



AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Daniel A. Karnes for the degree of  
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Abstract approved:

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In this era of free trade and globalization, food is traveling greater and greater distances to its consumers. This is causing small farms and small farmers all over the world to protest as their livelihood is being undercut by cheap agricultural commodities from outside their communities. In the Ecuadorian Andes, these protests are becoming well organized and are having an influence on the national government and its policies. This thesis seeks to answer questions about the role outside food staples play in the daily life of the Cañari of the Southern Ecuadorian Andes, the factors that are influencing the decisions made by households on what to eat, about how much control the community has over what is bought and sold in its local markets and about where this control comes from and how it is being used to improve the livelihood of the community.

My research shows that food staples from outside of the indigenous communities that form TUCAYTA have become an important part of the diet of Cañari families that are not able to or choose not to meet their subsistence needs through what my Cañari informants consider their ‘traditional methods.’ The major causes for the lack of ability or desire to feed their families with crops cultivated on their own plots of land generally came from a lack of access to sufficient land to meet their families need, a lack of labor-

power to cultivate the land they had access to and/or a perceived lack of need to grow their own food as remittances from family members overseas were enough to meet the food needs of their families. While in general, communities do not have much control over what is bought and sold in the local markets, the indigenous political movement *pachacutik* is attempting to change this. *Pachacutik* has been involved in protests that aim to put the demands of indigenous communities into the forefront of many political debates happening in the capital. These protests come in the form of blocking major transportation arteries to disrupt the flow of fresh foods from rural areas to the urban centers. In effect, the power of these protests comes from the control indigenous communities have over the domestic food supply.

To Grow or To Buy:  
Food Staples and Cultural Identity in the  
Southern Ecuadorian Andes

by  
Daniel A. Karnes

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Daniel A. Karnes, Author

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**TO GROW OR TO BUY:  
FOOD STAPLES AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE  
SOUTHERN ECUADORIAN ANDES**

### Note on Translations and Name Changes

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. *Italics* are used to mark non-English words. Most of the names have been changed to protect peoples' anonymity. I did not change the name of the agronomist for TUCAYTA or the president of ECUARUNARI, as they are both public figures and the information they provided did not incriminate them or anyone else in any way. I also did not change the name of the woman whose quote ends this thesis as I want to give her the full credit of such wise words. Please remember that the interviews were done in both of our second languages and direct quotes may not be in proper Spanish.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In this era of free trade and globalization, food is traveling greater and greater distances to its consumers. This is causing small farms and small farmers all over the world to protest as their livelihood is being undercut by cheap agricultural commodities from outside their communities.<sup>1</sup> In the Ecuadorian Andes, these protests are becoming well organized and are having an influence on the national government and its policies. I designed my research to be a case study that will help explain how one community of smallholder farmers is experiencing changes caused by the influx of the global market and what this community is doing in reaction. My questions are: what role do outside food staples play in the daily life of the Cañari of the Southern Ecuadorian Andes? What factors are influencing the decisions made by households on what to eat? How much control does the community have over what is bought and sold in its local markets? Where does this control come from and how can it be used to improve the livelihood of the community?

The current situation in the upper Cañar region is one of largely subsistence agriculture with small amounts being sold in the market to cover other farm related expenses (Jokisch 2002). Many papers have been written on how migration affects agricultural change, about how Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) affect land use change and even about the evolution of the indigenous peasant economy (Jokisch, 2002; Keese, 1998; Korovkin 1997). These approaches do not take into account the influences of food and cultural identity on household decisions. In my study, I would like to look at

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<sup>1</sup> For this thesis I will call a small farm one of less than 10 hectares and a small farmer one owning less than 10 hectares

why people eat what they eat, and how their values affect decisions made about where to get their ‘daily bread.’ I am not attempting to disprove the findings of Keese and Korovkin; but to further the explanations provided by Jokisch on what values underlie the decisions made about whether to continue with subsistence agriculture or to seek means of generating income to buy food (Jokisch, 2002; Keese, 1998; Korovkin 1997).

This project seeks to define the framework within which indigenous residents of the upper Cañar region in southern-central Ecuador base their decisions on what is eaten within the household. It examines the roles played by both what my Cañari informants consider traditional food staples (potatoes, wheat, barely, maize, *melloco* (*Ullucus tuberosus*), *mashwa* (*Tropaeolum tuberosum*), *oca* (*Oxalis* *tuberose*) and what they consider to be non-traditional food staples (noodles, rice) in daily subsistence. By understanding what roles these foods play I hope to be able to better understand the connections between food and cultural identity and the importance of cultural identity to livelihood.

## A Brief History of TUCAYTA

During my time in Cañar, I worked with an organization called Tucuy Cañar Ayllucunapa Tantanacuy or TUCAYTA (*Coorporación de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas Cañaris* or Association of Cañari Indigenous and Farmer Organizations) was originally founded in 1965 right after the first wave of agrarian reform in Ecuador. It was an attempt to unite grassroots organizations with community level organizations and cooperatives that were newly liberated from the *haciendas* to fight for irrigation systems and bilingual education. It wasn’t until 1980 that this group became well organized and

with the help of various governmental organizations, national and international NGOs, conducted a study on the creation of an irrigation canal for fourteen of the fifteen communities. Once this was done, they looked for aid in building the canal over the following ten year period (the canal of *Patacocha* was completed in August of 1991).

With the canal under construction, TUCAYTA then turned its efforts to bilingual education, and in 1985, the *Instituto Pedagógico Intercultural Bilingüe Quilloac* (The institute for intercultural and bilingual education of Quilloac) was founded. This organization was founded to promote the rescue and revalorization of the Quichua language, clothing, music, archeological vestiges and the local agricultural and environmental knowledge.

In 1995, TUCAYTA began seeking outside aid in specific areas such as: development of the administrative system for the canal water, technical assistance for agriculture and animal husbandry, conservation of soils, conservation of creeks and streams that led to the canal, reforestation, and training of social organizations. In 1996, TUCAYTA began negotiating with the state and national governments over the transfer of the canal to TUCAYTA, to be put in the name of its communities and its users. This was realized in 1998 as TUCAYTA became the official executor or agent of development for the canal. In this fashion, TUCAYTA has come to play a leadership role in the communities.

TUCAYTA is currently made up of approximately 7650 people in more than 1650 families. It is comprised of 90% indigenous peoples that identify themselves as

“Cañaris” and 10% *mestizos*.<sup>2</sup> TUCAYTA is located in the *Provincia* (state) of Cañar, the *Canton* (roughly equivalent to a county) of Cañar and the *Parroquia* of Cañar.<sup>3</sup> The people and families that form TUCAYTA are distributed in 15 communities to the south and west of the city of Cañar. The altitudinal range of the communities that form TUCAYTA is between 2850-4100 meters above sea level, which provides many different ecological zones for the cultivation of various crops.<sup>4</sup>

TUCAYTA is sub-regional constituent of the national indigenous organization CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* – Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador). CONAIE is the apex organization for a hierarchical structure of indigenous organizations throughout the country, see figure 1.1.

### **My Role Working with TUCAYTA**

During my time in Cañar, I worked with TUCAYTA doing research on the current influences on the Cañari diet. I was introduced to TUCAYTA by Judy Blankenship, an American author and photographer that lives in the community of Chaglaban for the first half of every year (the other half of the year she lives in Portland, Oregon). While my research has been on food staples and cultural identity, Nicolas Pichisaca, the senior agronomist at TUCAYTA pointed me in the direction of studying the effects of emigration on how households choose what to eat. As emigration was a hot topic at the time and it directly affected the diets of many families in Cañar, I devoted a good deal of

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<sup>2</sup> Note that although the name Cañar is shared with the region of Cañar and the city of Cañar, only the indigenous people are called “Cañari”.

<sup>3</sup> *Parroquia* does not translate well to English. It is a term originally used by the Catholic Church for ‘parish’ but today it can also mean a small group of communities.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of this information comes from an unpublished information sheet given to me by Nicolas Pichisaca. It has been included as Appendix C. Additional information came from informal interviews and participant observation with the TUCAYTA staff.

my time looking specifically at how emigration was affecting households' views of different food staples.

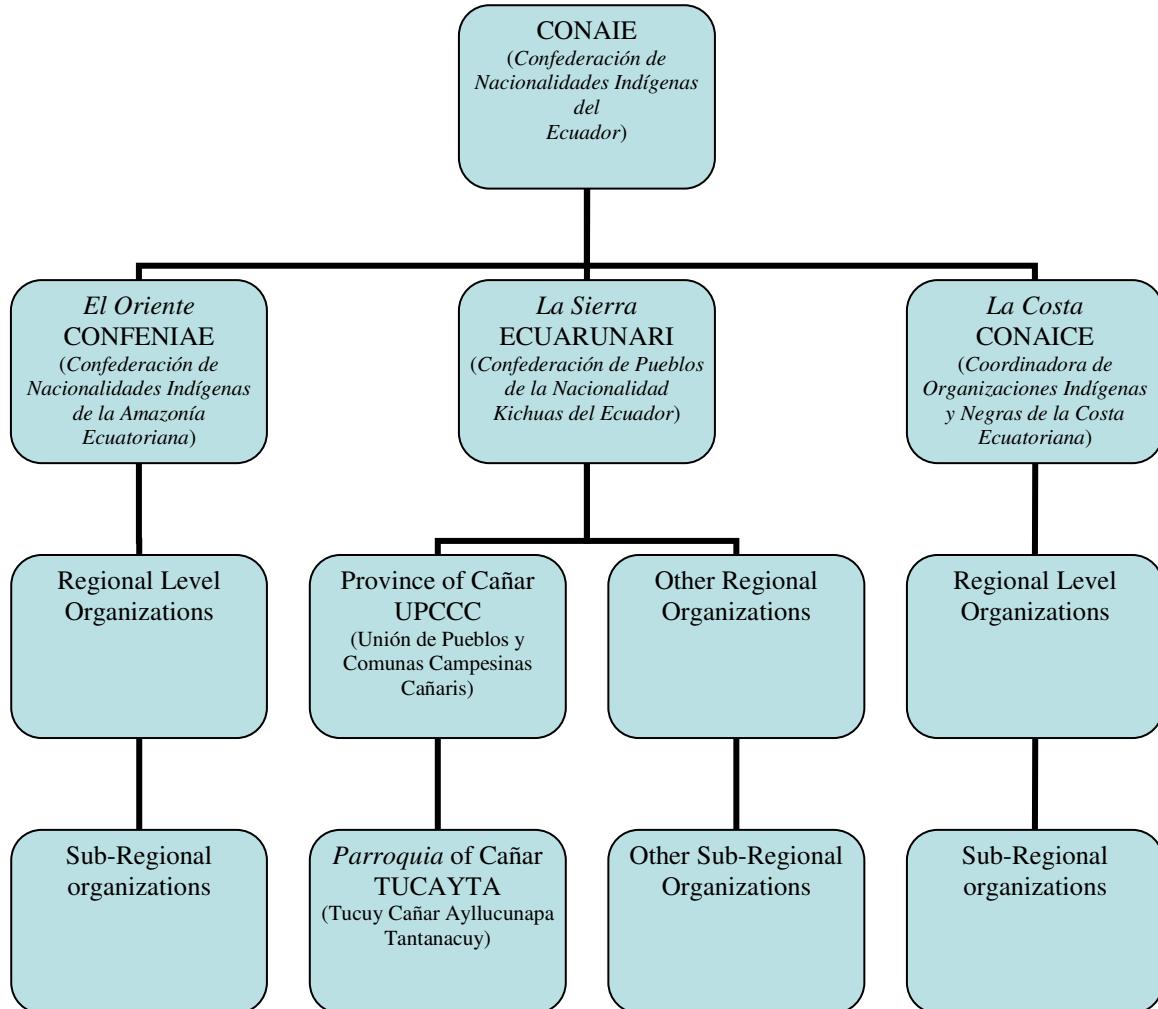


Figure 1.1 - Organization Chart of the Indigenous Organizations of Ecuador

During my stay in Cañar, I spent a great deal of time at the TUCAYTA office and in the field with TUCAYTA personnel. During this time I worked along side many of the *promotores* of TUCAYTA helping install aspersion irrigation systems, helping reforestation and erosion control efforts, and sitting in on meetings (both the weekly staff meetings at the TUCAYTA office and the monthly meetings with community leaders in one of the communities). Working directly with TUCAYTA on a daily basis gave me the

opportunity to develop rapport with much of the staff and with the community leaders that frequented the office. Through this, I was able to see how TUCAYTA's role in the community was changing due to its branching out from the administration of water resources into other areas of economic development and into cultural and political activism and how political activism was also affecting food choices made at the household level.

## **Organization of Thesis**

In chapter two I will discuss the methods I used in doing my research, and in analyzing the data obtained during my stay in Cañar.

Chapter three will give a brief history of Cañar from pre-Inca times to the present. This chapter was written to dispel some images of “the timeless Indian” as it will show how the Cañari have participated in the history of their region and how this history has helped shape them into their present state. I will consider how the formation of *haciendas* helped link the Cañari with other indigenous groups of the Ecuadorian Andes linguistically and culturally and how this produced a relatively similar set of foodways<sup>5</sup> throughout the indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Andes. I will show how indigenous communities and their foodways came to be defined as rural and backward. This chapter will also discuss the role export-based agriculture has played in Ecuadorian politics from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how through agrarian reform, a cash economy has become so important in a region of subsistence farmers.

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<sup>5</sup> Foodways have been defined as “behaviors and beliefs surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food” (Counihan 1999:6)

In chapter four I examine the anthropological literature on food to show the importance of the symbolism of individual foods and how this symbolism is derived from a group's economic activities. As discourse analysis has become an important tool of anthropological research, I will discuss the importance of analyzing discourse as a means to determine a group's values. In order to do this, I will explore the literature that looks at the make up of the two major discourses present in the Ecuadorian Andes. I will argue that discourses are not only derived from the community, but they can also change the socioeconomic and cultural landscapes of communities.

In chapter 5 I will explore a new influence on the Cañari discourse on food. For this I will give a brief history of the development industry and poststructuralism and outline how the development industry has affected the local discourse in Cañar, and in the Ecuadorian Andes in general.

Chapters six and seven present my research findings. Chapter six specifically deals with food staples. It presents the various food staples present in Cañar, and a quantitative analysis of how access to non-farm cash incomes, political activity, primary household language and emigration affect the relative prestige of each food staple. The quantitative analysis is followed by a discussion of each of the food staples explored, and interprets the results based on information obtained both through ethnographic interviews and through the literature review.

Chapter seven discusses food preparation and the influences on diet and cuisine in Cañar. It presents the ethnographic interviews themselves. As emigration was the hottest topic during my stay, I explore some of the ins and outs of emigration as experienced by my informants and their families. This discussion of how emigration is affecting

livelihoods in Cañar includes topics relating to causes and effects of emigration. Important themes in this discussion include land prices and demographic pressures, junk food and nutrition. It explores the different points of view in Cañar and is concluded by presenting some of my informants and their dreams for the future.

In chapter eight I will present my conclusions and recommendations. This will include questions regarding economic development and advocating for political change. It will also explore ‘the foodshed’ a theoretical model that may be of benefit for the staff of TUCAYTA. I will examine some possible ways forward for the organization and the people, and talk about possible ways to combat the loss of many of their family members to emigration. In this chapter I will also examine literature on peasant federations and *organizaciones de segundo grado* (second level organizations or OSGs) as they relate to economic development, cultural revitalization and the indigenous political movement known as *Pachacutik*.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introducing My Methods

Justifying research in cultural anthropology means making one key assumption, that social processes are also cultural processes, that the ways people relate to one another and how these relationships are understood shows a system of shared patterns of symbols and meanings and that these shared meanings shape social relationships (Lyons 2006:8). This idea of patterns of symbols and meanings or ‘webs of significance’ show that culture is not simply a collection of separate elements, but that each element is interconnected (Geertz 1973:5). Discerning what these patterns are and what they mean is the basis of ethnographic research in cultural anthropology. Looking for these patterns of symbols and meanings is a break from the Structuralist past as anthropologists have changed their focus from the study of underlying social structures to the study of discourse.

My study seeks to provide an ethnography of foodways of the people of Cañar. Weismantel’s work in Zumbahua provided the guiding principles in my research in Cañar. My work in many ways continues her ideas about competing discourses in society, but takes recent political developments into account (the indigenous movement known as *Pachacutik*) as this is reintroducing a ‘new and improved’ indigenous discourse into society by championing and revaluing much of what is considered Indian while remaining cognizant of possible complications of associating with NGOs.

In doing an ethnography of household food consumption in Cañar, I used three methods: 1) a literature review, 2) participant observation and informal interviews, and 3)

semi-structured interviews. The idea is to try to find a set of cultural rules that govern household food, find how these rules are changing, determine what is influencing these changes, and finally examine how Cañari identity is redefining itself based on these changes. Bourdieu refers to these as “dispositions” or habitual ways of responding to the world, that are “transposed” from one situation to another (1979).

## **Sample Selection**

I developed the sample for my semi-structured interviews using targeted sampling of key informants. Working with the *promotores* (extension workers) at TUCAYTA, we identified certain groups within the population that the *promotores* considered “experts” on topics relating to food and changes in diet and cuisine. We identified mothers of families (split into two categories, those with family sending money back to Cañar from overseas, and those without money coming in from overseas), teachers, nurses, farmers, and grandparents that are caring for their grandchildren because their children are overseas. After having been there for two months and having built rapport with the *promotores* of TUCAYTA and some members of the community I lived in, the *promotores* and I began going into the communities to conduct interviews for the remaining weeks. Our goal was to do between fifteen and thirty interviews, but unfortunately I got rather sick for about ten days and this caused us to not reach our goal. We conducted interviews and collected stories from as many people as were possible in the time given. This resulted in eight recorded interviews, five non-recorded interviews, and close to one thousand hours of participant observation. Of the eight recorded

interviews, one interview was of a couple and two interviews were with the same person.<sup>6</sup>

Two of the non-recorded interviews were done using a written survey that was being developed with hopes of finding funding to go back to Ecuador a second time to gather statistically significant data in order to do a statistical analysis of food preferences to support ethnographic data.

## Literature Review

The literature review was done for four main reasons 1) to provide background information and context for generating interview questions, 2) to provide sufficient background on certain topics to increase my ability to probe deeper into issues during interviews, 3) to provide a context within which to interpret information collected both from participant observation and during the semi-structured interviews, and 4) to provide me with adequate knowledge of the region of Cañar including: history (from pre-Incan times, through the Incan, Spanish colonial, *hacienda*, and modern periods), ecology, diet and cuisine, indigenous politics, culture and development theory.

## Participant Observation and Informal Interviews

Participant observation is the central method of research in cultural anthropology. Participant observation, in essence, is experiencing a culture through everyday interactions with the people you are studying. It is sharing their lives with them: working, cooking, cleaning, playing, dancing, drinking and whatever else is appropriate

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<sup>6</sup> With the woman I conducted two interviews with, the first interview I followed my interview guide. After she got to know me better and her father vouched for me (as I interacted with him a few times a week in the TUCAYTA office) she gave me a second interview devoted to her own experiences of going abroad for work and how it affected her and her family.

within the host culture. In doing participant observation, establishing rapport and learning to act so that people go about their business as usual are key (Bernard 2006, 344).

Informal interviews are characterized by a lack of structure and control (Bernard 2006:211). This basically means just talking to people during the course of the day and jotting down notes whenever possible. This method was used constantly throughout my time in Cañar. It was a way to get to know people and get to know what they think about certain topics.

While in Cañar, I lived with a Cañari family. The family was a man and his wife and their three daughters. I worked with them in their potato fields, I helped cook meals, and I often helped the girls do their homework. After dinner, I would often discuss what had happened during the day and ask questions about what they believed my observations meant. Generally speaking, these informal interviews lasted 30 minutes to one hour almost every night. After this, I would go to my room and try to remove myself from this immersion in the local culture in order to intellectualize what I had seen and heard during the day, put it into perspective and write it down. This involved looking over my field notes and rewriting them into a more organized, more coherent set of notes. I would check them for inconsistencies that could be topics for conversation the following day.

Participant observation could be considered one of the more ethically questionable methodologies as it uses information gathered when people do not necessarily realize that you are gathering information. For this reason, I have made a conscious effort to exclude any information that could harm a participant or community and/or reveal the identities of any participant that did not want to be identified. At the

same time however, participant observation helps one learn culturally appropriate behavior that can increase the validity of the data collected during subsequent interviews.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviewing methods. They are structured in that the interview is based on an interview guide that is created beforehand with a list of topics and/or questions. They are unstructured in that there is minimum control over the people's responses. "The idea is to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms, and at their own pace" (Bernard 2006:211).

My interviews were conducted using an interview guide (see appendices A and B) that was developed from the literature review, and adapted to the local circumstances over the first two months of the research period through informal interviews with the TUCAYTA staff. Certain topics or questions were not touched upon in some interviews as they could unintentionally insult the interviewee, or result in obviously biased answers. Depending on how my rapport was with the participant and whether or not a *promotor* from TUCAYTA was present, I would include or exclude specific questions dealing with issues of hunger, non-agricultural work and relations with TUCAYTA personnel. Questions of hunger were often touchy as admitting that there were periods where there was not enough to eat for the family was considered shameful in indigenous culture. The only participant that admitted to not having enough was *mestizo*. Questions about non-agricultural work were often hard to bring up because many people seemed to interpret them as a judgment on how much or how hard they worked. Finally, asking about a

participant's relationship with TUCAYTA personnel in front of TUCAYTA personnel could influence the participant's response.

## **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts, field notes and literature were coded into thematic categories. Quotes in the participants' own words were used whenever possible (translations were done by myself and then checked over by a native speaker). While there were many themes in my research, I found it useful to cluster them into four major thematic categories: 1) the Cañari diet, 2) causes of changes to the subsistence economy, and 3) emigration, food, and family and 4) competing discourses.

My job as an anthropologist has been to figure out what characterizes each discourse present in Cañar and to categorize complexity into a discourse. Since what I have been categorizing is complex, creating a perfect taxonomy would be. Unless I am to fall victim to the questions brought up by many postmodernists, I must move beyond the notion that my work is imperfect and give the best explanation I possibly can at this date and time, to be used as a point of reference for future researchers both in Cañar and in the Andes.

## CHAPTER 3

### CAÑARIS THROUGH HISTORY

The Cañari are an indigenous group of the southern Ecuadorian Andes that, for five centuries, have been ruled over by powers from outside of their region. This chapter documents the changes in power in Cañar and looks at the political and economic developments brought in by new regimes that have caused changes in the way the Cañari meet their daily needs for subsistence. The first change in regime came about near the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the troops of the Inca arrived in Cañar, the second followed a mere two generations later when the Inca were defeated by the Spanish in 1532 at the battle of Cajamarca, Ecuador gained its independence from Spain in 1822 marking a third major regime change. While changes in government have been more numerous and more abrupt since Ecuador has become an independent nation, Quito remains the seat of power. In this chapter I will briefly explore the changes in governance and discuss their significance for the indigenous peoples of Cañar. As indigenous communities have come to be one of the main sources of domestically produced and consumed foodstuffs, I will show how indigenous peoples and organizations are currently using food as a means of gaining political power.

#### Who are the Cañari?

The Cañari are a Quichua speaking indigenous group that live in the region of Cañar in the southern highlands of Ecuador (see figures 3.1 and 3.2 on the following page). While it is difficult to talk about socio-economic organization of the Cañari before the arrival of the Inca, some scholars believe that the Cañari were more linguistically



**Figure 3.1 (above)** - This map of Ecuador, going south to north, has the region of Cañar highlighted in black, the region of Chimborazo where Lyons did his research highlighted in the darkest grey, the region of Cotopaxi where Weismantel did her research highlighted in the lightest grey, and the region of Cotacachi where Camacho did her research highlighted in the middle grey.

**Figure 3.2 (below)** - This map of Ecuador shows the three distinct geographic regions, the coast (*la costa*), the highlands (*la sierra*), and the Amazon (*el oriente*).

linked than politically (Benítez, 1987: 103). The Cañari are said to have stopped the Inca Topa Inga Yapangui during the Inca's second push northward from Cuzco (Benítez, 1987:119).<sup>7</sup> As such, the Inca were present in Cañar for more than a generation before they went on to conquer the rest of what is now Ecuador.

The Cañari claim to be the only ethnic group in modern Ecuador that was never conquered by the Inca, a claim backed up by scholars (Benítez, 1987). It is widely held that the Cañari allied with the Inca after stopping their advance and helped conquer the rest of what is Ecuador today. Although they held a somewhat higher prestige within the Inca Empire than many of the other groups, the Cañari were still subjected to Inca rule. During the pre-Inca times, it is believed that the Cañari were subsistence farmers that lived up in the hills living on a diet consisting mainly of potatoes and other Andean tubers.

## Inca Rule

The period of Inca rule had two profound effects on food amongst the Cañari. The first of which were large scale population relocations from the hillsides and higher elevations into the inter-Andean valley floors (Coe, 1994). The reason this was done was to shift cultivation patterns away from potatoes and other tubers to maize<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Inca in the singular form is the title of their ruler, while in the plural form it refers to the people as a whole. As Inca is both the singular and plural form, one must infer from the conjugation of verbs used in conjunction with the noun which form is being used.

<sup>8</sup> Maize was a very important staple for the Inca both for day to day subsistence and for ceremonial uses. For a discussion on maize's role in the Inca Empire see Coe (1994).

The second effect of Inca rule on the Cañari was the introduction of the Inca's tributary labor system called the *mitamacuna*. The *mitamacuna* had two parts that are somewhat related. The first was the direct form of tribute that was required of all peoples conquered by the Inca. This tribute came in the form of labor. The *mitamacuna* required one fifth of the male population that were subject to the local native chief to work directly for the Inca (the ruler) for a period of one year. This was a rotating system, as one group finished its year, another would replace them which meant that every male worked every fifth year for the Inca.

The *mitamacuna* also had a system in which populations were relocated and mixed together. Each group that the Inca conquered were used for a special skill they were said to possess (some were considered good farmers, others smiths, the Cañari were considered great warriors). The Inca relocated populations based on these skills. For example, when they needed smiths in a given area, they took from the group they considered good smiths and relocated them to that area. This was done both to have specialized craftsmen available in any given area, and as a way to keep populations ethnically divided to prevent revolts against Inca rule.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most important effect of the *mitamacuna* system on modern Cañar was the start of a tradition in which men worked for extended periods outside of their communities for reasons not directly related to subsistence. While the exact details of how this tradition was carried out varied during different time periods, the fact that the tradition was carried on under circumstances that were not necessarily of the choosing of these men is important.

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the *Mitamacuna* and its effects on peoples conquered by the Inca, see Benitez (1987) and Lyons (2006).

The legacy of the Inca was one of ruthless subjugation of the peoples of the Andes from what is now northern Chile up to the southern borders of modern day Colombia. Even so, their efficiency in food production and distribution enabled them to construct monumental architecture as can be seen from the well known ruins of Cuzco and Machu Picchu and the less well known site of Ingapirca<sup>10</sup>. In Cañar today, there are bittersweet memories regarding the Inca as they were the oppressors of the fiercely independent Cañari, while simultaneously signifying the greatness of the indigenous Andeans. Memories of a time before Inca rule are all but lost by the contemporary Cañari, even so, many Cañari look back to the time before Inca rule as a time when they were an independent people.

### **Arrival of the Spanish**

Soon after the Inca Empire reached its zenith, civil war broke out. The Inca Empire was broken into two halves by the last Inca, Huanya Capac, giving half to each of his sons. These two halves of the empire, based out of Quito in the north and Cuzco in the south, fought a bitter civil war that left the empire in disarray right as the Spanish arrived. Chaos caused by the civil war, disease brought over from Europe and superior weaponry helped the Spanish defeat the Inca at Cajamarca and take the reins of the Inca Empire (Benitez 1987).

The arrival of the Spanish brought about radical changes in the food systems of the crumbling Inca Empire. While the Spanish introduced many new food and animal

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<sup>10</sup> Ingapirca is a site near the city of Cañar that is often visited by tourists and is widely held to be the most impressive Inca ruins in Ecuador, although it is said that Ingapirca actually predates the Inca arrival in Cañar.

crops (wheat, barley, cattle, pigs and sheep just to name a few), the Spanish economic system had a more profound and lasting effect on the former subjects of the Inca Empire. The Inca Empire practiced a type of state led redistribution, a system characterized by the populace giving some of their surplus to the local chief who would then pass some of it up to the Inca and use the rest of it for ceremonial purposes (Lyons 2006). These ceremonies were held to ward off the wrath of semi-divine spirits said to live in the hillsides.<sup>11</sup> One of my own informants talked about beliefs that these spirits would often disguise themselves and join in the festivities. If there was sufficient food and drink, they would send good weather and sufficient rain, if not, they would send drought and freezing weather to wither crops. The most important thing to note is that the redistribution of the surpluses came back to the people in the form of feasts.

This system is contrasted with the Spanish economic system that was considered an early stage of capital accumulation (Lyons 2006). Capital accumulation is characterized by the concentration of wealth for investment that seeks economic growth and the efficient allocation of resources. The effects of this alteration can best be seen by looking at how the Spanish slowly changed the *mitamacuna* system over time to help them extract the surpluses being produced for use outside of the community.

The first of the major changes that the new Spanish administration instituted to the *mita* was the introduction of the *encomienda*.<sup>12</sup> The *encomienda* was a system of collecting tribute that demanded products rather than labor. Instead of having one in five males working on state lands to produce food for the central state, the Spanish simply had

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion on Pre-Hispanic religious beliefs, syncretism with Christianity and the connection between religious ‘festas’ and respect among indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Andes, see Lyons 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Under the Spanish, the *mitamacuna* was shortened to simply *mita*.

the people grow the crops on their own land and demanded as tribute the products rather than the labor. While under the system of the Inca, the state accepted the risk of bad weather or other disasters, the Spanish system transferred this risk to the farmers. The tribute collection system was again changed as the Spanish later demanded as tribute the cash value of the products, thus forcing farmers to further assume the risk of fluctuations in market prices. This is not to say that the Spanish quit demanding labor under the *Mita* system. Rather, in addition to the *encomienda*, *mitayos* (workers under the *Mita* system) worked directly for members of the colonial bureaucracy instead of the state itself. Spanish colonists obtained the right to a certain number of *mitayos* based on their influence in the regional governing bodies. The Spanish crown mandated payment for the labor of the *mitayos*, but as the people collecting tribute were the same that were receiving the labor, they often figured ways to funnel the wages back to themselves through the tribute payments (Lyons, 2006: 41). As wages from the *mita* service often paid the tribute, the differences between *mita* service and tribute payments through the *encomienda* often were unclear to indigenous communities.

### ***Spanish Rule and the Rise of the Haciendas***

As the Spanish took the reins of the empire from the Inca, they continued to let the local chiefs' rule over their people just as the Inca had done. The *encomendero* (the Spanish crown's local representative) would collect the tribute directly from the *caciques* (the local chieftains). He would keep part of the tribute and pass the rest up the colonial bureaucracy. Lyons asserts that the official tribute payments under Spanish rule were actually equal or lower than tribute under the Inca, but that local practice often overrode

legal theory (2006:41). This means that the *encomenderos* and/or *caciques* must have charged the local peoples more than was officially mandated.

*Mita* service required by the Spanish Colonial government often required indigenous peoples to work on *haciendas*, large estates owned by Spanish colonists and their descendants. *Haciendas* often required large pools of laborers for their day-to-day functioning, and the number of laborers present on a *hacienda* was often considered part of its value if it was being bought, sold or rented. This meant that, in order to ensure a steady supply of laborers, many *hacienda* owners sought to devise ways of keeping *mitayos* for longer periods of time, or even permanently. This was achieved in three main fashions. First, *hacienda* owners would often pay *mitayos* a wage that was too low to pay the tribute demanded by the Spanish crown. Second, they often fined workers for lost or injured animals, requiring them to stay longer than the one year in order to pay the *hacienda* owner back for these animals. Third they offered loans and/or advances to *mitayos* to help them cover expenses at their homes. *Mitayos* were not allowed to leave the *hacienda* while they still owed the *hacendado* (*hacienda* owners) money. The *mitayos* who stayed well past their one year service due to debts to the *hacendado* came to be known as *conciertos*.<sup>13</sup> The official log book denoting the amount of debt owed to the *hacienda* by each worker was considered a measure of the available labor pool to the *hacienda* for prospective buyers or renters, and thus part of the measure of its value (Lyons, 2006: 57).

As tribute payments and *mita* service became more and more burdensome, many indigenous peoples chose to flee their communities rather than pay. This left many

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<sup>13</sup> *Concierto* translates to indebted worker. The term used to denote these types of relationships is *concertaje* which translates to debt peonage.

*caciques* with fewer and fewer people in their communities, and therefore put a greater and greater burden on the ones who stayed behind. During this period the *caciques* took one of two main roads, either allied themselves with the colonial elite, or stayed true to the people they represented (often becoming involved in or organizing indigenous uprisings). The end result was the slow disappearance of the *caciques* as they were either assimilated into the colonial elite or they lost their position of power, becoming indistinguishable from the people they once ruled.

### ***Life on the Hacienda, the Quichua Language, and a New Identity***

Many *hacendados* accepted errant workers from other *haciendas* and communities who were fleeing poor working conditions, tribute payments and/or *mita* service now controlled by the Spanish administrators. As more and more people fled indigenous communities, most communities were eventually replaced by a network of *haciendas*.

Life on the *hacienda* had many hardships. The common agreement between *hacendados* and the indigenous people who came to live and work on their *haciendas* was an exchange of land for labor. The indigenous worker would be “loaned” a certain amount of land in exchange for a certain number of days of work on the *hacienda* lands. Common problems with life on the *hacienda* were that the tasks assigned as “one day of labor” often would take one person two or three days to complete. When conditions were harsh on the *hacienda*, many workers would gather their stuff and leave in the middle of the night. They could find refuge on another *hacienda* where they had relatives

(*hacienda* owners would almost never turn down incoming workers as the number of workers was part of the value of the *hacienda*).

This created a system in which indigenous populations became very fluid as they might not have stayed on the same *hacienda* for more than a generation or two. Lyons points to this fluidity as the method through which the Quichua language was dispersed throughout Ecuador (2006).<sup>14</sup> During this period, almost all other indigenous languages in the highlands died out.<sup>15</sup> As the many indigenous groups in the highlands came to speak the same language and came to know a common history, they became a single ethno-linguistic group that had many regional variations. This unity of language, history and culture has been very important to the modern indigenous movement as Ecuarunari is a key player in the fight for indigenous rights of self-governance in Ecuador.<sup>16</sup>

### ***The Urban/Rural Divide***

While the consolidation of indigenous peoples of the highlands into one ethno-linguistic entity was happening on the *haciendas*, indigenous peoples who came to reside in urban areas were experiencing a different sort of transformation. When the Spanish arrived in Ecuador, the Spanish Inquisition was in full swing. As they took the reins of the Incan Empire, the Spanish saw it as their Christian duty to ‘save’ the indigenous peoples by converting them to Christianity. While Christianity was often adapted by local peoples based on their own religious ideas in rural areas, the effects of the forced

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<sup>14</sup> Quichua is a very close relative of Quechua, the language of the Incas.

<sup>15</sup> There are many different local dialects of Quichua, most of which are relatively similar, although some are so different, like that of the Otavalo region, that they are unintelligible to Quichua speakers from other regions.

<sup>16</sup> *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimuti (Confederación de los Pueblos de Nacionalidad Quichua del Ecuador* or the Confederation of the communities of the Quichua Nationality of Ecuador)

conversion and Western ideas of rationalism on the psyche of the indigenous peoples in urban areas should not be downplayed. “The clash between cultures caused the indigenous person to have to give up their temporal perspective, history, myths and legends, religion and knowledge if he was to be considered an ‘*hombre*’ due to the European ideas of rationalism” (Benitez, 1987:130).

The concentration of this new epistemology in towns and cities caused a split between indigenous peoples that lived in the city (many had had *mita* service in urban areas in such places as textile workshops) and those who lived on the *haciendas*. Those who lived in the city were quickly assimilated into the *mestizo* culture, while those on the *haciendas* retained some of their pre-Colombian beliefs and practices.<sup>17</sup> Those that stayed on the *hacienda* are those who are today considered indigenous.

As the urban/rural dichotomy also became the *mestizo/indígena* dichotomy, the work that each group did also became part of this dichotomy. At this time in history, the idea of urban life carried connotations of progress, specialization and comfort. Rural life on the other hand was considered backwards, simple and rough. As the *haciendas* were the primary producers of food for the domestic markets, the urban population was dependent on these backward, rough indigenous peoples for food, a fact that would one day help the indigenous peoples bring the country to its knees (Striffler 2002).

## An Independent Ecuador

Little changed on the *hacienda* when in 1822, Ecuador became independent from Spain. The reason little changed on the *haciendas* was that the battle for independence

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<sup>17</sup> Racism often compelled “indians” to act *mestizo* as a means of escaping racialized violence. The very definition of *mestizo* is a mixture of Native American and Spanish blood.

was really a battle between the Spanish crown and the colonial elite. It wouldn't be until 1918 that life would significantly change for the indigenous peoples on the *haciendas*. In 1918, the *concertaje* was abolished. This was done during what was called the “liberal revolution”. Ecuador had long been a country that had two opposing political camps that were roughly divided regionally (the coast being liberal and the highlands being conservative, while the Amazon had little influence). This revolution was by the commercial powers of the coast that helped dismantle much of the Catholic Church’s power throughout the country.<sup>18</sup> The abolition of the *concertaje* was a way to free up laborers from the highland *haciendas* to become wage earners on coastal plantations. While the *mitamacuna* of the Inca and the *mita* of the Spanish forcefully relocated many indigenous peoples, the abolition of the *concertaje* brought about a new, voluntary form of migration freeing up indigenous peoples from the *haciendas* to work on for large capitalist farmers and for urban industry.

One of the important effects of the abolition of the *concertaje* was a redefinition of the terms of the agreement between *hacendados* and the indigenous peoples living on the *haciendas*. As they could no longer be bound by debt, the land became the center of the agreement. This changed the terminology, what was once a *concierto* (indebted peon) became a *huasipunguero* (a sharecropper). This became very important in the 1950s and 1960s as growing urbanization dramatically increased the demand for dairy products as urban dwellers have larger disposable incomes. Because of this, many landlords cut agriculture and used the irrigated valley lands for pasture, moving the *huasipungueros* into the less fertile hilly regions on the outskirts of the *hacienda* that had

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<sup>18</sup> Many *haciendas* were owned by the church.

little or no access to irrigation. This caused many indigenous peoples to join the land reform movement to gain title to their plots (Lyons 2006: 61).

### ***Ecuador's Export Driven Economy***

The political economic landscape of independent Ecuador has largely been shaped by three economic booms (Striffler 2002). These booms showed the effects of Ecuador's geography on national level politics and the roles indigenous peoples of the highlands played in the development of Ecuador's modern economy. The first two booms were based around agricultural commodities grown for export on the coast. The climate on the coast of Ecuador is generally hot and wet year round. In the *sierra*, it is quite a bit cooler and drier. Climatic conditions make the coast an ideal place for large scale, capital intensive plantations (Striffler 2002). These booms caused a shift in agricultural policies that tended to favor export crops over crops grown for domestic consumption as the government sought modernize the agricultural sector, thereby further increasing the revenues earned by the government from export agriculture (Lawson 1988). It is important to note that the first two booms came on the backs of the indigenous peoples of the highlands. Those that left the *haciendas* after the abolition of the *concertaje* provided the workforce and those that stayed on the *haciendas* provided a cheap source of food for the coastal plantations.

#### *Cocoa*

The first of these booms was based around cocoa production on the coast between 1880 and 1920. This surge in cocoa production for export brought a great deal of wealth to the Ecuadorian government, and altered power relations on a national level. As the coastal region tended toward production for export, this export boom brought much

political and economic power to the coastal elite who controlled the production of cocoa. The boom in export production also caused a boom in domestic food production in the highlands as the many workers flocking to the coast needed to be fed (Striffler 2002). In addition to changing the power dynamics in the country, this boom cemented the coastal regions' dependence on the export markets while the highland regions often supplied the coast with food.<sup>19</sup> Potato production in the highlands soared along with cocoa, increasing consumption of highland potatoes on the coast during this boom. This boom ended when demand for cocoa fell off during and after WWI. As the government had expanded greatly during this boom, the loss of revenues due to global events caused a great deal of chaos in the government.

### *Bananas*

The second boom was centered on banana production in the northern and southern coastal regions. Where land during the cocoa boom was largely under the control of domestic producers, large foreign companies like United Fruit began buying up many of the coastal *haciendas* and turning them into banana plantations. Many of these companies were seeking new land in Ecuador due to the influx of a Panama disease in their Central American plantations.<sup>20</sup> When Panama disease eventually reached Ecuador (about 20 years after they arrived), many of the big fruit companies sought to shift from direct production to a system of sub-contracting the cultivation to domestic capitalists.

The rise of the sub-contracting system also went hand in hand with the replacement of the *Gros Michel* banana variety with the *Cavendish* variety of banana that

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<sup>19</sup> One major exception is the production of rice for the whole country is centered in the coastal region

<sup>20</sup> For an in depth look at Panama disease and its effects on the banana industry in Ecuador see Striffler (2002).

was disease resistant but was more fragile and needed more chemical inputs to grow. This system of subcontracting became important to the Cañari in particular as they were relatively close to the plantations of the southern Ecuadorian coast. This system changed the dynamics of wage labor in banana production by favoring temporary workers over the long term employees who had been common during the United Fruit era (1930s and 1940s). Because of this, a form of circulating migration began where many young men would leave their region and move to the coast for a short period of time (usually a year or two) to work on a banana plantation. This was done as a means of getting enough money to get married, establish a household, buy land and begin a family. This form of circulating migration was widely practiced amongst the young men of Cañar until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The father of the family I lived with in Cañar was one of the last to participate in this form of wage labor. To this day, Ecuador remains the largest exporter of bananas in the world, but today, few Cañari men are involved as new opportunities have arisen in the form of international migration, which I will explore later in this chapter.

### *Oil*

The third and final boom started in the 1960s and was centered on oil in the Amazon region. This boom was to have very important and lasting effects on the modern Ecuadorian economy. Oil revenues once again made the Ecuadorian government rich. This time, however, the money did not come from agriculture which allowed the government to push through a series of agrarian reforms designed to stop populist revolts against the landed elites of the highlands and the coast. They could do this because they did not fear losing revenues as their new source was independent of agriculture (Striffler

2002:122). Many in the Ecuadorian government saw these measures as necessary as they feared a “communist revolution” similar to what had happened in Cuba (Lyons 2006:61).

### ***Agrarian Reform***

Agrarian reform was an attempt to achieve political stability while modernizing agriculture and increasing production.

Ideally, capitalist farmers would work high-quality land while peasants brought marginal properties into cultivation. A state-organized class of agricultural laborers would be turned into landowning peasants, production would increase, and the growing urban middle class would receive a steady supply of cheap food (Striffler 2002:119).

This meant breaking up the *haciendas* in the highlands and selling off the irrigated lowland valleys to the capitalist farmers as pasture for dairy production, while pushing the indigenous farmers up onto the hillsides. This was partially achieved because most of the indigenous peoples of the highlands were wary of the government redistributing land to them and decided to wait to see if the offer was genuine, by which time all of the best lands were already gone (Striffler 2002).

This often meant that indigenous families had to pick up and move off of the good land they had worked (but not owned) for many years and move up into the hills to work more marginal lands that they could now own. Lower agricultural production due to the marginality of the lands they received caused many indigenous peoples to seek cash incomes through circular migration or artisanal work (Benitez 1987:158). Some of the more genuine efforts at land reform from the government helped set up peasant-owned and peasant-run cooperatives out of lands that were once owned by the *haciendas*. This was the case in Cañar as the two *haciendas* that controlled most of the land in the

communities of Quilloac and San Rafael became cooperatives that made them two of the most prosperous communities of TUWAYTA.

Agrarian reform created an atmosphere in which indigenous subsistence-based agriculture came to be seen as being against the country's economic interests because food produced for subsistence was outside of the national economy and therefore produced no revenues for the national government. Policy biases against subsistence agriculture have been very prevalent in the Ecuadorian government and have caused many indigenous peoples to move away from subsistence agriculture toward cash cropping as a means to earn income to buy their foods, thereby increasing the importance of the cash economy in areas that were traditionally filled with subsistence farmers (Lawson 1988). Currently some of these ideas are being rethought as it has been proven time and again that indigenous subsistence-based agricultural practices are not as harmful to the ecosystems they inhabit (the higher elevations and hillsides) as are their alternatives.

### ***Oil Revenues and Debt***

In addition to aiding agrarian reform, the oil boom had one other profound effect on the Ecuadorian economy, something called 'Dutch disease.' 'Dutch disease,' so named as Holland was the first country to experience this phenomenon, occurred during the 1970s when the oil prices skyrocketed. Many countries during this period found themselves with huge incomes from oil sales and sought to increase their exploitation of oil resources through further investment. As many countries (Mexico and Ecuador are examples of those following the Dutch lead) borrowed against future oil revenues, when

the prices fell in the early 1980s, many countries saw their ability to pay back these loans also fall. What they ended up with is a great deal of international debt and no way of paying it back.<sup>21</sup>

With mounting international debt and a loss of revenues from oil, Ecuador began to experience a balance of payment deficit. As part of World Bank policy, when a country is defaulting on loans, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) steps in to attempt to restore fiscal responsibility and ensure the governments' ability to repay loans. This often results in "the subordination of government social policy to macroeconomic policy" (Escobar 1995:150). In the case of Ecuador, Victoria Lawson points out that the macroeconomic policies often included subsidizing urban industrial growth by creating price ceilings for agricultural products, making food cheap and available for the urban working class (1988). This limited the ability of farmers to sell their products at market price and thus undercut their means of making a living. In addition to this, these reforms made credit available to people investing in agriculture at an interest rate lower than the inflation rate of the currency. Access to this credit was not evenly distributed however as 77% of agricultural producers were on small farms at this time, but they received only 28% of the production credit (Lawson, 1988: 438). Most of the credit went to medium and large scale producers who were located mostly on the coast (60% of loans went to the coast while 39% went to the highlands – Lawson, 1988: 438).

This period of unequal access to credit created bitterness amongst the Cañari. During my interviews I asked about knowledge of the government's agricultural policies.

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<sup>21</sup> For more on Dutch disease, see Collier and Lowry 1994; and Bautista and Valdés 1993.

To these questions, the most common response was “They do not help at all”.<sup>22</sup> When asked to clarify, my informants talked about how credit from the *Banco Nacional de Fomento* (the national development bank) has been relatively unavailable to indigenous peoples. Through a system that put limits on the prices smallholder farmers could get from their products and denied them access to loans to invest in agriculture to gain a share of the export market, the IMF had inadvertently (let’s hope) created policy that favored one racial group over another.

This was not lost on the indigenous groups of the highlands, as the indigenous political movement *Pachacutik* was born during this era.<sup>23</sup> The indigenous movement and its effects on the Cañari will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

### ***Political Activism and Paros***

For the past five centuries, the indigenous peoples of Cañar (as well as those of most of the Ecuadorian Andes) have continually had their economic lives controlled through institutions such as the *mitamacuna*, the *encomienda*, the *concertaje* and even through their tenuous control over their *huasipunguero* plots. Outside control has gone so far that some indigenous groups lost the collective memories of a time when they were in control of their own lives. Through the introduction of schools in the past 40 years, these indigenous groups found out that there was once a time when there were no whites or *mestizos*, and their ancestors had been dispossessed of their lands (Lyons 2006:130). Today, there is a movement against this outside control. The cultural revitalization of the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ellos no ayudan por nada.*

<sup>23</sup> *Pachacutik* is a name that originally comes from the Inca Pachacuti Inga Yapangui (who was called *Pachacuteq* for short), a name that my informants say means “world turner” or “world transformer” in Quechua. For more information on the indigenous political movement, see Carroll and Bebbington, 2000.

'indigenous nationalities of Ecuador' is one of the primary goals of the national level indigenous organization CONAIE.

The 1990s were an important decade for CONAIE. They had consolidated their leadership of the regional indigenous organizations and began their fight for rights of autonomy. During this decade, they began using a new tool in their protests, the *paro*. The verb *parar* in Spanish means to stop, and a *paro* is a stoppage. During the 1990s, CONAIE began organizing all of its constituent organizations in the country to participate in national level *paros* to block the roads throughout the country until their demands were met. The demands varied from vetoing agrarian legislation (1994) to stopping the change in currency in Ecuador from the *sucré* to the American dollar (2000).<sup>24</sup> The strategy used by CONAIE and its constituency (which includes the UPCCC and TUCAYTA) is to block the major traffic arteries of the country, especially the Pan-American Highway, restricting access to Quito and other major cities. They do this by strategically placing indigenous protesters at places in the highway that it is impossible to divert traffic around. At these points, they dig ditches across the highway and move large boulders into the road to stop all commerce. Stopping commerce stops delivery of agricultural products from the rural areas to the urban areas and therefore prevents fresh foods from making it to urban markets. It does not however affect the rural areas as drastically since these areas are full of subsistence farmers that can get by with what their communities produce.

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<sup>24</sup> For a detailed look at indigenous politics and the use of traffic blockages, see Sawyer 2004 and Gerlach 2003.

## CHAPTER 4

### FOOD, DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY

In the Saloum Saloum areas of Western Central Senegal, the Saloum Seereers live, farming millet and a few cash crops. To them, millet is more than just what they eat, it is who they are. When I first arrived in the village of Sellick in the Saloum Saloum for two years of Peace Corps service, I was asked repeatedly, *ñama saç?* (Do you eat millet?). At the time, I did not realize that the question was loaded with significance to them, that eating millet was not simply an act of daily consumption, but it meant speaking the language and living the life of a Saloum Seereer. After a month or so, I found out that they were testing me to see how much I knew about the culture I was living in, and that the correct answer was not yes or no, but it was *iiy, ñamam saç fo bassi, saç fo fodeex, saç fo xa ñoow, saç fo lib* (yes, I eat millet with peanut sauce, millet with leaf sauce, millet with beans, millet and fish). By taking the staple food of the people and naming some ways it was prepared, I was not only displaying my knowledge of the culture, but I was showing solidarity. The other outsiders in the village, a group of elementary school teachers, did not eat millet, they did not farm millet and they were not about to show solidarity with a group of farmers that they considered *chad'o* (a cross between hillbillies and animists).

While it may seem that this is somewhat tangential to food in the Ecuadorian Andes, the point I am trying to make here is that foodways differ from place to place and from group to group. These foodways have sets of ideas and beliefs that are attached to them, both on what to eat and on how to prepare it. This set of ideas and beliefs is not some high philosophical ideal, but is hidden within the everyday conversations people

have. For example, I once heard someone in Sellick say, “did you hear that Leiti Ndour eats *çeeb u jen* (rice and fish) for dinner every night? Who does he think he is?” In this simple statement, this woman was not only saying that he was eating rice, but that he was acting like a city-dwelling Wolof (Wolof are the dominant ethno-linguistic group in Senegal). Through talk about different food staples and different methods of preparation a ‘discourse’ on food is formed, made up of the “banal,” the “unimportant” aspects of daily life (Weismantel 1988:13). This discourse on food is created within a specific locality or region as “local or regional cuisine refers to... integration within local culture – a social group or community whose members cook known dishes regularly and seasonally; and consumers from the same region who know the cuisine and feel competent to discuss it” (Mintz 2006:6). This discourse is not static, but changes both temporally and spatially as it comes into contact with other discourses on food. Nor is it monolithic as there is no single definition of what it means to be Seereer.

In this chapter I will discuss how discourse is formed and what makes up the two major discourses in the Ecuadorian Andes. I plan to examine the anthropological literature on food to show the importance of the symbolism of different food staples and how this symbolism is derived from a group’s economic activities. I will discuss the importance of food to interpersonal relationships and the formation of social networks. By showing the interconnectedness of family, community and the local economy I will underline the importance of each to formation of a discourse that, in turn, describes in detail the values and beliefs of the respective social group.

## **Discourse, Dialogue and Hegemony**

### *The Study of Discourse*

In the past, many anthropologists took a structuralist approach to studying cultures, that is, they sought to uncover the underlying structures or rules that governed practice within a culture. Coward and Ellis believed that Structuralist thought had some problems as its system of signs “removed any emphasis on productivity, stressing instead a pre-given meaning” (1977:3-4). They called for a “replacement of the notion of structure with that of ‘the process of structuration’” thus freeing the system of signs from the stasis of structuralism (Coward and Ellis 1977:4).

Post-structuralist thought moved away from structure to the analysis of discourse (Foucault 1969:27) since “[t]he structure of a language is only a tool, in itself empty of content, but making possible the expression of meaning. It is discourse that reveals the movement of history” (Weismantel 1988:13). While discourse enabled more flexibility than structure, studying discourse as a singular entity did not capture the ways in which multiple discourses intersect with each other in society. This way of regarding discourse was termed the dialogic by Mikhail Bakhtin (1968; 1981). Pierre Bourdieu also takes up the idea of competing discourses (1979).

### *Competing Discourses*

The study of discourse has led academics to move beyond studying discourse as a singular entity to studying multiple competing discourses within the same society (Weismantel 1988:13). Such is the interaction in Sellick between a rural Seereer discourse and an urban Wolof one. In the Ecuadorian Andes, the world is also

characterized by two major discourses that are often at odds with each other. These two discourses come from the two main cultural groups of the country, the indigenous peoples and the *mestizos* (the mixture of indigenous and Spanish colonial blood and culture). As shown in chapter two, these two cultures have come to be separated both culturally and geographically (as indigenous has come to be relatively synonymous with rural and *mestizo* with urban).

In most Latin American societies, socio-economic class is an issue of paramount importance to the majority of the population. The concept of class has become somewhat of a dividing line between indigenous peoples and *mestizos*, especially when it comes to food. Even poor, lower class *mestizos* act in certain ways and eat certain types of food to show that they are not at the bottom of the social hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> The division of class along cultural lines was established during the colonial period, and has had a profound effect on food in the Andes as many foods were considered “‘Indian,’ and hence unfit for consumption by non-Indians” (Weismantel 1988:9).<sup>26</sup> Today, while the cultural/class based lines are drawn, the clash between the two cultures is over the power of definition. In Weismantel’s time (mid to late 1980s), it was clear that the *mestizo* discourse was gaining ground even within the indigenous communities in and around Zumbahua. Understanding how the *mestizo* discourse on food was having such an impact on

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<sup>25</sup> Many similarities can be found in American history. Take for example the attitude of poor whites toward freed slaves after the civil war, the reception of the Irish during the potato famine, and even the current attitudes of the white working class toward Hispanics.

<sup>26</sup> I say cultural rather than racial as racially *mestizos* and *indigenas* are very close as there has been a great deal of mixing of Spanish and Indigenous blood lines. Among indigenous communities it was caused during the *hacienda* years with its ‘institutionalized miscegenation’, among *mestizos*, it was even more common as any indigenous person could move to the city and within a generation, would become culturally *mestizo* through adopting *mestizo* dress, food, language etc. (Weismantel 1988:153).

indigenous communities throughout the Ecuadorian Andes necessitates a discussion of hegemony.

### ***Hegemony***

The cultural ascendancy of *mestizo* ideals over indigenous ideals is an example of hegemony. Hegemony is a very powerful term that has been talked about a great deal among left-leaning scholars since the 1960s. The idea originates from the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who generally talked about hegemony in terms of politics. I use it here to talk about a sort of cultural hegemony, where the values, beliefs, and symbols of a dominant group filter down into the discourses of the dominated. While Gramsci's work on hegemony has had many, often ambiguous interpretations, I would like to use the interpretation of his work given by James Scott (1985).

[Marxist analysis] typically rests on the assumption that elites dominate not only the physical means of production but the symbolic means of production as well... By creating and disseminating a universe of discourse and the concepts that go with it, by defining the standards of what is true, beautiful, moral, fair, and legitimate, they build a symbolic climate that prevents subordinate classes from thinking their way free. In fact, for Gramsci, the proletariat is more enslaved at the level of ideas than at the level of behavior (Scott 1985:38-39).

Weismantel however, points out that Gramsci's work also permits a reading that emphasizes,

...[N]ot the ultimate total control which hegemonic ideologies seek to exert, but rather the constant process of ideological struggle that characterizes the relationship between classes... Hegemony exists in the constant struggle on the part of the dominant ideology to overwhelm and incorporate the ideologies of the subordinate classes, and to make its own universe the only conceivable frame of reference. To lift it, as Gramsci says, onto a seemingly universal plane (Weismantel 1988:36-37).

While Scott's interpretation is useful to show how symbolic domination can affect a group of people, Weismantel puts it into the terms of discourse, and the struggle between discourses over the power of defining the frame of reference. Weismantel's work took place at a period in Ecuadorian history during which the indigenous movement was gaining power and many organizations were attempting to come together on a national level to start fighting for the rights of indigenous communities throughout the *sierra* (as the majority of Ecuador's nearly 3.5 million *indígenas* live in the *sierra*), and throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> The indigenous movement and the organizations that are part of it have become the champions of the indigenous peoples' discourses on food. Part of the work these groups have been doing has been to counter the hegemony of Western capitalist ideologies and the industrial food system that goes with it. Weismantel cites Bourdieu's concept of the emergence of a 'universe of discourse' which causes what had been undiscussed practice to become "defended orthodoxy or confrontational heterodoxy" (Weismantel 1988:17; Bourdieu 1979). This seems particularly suitable for the current situation in Ecuador as many indigenous peoples are now trying to put their own cultural practices into a position of power and some are even going as far as revalorizing lost practices in an attempt to become more like their ancestors.

What are created by the hegemonic discourse of Western capitalism and the industrial food system on one hand, and by the counter-hegemonic discourse championed by the indigenous movement (that promotes the subsistence economy and the indigenous

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<sup>27</sup> For more information on the indigenous movement in Ecuador see Sawyer 2004, Gerlach 2003, and Carroll and Bebbington 2000. The numbers used here were obtained from the CIA World Factbook at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ec.html> as 25% of a population of 13.75 million are said to be indigenous. This estimate is rather conservative as ECUARUNARI claims that as much as 40-50% of the population is indigenous (Humberto Cholango President of ECUARUNARI, personal communication).

food system) on the other, are at once a dichotomy and a continuum. They are a dichotomy in that they show two sides that are considered diametrically opposed to one another. At the same time they are also a continuum because the indigenous peoples themselves do not wholly embrace one side or the other, but instead embrace aspects of each depending on the issue and the situation. The important thing to note in the contemporary literature is the ground that is being gained by the indigenous groups, putting the indigenous discourse on food onto an equal or even a higher level than the *mestizo* discourse on food within many communities in the Ecuadorian Andes.

Having laid the groundwork on discourse to show the public arena in which food is discussed and how these discussions are important symbolic and ideological battles over the power of definition, I now move on to discussions of what makes up these discourses.

## **Food and Theory**

A great deal has been written about food in anthropology. Mary Weismantel said that “the process by which the laws of cuisine shape an act of cooking, and in turn are restructured by the form of each successive meal is of intrinsic interest to the anthropologist because it represents the relations between the social collective and the individual” (1988:23). As food nourishes the body of the individual, commensality nourishes the body of the social collective. Commensality provides an arena in which discussions can take place about what to eat, how to prepare it and together as a group, define cultural identity.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Weismantel and Camacho both talk about two aspects of food preparation that change from culture to culture: diet and cuisine. Diet is simply the “list of what foods are eaten and in what proportions as well as their nutritional value (Weismantel 1988:87). “Cuisine on the other hand, refers to the cultural rules, representations, beliefs and practices that govern cooking and eating in different societies and influence people’s behaviors and identities (Fischler 1995 quoted in Camacho 2006:156). With diet, inter-group variation is important to note as some ingredients are more expensive or more prestigious than others, thus differentiating the haves and the have-nots within a single social group. With cuisine, inter-group variation is less important. For example a soup made with just potatoes and one made with potato, cabbage, cauliflower and chicken garnished with cilantro are both merely different versions of the same culturally correct dish.<sup>28</sup> While the ingredients seem somewhat different, they both use the same staple, potatoes, and they both entail much of the same preparation, ie boiling them in water.

It is the difference between cultural groups (intra-group differences) that are more important with cuisine. In Cañar the two main cultural groups are the *mestizos* and the indigenous peoples. While the two types of cuisine often use the same food staples (potatoes are quite common among both groups), the methods in which they prepare these foods are generally different. The story Weismantel uses to denote the differences between indigenous and *mestizo* cuisine starts in Zumbahua (the indigenous community where Weismantel did her research which lies approximately 10 hours north of Cañar) with a neighbor couple paying a visit to a woman and her children who

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<sup>28</sup> Weismantel’s use of the example of barley gruel instead of potatoes as a staple is not as common in Cañar.

are on the patio enjoying the sun. The woman feels uncomfortable at first as this sort of intimacy between neighbors who are not related is rare. Good humored conversation begins, and the woman mentions that she is cooking wild mustard. The man replies “wild mustard, those are good. Fried in a little oil, with white rice, that’s the way to eat wild mustard” (see Weismantel 1988:144 for the full version of the story). What he did was to take a food item that is not commonly eaten by *mestizos* (as wild mustard is a weed gathered from the fields) and talked about preparing it by frying it in oil, a very expensive method of preparation that is characteristic of *mestizo* cuisine. The woman was trying to show solidarity with her neighbors by making reference to a type of food that is generally only used by indigenous peoples, but was rebuked by the man’s appeal to an outsider cuisine, one that is often considered more prestigious. The woman most likely went and complained to her kinswoman after that, much the same way as the Seereer villagers complained about Leiti Ndour’s preference for rice and fish. As *mestizos* and indigenous peoples have different methods of preparation, it brings the focus beyond who is rich or poor in one cultural group into the struggle for dominance between cultural groups. To better understand how these two different sets of diet and cuisine are viewed in Cañari society, I move on to a discussion of where food staples and methods of preparation derive their meaning.

### **Food as a Sign, Food as a Symbol, Food as a Product**

Weismantel looks at food as three things simultaneously, as a sign, as a symbol, and as a product. When talking about food as a sign, she is talking about the underlying linguistic structures that link the material object and the abstract concept. While her

discussion of semiotics and food is somewhat opaque, her main message is that as a system of signs, each constituent element exists in a fixed relation to others, and that they derive part of their meaning from their position relative to each other (Weismantel 1988:14). This simply means that through a system of signs that is based in the language of a group, the leap can be made from simple material objects to symbolism, using the Senegalese example above, from millet as simply food to millet as a way of life. Millet, as a way of life, is then put into a position relative to other foods, such as rice.

Millet as a way of life as opposed to rice as a way of life can now take on symbolism. In Sellick, millet represents hard work in the fields and seasonality while rice symbolizes an urban environment and possibly wage labor. The relationship between millet and rice here is the relationship between the rural farmer and the urban wage laborer. From the point of view of most men in Sellick wage labor is a cutthroat business for people whose crops failed or do not have land to farm. The words used by men going to town “*xaam war xaalis*” (I am going to ‘need’ money<sup>29</sup>) have a very shady undertone as the activities engaged in are often considered morally reprehensible. Thus rice has two meanings for the villagers in Sellick on the one hand it signifies a good steady income (as was the case for Leiti Ndour who was the president of the ‘rural communities’), but on the other hand, it also signifies desperation. To most people in Sellick, a good steady diet of millet is considered a blessing because they know that good steady incomes are few and far between<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> This statement basically means that I am going to go do whatever I have to, to get enough money to feed my family. Whether this meant begging from a well off family member, actual wage labor (people often referred to this as hard to find, backbreaking labor for little pay) selling drugs, or even petty theft, it was all justified if it meant putting food on the table.

<sup>30</sup> All of this information was gleaned from conversations over a two year period living in the village of Sellick between March 2003 and May 2005.

Weismantel points out that “when foods become symbols, their meanings are not arbitrarily defined but derive from roles they play in economic life” (Weismantel 1988:7). When someone from Cañar looks at a potato, they see the work it took to plow their field, the planting, the spraying of pesticides, the application of fertilizers, the months of time in the ground, and finally the labor involved in harvesting. “A symbol works because it is a thing, a tangible representation of the intangible social and cultural forces that organize material life” (Weismantel 1988:8). The symbolism of each ingredient or each way of preparing an ingredient is part of a people’s understanding of the workings of the cultural rules that govern cuisine. This would explain why to the Cañari, food symbolism is such a charged topic as generally speaking, their economic lives are centered on agriculture. The symbolism of a food, created by the food’s role in economic life, in turn creates a cultural identity. If asked what they are, people in Sellick would say that they are millet farmers, just as the indigenous peoples in Cañar would say that they are potato farmers.

In post-industrial societies, one does not need to farm to ensure one’s own subsistence, as currency is used to represent work done, and can be traded for work done by others (food) thus ensuring the survival of the ‘community’. One of the differences between the Western societies and that of the indigenous peoples of highland Ecuador is the importance placed on agriculture. In a subsistence farming community, the economic survival of a family group is ensured primarily by raising one’s own crops and livestock, thus the community has something in common as they have collectively “classif[ied] what is edible and desirable, [and] rank[ed] what is most valuable nutritionally and socially” within their own environment (Camacho 2006:156 quoting Messer 1989). In

Western Society, the commonality is provided by a supermarket experience and food advertising. The majority of food travels over 1500 miles before reaching the consumers, making it anything but local.

### ***Food Production, Food Consumption and Identity***

Moving beyond food as a sign and as a symbol, we come to it as a product. Being the object of production, food manifests itself in the form that we find it in the grocery store. This is not the only form that a product can take, as consumption of the food item can happen in various stages of its maturation. Take for example the plantain. When it is green, it is fried in small circles, mashed into cakes and fried again, with salt being added to become a savory treat. When it is yellow and riper, it is fried in long strips and is a sweet treat. This is but one example of the various stages during which many crops can be consumed. Urban society tends to know of only one or two of these stages as they are the easiest to transport and are therefore the ones found in a supermarket. Farmers on the other hand often know of many other stages during which the food item can be eaten as they have access to the fresh crop during its whole development. Subsistence farmers often sell off their surplus to generate cash to take care of non-subsistence expenses such as schooling for their children, clothing, and transportation when needed etc. Food as a product takes on multiple meanings to the farmer providing for their food needs in various stages, with many different culinary possibilities. Just as it once was throughout the world, subsistence farmers still have a seasonal culinary calendar that is based on the maturation of certain crops. This in turn creates a temporal perspective that is based in the agricultural calendar.

Production however is only half of the picture of economic life, as production without consumption has no purpose. The connection between the two is put eloquently by Karl Marx

Production is consumption, consumption is production... they appear as mutually connected... yet remaining outside of each other. Production creates the material as outward object of consumption; consumption creates the want as the inward object, the purpose of production (Marx 1859:93 quoted in Weismantel 1988:24).

Identity and sense of self are therefore based not only on what the group does (production) as discussed earlier, it is also based on what they eat and use (consumption). Consumption not only provides for the material and physiological need for sustenance and psychological comfort but also the social and symbolic dimensions of a people's food habits (Camacho 2006:156). The collective memory, the knowledge and experiences of a people are stored in specific everyday food crops "whose tastes, aromas and textures are part of peoples' shared sensory landscapes and local histories" (Camacho 2006:158).

While agriculture shapes the productive lives of the Cañari, cooking provides the link between the natural and the social as it "occupies a central place in families' economic life, transforming the results of its productive activities into a consumable form" (Weismantel 1988:27 quoting Niñez 1984:9). The process by which crops become food is not however just about what one eats, it is also about where and with whom. Where one eats is often a product of one's environment. Cañar's geographic location is at 3160 meters above sea level (roughly 10,400 ft), and it is relatively cold there most of the year with the average annual temperature of 11.8° Celsius (53.25° Fahrenheit).<sup>31</sup> This causes people to prefer to eat indoors, where it is warmer (most indigenous people in the

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<sup>31</sup> Information obtained at [www.imcanar.gov.ec](http://www.imcanar.gov.ec).

Ecuadorian Andes use wood as fuel for cooking and thus the kitchen almost always has a fire going providing a perfect place for eating and congregating). In addition to the temperature inside the kitchen, the social atmosphere also makes the kitchen an ideal place.<sup>32</sup>

As stated earlier, food becomes a symbol because of its function in economic life. Productivity is the basis of economic life which is the origin of a symbol. Symbolism can only exist when built upon a system of signs, uniting the sign, the symbol and the product as the three elements of the idea “food” that produces cultural identity. I would now like to move on to a discussion of cultural identity in the Ecuadorian Andes to show the roots of the indigenous peoples struggle to redefine themselves in a more positive way.

### **Diet and Cuisine in the Andean Context - White versus Indian**

People’s everyday discussions are being influenced at once by a hegemonic and by a counter-hegemonic discourse. The differences between ‘White’ and ‘Indian’ in the realms of both diet and cuisine have traditionally been indistinguishable from class as ‘White’ is rich and ‘Indian’ is poor in most cases (Weismantel 1988:88). While the fact that ethnic identity is often linked with class still holds true to some extent, this is something the counter-hegemonic discourse, championed by the indigenous movement, wants to change in Ecuador. For this reason I believe that a close look into this dichotomy is necessary to understand what makes up these food systems.

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<sup>32</sup> The kitchen is often considered the center of the household, and it was traditionally also the place where the parents slept. I will go into more detail on the importance of the kitchen in indigenous households later in this chapter.

Looking at what makes up the ‘indigenous diet’ is rather difficult as it is by definition ‘indigenous’ to a specific area. Therefore, diet can vary from region to region, even within the *sierra* due to such things as fertility of the soil, access to irrigation, and elevation.

While there is quite a bit of variability in indigenous diets, cuisines tend to be very similar. To indigenous peoples from Cotacachi for example food is “synonymous with filling and strength-giving products represented by slow cooking and nourishing meals” (Camacho 2006:167) which bears a striking resemblance to both the cuisine talked about by Weismantel and that talked about by my own informants in Cañar (Weismantel 1988). Camacho contrasts this slow cooked, nourishing meals with snacks which she characterizes as “generally associated with fast food, children’s food, *mestizo* food or junk food” (Camacho 2006:167). She points to well being as associated with “balance in different levels (natural, social and spiritual) and is not limited to the individual but also to the collectivity” (Ecuarunari, 1999 quoted in Camacho 2006:167). As such, food is then something that is meant to nourish not only the individual, but the collective as well. Slow cooking often means larger quantities are prepared to feed the whole family, while snacks are often bought and so they are generally packaged individually. Slow cooked meals are also associated with the local agricultural economy while snacks are associated with an outsider food system that removes money from the local economy. In this sense, the cuisine of the indigenous groups of the Ecuadorian Andes is one that supports the local agricultural economy, brings families and communities together and takes a long time to prepare. Indigenous peoples in Cañar,

Cotacachi, and Zumbahua contrasted this to the ‘*mestizo*’ foods that support the national economy, focus on the individual and is quick and easy to prepare.

### ***The Ambiguity of White Rice in the Indigenous Diet***

When looking at the *mestizo* diet from the indigenous point of view, Weismantel and Camacho both point to white rice as a focal point. Camacho points to it as an ambiguous food as it has characteristics of both a staple food and of a snack in that it is at once the staple of a meal (that is supposed to be slow cooked and filling), but at the same time, it does not take long to cook and it is not considered a filling food by the indigenous peoples of Cotocachi (Camacho 2006:167).

Weismantel’s ‘market of desire’ is based in an observation that the indigenous peoples of Zumbahua look at white rice as less substantial than the food they eat, but even so, “it is still the most desirable, and this quality is connected with two facts about it: white people eat it, and it is bought at the market” (Weismantel 1988:149). This was the case as to the women of Zumbahua in the 1980s, the action of buying food had a semi-mystical quality, “the pile of grain in the storeroom transparently represents an accumulation of human labor, the clearly remembered days of hoeing, scything, threshing of the previous year. But the piles of plastic bags filled with rice, noodles and sugar at the market carry no such message. The moment of exchange in which they fall into one’s hands is so effortless, if only one has the money to buy” (Weismantel 1988:149-150).<sup>33</sup>

This view of bought food carries over to views of whites in Zumbahua. They are seen as

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<sup>33</sup> During this time in Zumbahua, the women generally did not participate in wage labor. This was done by the men who went to the cities seasonally. For this reason, it is not surprising that these women did not associate money with back-breaking work as many of the men may have.

“scarcely human, eating only white rice day in and day out, a food that is glamorous but insubstantial. *Runa* flesh is made up of barley and potatoes, the fruits of their labor, but wealthy white bodies seem to be literally made of money” (Weismantel 1988:152).<sup>34</sup>

During the time Weismantel did her research, the subsistence-agriculture economy was still thriving. She wrote that money was not a universal means of exchange, but that it was used for non-necessities which formed the basis of social success (Weismantel 1988:150). Camacho’s more contemporary research points out the households’ economy lacks self-sufficiency as they are “increasingly market dependent and rely upon wage labor of family members” (2006:159). She points to household and individual productive processes, diets and relationships to food being modified due to “the impact of national development policies (dollarization, economic adjustment, elimination of agricultural subsidies and liberalization of land markets), and globalized relationships of production and consumption (trade liberalization and food imports – Camacho 2006:159). In the space of less than twenty years, the market and the food staples bought there had become a very important part of the indigenous economy and diet. As food and commensality are important players in the formation of familial and extra-familial social networks, the changing views towards food due to the influences of the local markets is also having an important effect on communities and social relations.

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<sup>34</sup> *Runa* is a Quichua word meaning “us, or people”. In Ecuador it often has a meaning similar to the word ‘nigger’ in American society even though the term has a very different history. It is at once a word used by racists to demean indigenous peoples, and also a rallying point for indigenous peoples, embracing the term in a counter racist act of identification with their roots.

## **Compadrazgo and Forming Social Networks**

In Zumbahua, the kitchen defines the household; the family is defined as those who eat together. As the symbol of the conjugal union, the kitchen is the necessary element to create a home (Weismantel 1988:169). “All of the children that a couple raise in their household are referred to by them as their sons and daughters. Food, not blood, is the tie that binds” (Weismantel 1988:171) which makes commensality the basis for defining a family group.<sup>35</sup>

Since cooking ensures the material reproduction of the family group, the creation of a new kitchen is considered to be the creation of a new household and a new reproductive unit. The creation of a new household in Zumbahua of the 1980s involved a great deal of labor that came from one’s social network. As money was not used as the most important means of exchange, looking at the process of forming ones own social network will therefore show how new family groups are formed (Weismantel 1988). To look at this I will first introduce an animal that is vital to the formation of social networks, the *cuy*.

The *cuy* (guinea pig) is an animal that was originally domesticated in the Andes and has a great deal of meaning for indigenous peoples throughout the Andes. In Zumbahua the *cuy* is of paramount importance in forming relationships between families. I found the situation to be quite similar in Cañar as one of my informants explained to me that people generally do not buy and sell *cuy* like other animals, but that they are raised to give away as gifts.<sup>36</sup> Weismantel writes that the expression “to kill a *cuy*” for someone is “an open declaration that you would like to deepen and formalize the relationship

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<sup>35</sup> The raising of children that are not the biological sons or daughters of a couple is not uncommon.

<sup>36</sup> As my research was primarily on food staples, I did not gather too much information on *cuy*.

between your household and theirs..." (1988:131). The specific type of relationship that the *cuy* symbolizes is that of *comadrazgo* (Weismantel 1988:132).

*Comadrazgo* is a system of relationships between godparents and the mother and father of a child. When one encounters the parents of their godchild, or the godparents of their child, one refers to them as *comadre* or *comadre* (these roughly translate as co-mother and co-father). This relationship does not, however, only refer to the baptism of one's children, but to many other ceremonies in which the sponsorship of new *compadres* is sought (first-communion, cross raisings and weddings are but a few examples).<sup>37</sup> The importance of *comadrazgo* and the sponsorship of certain ceremonies amongst indigenous peoples of the *sierra* can not be stressed enough as it is the main form of extra-familial social networking, and families often put off the baptism of their children until they have found suitable godparents (Lyons 2006).<sup>38</sup> Weismantel cites that *cuy* are used primarily for this purpose, and that nearly every family in Zumbahua raises *cuy* for use in these types of relationships (Weismantel 1988:132).

In Zumbahua, the opening of this type of reciprocal relationship is quite different from reciprocal relationships in the United States. In the United States, reciprocal relations often have a debt. If my friend Kyle buys me a beer, under normal conditions, I am obligated to buy him a beer to close the transaction. If I do not do this, he may let it go once, but if I continually do this, he would most likely go home and complain to his wife that I am cheap, that I do not hold up my end of the social relationship and that he is

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<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion on *comadrazgo* see Lyons 2006:82-87.

<sup>38</sup> The family I lived with in Cañar had a 5 year old daughter that was not yet baptized because her parents had been trying to find a good way to ask long time friends to be her godparents to formalize their relationship. The couple I lived with were however about to become *compadres* with the other couple through a somewhat less important ceremony, a house raising.

not going to go have a beer with me again.<sup>39</sup> Repayment of a debt is considered closing accounts between the two parties in both cultures. But while in American culture, one would seek to keep oneself out of debt, in the Ecuadorian Andes, by keeping the accounts open, one keeps a relationship in which one can call upon the other for favors (Weismantel 1988:131). In order to construct a new kitchen, one must have enough of these relationships established to be able to call upon a sufficient number of people to help you build a new kitchen. In addition to this, a new kitchen does not always have enough labor power and equipment to be fully independent, and food exchanges between households can be a daily routine for the next 10 years or so.<sup>40</sup> At the time Weismantel wrote her book (mid to late 1980s), this system of building a kitchen using help from your social network was falling to the wayside as people were starting to rely more heavily on wage laborers to build new kitchens.

## Conclusion

This chapter has given a brief discussion on the use of discourse as a unit of analysis. It has explored the connections between the symbolism of foods, the economy, the family and the community. By looking at the *mestizo* food system as a hegemonic force, I have shown how this food system has become a major player in indigenous households throughout the Ecuadorian Andes. In resistance to this, the indigenous political movement – *Pachacutik* – has been attempting to revalorize the indigenous food system. The following chapter will talk about international development and show how

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion on these reciprocal relationships among American men and how they differ from those of American women, see Spradley and Mann (1975).

<sup>40</sup> Weismantel uses the example of a *kutana rumi* or grinding stone which is essential for grinding barley into *machica* which forms a very important part of the diet in Zumbahua. For a more complete discussion of the meaning a process of creating a new kitchen in Zumbahua, see Weismantel 1988:169-176

social movements such as *Pachacutik*, born out of protests against racist policies have become an important player on the national political scene.

## CHAPTER 5

### POST-WWII DEVELOPMENT THEORY

There are many intellectual theories that explain the unequal structure of the world economy (modernization theory, dependency theory, world systems theory, etc.). Poststructural development theory is a recent train of thought that is useful for thinking about food in the Ecuadorian Andes. Among other things, post-structuralism suggests that one area we should be studying is the rise of social movements in response to development (Escobar 1995:215-217). These movements are an important way that economically and socially marginalized peoples (which in Ecuador generally mean Indigenous peoples and those of African decent) form and assert their identity in the face of changes to the local, national and global economies. In Ecuador today, the people involved in social movements are becoming important actors on the national scene as they fight for the power of self-definition discussed in chapter four. These movements seek to recapture the ability to define, *for themselves*, the meaning of such things as progress, development and knowledge. While these movements are attempting to free themselves from the power structures created by the West, the process is difficult as the discourse that has given birth to many of these movements comes from the same Western culture. This chapter examines the literature on development theories to provide a historical context for current beliefs among the Cañari about how local, national, and global economic systems have changed their agricultural practices and impacted the formation of their identities. I will conclude this chapter with a look at the literature on peasant federations, an important type of community organization that is seeking to redefine development based on the ideas and goals of the communities they represent.

Peasant federations are, in effect, trying to invert the traditional development hierarchy that puts the interests of global capital and the national government over the goals of the local community.

The language of the indigenous social movements has become an important player in the debates on food in Cañar. Poststructuralist thought has become a third discourse in Cañar. This discourse, which I have named the ‘neo-indigenous’ discourse, has the goal of regaining much of the knowledge of indigenous peoples that has been lost through centuries of exploitative political and economic systems. Its role can be ambiguous at times, however, as it both fights to protect indigenous cultures while at the same time inadvertently brings with it Western culture values. While it is not a discourse on food per se, its effects on the indigenous discourses on food are unmistakable as many communities are questioning the terms of their integration into a market economy that has been steadily replacing the cultivation of their own native foods with the cultivation of improved varieties of ‘Western’ foods that are considered ‘more efficient.’

### **Development and Modernization Theory**

After WWII, U.S. President Harry Truman made a famous speech in which he stated that the whole world deserved a “fair democratic deal” (Peet and Hartwick 1999:145). From this the Truman doctrine was formed as a way to spread development to the less privileged throughout the world. This “fair democratic deal” has done much to change the world as it brought about the current ideas about development and underdevelopment, and it separated the world into the First World ‘haves’ and the Third World ‘have-nots.’

Due to the success of the Marshall Plan in reconstructing Western style economies in Germany and Japan, it was believed that Western style economies could be ‘built’ in other parts of the world. This attempt to build modern economies based on the modern Western industrial model was termed modernization theory. Modernization Theory seeks to look at two fundamental questions; “what is impeding advance (toward this industrial model) and what are the conditions and mechanisms of social transition from traditional to modern? (Peet and Hartwick 1999:76).” Modernization theory assumes that economic development is linear, that it goes from one point to the next on a specific path that was ‘discovered’ by the West. Modernization theory calls for heavy investments in infrastructure and government institutions that were seen as the foundation for building a modern industrial economy. Agriculture was seen as a means to subsidize industrial development by providing cheap food for the industrial working population which allows lower pay and therefore higher profits that can then be reinvested. Modernization theory and the interventions that it made possible did not, however, take the culture or identity of the people that were to be developed in mind.

### **Marxist and Neo-Marxist Critiques of Modernization Theory**

Beginning in the 1960s, these ideas were struck down by left leaning intellectuals who called Modernization Theory ‘Eurocentric’ as it used environmentally deterministic ideas that Europeans were “endowed with superior natural characteristics, especially greater intelligence...” due to the more favorable environmental conditions in Europe for economic development (Peet and Hartwick 1999:85). This gave rise to Marxist critiques of Modernization Theory such as Dependency Theory and World Systems Theory.

Dependency Theory attacked modernization theorists by stating that “European development was predicated on the active *underdevelopment* of the non-European world (Peet and Hartwick 1999:107, italics in the original). World Systems Theory portrays the world as split up into core and periphery zones. The West<sup>41</sup> is the core, while everything else is the periphery. It states that the core dominates relations with the periphery, preventing different peripheral areas from having relations with each other. Both of these theories point out that in order to become developed along Western lines, one must exploit those lower in the hierarchy. As the third world does not have a group of countries lower in the hierarchy to exploit in order to develop, these theories presented solutions that would instead seek to deny the First World of a Third World to exploit. This is a sort of Marxian ‘working class nations of the world unite.’”

### **Poststructuralist Thought**

Poststructuralist thought looks at development as a historically produced discourse that seeks to examine “why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped in the early-post WWII period, how ‘to develop’ became a fundamental problem for them, and how, finally, they embarked up the tasks of un-underdeveloping themselves (Escobar 1995:7). Many poststructuralists looked at the World Bank’s style of integrated rural development as seeking “a radical cultural reconversion of rural life” (Escobar 1995:145). This “reconversion” often meant a structural situation in which rural communities were called upon to provide cheap food and cheap labor for a “modern” sector that was based on a combination of multinational, state and local capital

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<sup>41</sup> By ‘West’ I am referring to Western Europe and the United States.

(Escobar 1995:128). Thus development practitioners sought to transform rural communities into a part of the urban working class, or into small scale cash croppers to support the urban working class. Both of these options were to bring profits to the modern capitalist sector, not to the rural agrarian sector.

Poststructuralism calls into question many key assumptions of modernization theorists, causing two major shifts in attitudes towards the development industry. The first of which is the assumption that “progress, improvement [and] development [are] ...good at the level of intuition” (Peet and Hartwick 1999:142). The second change was in the methodology used in development studies as it questioned the very necessity of development (Peet and Hartwick 1999:143). Poststructuralists say that the definition of progress, improvement and development not only change from culture to culture, but that it is part of Western culture to believe that more is, by definition, better.

Development endeavors as experienced by indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Andes had begun with the land reform measures of 1964 and 1973 which moved indigenous farmers from the fertile valley floors into the marginal hillsides (Striffler 2002). They continued with price ceilings on agricultural produce, and with unequal access to low interest loans (Lawson 1988). It is not hard to believe that under these circumstances and with a growing body of literature calling for respect for indigenous culture as a means to stop environmental degradation, that traditional culture would be looked to as a bastion of respect and dignity in the face of development efforts that sought the “peasants’ elimination as a cultural, social and producing group” (Escobar 1995:106).

In the conclusion to his book, Arturo Escobar writes that,

Since the middle and late 1980s a relatively coherent body of work has emerged which highlights the role of grassroots movements, local knowledge, and popular power in transforming development. The authors representing this trend state that they are interested not in development of alternatives but alternatives to development (Escobar 1995:215).

Alternatives to development put communities and cultural groups into a place where they control the power to define their problems and goals. Looking at social movements may contribute to the emergence of novel solutions to the problems of social and economic relations between the indigenous communities and the modern capitalist sector (Escobar 1995:216). These solutions may be marked by the reemergence of “concepts and practices discarded long ago” (Escobar 1995:217). This retraditionalization marks the organizing strategy of these social movements as they revolve around two principles “the defense of cultural difference, not as a static but as a transformed and transformative force; and the valorization of economic needs and opportunities in terms that are not strictly those of profit and the market (Escobar 1995:226).

### **Peasant Federations and Negotiating Development**

One novel solution to the problems of development that has arisen is the peasant federation or *Organizacion de Segundo Grado* (Second tier organizations or OSG). Carroll and Bebbington’s work on peasant federations challenged many practitioners of development as it has extended the scope of interventions beyond the community and into the realms of power, while simultaneously focusing on horizontal multi-communal and sub-communal systems of collective action (2000:438). While the community is still

a very important part of development endeavors, the shift from having political/cultural organizations side by side with economic/livelihood organizations that have overlapping memberships to having one organization that combine aspects of both has put these new organizations at the center of community development. In their discussion of these multi-purpose organizations (those combining both economic/livelihood functions with cultural/political organization) Carroll and Bebbington (2000) made a passing mention of TUACYTA as an example of a peasant federation, often called an *OSG* (*Organizaciones de Segundo Grado* or Second Level Organizations) that has seen success combining these functions.<sup>42</sup>

TUACYTA has indeed become very involved with cultural activities including the planning and funding of many festivals (the biggest of which are *Pawkar Raymi* commonly referred to as *Carnaval* and *Inti Raymi* which translates to ‘the feast of the Sun’). This is very significant as some scholars attribute the success of the Ecuadorian protest movement to the fact that the political demands of the indigenous movement are being put into the language of culture (Carroll and Bebbington, 2000:442). By combining the organization’s political and economic activities with the cultural revitalization movement, TUACYTA has made itself more resistant to co-optation and divide and conquer tactics used by the national government. TUACYTA and other *OSGs* have also made a cultural use of social capital through sponsoring such activities as soccer tournaments and ritualized festivals, which provide powerful tools for solving inter-community disputes by building bonds between the communities (Carroll and Bebbington, 2000:443).

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<sup>42</sup> For more on peasant federations and *OSGs*, see Carroll and Bebbington (2000).

## CHAPTER 6

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The social movements in Ecuador that have come out of poststructural theories on development seek to defend indigenous communities and fight for autonomy based on cultural differences with the *mestizo* majority in the country. One of the most important elements of the cultural identity of the indigenous peoples and one of the rallying points in these social movements in the Ecuadorian highlands is food. What foods they eat, how they are obtained and how they are prepared are important questions to ask in order to gain a better understanding of the values of the indigenous communities in general and the Cañari in particular. This chapter attempts to look specifically at what foods the Cañari eat and what factors influence the decisions made from household to household on what to eat and where to get it.

#### **Factors that Determine Relative Prestige of Food Staples in Cañar**

In order to discern the factors that are important in determining the prestige<sup>43</sup> of different food staples amongst my informants, I quantified some of the data obtained during both my semi-structured interviews and my informal interviews. In total I conducted 12 interviews with 15 individuals. These interviews included nurses, teachers, farmers, mothers and those whose nuclear families were directly affected by emigration. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Table 6.1 provides a demographic breakdown of the interviewees and Appendices A and B provide the interview guide in English and Spanish respectively.

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<sup>43</sup> I use the word prestige here to denote the hierarchical nature of my informants' responses.

Table 6.1 - Demographics of Interviewees

Women under 45	5
Women 45 and over	3
Women who have lived abroad	3
Women who have not lived abroad	5
Total number of women	8
Men under 45	3
Men 45 and over	4
Men who have lived abroad	2
Men who have not lived abroad	5
Total number of men	7

During my interactions and interviews with my informants, I paid attention to the factors that they identified as important in determining what is eaten in the household. Upon analyzing the data collected during the interviews, the four factors that were commonly cited by my informants include access to cash incomes, political activity, primary language spoken in the household, and emigration experience. First I looked at each household's access to cash incomes. These included remittances from family members working in urban centers and in other countries as well as incomes from regular wage labor.<sup>44</sup> For this I assigned one of two possible values, high or low. High means steady access to cash incomes independent of agriculture (as for all of my informants, agriculture is not seen as a viable source of steady cash incomes). Low means that access to cash incomes is sporadic or is primarily based on selling off agricultural surpluses.

Next I looked at the level of political activity of the family. To glean this information, I looked at whether my informants used the language of the indigenous movement *Pachacutik*<sup>45</sup>, whether they regularly attended the monthly TUCAYTA

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<sup>44</sup> This includes teachers, NGO workers and one construction worker who has been steadily employed for more than a year, but does not include temporary wage laborers.

<sup>45</sup> This would include what was written in the fliers passed around by the UPCCC, ECUARUNARI and CONAIE.

meetings, how outspoken they were about the political situation of the country and how knowledgeable they were about international treaties such as the *TLC (Tratado de Libre Comercio* or the Free Trade Agreement). For this I assigned two possible values, high or low. High means that the family is active politically in at least one of the four areas mentioned above. Low means that the informant showed little knowledge or interest in local, national or international politics.

The third category that I looked at was the primary language spoken in each home. To determine this, I used both information volunteered by informants in addition to observations about what language they would use when talking to others in the room, especially their own children if present. There were two primary languages in Cañar, Quichua and Spanish.

The fourth category I examined was whether or not the interviewee had spent some time working abroad. While my interview guide does not have any direct questions as to whether or not interviewees have or have not lived abroad, emigration was a very important topic to every interviewee, and most volunteered information about themselves or their family members living abroad, or it was brought up by the *promotor* from TUCAYTA. While most interviewees had at least one member of their family living abroad, I broke the responses up into groups based on whether the informant had personally lived abroad or not. The possible responses were “yes I have lived abroad” or “no I have not lived abroad”.

For each of the food staples, I used a value of one, two or three to determine its relative prestige. A one signifies that that the interviewee did not enjoy eating this food staple. They generally would not actively choose this food staple over others, but as was

the case with noodles, often would because they were relatively quick and easy to prepare and were relatively cheap. A two signifies that the interviewee believed that it was a good food and that they ate it relatively often when available. A three signifies that the interviewee believed that the food was a very important food staple and it was consumed daily when possible. Note that the word ‘prestige’ was not used in its Spanish form, but I used the context and emotions invoked by interviewees when talking about specific foods to determine the relative prestige of each staple. Table 6.2 shows the results of this analysis. Figures 6.1-6.4 show how each factor individually influenced the mean relative prestige of each food staple. As potatoes and noodles showed remarkably low variability across all households I removed them from the graphs below. I used the family as a unit of analysis as the family group was defined as those who ate together and was the one group that was nearly universally present and important to my informants. My interviews were with the male and female heads of households, although sometimes their children were present. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, which was a second language for myself and many of my interviewees.

Table 6.2 - Factors Influencing the Relative Prestige of Primary Food Staples

Household #	Level of Access to Cash Income	Level of Political Activity	Primary Language Spoken	Lived Abroad	Potato	Rice	<i>Melloco</i>	<i>Oca</i> and <i>Mashwa</i>	Barley ( <i>Machica</i> )	Quinoa	Noodles
1	Low	Low	Quichua	No	3	1	2	2	2	NA	1
2	High	Low	Spanish	Yes	3	3	1	1	1	2	2
3	High	High	Quichua	No	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
4	Low	Low	Quichua	No	3	2	2	2	2	NA	1
5	High	High	Quichua	No	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
6	High	High	Spanish	Yes	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
7	High	High	Spanish	No	3	1	2	2	3	2	1
8	High	High	Spanish	No	3	2	2	2	1	2	1
9	Low	Low	Spanish	No	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
10	High	Low	Spanish	Yes	3	3	1	NA	NA	NA	1
11	High	High	Quichua	No	3	1	2	2	2	2	1
12	NA	NA	Unknown	Yes	3	3	2	2	2	1	1

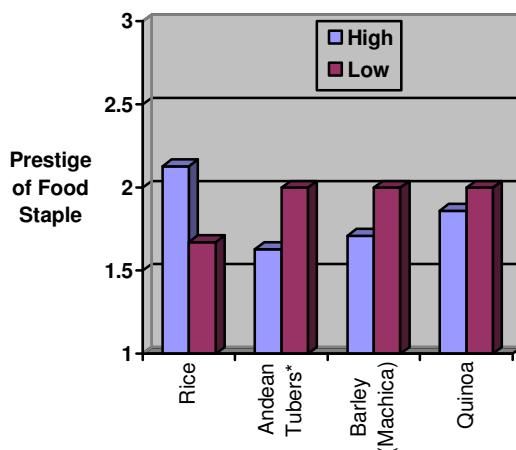


Figure 6.1 - Perceived Prestige of Food Staple by Cash Income

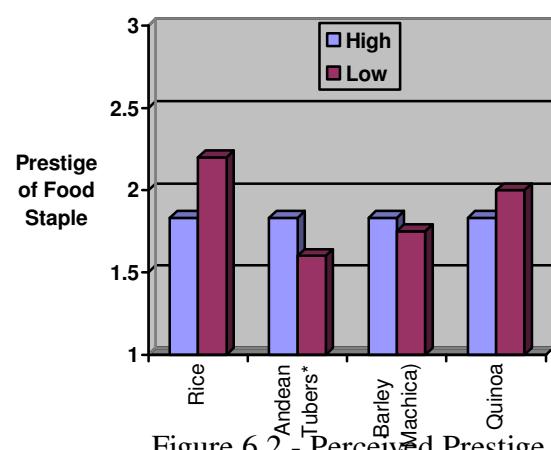


Figure 6.2 - Perceived Prestige of Food Staple by Political Activity

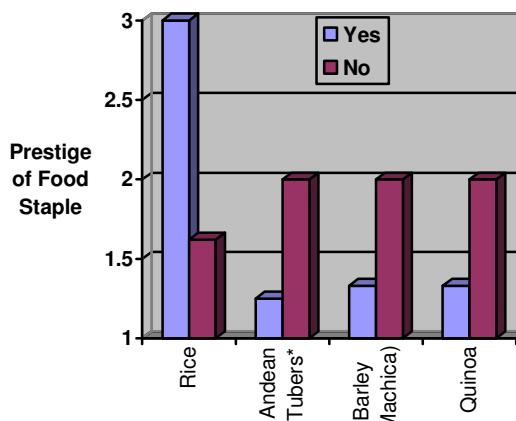


Figure 6.3 - Perceived Prestige of Food Staple by Whether Household's Primary Decision Maker has Lived Abroad

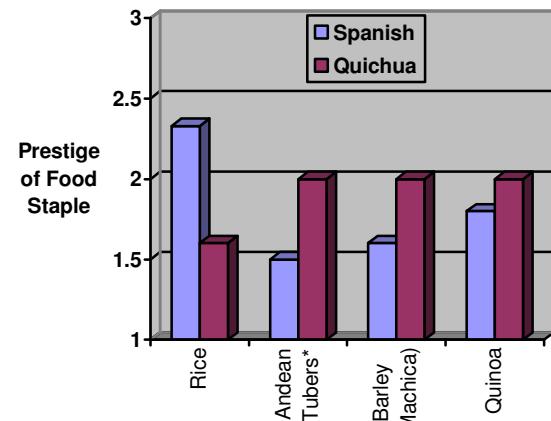


Figure 6.4 - Perceived Prestige of Food Staple by Primary Language Spoken in the Household

\* *Melloco, oca* and *mashwa*. Does not include potatoes.

## Discussion

### Rice

Looking at how various factors influenced the prestige of rice, the results were not very surprising given that much has been written about rice's role in indigenous diets (see for example Weismantel 1988 and Camacho 2006). While rice did prove to have a

moderately higher prestige amongst those with greater access to cash incomes (mean 2.13 vs. 1.67), what proved more important is the source of this increased access. It is known that the heads of families #2, #6 and #10 have personally lived abroad AND have access to remittances from family overseas. If I were to put these three families in a different category than those whose access to cash incomes came from within the community, the graph would change significantly as seen in figure 6.5.

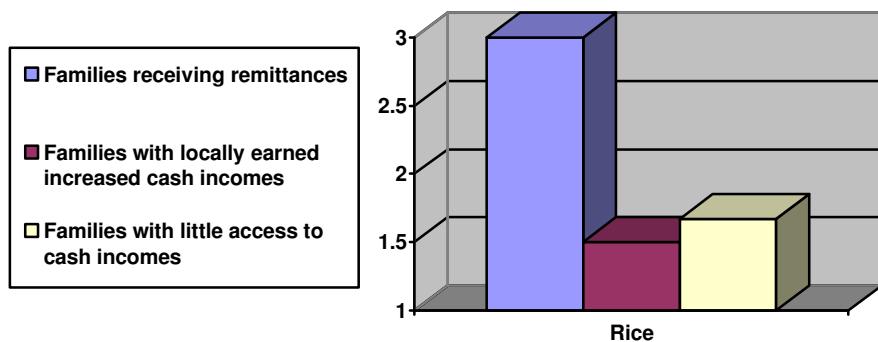


Figure 6.5 - Prestige of Rice by  
Source of Cash Incomes

Figure 6.5 shows the strong divide between families with money coming in from overseas and families that earn their money locally. One of the *promotores* of TUCAYTA explained this phenomenon by saying that “families that receive remittances even buy potatoes.” While this statement sounds rather innocuous, it is a way of calling families that receive remittances lazy, as they no longer feel the need to grow potatoes. This may be the case for some families receiving remittances, but it must be said that families that receive remittances are generally missing one or both parents and therefore are lacking in labor-power. This can make it rather difficult to cultivate crops and provides another possible explanation of reliance on the market for potatoes. Since rice is an important food staple that is only available in the market since it is not grown in the

region, those with increased access to cash incomes and less labor power available would logically buy some of their food in the market, increasing the relative prestige of foods accessible in the markets for these households.

Rice also had a much higher prestige level among Spanish speaking than among Quichua speaking households. White rice is considered a *mestizo* food in the Andes, and is therefore much more commonly consumed in *mestizo* families (Weismantel 1988; Camacho 2006). As Weismantel's book noted, white rice had a higher prestige value than most indigenous foods in Zumbahua during the 1980s and I think it would be safe to generalize that over much of the Ecuadorian Andes during this period (1988). Families that sought the higher level of social distinction that was commonly associated with *mestizos* would often seek urban jobs, and would generally eat more rice and speak Spanish in their households. While it seems this trend has been tapering off due to the increasing prestige of indigenous foods brought about by the cultural revitalization movement throughout the Ecuadorian Andes, it still continues in Cañar today.

One thing that has changed a great deal since Weismantel wrote her book is that indigenous communities are becoming more politically active and many are adopting the discourse of the indigenous political movement *Pachacutik*. Since the indigenous political movement is also a cultural revitalization movement, it can be expected that families that are involved in politics in Cañar, consume more ‘indigenous foods’ and less ‘*mestizo* foods’. Rice did show a slightly higher mean prestige (2.2 vs 1.83) in families that were not politically active than in families that were. As this study is not statistically significant however, this small difference is too minor to make any real judgment. I attribute the lack of difference here to the fact that practice is not in line with the

discourse and families are often unable to meet their basic subsistence needs solely on agriculture. Many families that were quite politically active would talk about rice using the term “*comida chatarra*” (junk food), but then would turn around and report that they still ate rice relatively often. Since many of these families are dependent on wage labor, rice would still be an important staple.

### ***Andean Tubers and Machica***

While machica and the Andean tuber crops *melloco*, *mashwa* and *oca* did not show much of a difference in prestige due to access to cash incomes, these results are once again suspect due to the two very different sources of cash incomes. Separating out families #2, #6 and #10 from the group with increased access to cash incomes once again shows a very different picture as seen in figure 6.6. It is noteworthy that the families that receive remittances did not even mark on the graph since all of those families avoided these food staples while the prestige was actually higher amongst families that have local sources of increased cash incomes than amongst those with little access to cash incomes. I would attribute this phenomenon to the discourse surrounding the indigenous political movement that would affect local professionals and farmers much more so than it would affect those not-dependent on the local economy for their livelihood.

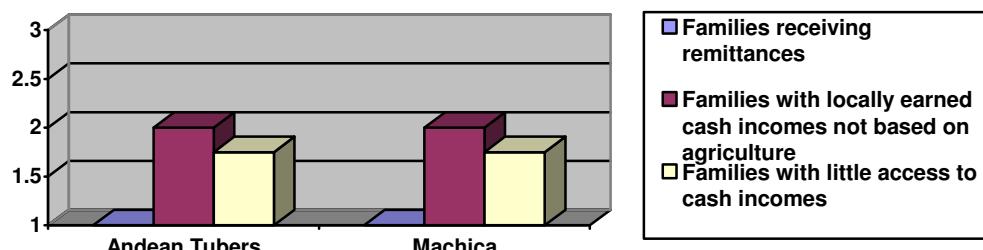


Figure 6.6 - Prestige of Andean  
Tubers and Machica by Source of Cash Income

In addition to this, access issues may be affecting the relative prestige of these food staples. Of these four staples, only *melloco* are actually available in the local market on a regular basis. One informant told me that *oca* and *mashwa* are only available in the market for a short period of time every year if at all. Access to *machica* is somewhat different as multiple informants reported that the barley to make *machica* is available in the market, but one must grind it oneself (one couple said that they regularly buy barley and pay someone who owns a machine to mill it for them).

While Andean tubers and *machica* showed a slightly higher prestige amongst those politically active than those not politically active, such a small difference is insignificant in a sample this small. There was a slightly larger difference in prestige levels when the comparison was based on the household's primary language. What can be said about this is that while the indigenous political movement is attempting to revalorize indigenous foods like the Andean tubers and *machica*, the practice is following slowly behind the discourse. Those who have continued to speak Quichua in their households continue to use these indigenous foods (the mean relative prestige of the Andean tubers and *machica* is 2 in Quichua speaking households with high levels of political activity) while those who merely talk about revitalizing the Quichua language and indigenous food staples while continuing to speak Spanish in their households are lagging behind (the mean relative prestige of the Andean tubers and *machica* is 1.67 in Spanish speaking households with high levels of political activity).

### *Quinoa*

Not much can be said about quinoa since there were huge holes in even this small sample. The only significant difference in the prestige of quinoa was between people that have lived abroad and those who have not lived abroad. I interpret the relatively low prestige of quinoa amongst people who have lived abroad as a product of old ideas about quinoa as a food staple that takes a great deal of time and effort to process. This is no longer the case as processed quinoa is widely available in markets in and around Cañar. Another possibility is that the local discourse on food has been affected by many NGOs talking about the high nutritional value of this food staple which has affected those in touch with the local discourse, but not those who have been away from their community for an extended period of time. It is interesting to note that most of my interviewees reported buying quinoa in the markets rather than growing it (as they had done when they were younger). While quinoa enjoys some of the prestige of the indigenous foods due to the influences of the cultural revitalization movements, it is no longer a part of the subsistence agricultural economy in Cañar.

### **Possible Biases**

As stated earlier, these numbers came from qualitative data collected by the researcher about people's perceptions of different food staples. Quantifying people's statements is a judgment call by the researcher as to which category people fit into. While the interviewees were not specifically asked to give each food staple a 1, 2 or 3, these numbers were given based on what the interviewee said about the food staple in question, and what sort of emotions the food staples seemed to invoke in the

interviewees. It is possible that because I introduced myself to TUCAYTA as a graduate student from the United States doing research on the prestige of different food staples, I may have been steered towards those who said what the staff of TUCAYTA wanted me to hear to further their political agenda. However, the interviews I obtained without the help of TUCAYTA did not show significantly different information than the ones obtained with the help of TUCAYTA.

In addition to this, some of the most compelling parts of this analysis are some of the most suspect. There seemed to be a widely held perception in Cañar that although families with someone sending money from overseas are better off financially, the children of these families are at a severe disadvantage socially as they have to rely on one parent or often on their grandparents or aunts and uncles for moral support. This has been blamed for the children's poor performance in school, misbehavior at home, and even poor nutrition. As one must always be wary of people 'telling you what you want to hear', it brings up the question of whether or not families that have someone who has or does live overseas may tell you about problems more-so than families that have not had these experiences. It may also be possible that since public opinion of emigrating is rather low in Cañar, families that have no one who has gone abroad may sugarcoat some of their own experiences to show how good the life of a complete family (one with both parents present in the household) is. This could have affected how my interviewees talked to me about different food staples. Since my time in Cañar was quite short (just under three months) I was not able to thoroughly check the reliability of my data. This means that while some of my data seems compelling, more research needs to be done with a larger sample and the data needs to be checked for reliability through in depth

ethnographic interviews with a significant portion of the population that represents all of the possible combinations of variables (access to cash incomes, political activity, experiences with emigration and primary household language). It would also be of great use to get a more nuanced understanding of some of these variables (such as source of cash income). While this chapter focused on the quantitative analysis of the relative prestige of different food staples, the following chapter will attempt to show some of the detail that a quantitative analysis loses.

## CHAPTER 7

### PRESENTATION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS

Marx famously remarked that “people make their own history, but not always under conditions of their own choosing” (quoted in Lyons, 2006:35). Lyons points out that Marx’s aphorism can be interpreted to refer to “history” in another sense, as people’s subjective knowledge of how the past led to the present. He remarked that people form their own understandings of history and their place in history, but not always under conditions they control (Lyons, 2006: 35). This chapter looks at the Cañaris’ understanding of their situation and how they relate it to their understanding of history and current events, putting a personal voice behind some of the information that has been presented. In doing this I will look at themes that came up in my interviews to convey the meaning given to certain acts of speech on the part of my Cañari informants.

This chapter will be divided into five sections. The first will be a discussion of diet and cuisine in Cañar. The second will present a taxonomy on which food staples are ‘insider’ and ‘outsider.’<sup>46</sup> The third section will deal with some of the perceived causes of changes to Cañari diet and cuisine. Many of my informants blamed demographic pressures and emigration for changes to livelihoods that have directly impacted household diets. This section will look at what my informants’ cite as reasons for the fragmentation of landholdings as well as emigration and how the two are interrelated. Section four will discuss the effects of these changes to the Cañari diet and cuisine as experienced by my Cañari informants. These effects include: how emigration is affecting the children of Cañar, concerns about nutritional problems caused by the influx of

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<sup>46</sup> ‘Insider’ meaning part of the Cañari food system, ‘outsider’ meaning from a different food system.

'outsider' foods and foodways into indigenous culture and the specter of the industrial food system looming on the edge of the weekly markets.

Section five will present three of my informants showing a range of responses to the changes in diets and cuisine in Cañar. The first pair of informants (a couple) is very active in local and national politics and has a firm belief in revitalizing the indigenous food system as a means of ensuring the economic and psychological wellbeing of their community. The second informant is one who recently returned from the United States to be with her children that she had left behind. She has dreams of taking her children with her back to the United States to be with their father and have 'real opportunities' for education and health care. My third pair of informants is a couple that seems to be on the fence. He wants to build a house of traditional materials, cultivate a garden of native plants and raise alpacas to use their wool to make textiles to sell to tourists. His wife publicly shares his hopes and dreams, but privately longs for city life and the comforts it promises. The first couple shows the effects of the cultural revitalization movement and the influence of a counter-hegemonic discourse on food in Cañar. The second informant is an example of someone who has internalized the hegemonic discourse on food, making it her own. The third couple shows how the discussion of food plays out in a household influenced by both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses. In each I will present how their food choices reflect or do not reflect their ideas about politics, economics and their community and how their food choices reflect the political atmosphere on a local and national level.

## Diet and Cuisine in Cañar

Cañari ideas of what makes up a good diet come straight out of the subsistence economy. When I asked my informants where they got their food, the majority said that they grow their food and buy a bit in the market. When asked what crops they cultivated themselves, the responses included: potatoes, maize, peas, fava beans, wheat, barley (which is ground into *machica*), *melloco*, *mashwa*, *ocas*, *mote*, *quinoa*,<sup>47</sup> and some also included the animals they raised *cuy*, cows, rabbits, chickens and sheep. While specific crops cultivated by individuals varied both from house to house and from community to community, potatoes were present in all households and are considered the most important staple food amongst my Cañari informants (those I interviewed, and those I interacted with in less formal settings).

The role of the potato in the subsistence economy is very important as all but one interviewee said that they grow at least some of their potatoes (the exception was a woman who said that her family had no land to farm). One informant, Jose, a teacher at one of the bilingual schools even went as far as to say “when there are no potatoes it is like saying that there is nothing to eat in the house”. As the main staple of the Cañari diet, potatoes occupy a unique position in Cañari foodways. They are eaten nearly every day, and play an important role on many special occasions. However, potatoes are not the only staple in the Cañari diet.

Other staples include *melloco*, *machica*, maize, rice and noodles. These specific foods, as signs, are related to one another in a rather hierarchical fashion. Translating these foods into the language of a system of signs puts potatoes in the highest position

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<sup>47</sup> The one interviewee that included this did not state specifically that she grew quinoa, but that they have quinoa, thus it is unclear if any of my interviewees actually grows quinoa themselves.

and noodles in the lowest position, even though my informants considered them all to be part of the same group of foods that all perform the function of the staple food of a meal. These foods are considered the ‘validator’<sup>48</sup>, as without them, it is not a meal but a snack. While they all play the same role, their place in the hierarchy of most desirable to least desirable food staple come directly out of their symbolic values which in turn is a product of their function in the local economy. While traditionally the Cañari are subsistence agriculturalists, denying their integration into the market economy is somewhat naïve. One must not only look at each food staple’s origin, but the relations between the subsistence economy and the market economy as viewed from both the individual and community perspectives.

*Melloco*, maize and the barley used to make *machica* are locally grown, with the *melloco* being grown mostly at higher elevations and maize at the lower elevations. Most of the rice present in Cañar is grown in the coastal regions<sup>49</sup> and is brought to Cañar by truck to be sold in local markets. The noodles are generally either imported, or the wheat to make them is imported into large cities and processed there into noodles to be shipped to markets throughout the country. While the origins of food crops are not that difficult to trace, looking at each food’s function in economic life, and therefore its symbolic value is not as easy to determine.

Quinoa occupies a unique position in the Cañari diet as it was once a subsistence crop that is no longer grown locally.<sup>50</sup> Many of my informants reported that their

<sup>48</sup> Weismantel defines the validator as “an ingredient that is so central to the composition of a dish or a meal that its presence defines the meal or dish as such” (1988:125).

<sup>49</sup> Ecuador grows more rice than is consumed domestically; the country is a net exporter of rice (Recalde 2002; 2003).

<sup>50</sup> There is a cooperative that is part of TUCAYTA that grows quinoa for export to the United States and Europe however.

families grew quinoa on the edges of their fields when they were young.<sup>51</sup> It was not a food that many of them had fond memories of eating as many said it looked like worms in the soup. Since many types of quinoa require a great deal of processing (including the type that was grown in Cañar), production for consumption has fallen off as many families have become more affluent.<sup>52</sup> Today, many indigenous households still eat quinoa even though they no longer grow it. Processed quinoa is now available in many markets in Cañar and I was often served quinoa soup by many of my informants, none of whom claimed to still grow quinoa.

Cuisine is the intersection where food staples meet the cultural rules involved with food preparation, where economic production meets the dinner table. The rules that govern cuisine are part of what Geertz refers to as the ‘patterns of symbols and meanings’ or ‘webs of significance’ that surround culture (1973). As culture is not a collection of disparate, separate elements, looking at the interaction between different elements is necessary to form a clear picture of a culture at a given moment in time (Lyons 2006:8). These elements can include such things as economy, language, political structure and yes, cooking. One can look at these elements and see that they are all based on food, as economy is the production of food, language provides us a platform with which to describe food, political structure is the distribution of food, and cooking the preparation of food. Looking at food as simultaneously a sign, a symbol and a product, is a way to unite the various elements that influence foodways. They do this through use of language to create a system of signs which are necessary to understanding the relationships

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<sup>51</sup> Informants that were over the age of 35.

<sup>52</sup> See Hellin and Higman for a discussion on processing quinoa and its current position as an export crop for many indigenous communities (2003).

involved with symbolism. Symbolism is the ability of a tangible ‘thing’ to represent an intangible social or cultural force to a group of people (Weismantel 1988). This can be anything from *cuy* symbolizing interpersonal relationships, to rice being a metaphor for the market economy. The importance of a food and its symbolism can in this fashion show the values of a group of people. Food is also the object of production. The symbolism of a food is derived from its role in economic life. Thus looking at a group’s cuisine is looking at their values and their economy in their language.

The rules of cuisine in Cañar are somewhat similar to those described by Weismantel (1988). The Cañari primarily eat slow cooked soups, using mostly the native foods - Andean tubers (potatoes, *mellocos*, *ocas* and *mashwa*) as the staples of lunches and dinners, and *machica* for *coladas* at breakfast time.<sup>53</sup> The presence of meat and vegetables in the soups is considered a marker of affluence within Cañari culture.

There are however, many Cañari that embrace what Weismantel referred to as *mestizo* cuisine, eating mostly *secos* consisting of white rice with a protein, generally either beans or meat with some vegetables on the side. Meats and sometimes vegetables in *mestizo* cuisine are often fried in oil, a practice that Weismantel classified as a type of cuisine for people “both richer and whiter” than the Zumbahuans (1988:145). Today in Cañar, frying meat and potatoes in oil is not that uncommon, nor are many other practices associated with *mestizo* cuisine such as serving a *seco*, substituting cola for *chicha*, and serving meals with *ají*.

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<sup>53</sup> *Coladas* are literally blended drinks. In the mornings many Cañari make either *machica* based or oatmeal based thick, warm drink. In addition to this there is often a glass of *jugo* (juice) that could be made from a variety of different fruits. This was also a blended drink but was served at room temperature.

This calls into question, what really is Cañari cuisine? Is Cañari cuisine only that which is traditional? Or does it include elements that come from other cuisines, especially *mestizo* cuisine? Labeling only soups as ‘true Cañari cuisine’ would be to confine the Cañari to the role of the ‘timeless Indian’. Denying that *secos* are a part of what is considered Cañari cuisine is the same as denying the fact that many Cañari are involved in the market economy. Incorporating *secos* into the Cañari culinary repertoire does not however mean that one must forget the history behind its inclusion or forget what *secos* represent to many Cañari. Today, serving a *seco* is an act that is similar in many ways to driving an SUV in the United States. It is a visual display of class that is judged differently by different groups of people. Some see an SUV as an expensive automobile that indicates that the driver is well off financially. To others, an SUV is a selfish act of conspicuous consumption that is damaging to the community (in this case the global community).

The choice of what to eat on a daily basis, more so than what car you drive, is often influenced by your children. The mother of the family I lived with often expressed her concern that her daughters did not like to eat indigenous foods (by this she meant soups). Her concern was that her daughters were not getting the nutrition that they needed to be healthy. This is a good example of Cañari ideas that indigenous foods are healthier, that they are slower cooked and have filling ingredients that nourish the body.

Most of the people I interviewed believe that *mestizo* cuisine is unhealthy as it requires frying meats and plantains in oil to be served with white rice. They believe that boiling the meat and cooking a soup with potatoes is a better method of preparation, but that this method takes a good deal of time, which is not always available to the Cañari

women today.<sup>54</sup> For many Cañari women, slow cooking is a luxury that they can no longer afford. This is in part due to much of the male population working overseas, leaving the women behind with larger work loads, as well as the fact that many Cañari women are entering the workforce themselves.

### **Insider and Outsider Foods**

The way my informants classified these various food staples into insider and outsider food crops was based on whether the food crop was perceived to be grown locally or not. I say perceived because most of my informants claimed to grow half of their food and buy the other half in the market.<sup>55</sup> Of the foods they buy in the market, two food staples that are considered insider foods, maize and quinoa are generally not grown locally. For maize, this is due to the relatively high altitude of Cañar. For quinoa, the explanation is a bit more complicated as quinoa was traditionally grown in Cañar, but cultivation has fallen off in the past two decades as many of my informants said that the variety that grows well in Cañar is difficult to process, and other types are readily available in the markets of Cañar, processed and ready to cook.

My observations show that amongst Cañari professionals (NGO workers, teachers and the staff of TUCAYTA) whether a food is grown to be eaten or sold is considered the distinguishing feature that separates what are considered indigenous foods from what are considered *mestizo* foods. Crops grown primarily for subsistence, with only the excesses

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion on how women are being affected by migratory work patterns, see Weismantel (1988).

<sup>55</sup> Two of my informants said that they only buy small amounts of food in the markets as they have a large quantity of land that they cultivate. One said that she buys almost all of her food because she has no land to cultivate.

being sold in the market are considered indigenous foods while crops grown specifically to be sold in the market are considered *mestizo* foods.

The Cañari professionals are also the most outspoken advocates of *Pachacutik*, the indigenous political movement. Most of these professionals are leaders in their communities which makes them respected figures. I rarely heard the leaders speak in meetings about the importance of eating what are considered indigenous foods as they were more concerned with the functioning of irrigation systems and problems in the *paramos*.<sup>56</sup> Outside of meetings however, I heard a great deal about this, hanging around the TUCAYTA office and listening to political organizers for *Pachacutik* and the UPCCC. For the TUCAYTA staff and many community leaders, this is one of the main topics of conversation. Thus the goals of *Pachacutik* are becoming a large part of discussions in the public arenas of Cañar where discourse is formed. This has created an environment in which the vast majority of the Cañari that I interacted with use this same rubric to judge foods as insider or outsider. In table 7.1 I recreate this rubric using the data collecting during my semi-formal and informal interviews using the guidelines discussed in the previous paragraph (insider being grown primarily to be eaten and outsider being grown primarily to be sold in the market).

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<sup>56</sup> The *paramos* are the high hilltops that are generally not lived in or farmed. In the past decade or two however, they are becoming cultivated land and rangeland for animals. There is a great deal of concern about this as the long grasses that cover these hilltops act like sponges for the mist and rain water. The *paramos* is where the irrigation canals begin and they are concerned about the diminishing quantity of water available that is being caused by the erosion of topsoil from agriculture.

Table 7.1 - Categorization of Foods as Insider or Outsider

Insider	In-between	Outsider
Potato	Lard	Rice
Corn	Vegetables	Noodles
Peas	Chicken	Tuna
Fava Beans	Beef	Cola
Wheat	Pork	Cooking oil
Barley	Lamb	Sugar
<i>Mashwa</i>	Goat	Coffee
<i>Oca</i>	Bread	
<i>Melloco</i>		
<i>Chicha</i>		
Guinea Pig		
Mote		
Quínoa*		

\* Quinoa is perceived to be part of the subsistence economy in Cañar even though the majority of the quinoa consumed in Cañar is bought, pre-processed at grocery stores.

The difference between how the Cañari professionals and the Cañari farmers talk about what they consider their own foods is in the frequency that they use the words *nosotros, nuestro(s) nuestra(s)* which translate to ‘we’ and ‘our’ (marked for gender and number) and how they use these words.<sup>57</sup> Tables 7.2 and 7.3 show the frequency the words were used during my recorded interviews. The large difference between the use of the words *nosotros, nuestro(s)* and *nuestra(s)* between these two groups shows that the professionals of the community talk as if they are talking for their people in general. In a way, this sets the standard by which household practices are judged by the communities, making individuals feel the need to either conform and use the discourse of the leaders of the communities, or rebel.

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<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that the conjugation of verbs into the first person plural does not necessarily use the word ‘*nosotros*’ as in Spanish it is possible to conjugate verbs into the first person plural simply by adding the suffix ‘*amos*’ or ‘*emos*’.

Table 7.2 - Instances of the Usage of *nosotros*, *nuestro(s)* and *nuestra(s)* by family

Family #	Instances of we/our in the familial sense	Instances of we/our of an unclear nature	Instances of we/our in the larger sense (community level or greater)	Word Count	Ratio of words to instances of we/our
1	1	2	8	1546	141:1
2	5	2	8	2952	197:1
3	2	0	49	4136	81:1
4	3	0	3	2105	351:1
5	1	1	30	2845	89:1
6	6	0	8	4441	317:1
7	5	0	17**	2345	107:1

\*\* These informants also used the words *propios mismos* when talking specifically about food, which is a redundant (the two words are nearly synonymous) way of saying ‘ours’ or ‘our own’ on 12 occasions. This could be used to replace *nuestro(s)* or *nuestra(s)* which would increase this statistic to 29 making the ratio 69:1.

Table 7.3 - Instances of the usage of *nosotros*, *nuestro(s)* and *nuestra(s)* by occupational group

Group	Instances of we/our	Word Count	Ratio of words to instances of we/our
Professionals	105	9326	89:1
Non-professionals	46	11044	240:1

On a national level, these professionals are using the words of a counter-hegemonic discourse that comes from the indigenous movement *Pachacutik*. This discourse sets up the *mestizo* food system as a hegemonic force that many community members have naturalized to the point that they see *mestizo* foods and therefore *mestizo* culture as superior to indigenous foods and indigenous culture. On the community level however, they are becoming the new hegemonic force, creating their own discourse that is made to resemble the discourse of their ancestors with a modern, progressive voice.

Since the indigenous movement is using the language of culture as a basis for their political demands, food, as one of the most important aspects of cultural identity, becomes a major part of any discussion on social relations between indigenous peoples and *mestizos* (Carroll and Bebbington 2000). Controlling the power to define what are considered Cañari foodways is important to professionals in the communities that form

TUCAYTA. This is because of three important aspects of the history of the indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Andes that helped bring about the indigenous political movement. The first was the migratory patterns of the *hacienda* period outlined in chapter three, that spread the Quichua language throughout the highlands of Ecuador, linking the many different indigenous groups in the Ecuadorian Andes linguistically and culturally. The second was the advent of the postmodern critique, which gave indigenous communities the power to argue that their culture should not be judged based on the values of another culture. The third was the effects of Poststructural thought on development that gave the indigenous groups the ideological force to organize and fight against racist policies on the national level through social movements.

To the Cañari, the power to define what their foodways are is an important part of the power to define both who they are, and who they are not. Having previously discussed what my Cañari interviewees consider ‘insider’ foods, I will now move on to discuss what sort of changes to their foodways my interviewees see taking place, and what they believe to be the causes and effects of these changes to the Cañari diet and cuisine.

### **Perceived Causes of Changes to the Cañari Diet and Cuisine**

Chapter six outlined how such factors as source of cash incomes and experience with emigration affected the relative prestige of different food staples. Using the taxonomy from the previous section, this section seeks to put the results discussed in chapter six into the local context. By outlining the perceived causes of changes to the Cañari diet and cuisine I seek to show what my interviewees define to be problems facing

their unity as a cultural group (and therefore as a possible threat to the basis of their political demands).

Demographic pressures in rural areas have long been cited by neo-liberals as a justification for subsidizing urban industrial development as a means to provide an outlet for the surplus population (Benitez 1987). While many of my informants consider access to land an important issue, demographic pressures causing landholdings to shrink below the size needed for a family's subsistence is only half of the problem (Jokisch 2002). In the indigenous communities surrounding Cañar, it is believed that land is being eaten up, not only through normal fragmentation of land holdings through a system of equal inheritance but it is also being eaten up by houses (Jokisch 2002).<sup>58</sup> Many of my informants would say that what were once farm lands is now “*puro casas*” (all houses). Some informants also referred to the houses as “*cáscaras*” (shells) meaning that houses are being built with beautiful facades but are left empty, devoid of inhabitants as they are being built by people living overseas who never move back to live in them. Walking around the countryside in Cañar was a very interesting experience for me as, for every two houses you see, there is a third one under construction.

The construction industry is booming to such an extent that one of my informants, Juan, said that migration patterns have reversed themselves. “When I was younger, I went to the coast to work on a banana plantation to make some money to get myself established. Now, people from the coast and even from Peru come to Cañar to work as carpenters, masons, and electricians.” When I asked why this is, he looked at me directly

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<sup>58</sup> My research only provided anecdotal evidence that landholdings are becoming smaller and smaller.

in the eyes (something not very common in Cañar) and said “because everyone has gone to New York.”

One of my other informants, Carmen, made a connection between the boom in the housing market and overseas migration. The following is an excerpt from a transcription of my interview with her.

**Carmen** - Now... our parent's generation used to work in agriculture. Our generation, not very much. Not anymore. But my parents, yes, yes they worked here, but us... only sewing. Making skirts.

**Danny** - And you sell these skirts to make money?

**Carmen** – Yes, yes that's it. And from here... from here... but only a little, when one has a lot of land they work in agriculture. But we do not have much land. Not enough.

**Danny** – And that is why people are doing other types of work? Because the traditions of your parents are changing?

**Carmen** – Now, pretty much, almost everyone has gone overseas. Some... have stayed here... only a few have stayed here. A few have gone to places within this country. To the US, to Spain, to Italy, they left... to work.<sup>59</sup>

In her mind, there was a definite connection between demographic pressures, giving up agriculture and going overseas for work. There is an even stronger connection between the loss of the customs of her parents' generation and going overseas for work. After I had finished the semi-structured interview and I had turned off the recorder, she asked me if I had ever been to Spain. This led her to begin talking about her own experiences working overseas. After a couple minutes, I asked if I could turn the recorder back on. What followed was a very descriptive monologue about what someone

<sup>59</sup> **Carmen** – *Eso ya* (long pause) *padres y madres ya trabajaba en agricultura. Nosotros casi, no mucho ya. Ya no. Pero mis padres si, si, estaban trabajando aquí, pero nosotros ya... solo que coser. Hacer faldas.*<sup>59</sup>

**Danny** – *¿Y usted vende estas faldas para, ganar plata?*

**Carmen** – *Si, si eso. Y de allí* (long pause) *de allí* (short pause) *pero poco poco cuando tienen terreno bastante si, trabajan en agricultura. Pero nosotros no tenemos mucha tierra ya. Insuficiente.*

**Danny** – *¿Por eso es para que gente que trabaja en otras cosas ahora? ¿Porque se cambiaron los costumbres de los padres?*

**Carmen** – *Ya ahora casi, fueron a extranjeros casi. Algunos... Ya quedaron aquí... algunos no más están aquí. En este país de allí un poco. A EEUU, a España, Italia. Salieron ya. A trabajar*

who goes overseas for work experiences. The following quote is another excerpt from the interview with her in which she related one experience that showed the effects of emigrating on one's identity.

**Carmen** - First of all, we here in Ecuador wear skirts. Over there in other countries, you have to wear pants. I had never worn pants before. I arrived in Spain and my husband said to me, "over there, you never wore pants, you only wore skirts. Here, now, you have to work. You have to take off your skirt and you must wear pants". I cried, saying that I didn't want to wear pants. Yes, I cried. It was because I didn't want to wear pants. It was because here, we wear skirts.<sup>60</sup>

Today, Carmen makes skirts for a living and she tells people that ask her about going to Spain to work not to go. She says that overseas you lose yourself and begin doing things you never would do at home (she told me that in Spain, not only did she wear pants, but she used to drink considerably more). Makes skirts for a living as it seems to be a way to try to regain her identity as a Cañari woman.

While emigration is one of the perceived effects of demographic pressures, I was surprised to find out that it is also one of the perceived causes. This is because remittances from family living overseas for the most part have not been used to invest in agriculture. Instead they have caused "a large investment in housing and land [that] has converted much of the region into a peri-urban landscape of cultivated real estate" (Jokisch, 2002:523), significantly increasing in the price of land in the region of Cañar. In a conversation, María once told me that "my parents [generation] they could sell animals to get the money to buy land. Not anymore, only those who do not rely on the

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<sup>60</sup> **Carmen** - Primero, nosotros aquí en Ecuador ponemos faldas. Allá en otro país se toca poner pantalón. Yo no sabía poner pantalón. Llegué allá me digo mi esposo. Digo, ahora si, allá no sabias poner pantalón y sabias poner falda. Y ahora aquí tienes que trabajar. Tienes que sacar falda y tienes que poner pantalón. Yo me llore por no poner pantalón. Si lloro. Porque no me gustado poner pantalón. Porque aquí ponemos falda.

land can afford to buy it.”<sup>61</sup> What she meant by this was that the only people that could afford to buy land were those with non-agriculture based incomes, making subsistence farming require a large cash investment for those who did not inherit enough land.

An article by Brad Jokisch says that between 10-15% of all Ecuadorians have moved overseas in the past twenty-five years (2007). In Cañar, Nicolas Pichisaca, TUCAYTA’s agronomist and senior employee says that as much as 40% of the male population of the communities near Cañar currently lives overseas, with the majority of them in New York.<sup>62</sup> There have been two major waves of emigration since the early 1980s. The first wave was caused by the economic crisis that followed a drop in the prices of oil in the early 1980s. The second wave of emigration was caused by a currency crisis in which the sucre lost more than 2/3 of its value (Jokisch 2007).<sup>63</sup> While the first wave of emigration is responsible for many of the overseas connections that facilitated the second wave, the causes of the second wave are something that many Cañari talk about today.

In order to obtain the required amount of money to buy land for agricultural purposes, many families look to overseas emigration to Spain, the United States, and to Italy. One or both parents in many families have gone overseas to work for money to buy land and build a house. This has caused land prices in Cañar to rise dramatically, especially over the past ten years, as many migrant workers send money back specifically to buy land and build a house (Jokisch 2002, Jokisch 2007). As less land is available for

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<sup>61</sup> “mis papas, ellos vendaba animales para comprar tierra. Ya no. Solamente los que no usan la tierra pueden comprarlo.”

<sup>62</sup> Jokisch stated that the provinces of Azuay and Cañar have formed the ‘core’ of the immigrant-sending provinces since the 1970s which makes Mr. Pichisaca’s comment believable (Jokisch 2007).

<sup>63</sup> For more information on Ecuador’s financial crisis and the affects of dollarization see Jacome (2004); Beckerman and Solimano (2002).

cultivation, many people are moving out of agriculture as their primary work, looking to wage labor instead. Many people in Cañar do find part time or full time jobs locally, but the competition is rising as immigrants from Peru are arriving in droves to work in a construction industry that is booming due to the sheer volume of houses being built.

This is creating a vicious cycle in which agricultural land is becoming scarcer, causing people to emigrate. Once they earn some money overseas, they buy land back home, further raising the price of land. This is coupled with an influx of migrant workers in the local community, which is driving down wages, causing the local Cañari to once again look abroad for sources of income. While the dream has been to work abroad until one has paid off family debt and saved up enough money to buy land and build a house, this process is often requiring more than ten years abroad. After such a long period of time, many families manage to build their dream house in Cañar only to decide not to return. Instead they seek to bring their families overseas with them, leaving the shell of a house and high prices for land behind in Cañar.

### **Perceived Effects of Changes to Cañari Foodways**

Anna, a teacher at one of the local bilingual schools explained to me why emigration is important to the foodways of the Cañari. She says that the children of parents who live in the United States often do not have anyone who really looks out for them. While they may have family that is supposed to take care of them, she said that this is in no way an adequate substitution for the love of one's own mother. "A child in first grade, second, third grade, they have to prepare food for themselves. They have to come from the house by themselves. There are even children who come to school not

having eaten....”<sup>64</sup> Anna talked about studies in the United States that have shown that good nutrition is linked to longer attention spans and better study skills in students. Anna also believes this to be the case in Ecuador. She attributes good performance by children whose parents live with them to good nutrition. While it is the rare case that a child comes to school without having eaten, what is eaten is an important issue for Anna and many of my other informants. She talked about two patterns, *facilitismo* and *comida chatarra*, that she saw as directly caused by emigration, that are currently affecting the foodways of the Cañari.

While *facilitismo* would roughly translate as ‘convenience’, in Cañar, this word is often used as a way to talk about a loosening of traditional customs that surround cooking and eating. Many parents are turning to wage labor as subsistence farming is not always a viable option. In these families, as well as in the families of many migrant workers, time is becoming an issue in food preparation. In the family I lived with, the father had been steadily employed building a house for an American couple that lives half of every year in the Cañari community of Chaglaban. This steady wage labor has had two major effects on the family. On the one hand, it has provided a steady supply of cash. On the other hand, it has stretched out the responsibilities of his wife. While this is not a wholly new phenomenon (Weismantel 1988 talked about how circular migration is having the same effect on the women of Zumbahua), how it is being handled today is changing.

Having cash on hand is becoming more and more common in Cañar, even to the point where indigenous peoples from other regions made comments to me about how rich

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<sup>64</sup> *Un niño de primer grado de segundo, tercer grado, tiene que estar ellos mismo preparando la comida, ellos mismo viendo del hogar. Hay niños que al centro educativo vienen hasta sin comer...*

the Cañari were.<sup>65</sup> With this cash on hand and a tightening of peoples schedules, dietary habits are changing. When people are too tired to cook, or their schedules do not allow them to cook the traditional slow cooked soups, people eat more rice.

One interesting term that I learned in Cañar is ‘*comida chatarra*’ which translates as ‘junk food’. The interesting thing about *comida chatarra* is how this label is applied to different foods for different people. Almost everyone I talked to that knew what the term meant put things like candy, popsicles and suckers into this category. Jose Antonio and Marco, a pair of older farmers said that *comida chatarra* was a phase kids go through where they want sweets. People that worked for TUCAYTA, teachers in the bilingual schools and others that worked for NGOs did not necessarily agree. They also put rice, noodles, hot dogs and tuna into this category. A third group of people that had recently come back from overseas did not know what exactly was meant by this term. Many of them had never heard the term before and asked me what was meant by it. It was during an interview with my neighbor Rosa who had returned to Cañar from New York shortly before my arrival that the significance of this hit me. This term was a new addition to the Cañari discourse on food.

In 1988, Weismantel wrote that the *platos tipicos* (typical dishes) that are the general fare at many restaurants throughout the country, are considered provincial and backwards to young urbanites who call Quito or Guayaquil home. In 1988, fast food was the new thing in the urban centers that was displacing the old style restaurants. Today, I would argue that this has spread a great deal, to the point where even in Cañar, a town of 16,000 people, there are at least three new fast food style restaurants. Fast food is a

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<sup>65</sup> I spent time in some indigenous communities in Bolivar province as my wife was doing some research there.

major part of the industrial food system that promotes uniformity, mass production and convenience. The traditional indigenous food system is diametrically opposed to this as it promotes heterogeneous crops, diversity and slow cooking. While much of the fast food culture is being diffused to rural areas from the mainly *mestizo* urban centers, the championing of the indigenous food system is coming from NGOs and the indigenous movement. In today's United States, both the consumers of fast food as well as its critics come from any range of ethnic groups. The same debate in Ecuador is becoming a debate about the urban/rural divide, ethnicity, cultural values, and even temporal perspectives.

### **Presentation of Individual Cases**

How the debate over food systems affects individuals who make up the communities of TUCAYTA varies a great deal. Some see the cash economy and the *mestizo* diet as a way out of poverty, the door to the comfortable life. To others, it is a way to get the money to buy enough land to continue their subsistence farming lifestyle (and maybe even build a nice new house). While there are still others the cash economy and the *mestizo* diet is encroaching upon their communities, bringing with it racist policies and an economic system within which they can either provide cheap food or cheap labor to the rich. Far from being united, the individuals who form the communities that make up TUCAYTA are divided in their visions of the future. Some look back to their ancestors for examples on how to organize and work as a community. Others look to the Western examples of individualism and Smithian self-interest as a means to a comfortable life for the families of those who work hard to earn it. This section will

provide three of my interviews as three different points of view regarding food, economy and identity.

Jessica and Isidoro are from a community near *El Tambo*, a town not far from Cañar, but far enough that it is not part of TUCAYTA. They are the most outspoken advocates for *Pachacutik* (the indigenous political movement) that I interviewed. They were also the first people to really talk to me about it. The way they talked about *Pachacutik* was with hope, they both continually said “*estamos recuperando*”.<sup>66</sup> To them, this term was very important as it meant that they (the communities) were taking back what is theirs and becoming healthy again.<sup>67</sup>

Although they were outside of the communities that made up TUCAYTA, they had a great deal of respect for what TUCAYTA was doing. They were seeking to create a pair of NGO type organizations to help the people of their community economically to prevent the need to emigrate. These two organizations focused on an irrigation canal similar to the one TUCAYTA oversaw, and a micro credit union designed to help the local women start small income generating endeavors.<sup>68</sup> They also believed that through creating income generating possibilities organized and run by members of their own community, with external connections similar to those talked about by Carroll and Bebbington they could build the capacity for self-governance like TUCAYTA has done (Carroll and Bebbington 2000). To them, ideas about economic development and self-governance start in food and food rights.

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<sup>66</sup> We are recuperating.

<sup>67</sup> The word *comunidades* (communities) by itself is often used to talk about indigenous peoples.

<sup>68</sup> The credit union they seek to create is similar to *Mushuc Yuyay*, the micro-credit union affiliated with TUCAYTA.

Since agriculture was the basis of the subsistence economy of the Cañari, methods of growing food, food distribution systems and national policies on smallholder agriculture are of a great deal of importance to Jessica and Isidoro. While Isidoro focuses more on social justice aspects of the food distribution system and international treaties that have been undermining indigenous food rights, Jessica focuses more on nutrition and how it affects the indigenous communities she works in. For the past eight years, Jessica has worked for a clinic called *Mano Amigo*<sup>69</sup>, which was set up by a Norwegian missionary group. Jessica is quite knowledgeable about the health issues that are faced in the indigenous communities surrounding Cañar. She relates many maladies in indigenous communities, particularly those related to child birth, to chemicals used in growing and processing foods.

Working for an NGO has exposed Jessica and her husband to poststructuralist discourse which has given them some of the ideological power to become the movers and shakers in their community. They often talked about how their generation was weaker and suffered from cancer; a disease they say did not exist until recently.<sup>70</sup> Seeking an alternative to monocultures, cash crops, emigration and the malnutrition that is caused when farmers are forced into dependence on the market, Jessica and Isidoro are looking to organic gardening of local foods to ‘recuperate’ the lifestyle that their ancestors enjoyed.<sup>71</sup> They have an organic garden and say that they stay away from processed

<sup>69</sup> This clinic is now called *fundacion mano amigo* and has been self financed since 2003 when the Norwegians cut off funding. In 2003, it changed its name to its current appellation from its original name, *Clinica Missioneros*.

<sup>70</sup> While I don’t doubt that cancer is on the rise in indigenous communities, I am skeptical of their claim that it did not exist until recently. No doubt the proliferation of technologies that detect cancer have made it seem like it came out of nowhere.

<sup>71</sup> For an interesting discussion of the irony of farmers starving to death due to dependence on cash cropping, see Shiva (2003).

foods as much as possible. While they did not have very much land, they said that they cultivated all of the land that they did have, growing traditional Cañari foods such as wheat, barley, potatoes, *mellocos*, *cuy*, sheep and chickens. They contrast this with the families of those who have emigrated saying that,

**Jessica** – The people that receive the money end up having more problems. They buy a bunch of food, what we call ‘junk food’, processed food. Some of those that receive this money don’t want to work to have their own gardens, they don’t want to work, to have their own gardens. Because a lot of money comes in. They give the kids money when they go into town and the kids buy french fries, cokes, cheetos, but these aren’t food (this is a play on words, she uses the word *comida* and *alimento* which are normally synonymous, but in this instance, she is using the word *alimento* to mean good nutritious food, while *comida* just means food). I have also seen problems with the women because they aren’t eating food, the good ones that are their own. The chickens are a big thing. We raise our own chickens, giving them our own grains to eat. But those that come from Guayaquil or other provinces, they only eat chicken feed. They don’t have any nutrition. But most buy and eat these. This is affecting the kids because they are getting infections because they aren’t eating well. I have seen these turn into bigger economic problems. They don’t think to do something good with the money, to use the money to start a garden or agriculture. They use it to build a house and buy a car. Nothing more!<sup>72</sup>

It is noteworthy that she continually uses the synonyms ‘*mismos*’ and ‘*propios*’ (both meaning ‘same’), often in conjunction. She would use these words together as a way to add emphasis through redundancy. In this small excerpt, she used them in conjunction three times, a number dwarfed by how many times she used them in the rest

<sup>72</sup> **Jessica** – *Los que reciben las platas. Allí se viene mas problemas, que compran solo las comidas que decimos que son comidas chatarra, procesados. Entonces, a través de esa plata que viene por inmigraciones, ya no quieren, algunos no quieren cultivar, o no quieren trabajar – tener unos huertos propios mismos. Porque vienen dinero bastante. De aquí se van a cuidad, para los hijos, dan comprando así papas fritas, colas, esa que decimos cheetos, esas comidas, no son alimentos. Mas le ha visto que problemas vienen y las mujeres también que vienen mas (can’t understand the word) porque no comen comidas, las buenas que son alimentos propios mismos. Con esa plata se van comer, por ejemplo del... del... de la gallina mismo. Nosotros criamos con mismo propios de granos, dándola comida, pero de lo que vienen del... de Guayaquil, de otros provincia que viene esas gallinas que comen solo balanceados, y no tiene alimento nada. Pero más compran eso y comen. Si vienen, afecta a lo menos los niños. Yo visto, donde yo trabajo, esa clínica llega, se da infecciones. Porque no es alimento, entonces yo ha visto mas problemas viene aquí se invierten mal economía. Aquí solo vienen, no piensan que poner una buena de lo que es necesario de unos proyectos propios por ejemplo para huertos o para agrícolas así. Entonces esa plata viene aquí se hace una casa, compra carro, ¡Nada mas!*

of the interview. Although she knew it was not good Spanish to say them together, she would do it anyway in a quick slurred fashion that meant to me that she may have heard them used in conjunction many times before. These words are an example of the discourse being dispersed to the populations from those in power. This language, used by Jessica and Isidoro, is the same language I would hear every day while I hung around the offices of TUCAYTA, and the same language used by the speakers in the protest march. This shows how the leaders of the indigenous communities, in Cañar and throughout the *sierra* use a common discourse, one that clearly defines the ‘us’ and the ‘them’.

A second story came from Rosa, one of my neighbors. She is a woman about 30 years old. She was overseeing the construction of a huge house right next to very a humble set of structures my home-stay family called home. I had to walk by this lived-in construction site taking a little trail that leads by it to get to the front door of the little shop that Juan and María ran. This always made me feel like we lived in the servants’ quarters in the back. Rosa was a quiet woman who always seemed to have an air of arrogance to those who did not know her. She was a *mestizo* woman from a farming community about an hour away who had married a Cañari man. Everyone told me that she had just come back from the United States, but it wasn’t until half way through my stay that I actually had a conversation with her. Her two daughters were slightly older and slightly younger than María and Juan’s three daughters, and spent a good deal of time at our house.

It was a dark and rainy evening (that sounds rather cliché) when she came over to ask me some questions about immigration policies of the United States. Her youngest daughter was born in New York, and is a citizen of the US, but her husband is still living

there ‘illegally’. While they are building a huge house in one of the communities outside of Cañar, she had come to ask me how she could move back to the United States with her kids. Her goal was to reunite her family once and for all. She had a lot of guilt about leaving her kids behind when she went to the US to follow her husband. While many people had the perception that those with remittances coming in were well off financially, Rosa was the only informant who said that her family did not have enough to eat at times. The precarious financial situation of many families who receive remittances is often covered up by the construction of a large house. Rosa says that often her husband sends money, but it all goes to paying for materials and wages, and there is not enough left over for her to feed her family. Having always wondered why one of her daughters eats at our house at least once a week, this statement made it rather clear.

When I asked Rosa questions about what her family ate, she talked about growing up on a farm in Suscal. It was important to her that I knew that she was also a farmer. She said that being a *mestizo* farmer in an area where it was almost all indigenous was very difficult. While she said that she grew up eating the same foods (potatoes, *melloco*, *machica*, maize, etc.), when I asked her why people were not eating the foods native to this region much anymore, she replied “What? We have to eat those?”<sup>73</sup> This immediate reaction was one of disgust. As we had been talking about nutrition, she had made a connection between these ideas, and she was asking if I was telling her family that they should eat these foods as they were healthier. As in the past, many have equated indigenous foods to poor food; her reaction would be one I would expect to get if I told someone in the United States that ramen noodles are healthy. Of the many foods native

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<sup>73</sup> ¿Qué? ¿Tenemos que comer eso?

to the region, for Rosa, only potatoes were worth eating. I asked Rosa what life was like for her living in the United States. Her response follows.

**Rosa** – Life in the US, I would say that for me more of a bitter routine. Why? Because I was not with my children. But at the same time I often wonder if my children had been with me, if it would have been different. Money would have been tight but we would have been happy, only making enough money to eat. But on the other hand, now, I am still not happy because I do not have my husband even though I have money. At the same time I miss him. Not only for me, but for my kids. I would tell him, I would often tell him “come back here”. But he would tell me that the house was not finished and they have no money saved up.

**Danny** – Do you want him to come back here and live, or do you want to take your kids and move to the United States?

**Rosa** – I think I would rather take my kids there (to the United States). <sup>74</sup> (she went on to talk about a better system of education and health care in the United States as the reasons).

For Rosa, the community is completely overshadowed by her desire for better health care and education for her children. While it is true that she is not from this community and is *mestizo*, her ideas are important to show the extreme opposite of the ideas of Isidoro and Jessica. Her ideas do not exist in a vacuum as many Cañari told me that people do emigrate permanently, even after having built large fancy houses. As the community talks more and more of the ills caused by emigration, she feels, as many others may feel, cut off from neighbors and community, as if her dreams of a better life for her family are endangering the lives of others by undermining the local economy.

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<sup>74</sup> **Rosa** – *La vida de los EEUU diría yo que, para mi era una rutina mas una rutina mas amargo diría para mi. ¿Porque? Porque yo no estaba con mis hijos. Pero yo me pongo a pensar ahora si yo estaba con mis hijos será muy diferente. Apretado feliz era que estado contenta, cuando sea apretado comiendo solo, como se dice, ganando solo para la comida. Pero agresivo. Pero en cambio, ahora, no me siento bien por lo que no tengo a mi esposo ya al mismo tiempo con dinero. Y al mismo tiempo me falta él. No solo para mí, sino para los hijos. Yo le digo a él, a veces yo le digo mas bien ¡viente por acá! Pero él me dice, aun no terminamos con la casa y no tenemos dinero guardado*

**Danny** - *¿Quiere venir y vivir acá tu esposo o quiere llevar a ustedes y vivir allá en los EEUU más?*

**Rosa** – *Yo pienso llevar a mis hijos allá...*

The third story is of the family of María and Juan, a family that represents those who live in the middle of this argument. María had personally lived both in town in Cañar and in Cuenca (the third largest city in Ecuador, two hours south of Cañar) when she was younger, working as a maid for a rather rich *mestizo* woman who later became the godmother to one of her daughters. One morning, husband at work and daughters at school, the two of us sat and talked for a few hours about her experience living in town, in a rich woman's house. She told me that she misses those carefree days. While she still loves her husband and daughters deeply, she resents the role she plays in the family. She said that she did not want a third child, but the birth control the doctor had given her hadn't worked. She said that it was too expensive to have three children. She did not like sending her husband off to work and her daughters off to school just so that she could stay at home and feed the animals, clean the kitchen, mind the *tienda* (they owned a little shop that sold goods commonly used by her neighbors), and work in the fields. She dreamed of a luxurious life living in town, without all of the mud, with a bedroom for each of her daughters and a tile floor in the kitchen that would be much easier to clean.

At night, after dinner and with their daughters either already in bed, or sleeping at the dinner table, Juan and María would talk about their dreams of raising alpacas for their wool, and making clothing to sell to tourists and locals. They wanted to have a native herb garden as well. They wanted to be able to show tourists who wanted to see something truly traditional their house made of traditional materials with their native plant garden and native animals. This dream they talked about was quite different than the one that María had told me when her husband was not around, and talking about this, she stole a glance my way as if to say, please don't say anything.

The following morning she told me the story of how her husband lost his vision in one eye in a fire. He had been the president of two different indigenous communities and was a very influential figure at a meeting at the UPCCC building in Cañar. The townsfolk, not liking the indigenous communities becoming organized, set fire to the building while the meeting was going on inside. Juan had to dive through a wall of flames to get out of the building, which explained some of the burn marks on his neck as well. She told me that that had happened right around the time they met, and since then, she has pushed him to keep out of politics. Juan, being a soft spoken man of great physical strength and intelligence was a natural leader, but he was now a family man. He would talk to me about politics at night, the indigenous movement, and with enthusiasm, tell me about a protest planned the following week. When asked if he was going to go, he replied that he could not as he had to work.

This picture of a man and wife, with opposing world views is typical of indigenous communities around Cañar. On the surface, the indigenous movement seems universal; it seems that the people are united in a cause that seeks to revitalize their language and culture. Under the surface however, there are a great many people who in public will tout the discourse of the indigenous movement, but behind closed doors, dream of the easier life of many *mestizo* families living in town or the idealized way of life in the United States, the land of opportunity.

## CHAPTER 8

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The postmodern critique has brought into question the objectivity of knowledge. Postmodern thought would say that ‘good’ is a relative term. What is considered ‘good’ to one group is not necessarily ‘good’ to another. ‘Evil’ being the antithesis of ‘good’ only exists as the opposite of what is ‘good’. Thus the subjective judgment ‘good’ could be better described as what a social group considers ‘appropriate’, and ‘evil’ would therefore be ‘inappropriate’.

For the 400 years between the battle of Cajamarca and the abolition of the *concertaje* in 1918 which effectively ended serfdom, the indigenous peoples constantly were reminded that their knowledge and their non-Christian beliefs in spirits in the hills were ‘evil’ or temptations from the devil. Even into the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these ideas were reinforced, with indigenous peoples being told that their subsistence-economy was backwards, and that they impeded the ‘progress’ of their glorious nation.

Anthropologists have long questioned the universality of what is considered ‘good’ or ‘appropriate’ and what is considered ‘evil’ or ‘inappropriate.’ Judging what is good for a society by the rules of your own society is considered ‘ethnocentric.’ Since the conquest of the Inca, the Cañari have had their food ways disrupted and their ideas of what is ‘good’ or ‘appropriate’ put down. Since the land reform period from 1964 - 1973, the deconstruction of the indigenous subsistence economy has sped up. Due to the hegemonic forces of what had become *mestizo* culture, indigenous peoples came to believe that they were backwards, that they were dirty and illiterate, and that their knowledge and traditions were archaic and obstacles for progress.

These universalistic, hegemonic ideas were finally dispelled with the help of postmodern critique and poststructuralist thought. This realization and the subsequent movement to recuperate what was lost were put into words by one of my informants. He said, “*Nosotros tenemos dueño de la vida*” “We are the owners of our lives.”

### **Discourses on Food in Cañar**

Today in Cañar, we have three sets of discourses on food that are important to the lives of the Cañari. Two of these sets of discourses are old, and have slowly evolved into their current form since the Spanish Conquest of much of the Andes. The first set of discourses is that of the indigenous peoples. This set of discourses has seen a great deal of change since the Inca conquered the Cañari at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. As shown in chapter three, through institutions such as the *encomienda* and the *mita*, these discourses have come to be formed primarily in rural settings. The second set of discourses is that of the *mestizos*. Just as the indigenous discourses on food have come to be formed in rural settings, the *mestizo* discourses on food have come to be formed primarily in urban settings. The neo-indigenous discourse is relatively new. It is a reinvention of the indigenous discourse on food, filtered through poststructural theories on development. This has reinvigorated many indigenous communities as it has used their culture as the basis of a struggle to regain the power of defining who they are.

Discourse does not exist in a vacuum, but is formed in an arena in which multiple discourses exist and play off each other (Todorov 1984; Weismantel 1988). This creates a fight for dominance between discourses. The power struggle between the two primary sets of discourses in the Ecuadorian Andes has seen the urban/*mestizo* discourses slowly

filter out into rural areas. The indigenous discourses on food have been losing ground steadily since these two discourses came into contact. With the introduction of the neo-indigenous discourse, the indigenous discourses on food have been regaining ground.

When people talk about livelihood in Cañar, they discuss how they can make the money they need to not only survive, but to thrive. The material difference between surviving and thriving in Cañar is symbolized by the house one lives in. A new, modern house, fully furnished, with bathrooms and hot water is a sign that a family is doing well. Surviving is having enough of what one would prefer to eat available. The difference between these two is the difference between the subsistence and market economies. Cañari society is split into three groups today. Two of these groups live in nice modern houses, or are in the process of building them. These two groups are the Cañari professionals and the families of overseas workers.

The rest of Cañari society is made up of subsistence farmers whose cash incomes primarily come from the sale of surplus crops. This group looks at the other two groups and their nice houses with envy. Money obtained from selling off agricultural surpluses has been steadily diminishing over the past 30 years as structural adjustment programs of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) have aimed to subsidize the growth of industry in urban areas by putting price ceilings on agricultural products (Lawson 1988). Being the primary suppliers for the domestic market of fresh produce, many indigenous families are seeing their ability to support their families undercut by these policies. Thus food, as a product, has been slowly losing its economic value to indigenous communities (my interviews provides anecdotal evidence of this). In response to this, many indigenous

peoples have been fleeing the countryside for the cities and overseas to find sources of income to provide for their families' non-food needs.

During this same 30 year period, NGOs have been proliferating and expanding their programs to include many rural areas in Ecuador. This has caused a need for educated, skilled indigenous peoples to work for many of these NGOs, especially the ones formed by indigenous peoples to fight for the political rights of indigenous communities. Together with opportunities in cities and overseas, incomes have been coming back to the indigenous communities, although they are in a form qualitatively different than they were in the traditional subsistence economy. Many families that are not making ends meet in the traditional subsistence economy due to insufficient land to meet basic subsistence needs and/or the rising cost of non-subsistence needs, are looking for ways to increase cash incomes. While there are many different opportunities such as working in the construction industry, opening a small store, or the professional sector, these opportunities are either not steady enough, require large capital investments or require skills and education beyond that of most Cañaris. This forces many people to look at emigrating as the most promising means of supporting their families.

The Cañari discourses on food are directly affected by the economy. My Cañari informants said that their foods are continually losing monetary value. Since these foods are considered 'products' their monetary devaluation is causing a subsequent devaluation of the symbolic value. Just as many older Europeans remember corn as a hunger food sent from the United States in the wake of WWII, many indigenous foods are coming to symbolize hunger as well. My informant Rosa's reaction to questions about why the foods native to the Andes are not being eaten as much is a good example of this. Over

the past 30 years, the market economy has been becoming more and more prominent in the daily lives of the Cañari, just as the *mestizo* discourses on food that provide cheap, tasty and quick food are becoming more prominent.

Indigenous communities are becoming organized in reaction to the devaluation of the foods native to the Andes, the large-scale movement of indigenous peoples to the cities and overseas, the loss of their livelihoods through racist government policies and the spread of *mestizo* discourses on food into rural areas. The national level indigenous organization CONAIE and the international indigenous political movement *Pachacutik* are rallying around the livelihoods and the foodways of the indigenous communities throughout the country. TUACYTA and other peasant federations represent more local examples of this movement. The neo-indigenous discourse comes from the professional class of indigenous peoples throughout the highlands of Ecuador, many of whom are affiliated with indigenous organizations.

Using Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic principle, the neo-indigenous discourse "is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject... A single voice can make itself heard only by blending into the complex choir of other voices already in place" (Todorov 1984:X). I argue that, due to the source of the neo-indigenous discourse, this is not the same indigenous discourse on food that has existed for centuries, but is a discourse that champions the rights of peoples who have been historically exploited by national and global capital. The current indigenous discourses on food have been steadily moving away from their roots in the subsistence-economy. The neo-indigenous discourse has given the old indigenous discourse on food the ideological strength to reclaim much of its traditional roots. The neo-indigenous discourse comes primarily from the professionals

in the indigenous communities who have close contact with academics and professionals from outside their communities who adhere to a poststructuralist view of the world. The ideas behind the poststructuralist school of thought, with roots in the postmodern movement and the development industry are having an influence on indigenous leaders. These leaders then look back at the ways of their ancestors, and using the works of academics like Anthony Bebbington and Arturo Escobar, look to a vision of the future in which their communities have the ability to govern themselves. In order to recreate the communities of old, they seek the revival of the economy of old.

The neo-indigenous discourse, coming from a dominant sector within many indigenous communities, is not being accepted by everyone in the communities. Many people told me in private that they were fighting with TUCAYTA (*estamos peleando*). At one town meeting, people began yelling at the *promotor* from TUCAYTA saying that they sit in their office and do nothing and collect their check. This type of reaction to the leaders in the indigenous communities has a root in the conflict between the various discourses on food. Most of the people who work at TUCAYTA also have their subsistence plots. They grow their foods and live in much the same fashion as the rest of the communities. The difference lies in the fact that they can afford land, a nice house and often times, a car that they use for work. They are not subject to the same level of poverty that their constituents are. Some people made comments in my presence to the effect that the TUCAYTA staff is getting fat off of the work of the communities they represent.<sup>75</sup> My experience with the majority of the TUCAYTA staff however does not lead me to believe all that was said about them. Nonetheless, the fact that these

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<sup>75</sup> I have the suspicion that these grumblings were in fact more common than I personally experienced. I believe that people generally held their tongues around me as I was working with TUCAYTA.

grumblings are present shows that opposition to the goals of TUCAYTA exists in the communities.

The neo-indigenous discourse is struggling in Cañar. As many people are not able to find a steady source of income for non-subsistence needs, many people look at the large fancy facades of the houses of those who have lived overseas or who have family overseas and they see a solution to their financial problems more immediate than the promises of their leaders. As my research has shown emigration to be the most important factor in household decisions on what to eat, this problem needs to be addressed. Solutions must include culturally appropriate ways of offering young Cañaris alternatives to emigrating.

### **What is the way forward?**

The way forward, progress, the very idea many poststructuralists call into question is the same idea on the minds of many Cañari. As I did my research with the help of TUCAYTA, the goals of TUCAYTA and their views of how to help the indigenous communities that they represent are my guide in making recommendations. Making recommendations to an organization like TUCAYTA can be somewhat difficult due to the multiple arenas in which the organization is involved.<sup>76</sup> TUCAYTA has more control over local issues than over issues on a national and international level which are generally in the hands of organizations to which TUCAYTA is filial. For this reason my recommendations include a concrete action that TUCAYTA can take on a local level, and

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<sup>76</sup> By multiple arenas, I am referring to local political/cultural matters as well as issues of livelihood/economic importance, policy issues on regional and national levels, the national political scene, and to international issues such as migration and free trade.

a larger issue for which TUCAYTA can begin grassroots organizing to help the national level organization CONAIE rally around in the future.

### ***Subsidizing School Lunches***

One area that could help the nutrition of children in the bilingual schools and help revalorize the native foods is to hire cooks for the bilingual schools' meal programs. Currently mothers of school children cook at the schools on a rotating basis, meaning that a different woman or group of women cooks every day. My informants considered this a burden on their schedules as they had to not only cook for the school, but for their own family as well. Because of this time burden, women said that at least half of the time the meal prepared is rice and tuna fish. This meal is perceived as the ultimate convenience food with little nutritional value by my informants, yet their children are eating it at least every other day at school. By hiring local women to prepare the meals everyday, TUCAYTA would be improving the nutrition of the school children and improving the health, education and nutrition of the families' of the women employed. In addition, it would release many women from the added burden of this unpaid labor. Hiring local women to prepare these meals would also send the message home with the school children that in this place of learning where we learn our history, our language and our customs, we also eat our food.

School meal programs have seen some measure of success in the Andes. In Peru, the PRONAA project is a government-based food program that seeks to increase the incentives for farmers to grow quinoa. PRONAA offers higher than the market value for the locally grown quinoa and uses it for the local school meal programs. By buying the

quinoa locally, it ensures that more of the money goes to the farmer as middlemen and transportation costs are minimized.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Political and Economic Organizing - The Foodshed***

Organizing around the idea of the foodshed could provide both the Ecuadorian government and the rural farmers a way to ideologically and practically organize in a way beneficial to the domestic economy and the local economies of farming communities. The idea of the foodshed “connects the cultural (“food”) with the natural (“...shed”) thus it becomes a unifying and organizing metaphor for conceptual development that starts from a premise of the unity of place and people, of nature and society” (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson and Stevenson 1996:3).

Looking at Ecuador as a series of foodsheds that should consume to the greatest extent possible what is produced locally, sending the excesses to urban and/or international markets would help revalorize the products of the country. This is the idea of self-reliance rather than self-sufficiency. “Self-reliance implies the reduction of dependence on other places, but does not deny the desirability or necessity of external trade relationships (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996:9-10). This does not mean that certain communities would be without foods from outside of their foodshed, but that the foods that are grown in the foodshed should not be imported unless there is a shortage in the local supply. While in the short term, valorizing local products could increase food prices, in the long run, it would increase the revenue bases of the country as rural producers would make more money that they could then spend in the local

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<sup>77</sup> For more on the PRONAA program in Peru, see Hellin and Higman (2003:97-98)

economies. This ‘trickle-up effect’ would also shrink the gap between the rich and poor, thereby lowering poverty.

Advocating for change in Ecuador’s domestic agricultural policy, I would call for the placing tariffs on some imports. While some would consider this a protectionist act that could undermine international trade, I disagree as a set of tariffs designed to offset subsidies given by the governments of many ‘developed countries’ could revalorize the artificially low prices of these agricultural products.<sup>78</sup> In this fashion, Ecuadorian agriculture would be able to compete within their domestic markets having the advantage of lower transportation costs. Transportation costs have been continually externalized by the global food system as their artificially low price of food commodities often do not reflect “the environmental costs associated with recovery and combustion of fossil fuels” (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996:4). Therefore, lowering transportation costs also lowers greenhouse gas emissions.

The concept of the commensal community is advocated by Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson (1996:8). As commensality, not blood is the basis of the family unit in much of the Andes, this idea could be the tie that binds not only the family, but also the community. For too long trade in the global food economy has resembled colonialism with “farmers selling low value commodities to distant markets and processors and the subsequent re-importation of finished food products at high prices” (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996:10). Advocating for the idea of the foodshed would provide farming communities higher incomes which would help farming

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<sup>78</sup> “Developed countries’ farm support amounts to over \$360 billion a year, \$30 billion more than the GDP of Africa” (Hellin and Higman 2003:212).

regain its status as a respectable occupation and help young people stay in their communities instead of emigrating.

## Conclusion

Food staples from outside of the indigenous communities that form TUCAYTA have become an important part of the diet of Cañari families that are not able to or choose not to meet their subsistence needs through what my Cañari informants consider their ‘traditional methods.’ The major causes for the lack of ability or desire to feed their families’ with crops cultivated on their own plots of land generally came from a lack of access to sufficient land to meet their families’ need, a lack of labor-power to cultivate the land they had access to and/or a perceived lack of need to grow their own food as remittances from family members overseas were enough to meet the food needs of their families.

While in general, communities do not have much control over what is bought and sold in the local markets, through the indigenous political movement *Pachacutik*, many communities throughout the Ecuadorian Andes are organizing protests that have demonstrated the power of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador over the domestic food supply. Through protests, the indigenous peoples have seen the ouster of one president in 2000 and the national assembly in 2007. These acts are showing that it is no longer possible to subsidize urban industrial growth at the expense of the indigenous peoples. Advocating for political reform on a national level, and encouraging people to go back to their roots in the subsistence economy on a local level have been two tools with which the indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Andes have sought to regain their food

sovereignty and to improve the lives of the members of their communities. As most of those who emigrate do so as a means of improving the lives of their families, the leadership of TUCAYTA is seeking ways to economically improve the lives of the families that form their base, both through increased incomes and decreased reliance on cash incomes for subsistence. This is being done as a means of stopping the tide of emigration that is causing many social, cultural, and familial problems within their communities.

The moment the *caciques* lost their autonomy and became servants of the colonial bureaucracy was the moment that the indigenous communities began their decline. CONAIE believes that renewing a level of autonomy for the many indigenous ‘nations’ throughout Ecuador is the means through which the indigenous peoples and their cultures will be revitalized. When asked how to change her country for the better a wise woman told me,

*Cuando nosotros escuchamos la interculturalidad no es solo el estudio de las dos lenguas. Sino conocer varias culturas y dar soluciones para poder orientar a los niños y toda la sociedad en general. Yo quisiera que un gobierno que conozca eso y que conozca toda la diversidad cultural para que pueda orientar, guiar a nosotros y solo así pudiera cambiar nuestra país.*

– Maria Rosa Acero

*When we hear the word interculturality, it is not only the study of two languages.*

*It is also understanding multiple cultures and giving solutions so that we can guide our children and society in general. I hope for a government that knows this and knows of all of the cultural diversity so that it can orient, guide us, only like this can we change our country.*

– Maria Rosa Acero

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE – ENGLISH VERSION**

- What is your name?
- About how old are you?
- How long have you lived here?
- How many people live in your home?
- Where do you get your food?
- Are there special foods that you eat at different times of the year (navidad, día de los reyes, carnival, inti raymi etc.)?
- What are they?
- What is your favorite dish?
- What are the favorite dishes of your children (if they have any)?
- What are some foods that you and/or your family do not like, but are eaten to avoid hunger?
- Are there times when there is not enough to eat in your home and people go hungry?
- When are those times?
- Is farming your primary work?
- What other kinds of work do you do?
- Where do you do your work?
- Do you do your work on your land or on the land of another?
- What do you grow?
- How much of what you grow does your family consume?
- What food crop is most important to you?
- Do you grow it yourself?
- What other food crops are important to you and your family?
- Do you grow anything specifically for the market?
- What sorts of fertilizer do you use?
- Do you have problems with pests?
- What do you do about them?
- Do you use any pesticides?
- Do you or any of your family members work in the city or abroad and send money home?
- Has your village changed or grown at all since you first came here/were a child?
- In what ways has the village changed or grown?
- What Ecuadorian agricultural policies affect you and your family?
- If you could, how would you change them?
- Have you ever worked with World Neighbors, TUCAYTA or other NGOs on agricultural projects or programs?
- What other NGOs?
- How would you describe your relationship with TUCAYTA personnel?
- What about the personnel of World Neighbors?
- What about the personnel of other NGO?

**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE – SPANISH VERSION**

- ¿Como se llama?
- ¿Cuantos años tiene usted?
- ¿Desde cuando vive usted aquí?
- ¿Cuántos hijos tiene usted?
- ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar?
- ¿De dónde consiguen comida?
- ¿Hay comidas especiales que ustedes comen durante diferentes tiempos del año (por ejemplo navidad, día de los reyes, carnaval, inti raymi etc.)?
- ¿Cuáles son?
- ¿Cuál es su comida favorita?
- ¿Cuáles son las comidas favoritas de sus hijos?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas comidas que no les gustan pero comen para evitar el hambre? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Hay épocas cuando les falta tener comida suficiente en su hogar?
- ¿Cuándo son?
- ¿Es agricultura su trabajo primario?
- ¿Trabaja usted en otro sitio?
- ¿Dónde trabaja usted?
- ¿Trabaja usted en su propia tierra o en la tierra de otra persona?
- ¿Qué cultiva usted?
- ¿Cuánto de lo que cultiva consumen usted y su familia?
- ¿Cuál es la comida más importante para usted? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Lo cultiva usted mismo?
- ¿Cuáles otras comidas son importantes para ustedes?  
¿Conoce usted el valor nutritivo de la comida chatarra? (papas fritas, perros calientes, caramelos, cola, atún, chupetes, dulces, bolos)  
¿Por qué esta dejando los alimentos nativos?
- ¿Cultiva usted o su familia algo para vender en el mercado?
- ¿Qué tipos de abonos utiliza usted?
- ¿Cuándo cultiven, tienen ustedes problemas con insectos?
- ¿Qué hace para proteger sus cultivos?  
¿Usa usted pesticidas?  
¿Trabaja usted u otra persona de su familia en otro país o en la ciudad? ¿Mandan dinero a su familia?
- ¿Ha cambiado o crecido su pueblo desde que usted vino aquí o desde que usted era un niño?  
¿De que manera ha cambiado o crecido su pueblo?
- ¿Hay política del gobierno Ecuatoriano que les ha afectado a ustedes o su comunidad?  
¿Si pudiera, como la cambiaría la política que les ha afectado?
- ¿Ha trabajado con Vecinos Mundiales, TUWAYTA u otras ONGs en proyectos de agricultura?  
¿Cuales otras ONGs?  
¿Cómo describiría su relación con el personal de TUWAYTA?  
¿Y con el personal de Vecinos Mundiales?  
¿Y con el personal de las otras ONGs?

**APPENDIX C**  
**DOCUMENT ON TUCAYTA**

Please note that this document has been modified to conform to the formatting requirements of Oregon State University. Feel Free to contact the author of this thesis to obtain a full version with more maps and organizational charts.

**QUE ES LA TUCAYTA**

Es una organización Indígena y Campesina Cañari- (Tucuy Cañar Ayllucunapac Tandanacuy – TUCAYTA), de derecho privado, sin fines de lucro con duración indefinida y número de socios ilimitado; aprobado mediante acuerdo ministerial N°-0000349 con fecha 3 de diciembre 1998 por el Ministerio de Bienestar Social del Ecuador. Aglutina a 15 comunidades y 4 cooperativas agropecuarias, en la parroquia Cañar, Cantón y Provincia de Cañar.

**OBJETIVOS**

- Promover el aprovechamiento sostenible de los recursos naturales: suelo, agua, bosque y semillas, a través de la sensibilización ambiental en forma participativa y la gestión de programa agro ecológico, para mejorar las condiciones de salud, conservar la biodiversidad y lograr así una mejor calidad de vida de las familias.
- Colaborar en el mejoramiento de los sistemas de producción mediante investigación y transferencia de tecnología participativa agro ecológica y socio empresarial, para robustecer la capacidad de autogestión y mejorar la seguridad alimentaria.
- Impulsar y fortalecer la participación activa de las bases, propiciando espacios de participación y educación comunitaria con el propósito de aumentar la autoestima, potenciar el trabajo comunitario, generar una visión integral y conciencia crítica para que las comunidades de base sean protagonistas de su propio proceso de desarrollo.
- Participar en el mejoramiento del entorno mediante la gestión participativa y la educación de las bases con el fin de reducir la contaminación, alcanzar la percepción comunitaria del territorio, cambiar la calidad del paisaje y/o panorama y los niveles de convivencia y/o comprensión
- Recuperar y conservar las tecnologías andinas (semillas) para contribuir con el mejoramiento de la dieta alimenticia, a través de la capacitación en nutrición y elaboración de alimentos, con el fin disminuir la morbilidad, mejorar el rendimiento laborar y la capacidad intelectual.

**MISIÓN**

Contribuir en el desarrollo rural y la conservación de la biodiversidad de la TUCAYTA bajo los principios de la participación comunitaria y la sostenibilidad de los ecosistemas, para garantizar la gestión de desarrollo TUCAYTA y comunal, aspirando un desarrollo humano, social y económicamente sostenible

## **VISION**

La TUCAYTA, hasta el año 2010 aspira ser una organización autogestionaria y propositiva, ejecutando proyectos de desarrollo y servicios sosteniblemente para apoyar el desarrollo de los sistemas de producción, manejo de Recursos Naturales y comercialización de la producción de sus bases y de la biodiversidad local.

## **EN DONDE SE ENCUENTRA LOCALIZADO LA TUCAYTA**

Se encuentra al sur de la Sierra Ecuatoriana, a 410 km de la capital Quito, concretamente en la Provincia, Cantón y Parroquia Caña. Geográficamente esta situado en la latitud sur a 02° 20' 40" y longitud oeste a 78° 05' 15". El rango altitudinal de la TUCAYTA es de 2850 m.s.n.m. en el valle bajo del río Caña y, 4100 m.s.n.m en la cordillera Zhinzun (ver el mapa).

## ***CUAL ES LA IDENTIDAD DE LA TUCAYTA***

La población de la TUCAYTA esta conformado el 90% por indígenas, que étnicamente se identifican como "Cañaris" y el 10% mestizos. La población total es de 7650 habitantes que corresponde a 1661 familias.

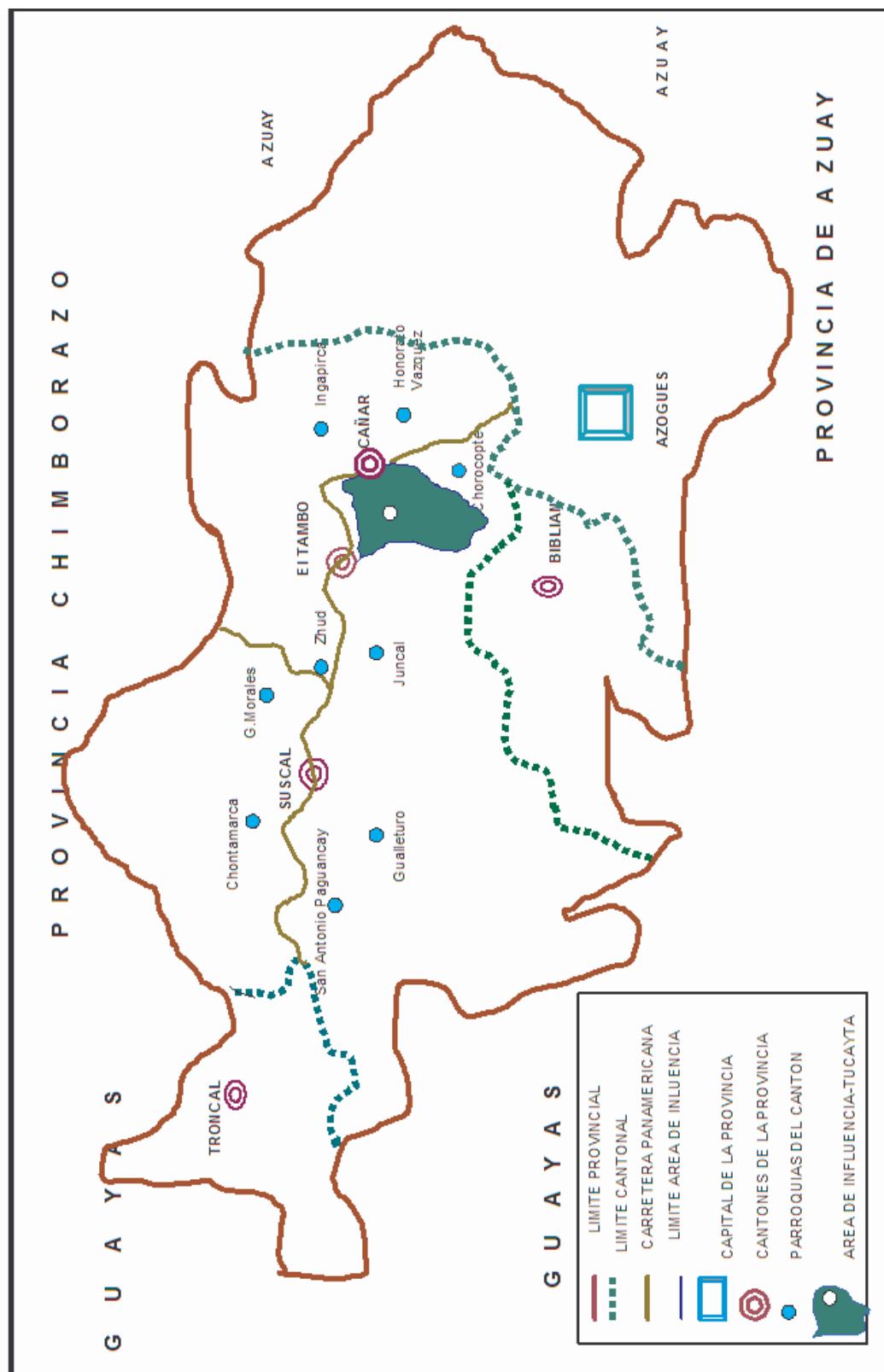
## **COMO Y POR QUÉ INICIA LA TUCAYTA**

La TUCAYTA nació en los años 65 a través de la Reforma Agraria, en donde aglutinó y dinamizó a las organizaciones de base mediante la organización de comunas y cooperativas, de esta forma logra adquirir las tierras de las haciendas y posteriormente inicia la conquista por el agua de riego y educación bilingüe

En 1980 con el apoyo de las instituciones de estado como INERHI, SEDRI, CREA, MAG, una ONG nacional CESAN y ONG Internacional COSUDE, hace un estudio sobre canal de riego y consigue un financiamiento para la construcción y la misma duró un tiempo de 10 años y tiene las siguientes características:

- **Canal principal:** 24 Km. revestidos
- **Canales secundarios :** 26 Km. En tubería de asbesto
- **Canales terciarios:** 65 Km. en tubería PVC
- **Embalses:** 2 con capacidad 1'100.000 m<sup>3</sup>
- **Reservorios familiares:** 130, con capacidad de 500 m<sup>3</sup> promedio
- **Superficie de la Cuenca:** 35,20 Km<sup>2</sup>
- **Capacidad hídrica de la Cuenca:** 20'400.000 m<sup>3</sup>
- **Nº módulos de riego:** 49 con promedio de 23,10 Has.
- **Nº de módulos de riego por aspersión:** 1 con 22,2 has. (con diseño)
- **Nº de has. que riegan por aspersión:** 380 – 400 (tecnología tradicional)
- **Nº de comunidades de la TUCAYTA:** 15
- **Nº de comunidades con riego:** 14

## PROVINCIA DEL CAÑAR



**En 1985** se logra la creación del Instituto Pedagógico Intercultural Bilingüe Quilloac- IPIBQ, (Quichua-Español) en el área de influencia, dando inicio así de la formación de talentos humanos, rescate y valoración del idioma, vestimenta, música, vestigios arqueológicos, tecnología de producción andina.

**En agosto de 1991** entra en funcionamiento el canal de riego Patococha, y por ende el recurso agua se transforma como **principal eje movilizador de desarrollo de la organización**

**A partir de 1995** las actividades del proyecto se orienta a desarrollar la: administración manejo de agua de riego, asistencia técnica en producción agrícola y pecuario a través riego parcelario, conservación de suelos, micro cuencas del canal, reforestación, capacitación socio organizativa.

**En 1996** se inicia la gestión y negociación de la transferencia del proyecto del sistema de riego por parte del Estado y/o Gobierno Nacional a favor de la TUCAYTA y en nombre de los usuarios y/o comunidades.

## QUE ACTIVIDADES DESARROLLAMOS

1. Administración y manejo de agua de riego
2. Investigación y transferencia de sistema de riego por aspersión y goteo
3. Organización de productores con enfoque empresarial
4. Investigación y transferencia de tecnología agropecuaria con enfoque agro ecológico
5. Crédito para producción agrícola, pecuaria, artesanía, comercio y otros.
6. Educación Bilingüe (quichua y español). Un Instituto superior y 12 escuelas en las comunidades
7. Implementación de huertos orgánicos de plantas alimenticias y medicinales
8. Creación de cajas de ahorro y crédito y cajas solidarias con mujeres
9. Implementación de pequeñas micro empresas comunitarias producción de compost mediante el reciclaje de desechos orgánicos de los mercados, producción bajo invernadero (hortalizas y frutales y procesamiento de granos).
10. Conservación de Recursos Naturales-RRNN
11. Rescate y difusión cultural: Intirraymi, Cuyarraymi, Taita Carnaval, Caña capital arqueológico, música y danza con la juventud.
12. Manejo de conflictos y negociación

## QUE INSTITUCIONES HAN PARTICIPADO Y PARTICIPAN

1. **Asociación de Agrónomos Indígenas del Caña - AAIC.**- son grupo de profesionales indígenas natos de la zona que trabajan por el desarrollo rural, actualmente colaboran con 4 técnicos en administración y manejo de riego, asistencia técnica en producción de papa, arveja, granos andinos y producción bajo cubierta y/o invernadero (iniciaron desde 1985)
2. **Instituto Pedagógico Intercultural Bilingüe-Killoak.**- Formación de educadores, Capacitación a estudiantes en la producción agroecológica y aspectos culturales como: Cañar Capital Arqueológico, Intirraymi, comparsa de Taita Carnaval y/o Capac Raymi, Intirraymi, kuyarraymi, aniversario de la TUCAYTA y otros
3. **PRODEPINE.**- Implementación de sistema de riego por aspersión y forestación (desde 1998 hasta 2001)
4. **Proyecto de Transferencia de Tecnología Agropecuaria –TTA del Programa de Modernización de los Servicios Agropecuarios - PROMSA .** - La Tucayta mediante un concurso ganamos y actuamos como Operadora y desarrollamos la asistencia técnica y se logró la formación de pequeñas micro empresas en procesamiento de granos, producción de compost, tomate, babaco y hortalizas bajo invernadero (desde octubre de 2000 hasta 31 de julio de 2003)
5. **Asociación de Productores Artesanal de Semillas “Mushuc Yuyai” – APROASEMY.**- son grupo de productores que se encuentran en el área de influencia de la Tucayta, dedicados a producción de semillas, Ahorro y Crédito y procesamiento de granos (iniciaron desde 1996 y continuan)
6. **Programa de Apoyo Alimentario-PL-480.**- financiaron para la producción de papa, arveja, quinua y adquisición de bovinos (iniciamos mayo de 2001 y culminamos junio de 2003), el presupuesto se manejo a base de crédito actualmente nos han transferido y se beneficia a 13% de las 1560 familias.
7. **Instituto Nacional Autonomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias – INIAP.**- Desarrolla la investigación participativa a través de Escuela de campo con agricultores-ECA's y Comité de Investigación Agrícola Local CIAL en los cultivos de papa, arveja, pastos, quinua, chocho y últimamente producción de compost mediante el reciclaje de desechos orgánicos de los mercados de Cañar. (desde octubre de 2000)
8. **Instituto Internacional Reconstrucción Rural – IIRR.**- Capacitación de Campesino a Campesino con enfoque agro ecológico.
9. **INWENT de Alemania.**- Capacitación en Agricultura Ecológicamente Apropriada-AEA, Protección Vegetal, Planificación Participativa y gestión local, (iniciamos en 2000), nuestros promotores y técnicos han tenido la oportunidad de formarse a nivel nacional e internacional.

**10. MUNICIPIO DEL CANTÓN CAÑAR.-** Apoya en la parte de infraestructura como: construcción de casas comunales, escuelas, mantenimiento de vías de comunicación, aspectos culturales; últimamente se viene elaborando una propuesta para realizar el reciclaje de basura en terrenos comunales de la Cooperativa San José de Guamtugloma filial a la TUCAYTA.

**11. CONSEJO PROVINCIAL CAÑAR.-** Obras de infraestructura, mantenimiento vial y aspectos culturales.

## **HACIA DONDE SE PROYECTA LA TUCAYTA**

### **AL FORTALECIMIENTO DE LA CAPACIDAD DE GESTIÓN PARA EL DESARROLLO DE LAS BASES, MEDIANTE:**

#### **1. CONSERVACIÓN DEL ECOSISTEMA PÁRAMO**

En el área de influencia de la TUCAYTA existe una superficie de 6500 ha de páramos (*Stipa sp*), este piso ecológico (3500 a 4200 m.s.n.m.) es considerado como una esponja hídrica, además en este contexto se encuentran vertientes que alimentan a la laguna del proyecto de riego Patococha y dos embalses que tienen una capacidad para almacenar 1100000 m<sup>3</sup> de agua. Sin embargo el movimiento de la frontera agrícola hacia arriba, la quema y el sobre - pastoreo bovino y ovino están ocasionando daños irreversibles. Frente a ello es necesario la introducción y manejo de alpacas, crianza y explotación de truchas y la protección de microcuenca mediante la forestación con plantas nativas.

**2. MEJORAMIENTO DE LA ADMINISTRACIÓN DE AGUA DE RIEGO.-** El agua de riego es el pilar fundamental, pero después de 13 años de servicio existe pérdida de 40 Lt/segundo en el trayecto del canal, razón por la cual es urgente el revestimiento del canal.

**3. INVESTIGACIÓN Y TRANSFERENCIA DE LOS SISTEMAS DE RIEGO POR ASPERSIÓN, MICRO ASPERSIÓN Y GOTEO.-** Consideramos que el recurso agua está cada vez menos, por ello amerita la transferencia y/o replica del sistema de riego por aspersión, micro aspersión y goteo que está funcionando en la Comunidad de Santa María y en la Cooperativa Virgen de la Nube.

**4. CONSERVACIÓN DE LAS BASES DE LOS RECURSOS NATURALES.-** En el área de influencia de la TUCAYTA existe una superficie de 6500 ha de páramos (*Stipa sp*), este piso ecológico (3500 a 4200 m.s.n.m.) es considerado como un eficiente acumulador y reservorio de agua, además se encuentran vertientes que alimentan a la laguna del proyecto de riego Patococha y dos embalses que tienen una capacidad para almacenar 2 millones de m<sup>3</sup> de agua. Sin embargo el movimiento de la frontera agrícola hacia arriba, la quema y el sobre - pastoreo bovino y ovino están ocasionando daños

irreversibles. Frente a ello es necesario la introducción y manejo de alpacas, crianza y explotación de truchas y la protección de microcuenca mediante la forestación con plantas nativas.

En el piso ecológico bajo que comprende entre 2750 a 3200 msnm y en la comunidad de YURACASHA N°-9, desde hace 20 años el Municipio viene depositando la basura de la ciudad sin ningún tratamiento, la misma que viene afectando a los miembros de la comunidad (presencia de moscos) y niños de la escuela. Frente a ello se viene coordinando con el Municipio y con otros actores para dar un manejo adecuado de la basura.

**5. CAPACITACIÓN SOCIO ORGANIZATIVA.-** Frente a la situación actual es necesario formar, al personal administrativo, técnico y a las bases en: producción agroecológica, gestión empresarial, liderazgo, gerencia rural, manejo de sistemas de riego, planificación participativa, política organizativa y gestión local.

**6. INVESTIGACIÓN Y TRANSFERENCIA DE TECNOLOGIA AGROPECUARIA CON VISIÓN AGROECOLÓGICO.-** frente a la situación actual es necesario la investigación y transferencia integral de recursos naturales en forma sostenida, orientado a largo plazo, valorizando al hombre como factor del ecosistema, permitiendo su conservación y recuperación, con tecnologías apropiadas, económicamente viables, socialmente justas y enfatizando en el uso de recursos locales.

**7. SALUD INDÍGENA.-** La TUCAYTA actualmente tiene un acuerdo con la Jefatura Provincial de Salud y se ha iniciado implementar huertos con plantas alimenticias y medicinales, esta actividad desde nuestro punto de vista es de gran importancia, por que nos permitirá superar la desnutrición y la salud de la población.

**8. CREDITO.-** Con los fondos PL-480 se tiene una buena experiencia, se viene ofertando para producción agrícola, pecuario, artesanía y comercio; pero la necesidad es cada vez más, actualmente se atiende al 13% de las 1661 familias, entonces es necesario inyectar más capital para cubrir la demanda.

**9. FORMACIÓN PEQUEÑAS MICROEMPRESAS.-** Actualmente se tiene en camino 3: procesamiento de granos, producción de compost y producción de tomate, babaco y hortalizas bajo invernadero, a estas hacen falta capital, equipos, maquinaria y la capacitación continua en la formación y ejecución como pequeñas micro empresas, y la creación en otras comunidades mediante un estudio confiable de mercado.

**10. EDUCACIÓN Y CULTURA.-** En el área de influencia tenemos 4 pre-escolares (jardín de infantes), 12 escuelas y un Instituto Pedagógico Intercultural Bilingüe (quichua y español), actualmente los centros pre-escolares y escuelas no cuentan de infraestructura adecuada, material didáctico y educadores bien capacitados. Frente a esta realidad se pretende primero una planificación participativa (niños/as, padres de familia, educadores, y otros actores locales). En cambio en la parte cultural la música, la danza en las fiestas de Intirraymi, Kuyarraymi, Killarraymi y la comparsa de Taita Carnaval, lo vienen

realizando niños/as, juventud y adultos pero es necesario reorientar de acuerdo a la situación actual.

**11. MANEJO DE CONFLICTOS.-** Desde hace tres años en las organizaciones indígenas y campesinas de la región, se presentan problemas en el campo: social (familiar, comunal organizacional), territorial, económico y otros; para solucionar, la TUCAYTA viene realizando en forma participativa a través de dialogo; esta iniciativa necesita robustecer para mantener la unidad de las familias en la organización y evitar gastos impugno ante las autoridades de la ciudad y Abogados aprovechadores.

