the communal assembly.

Some indigenous leaders repeatedly expressed their interest in developing formal rules for administering justice to prevent abuses and minimize friction with the police and the judiciary. In their view, such rules should be included in community statutes. In the late 1990s, FICI and CEPCU (Centro de Estudios Pluriculturales, an indigenous NGO) were trying to encourage communities to update and expand their statutes modeled on the standard form used by the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería. These developments, along with the significant role played by communities in managing their physical and social infrastructure, pointed to the increasingly formal and complex nature of communal decision making.

COMMUNAL DECISION MAKING

Although not all Otavalo communities had active cabildos or held regular assemblies, these two institutions had evolved into a prominent feature of the social and political landscape in Otavalo. According to community statutes, cabildos had to be elected at the communal assembly in the presence of the teniente político (MAG n.d). Community members nominated candidates, who were then elected by majority vote. Each of the five positions on the community council had been formally defined by the Ministerio de Agricultura. But each was exercised according to community members' collective memories and practical needs. The president (like the curaca of the old days) was expected to ensure communal unity and represent his or her community to outsiders. Thus the president was in charge of organizing community celebrations, which served to reconcile internal differences and strengthen communal solidarity.[21] The president also issued calls for community minga, obtained governmental or nongovernmental support for community development projects, and mediated conflicts with non-indigenous sectors of the population. The same functions were expected of the vice president in the president's absence. The *síndico* (also known as the *vocal*) was supposed to organize community minga in practical terms. The

21. For a discussion of the role of lavish community celebrations in re-creating communal solidarity, see Barlett (1988) and Butler (1992).

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treasurer was in charge of the communal funds, and the secretary had to take the minutes of the assemblies and keep records of participation in mingas. Most of the councillors were men, but their young age and the small but growing presence of women pointed to the ongoing erosion of traditional patriarchal authority.[22] In some Otavalo communities, each elected councillor appointed an alcalde to help him or her with practical matters. Reminiscent of the appointment of indigenous alcaldes by tenientes políticos, this practice indicated the emerging distinction between elected and appointed positions in communal decision-making bodies characteristic of local government structures in Ecuador.

While situations varied from community to community (and from one period to another), cabildos were generally accountable directly to the communal assembly. Assemblies could be held regularly on a weekly or biweekly basis or could be called according to community needs. They were open to all community members—men, women and children. Not all chose to attend, and not everyone present participated in the discussion or was listened to with the same amount of respect. Women were still underrepresented among active participants. But as with cabildos, this imbalance was slowly changing: both elderly matrons and young, educated women increasingly took the floor to voice their opinions, especially because more men were missing the assemblies due to their migratory work. Overall, assemblies, with all their imperfections, represented a continuing exercise in political accountability. The private appropriation of public funds (which reached scandalous proportions nationwide under the administrations of Sixto Durán Ballén and Abdala Bucaram) was not unheard of in indigenous communities, but such practices seemed to occur less frequently in communities with active cabildos and regular general assemblies.

The elements of accountability in the communal process of decision making combined with elements of pluralism. An indigenous community in the Ecuadorian Andes is generally conceptualized as composed of various affinity groups: clusters of relatives and neighbors with similar interests and concerns. It has been argued that typical communal authority is diffused among the informal leaders of these groups rather than concentrated in the cabildo (Ramón 1992; Sánchez Parga 1984; Chiriboga 1986b). In the

22. As mentioned in the previous section, the erosion of traditional patriarchal relations started in the 1960s, largely as a result of rural-urban migration and the spread of formal education. Over the following decades, a growing number of Quichua-speaking girls and young women attended elementary schools and adult literacy programs (Sánchez Parga 1991). Many of them also found temporary jobs in the cities, usually as domestic servants, or as wage laborers on local flower plantations (Korovkin 1998b). Otavalo women's educational and wage-earning experiences have gradually changed their social status, despite conflicts and contradictions. In the 1990s, women often held minor positions on the community councils, but relatively few were elected as community presidents. Significantly, however, the FICI presidency in the late 1990s was held by a woman.

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1980s and 1990s, this arrangement prevailed in Otavalo communities. Yet communities also included many formal organizations such as parent associations, potable water associations, Catholic and Protestant groups, and agricultural or credit cooperatives. Given the fairly large size of most Otavalo communities (up to two or three thousand members), these organizations often had overlapping memberships. While most adult community members formed part of parent associations and potable water associations, their participation in church groups and agricultural or credit cooperatives was uneven. At the same time, the number of various church groups in Otavalo communities skyrocketed in the 1980s and 1990s, largely due to the spread of Protestantism. Agricultural and credit cooperatives were organized by Catholics and Protestants alike. Their numbers were also increasing, mainly because of the support of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that preferred to work with relatively small groups of families. These newer organizations either coincided or overlapped with preexisting affinity groups, producing a peculiar blend of the older intracommunal diffusion of authority with nascent organizational pluralism. This pluralism, however, largely excluded political parties.

Communal decisions in this increasingly diverse organizational context were made by consensus built slowly and painstakingly through informal discussions. The most divisive issues were religious and cooperative activities benefiting small groups of community residents. Projects benefiting entire communities were far less likely to cause controversies, despite practical difficulties in their implementation. Prior to formulating any proposal, the president and other councillors conducted extensive consultations with influential community members, including former councillors, heads of affinity groups, and leaders of intracommunal organizations. Then the proposal was taken to the assembly where it was either rejected or approved by consensus. The consensual norms of decision making caused much frustration among the more executive-minded indigenous leaders because building consensus in the increasingly crowded and heterogeneous communities of the 1990s was a cumbersome process.[23] Still, when successful, the consensual practice of decision making reinforced communal solidarity and helped indigenous communities survive the onslaught of market forces and (some indigenous leaders would argue) party politics.

A major problem experienced by cabildos in Otavalo was the shortage of funds. Because they were not recognized as local governments, they received no financial transfers from the central government or congress as did municipal councils. The cabildos were legally entitled to receive na-

23. Communal decision making with reference to Ecuador's reforestation programs is discussed in Urrutia Ceruti (1995).

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tional and international development funding. Yet most of it bypassed them and ended up in the hands of intracommunal associations, whose small size and focus on specific tasks made them look to most governmental and nongovernmental development agencies like an ideal counterpart. This tendency left community councils with the worst of two worlds. As neither local governments nor voluntary associations, they had little if any access to external funds and had to rely almost exclusively on members' contributions and fines. Because average family incomes in most Otavalo communities bordered on the poverty line and cabildos could ensure compliance only on a limited scale, their budgets were tiny. Most of their meager revenues were spent on contacting government officials or organizing community mingas. Other expenses, such as purchasing a plot of land for a school or funding communal festivals, were usually assumed by agricultural or credit cooperatives with more ready access to cash.

The financial straits of the cabildos partly explain the lack of remuneration for their members. In a culture of exchange and reciprocity, however, communal leadership was also generally perceived as a service rendered to the community by its more distinguished members in exchange for compliance and respect. In this sense, it was similar to the *cargo* system of the 1940s and 1950s, in which prestigious families took turns organizing religious festivals. Cabildo members themselves might feel tempted to follow a different historical precedent—the accumulation of wealth by curacas who enjoyed a strategic position in political power networks. While cases of such accumulation (illicit by modern legal standards) were reported in some Otavalo communities, they probably were not the norm. In many cases, the opposite was true. Many indigenous leaders pointed out that communal leadership was an onerous undertaking. With one family member, usually the head of the household, dedicating much time to community business, the family's economic fortunes were bound to slide. This prospect acted as a disincentive for assuming communal leadership positions and, in a perverse fashion, as an incentive for misusing community funds. Local NGOs tried to alleviate this problem by paying community leaders a modest fee for their work on NGO-sponsored community development projects. Still, the perception that leadership should be unpaid service to the community remained strong among rank-and-file members, and such practices were often frowned on by those who neither held leadership positions nor were hired by NGOs.

Communities' interest in self-government and contacts with development agencies contrasted with their lukewarm attitude toward national electoral politics. In a way, this situation was paradoxical. It might be expected that community development would be better served if communities had some say in the municipal or provincial councils and the national congress. Their participation in local elections, however, was discouraged by the

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legacy of conflicts with local towns and the rapid expansion of centrally controlled agencies that operated autonomously from the provincial and municipal councils. Moreover, electoral politics did not appeal to indigenous people for two other reasons. Local indigenous leaders and community members often argued that it divided communities and undermined their carefully constructed unity. Moreover, many were inclined to see electoral politics as manipulative and dishonest because party candidates did not always live up to their electoral promises. Echoing the community sentiments, FICI and CONAIE also made a point until recently of distancing themselves from political parties and boycotting elections.

Despite the skepticism voiced, a small but growing number of community members voted for or even joined one of Ecuador's political parties. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the party most successful in gaining indigenous votes was Izquierda Democrática. This social-democratic party held many seats in the Congreso Nacional and controlled the presidency from 1988 to 1992. The party enjoyed popularity among Otavalo indigenous people because of its relatively generous spending on rural infrastructural projects. Izquierda Democrática nevertheless failed to develop a meaningful alliance with indigenous organizations or to incorporate ethnic issues into its political platform. Rather, it was the Partido Socialista with its close ties to rural and urban trade unions that tried consistently to achieve these objectives. To some extent, this closeness was due to the fact that many members of Otavalo artisan communities were employed in the province's textile industry and participated in the trade-union movement (Rivera Vélez 1988). Moreover, the Partido Socialista viewed indigenous struggles for land as part of broader peasant and worker struggles. Over time the party seemed to be able to reconcile its class-based ideology with the indigenous ethnic discourse. In 1987 the Partido Socialista endorsed CONAIE's proposal to proclaim Ecuador a plurinational state and give official status to indigenous governance institutions (Ayala Mora 1992, 46–49). The party also supported indigenous candidates in the provincial elections in Imbabura.

Indigenous people's participation in the electoral process and their willingness to build political alliances grew in the 1990s. Communities' vast experience in local non-electoral politics had probably increased their sense of political efficacy and heightened their interest in the electoral process. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that the adoption of neoliberal economic strategies at the national level had eroded their earlier social gains. Confronted with a mounting foreign debt, the national government implemented a series of structural adjustment programs. Although they failed to reactivate economic growth (1997 gross national product per capita was close to the 1981 level), these programs inflicted severe hardships on most Ecuadorians. Between 1982 and 1992, the national wage bill dropped by 43 percent. In 1993 the proportion of rural population living below the poverty line reached 76 percent. Between 1982 and 1993, public spending on educa-

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tion as a percentage of GNP dropped from 5.1 to 2.7 percent, and on health from 2.2 to 0.7 percent (Larrea and North 1997, 913).[24]

Integrated rural development programs, which had benefited indigenous and nonindigenous communities across the country, also lost most of their initial funding (Chiriboga et al. 1989). Public corporations in infrastructure and services faced a painful restructuring along neoliberal lines (Salgado 1989). Under the new legislation, IEOS was to maintain only a supervisory role, while drinking-water and sewage projects were to be funded on a cost-effective basis by municipal governments, which in turn had to rely on bank credit (MDUV 1993). The reorganization of IEOS presumably opened space for municipal initiatives. Yet in the context of the low and declining purchasing power of wage earners, it was unlikely that municipal governments would be willing or able on a large scale to assume responsibility for sanitation works in poor rural and urban areas, as IEOS had. Similarly, the prospect of a neoliberal restructuring of the national social security system was widely expected to penalize low-income earners. The government attempted to address the needs of so-called marginalized groups by creating the Fondo de Inversión Social de Emergencia (FISE) and the Consejo de Nacionalidades y Pueblos de Ecuador (CODENPE). These initiatives, however, failed to turn the economic and social tide.[25] Overall, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a progressive retreat of the national state combined with a dramatic decline in the standard of living of most Ecuadorians.

The structural-adjustment policies raised indigenous communities' awareness of national politics and established a basis for an alliance between indigenous and nonindigenous organizations. In cultural terms, this alliance was facilitated by the long history of interaction between indigenous and nonindigenous organizations. Indigenous communities' collaboration with governmental development agencies and NGOs as well as their exposure to trade unions and political parties had created an eclectic indigenous ideology. Fernando Rosero described it as the new Andean code, blending reconstructed ancestral values with elements of developmentalist and left-wing political discourse (1990).

In the mid-1990s, indigenous federations participated in and often led protests and strikes against structural adjustment. They also revised their earlier strategy of boycotting elections. In the national atmosphere of disillusionment with the party system, CONAIE sponsored an indigenous electoral movement, symbolically named Pachacutic.[26] Its leaders proclaimed

24. For a discussion of Ecuador's policies of structural adjustment, also see Thoumi and Grindle (1992), Salgado (1989), Schuldt (1993), and Ojeda Segovia (1993).

25. Ecuador's FISE and its relations with NGOs have been analyzed by Segarra (1997).

26. The word *pachacutic* in Quichua means reversal, revolution, or profound change. For a discussion of the concept of pachacutic in the context of Andean history, see Flores Galindo (1988).

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their intent to curb the clientelistic and opportunistic tendencies inherent in Ecuador's party system by practicing internal democracy and political accountability.[27] Pachacutic also supported the claim of indigenous federations to self-determination and a pluricultural state. Whether or not Pachacutic would live up to its lofty principles, it appeared to at least some indigenous voters to be an attractive alternative to the old-style party politics. In the 1996 elections, Pachacutic won several seats in the congress. It came a close third in Imbabura's provincial elections and a close second in Otavalo's race for the seats of municipal councillors.[28] Thus despite or perhaps because of their deeply ingrained mistrust of national electoral politics, indigenous communities found themselves at the center of the national struggle for democracy.

CONCLUSION

Otavalo indigenous communities have traveled a long way on the bumpy road to citizenship. They have sought and partly found a collective and culturally specific citizenship close to the views of self-determination of Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1996) and Donna Van Cott (1994). Having lost all vestiges of political and territorial autonomy during the late-colonial and early-post-colonial period, these communities succeeded in reconstructing their political institutions as part of rural civil society within the framework of the 1937 Ley de Comunas. To do so, they had to challenge not only hacienda relations but also the state system under which they were providing unpaid urban labor to white-mestizo elites and swelling the jail population while being denied political representation or public services. This combination of economic exploitation and political exclusion underlay Otavalo's indigenous mobilization of the 1970s. Clearly at stake for Otavalo indigenous people were their relations with the state.

The centrality of the state to indigenous struggles has often been emphasized in the literature on the Andes and Mesoamerica (Smith 1990; Strobele-Gregor 1994). The Otavalo experiences, however, shed light on the

27. According to the *Cambio* survey, 85 percent of the respondents expressed little faith in Ecuador's political parties (cited in Schuldt 1994, 13). For analyses of Ecuador's party system, see Bustamante (1996), Hurtado (1997), and Conaghan (1992, 1995).

28. In the provincial elections, Pachacutic was outrun by the Partido Roldocista Ecuatoriano (PRE), a populist party led by Abdala Bucaram, and by the right-wing Partido Social Cristiano (PSC). In Otavalo it ranked third (after PRE and Izquierda Democrática) in the contest for mayor of Otavalo and second (after PRE) in those for municipal councillors. See Fausto Romero Proaño, "Aun no se define sobre las autoridades en escrutinio," *Diario del Norte*, 23 May 1996, p. 3; and Romero Proaño, "Sorpresa en los cantones de Imbabura," 1 June 1996, p. 3. Pachacutic also participated in the 1998 Asamblea Constituyente. Pachacutic convinced the assembly to change the first article of the constitution, which now defines Ecuador as a pluricultural and multiethnic state (but not a multinational state, as initially suggested by Pachacutic). On the role of indigenous organizations in Latin America's constitutional transformation, see Van Cott (2000).

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relationship between these struggles and the process of political democratization. Barred from official recognition as local governments, the leaders of Otavalo indigenous communities have developed into active participants in civil society, mobilizing their members against the white-mestizo authorities. This mobilization created some of the disruption so feared by liberal students of civil society. It is doubtful, however, that Otavalo communities would have been able to change local relations of power otherwise. In the context of land reform and the national drive toward democracy, indigenous struggles were perceived as legitimate by at least some segments of the national political community, including those associated with the reformist military, the Partido Socialista, and Izquierda Democrática. Conversely, the indigenous movement in Ecuador had incorporated elements of national developmentalist and leftist discourse, fusing them with centuries-old indigenous values.

The Andean and Mesoamerican indigenous peoples' ability to blend strategically the old with the new as well as the role played in this process by new indigenous elites has been discussed by various scholars (Warren 1992; Nash 1995; Grandin 1997). Analysis of the Otavalo case, however, points to the implicitly statist aspects of this cultural experimentation, which are often overlooked in studies on indigenous identity and civil society. Otavalo communities recreated their identity largely around issues of governance: building infrastructure, monitoring education, and punishing thieves. This approach did not cause intense social conflicts like those that accompanied the indigenous mobilization of the late 1970s. In the 1990s, indigenous community mingas for building and maintaining the infrastructure were often praised and even occasionally imitated by urban dwellers in the canton of Otavalo. Despite certain tensions, the system of bilingual education was also run fairly smoothly by indigenous and nonindigenous educators. What proved to be rather divisive in ethnic terms was the indigenous practice of community justice. But even in this area, the communities' attempts to regulate their judicial practices, combined with the local government's failure to slow down the wave of crime and delinquency (originating locally and in Colombia), have created a foundation for yet another cultural and political compromise, this one between the two justice systems.

Significantly, Otavalo communities have been able to increase access to public services largely without losing their cultural and organizational autonomy. According to Jonathan Fox, this outcome is a sign of citizenship as opposed to clientelism (Fox 1997). To be sure, elements of clientelism can be detected in indigenous communities' relations with the provincial and municipal councils. Overall, however, they were rather successful in maintaining a political distance from the ruling parties. With all their problems and shortcomings, Otavalo's experiments in communal governance represent an important contribution to the expansion and redefinition of democracy in Ecuador.

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