

BOOK REVIEWS

Millennial Ecuador: Critical Essays on Cultural Transformations and Cultural Dynamics. Norman E. Whitten Jr., editor. 2003. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 432 pp., map. \$65.00 (cloth) \$30.00 (paper). ISBN 0-87745-863-4, 978-0-87745-863-0, ISBN 0-87745-864-2, 978-0-87745-864-7. [www.uiowapress.org]

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Norman Whitten has been exploring Ecuador through his own research and those of his colleagues and students at the University of Illinois for more than thirty years. The book under review presents the results of some of this research, covering most of Ecuador's ethnic and geographical divisions: Amazonia (with its many different ethnicities and languages), the Quichua-speaking Sierra, and the Afro-Ecuadorian areas of Esmeraldas and the Chota-Mira Valley. The breadth and quality of research in the book are unusual and notable.

As a Peruvianist, I am struck by the strong prominence of essentialized ethnicities in Ecuador's national discourse. In recent years, as the articles in *Millennial Ecuador* demonstrate, these ethnic groups have united to obtain unprecedented political power, often doing so in response to neoliberal economic and political pressures. In Peru, on the other hand, there is still great emphasis on the "peasantry" as a class and on region, although this singularity may dissipate as Peruvians, perhaps influenced by both Ecuador and neighboring Bolivia, turn to ethnic markers (for example, in the presidential campaign of 2000, Alejandro Toledo made successful use of the slogan "*cholo sí, chino no*" to contrast his ethnic identity with that of the Japanese-descended Alberto Fujimori).

Defending themselves against the negative impact of petroleum extraction, Amazonian peoples have been in the forefront of Ecuador's ethnic movements. Several articles in the book examine the extraordinary March for Land and Life in 1992 organized by the Amazonian Achuar, Shiwiar, and Canelos Quichua people. Demanding formal title to their land, members of these groups set off on "a collective, pragmatic, [and] millennial journey" (p. 29) to the capital of Quito. Structured also in part as a counterdemonstration to the Columbian quincennial, the march (described in detail in Chapter 7) attracted representatives of other ethnic groups along its thirteen-day path. Participants employed ritual and costume to create ethnic and shamanic displays in a kind of symbolic theater

that attracted outside attention and helped unify the disparate groups of marchers. After tense negotiations in Quito, Ecuador's president finally presented the Amazonian groups formal title to more than a million hectares. Who would have thought that possible even twenty years ago?

Two other articles further explore the theme of developing ethnic power. In the anthropological tradition of seeking the general in the particular, William Vickers in Chapter 2 explores the resurgence and growing political consciousness of the Secoya (also known as the Siona), a small Tucanoan group in northeastern Ecuador and northwestern Peru. Influenced by Evangelical missionaries, government agencies, NGOs, news media, and empowered through bilingual education, the Ecuadorian Secoya "have become active lobbyists" to protect their territory, organizing in particular against Occidental Petroleum and Texaco. No longer the "invisible minority" they once were, the Secoya have grown "into a recognized political entity on the provincial, national, and international scenes" (p. 46). Vickers provides a detailed and interesting examination of the growth of Secoya centralized organization out of traditional agonistic and more or less acephalous family groups (except for slight household and shamanic leadership).

In Chapter 8, Jim and Linda Belote focus on the indigenous activist, Luis Macas, who collaborates with them in coauthoring his life history/autobiography, as well as an ethnography of his Quichua community of Saraguro. Starting out as "a barefoot elementary school student," Macas ascended the social hierarchy and helped found various indigenous organizations (including a university). He also was the first indigenous person elected to the Ecuadorian legislature and later served as Ecuador's Minister of Agriculture. These are extraordinary achievements facilitated by the capacity of Macas to forge alliances with various indigenous and nonindigenous groups, especially NGOs, while at the same time maintaining his individual ethnic identity.

The rest of the book explores other aspects of Ecuador, although the importance of ethnicity to growing political consciousness is rarely far from the surface. In Chapter 3, Kris Lane examines colonial legacies (or the absence of them) in contemporary Ecuador. Chapter 4 continues this historical focus with Rachel Corr's analysis of the ritual and belief of the Andean community of Salasaca to show how residents of Salasaca (and other Ecuadorian groups) have responded to Roman Catholic indoctrination, not as passive victims but as creative actors who have "accepted, contested, and accommodated the hegemony of the Roman Catholic church" (p. 104). Michael Uzendoski covers, in Chapter 5, the conversion of lowland Quichua speakers of Napo Province to Evangelical Christianity, conversions facilitated by the Evangelical missionaries' strategic use of economic power

and by “their goodwill [in acting] as agents of change and liberation from the exploitative structures of the past” (p. 132). Dorothea Scott Whitten examines the commercial development of indigenous art in both the Andes and Amazonia in Chapter 9. Her focus on individual artists is commendable. Rudi Colleredo-Mansfield considers the lives and ethnic identity among Quichua migrants to Quito in Chapter 10. He persuasively argues that migrant home interactions are so great that we must expand our notion of community to include not just people in a bounded territory, but their migrant kin as well.

The Afro-Ecuadorian world is discussed in Chapter 6 with Diego Quiroga’s abstract analysis of the cosmology of the people of Esmeraldas in the northwest, and in Chapter 11 with Jean Muteba Rahier’s interesting discussion of the racist conceptions of Afro-Ecuadorian women’s sexuality. Mary Weismantel investigates Ecuador’s imagined past in Chapter 12 through her discussion of two representations of women: the *chola* from Cuenca and the *Mama Negra* from Latacunga. She takes up a theme frequently articulated by Norman Whitten’s work, of “*mestizaje*” as an ideology in which people are expected to “whiten,” rather than to “darken.” The book also provides a useful glossary and brief appendix giving general information on Ecuador.

I have a few quibbles. Photos, especially of the art discussed by Dorothea Scott Whitten, would have enhanced the book enormously. Cosmology and symbolism, moreover, are sometimes presented in too cavalier a way, without discussion of the important methodological issue of how we determine what constitutes a people’s cosmology or symbols. There is little discussion of demographic change, which along with the impact of the neoliberal economy, often underlies individual decisions. Finally, it would be useful in the future to have detailed ethnography of the organization, ideology, and role of NGOs that (as noted throughout the book) are having such an important impact on local communities.

Quibbles aside, this book represents masterful research on Ecuador. It is essential reading for anyone interested in Ecuador, ethnic identity, or contemporary political change.