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History of the Indian Population of Cañar¹

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In the southern Ecuadorian province of Cañar, there are Indian communities whose inhabitants are called Cañares. They are identified by their language, Quichua, their distinctive dress and hairstyle, their places of residence and origin in recognized Indian communities, and by certain practices and values typical of people belonging to this category. The existence of Cañares is affirmed in political, academic, and popular imaginations. Such affirmations derive support from archaeological evidence of a sedentary, pre-Columbian population having occupied the region since at least 2500 b.c.² Documents from the early Spanish colonial period refer to a native group called Cañares, based on accounts by native witnesses and authorities. Thus, the overwhelming consensus is that there was a pre-Columbian ethnic

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² Robert Braun, "Nuevo análisis del Cerro Narrío," in *Reconocimientos y excavaciones en el sur del Ecuador*, ed. Donald Collier and John Murra (Cuenca: Departamento de Investigaciones Etnohistóricas, Antropológicas y Geográficas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 1982), 143-65. See also Karen O. Bruhns, "Intercambio entre la costa y la sierra en el formativo tardío: nuevas evidencias del Azuay," in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Americanists*, vol. 46, ed. Jean-Francois Bouchard and Mercedes Guinea Bueno (Amsterdam: BAR International Series 503, 1989), 57-74; Karen O. Bruhns et al., "Excavations at Pirincay in the Paute Valley of Southern Ecuador, 1985-1988," *Antiquity* 64 (1990):221-33; and Antonio Fresco Gonzales, *La arqueología de Ingapirca (Ecuador)* (Cuenca: Comisión del Castillo de Ingapirca, Consejo de Gobierno del Museo Arqueológico del Banco Central del Ecuador, 1984).

group called Cañar, and that the contemporary Indian population of Cañar province descends from the original population.³

Recent research on the contemporary Cañar people has brought attention to their ethnic identity and ethnohistorical conceptions.⁴ These scholars assume that today's Cañares are the unproblematic heirs of a pre-Inca native culture and population. Given this assumption, they are taxed to explain certain incongruous ideas and practices. Older Cañar informants have explained that their ancestors were Incas before the Spanish came. With the conquest, most of those Incas were killed or went into hiding. Afterwards, according to these informants, they became Cañares, but now they are *runas* (Indian people) or *naturales* (native Andeans). Intrigued by this ethnohistorical vision, these scholars have suggested that post-conquest inter-ethnic relations modified the

³ Angel María Iglesias, *Los Cañaris* (Cuenca: Consejo Provincial del Cañar y Editorial Amazonas, 1985), 35; CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador), *Las nacionalidades indígenas en el Ecuador: nuestro proceso organizativo*, 2d ed. (Quito: Editorial Tincui/CONAIE, Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1989); Bolívar Luis Zaruma Quishpilema, *Hatun Cañar apunchicunamanta nishcallata yuyashca/Mitos y creencias de hatun Cañar*, 2 vols. (Cuenca: La Misión Luterana and NORAD, 1989); Segundo Moreno Yáñez, "Formaciones políticas tribales y señoríos étnicos," in *Nueva historia del Ecuador, época aborígen, vol. 2*, ed. Enrique Ayala Mora (Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional, 1983); and Heriberto Rojas C., *Miscelanea de arqueología Cañari* (Cuenca: Editorial Fondo de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1988).

⁴ Frank Salomon, "Ancestors, Grave Robbers, and the Possible Antecedents of Cañari 'Inca-ism,'" in *Natives and Neighbors in South America: Anthropological Essays*, ed. Harold O. Sjar and Frank Salomon (Göteborg: Socialantropologiska Institutionen Göteborgs Universitet, 1987), 207-32; Niels Fock, "Ethnicity and Alternative Identification: An Example from Cañar," in *Cultural Transformations and Ethnicity in Modern Ecuador*, ed. Norman E. Whitten (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 402-19; Niels Fock and Eva Krener, "Los Cañaris del Ecuador y sus conceptos etnohistóricos sobre los Incas," in *Amerikanistische Studien: Festschrift für Herman Trimborn*, ed. Roswith Hartmann and Udo Oberem, 2 vols. (St. Augustin: Haus Völker und Kulturen, Anthropos-Institut, 1978), 1:170-81; José Alcina Franch, "Tomebamba y el problema de los indios Cañaris de la sierra sur del Ecuador," *Anuario de estudios americanos* 37 (1980):403-33; Carlos Alvarez Pazos, "Corpus Christi: expresión de la religiosidad y de la vida Andina en Socarte," in *Expresiones culturales Andinas en Azuay y Cañar: estudios de Casos en tres parroquias rurales*, 2 vols. (Cuenca: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Cuenca, 1992), 2:293-490; Carmen Muñoz Bernand, *Enfermedad, daño e ideología, antropología médica de los renacientes de Pindilig* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1986); and Carmen Muñoz Bernand, *Pindilig: un village des Andes Ecuatoriennes* (Paris: Editions de CNRS, 1992).

concept the Cañar have of their own ethnicity. According to Frank Salomon, the destruction of their true ancestors by treasure hunters caused the Cañares to disassociate themselves from their pre-conquest past.⁵ The Spanish introduced the general category of Indian to encompass all the natives of the New World. For Andean natives this category meant Inca, and they gradually adopted it to identify themselves.

The alternative explanation herein presents elements of Cañar ethnogenesis. Based on a review of Spanish chronicles and ethnohistorical research, the concept of Cañar ethnicity is found to be an Inca creation. As a category, Cañares persist up to the present for reasons of political and economic exigency. While questions of degraded ancestors and pervasive bifurcating imagery⁶ may contribute to Cañar ethnic conceptualization, a close reading of the documentary evidence provides a clearer understanding of the context in which such answers may have arisen.

Ethnicity is understood here as a fundamentally political process of identity formation. It is generated as the social, economic, political, and religious pressures of empire or nation building are brought to bear on sub-populations.⁷ While descent is often the criterion by which ethnic identity is measured and phrased, in fact biological inheritance has little to do with it. Invented traditions and mythic ancestry serve to evoke homogeneity among heterogeneous populations. Both Mary Crain and Ronald Stutzman analyze the construction of Ecuadorian national identity along these lines, though with different emphases.⁸ Where Stutzman focuses on the ideological management of mixing black, white, and Indian "blood," Crain is interested in the rejection and subsequent attempts at integration of the Indian in national identity.

At the local level, ethnicity is both a defensive and offensive adaptation to the pressures and opportunities provided by the national

⁵ Salomon, "Ancestors," 226-28.

⁶ Fock and Krener, "Los Cañaris," 179.

⁷ Brackette F. Williams, "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989):401-44.

⁸ Mary Crain, "The Social Construction of National Identity in Highland Ecuador," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63 (1990):43-59; Ronald Stutzman, "El mestizaje: An All-Inclusive Ideology of Exclusion," in Whitten, *Cultural Transformations*, 45-94.

context.⁹ Through a constant recreation of local group identity, people classified as Indians in Ecuador encourage cooperation among themselves, attempt to manage internal group conflicts, try to defend themselves and their possessions from perceived threats, and look for possibilities to improve their social and economic situations. Because ethnicity has everything to do with the present, history and tradition are best seen as resources used for present purposes rather than as guides to explaining present behavior, including belief.

In Cañar, Indians refer to themselves as *runas* or *naturales*, just as do other Quichua speakers in the Ecuadorian highlands and jungle. The idea that they are the descendants and cultural heirs of the fierce, rebellious people who fought against Inca imperialists may appeal to the imagination but does not stand up under historical scrutiny. It is the sort of idea that is useful for constructing an ethnic identity. It also contributes to the image outsiders hold of the category "Cañar," making it sensible and explaining some of the characteristics of the Cañar today. The historical record suggests quite a different story.

When Sebastián de Benalcázar first arrived in the territory of the Cañares in 1533, he found the ruins of the capital city of the northern Inca empire, Tumipampa, and a decimated native population. He had landed at the end of a civil war being waged over succession to the position of Inca and control over the empire. The Cañares, occupying a large part of what is now southern Ecuador, had suffered the vengeance of one of the contenders, Atahualpa. In response to their having sided with his half-brother, Huascar, in the contest over succession, Atahualpa killed as many of the men and children among them as he could and destroyed Tumipampa.

Fourteen years later, Pedro Cieza de León passed through the territory of the Cañares. Cieza noted that the Cañar women seemed to

⁹ See for example, Hugo Burgos Guerara, *Relaciones interétnicas en Riobamba: dominio y dependencia en una región indígena ecuatoriana* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1977); Blanca Muratorio, *Etnicidad, evangelización y protesta en el Ecuador: una perspectiva antropológica* (Quito: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Socio-Económicos, 1982); Gladys Villavicencio, *Relaciones interétnicas en Otavalo: ¿una nacionalidad india en formación?* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1973); and Norman E. Whitten, Jr., "Etnocidio ecuatoriano y etnogénesis indígena: resurgencia amazónica," in *Temas sobre la continuidad y adaptación cultural ecuatoriana*, ed. Marcelo F. Naranjo et al. (Quito: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 1977), 169-213.

do most of the work and that they greatly outnumbered the men. He recorded how women were conscripted to serve as porters for the Spanish, and went on to explain:

Some Indians like to say that they do this because there are so few men and so many women, due to Atahualpa's cruel punishment of the natives of this province when he came here, after having in Ambato killed and defeated Atoc, the captain general of Huascar Inca, his brother. They tell that, in spite of the men and children having gone out with green branches and palm fronds to beg for his mercy, with a severe and angry expression he ordered his troops and war captains to kill them all; and thus, a great many men and children were killed, as I will describe in the third part of this history. Because of this, those who are alive now say that there are fifteen times more women than men; and because there are so many women, they work in this manner and do everything else their husbands and fathers tell them to do.¹⁰

If Atahualpa's revenge had such dire results for the Cañar population, what further declines would await the population after the Spanish conquest? What effect did the epidemics of European diseases have among the Cañares, and how many of them fled the area to escape Spanish colonial institutions? How many Cañares would have remained in the province of Cañar and how would local demographic changes affect their culture and social institutions? How did the intermingling of Inca-sponsored immigrants (*mitmaq*), Spaniards, and natives from elsewhere in the *audiencia* of Quito affect the local social order?

Before the Inca expansion in the middle of the fifteenth century the peoples who came to be known as Cañares shared common cultural traditions. Although published opinions include the claim of "nation"

¹⁰ Luis A. Leon, ed., *Compilación de crónicas, relatos y descripciones de Cuenca y su provincia*, 3 vols. (Cuenca: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1983), 1:58. This and all other English translations are the author's.

status for the Cañares,¹¹ or the existence of independent chiefdoms which could coalesce to form a confederation and which were governed by a common assembly presided over by the "Lord of Tomebamba,"¹² the bulk of evidence suggests that the Cañares did not constitute a polity. The archaeologist Idrovo and the ethnohistorian Oberem argue that, before the Inca conquest, there were no Cañar people, nation or confederation.¹³ Instead, there were local chiefdoms of various sizes sharing a language and certain cultural traditions (ceramics, metalworking, religious beliefs, agricultural practices) which distinguished them from neighboring peoples such as the Puruhá to the north, the Palta to the south, and the Shuar to the east. These chiefdoms occupied a territory encompassing the present-day provinces of Azuay and Cañar, and small parts of El Oro, Loja, Guayas, and Chimborazo.

This territory contains many distinct microclimates and ecological niches, but on a large scale may be characterized as including four main river drainages (see Figure 1). Each of four principal watersheds corresponded with different groups of local chiefdoms. First, the Cañar River drainage, bordered on the north by

¹¹ "Antes de la invasión de los Incas los Cañares no pertenecían al Reino de Quito ni dependían para nada de Cacha, régulo de Puruhá, sino que formaban una nación independiente." Iglesias, "Los Cañaris," 10. See also Leonardo Espinoza and Lucas Achig, "De la sociedad comunitaria a la sociedad de clases," in *La sociedad Azuayo-Cañari: pasado y presente*, ed. Leonardo Espinoza (Quito: Editorial el Conejo, 1989), 37-46; and Carlos Paida Thoalongo, *Taday, patrimonio histórico del austro* (Cuenca: Editorial Amazonas, 1991), 9.

¹² Federico Gonzalez Suarez, *Estudio histórico de los Cañaris pobladores de la antigua Provincia del Azuay* (Cuenca: Universidad del Azuay, Publicaciones 6, 1965 [1878]).

¹³ "[L]os Cañares aparecen como una serie de parcialidades más o menos vecinas las unas de las otras, con una economía basada en la agricultura y el comercio con la Costa y el Norte Peruano de manera preferencial; en suma cacicazgos independientes económicamente, pero formando unidades regionales en torno a centros de cohesión organizativa, corrientemente afectados por enfrentamientos bélicos, pero asimismo presto a unirse cuando un enemigo común se presentaba; en síntesis, 'una unidad cultural mas no política cuando las Incas venidos del Sur toparon con ellos,' como afirma Udo Oberem." Jaime Idrovo Urigüen, "Tomebamba: primera fase de conquista en los Andes septentrionales," *Revista del Archivo Nacional de Historia, sección del Azuay* 6 (1986):49-70. See also Udo Oberem, "Los Cañaris y la conquista española de la sierra ecuatoriana. Otro capítulo de las relaciones interétnicas en el siglo XVI," in *Contribución a la etnohistoria ecuatoriana*, ed. Segundo Moreno Yáñez and Udo Oberem (Otavalo: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología, 1981), 129-52.

Cañar Territory



Figure 1

the Nudo del Azuay and on the south by Buerán mountain; second, the Azogues-Cuenca drainage containing the headwaters of the Paute River from the Burgay and Tomebamba River systems, bordered on the north by Buerán mountain and on the south by the Nudo de Portete; third, the Paute-Gualaceo sub-drainage that is separated from the Azogues-Cuenca drainage by a north-south cross-cutting chain of mountains and contains the Paute River with its eastern tributaries; and fourth, the Jubones River drainage. These watersheds encompassed a wide range of ecological zones, from wet to dry and from frigid to tropical.¹⁴ Given this significantly varied regional geography, local populations could exploit different kinds of natural resources and agricultural niches without needing to expand out of their own areas. A very active inter-regional trade network allowed them to acquire products and materials not available in their home territories.¹⁵

Within each of these four sub-regions local populations developed independently from one another. Historian Juan Chacón identifies some of the local groups in pre-Inca Cañar as *ayllus*, or extended family groups, declares them "countless," and lists a number of them: Mageo, Collana, Chocar, Duma, Cuyca, Culléo, Sangurima, Burín, Toctesaray, Jadán, Zid, Payguara, Asmal, Pucará, El Pan, Paute, Puesar, Taday, Tarcán, Molleturo, Sayausí, Déleg, Chiquitad, Chordeleg, Tica, Xasán, Selel, Macas, and Maxtos. Distinguishing *ayllus* from *cacicazgos* or chiefdoms, Chacón goes on to list some of the latter: Tiquizambe, Tarqui, Pumallacta, Macas, Gualleturo, Pacaybamba, Sigsig, Molleturo, Tutusí, Guangra, Taday, Juncal, Suña, Hatun Cañar, Sibambe, Cañaribamba, Puésar, Payguara, Sidcay, Lavate, Chordeleg, Asmal, Mageo, Tarcán, Cuyes, Burín. This list of chiefdoms often overlapped or subsumed the *ayllus* listed above.¹⁶ For

¹⁴ Jaime Idrovo Urigüen, "Culebrillas: historia y arqueología de una laguna sagrada," *Revista del Archivo Nacional de Historia, sección del Azuay* 9 (1992):99; Fresco Gonzales, *La arqueología*, 35-40.

¹⁵ Fresco Gonzales, *La arqueología*, 58; José Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris de la sierra sur del Ecuador," *Miscelánea antropológica ecuatoriana* 6 (1986):182-83; Bruhns, "Intercambio," 61-63; and Bruhns et al., "Excavations," 230-33.

¹⁶ Juan Chacón Zhapán, *Historia del corregimiento de Cuenca 1557-1777* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1990), 37-38. Some of these *ayllu* and chiefdom names are Inca. For example, Collana, Cuyca, Sangurima, Toctesaray, Payguara, Pucará, Molleturo, Pumallacta, Gualleturo, Pacaybamba, Sigsig, Cañaribamba, and Cuyes all suggest Inca-sponsored *mitmaq* were present or that the site was settled under Inca

Chacón, the number of chiefdoms was "infinite." This view, which seems to make each family a chiefdom, certainly exaggerates the dissimilarities among local groups, but draws legitimate attention to a highly diverse and autonomous settlement pattern.

Other early testimonies of the multiplicity of local groups were supplied by the rural priests (*doctrineros*) who served predominately native populations. In 1577 the priests and other knowledgeable residents were asked to describe "everything about the Indies" in order to facilitate their administration. These reports were collected in 1582 and later published as the *Relaciones Geográficas de Indias*. Hernando Pablos, a *vecino*, or resident, of Cuenca, wrote that the people known as Cañares spoke different languages, though they also spoke Quechua, the language of the Incas.¹⁷ He went on to note that before the Incas came, the Cañares fought frequently among themselves, then contradicted himself, saying that they shared the same language; but this likely means that they spoke mutually intelligible dialects of the same language.

In agreement with this observation is that of Juan Gómez, *doctrinero* of Cañaribamba, who wrote that the Cañares spoke a single language but that it had a somewhat different vocabulary in his area. Melchor de Pereira, a *doctrinero* of Paute, learned that the Cañares were a cluster of distinct peoples ("*pueblos*"), each with their leader, who fought regularly among themselves. Gaspar de Gallegos, a priest in Azogues, described the same pattern of many local chiefs who were in constant conflict with each other. In summary there was evidence that several dialects of a single language were spoken by the different local groups or chiefdoms.¹⁸ Involvement in trade and relative proximity would have encouraged linguistic similitude among them, while geographically imposed isolation and defense of territorial resources would have allowed the development of separate local traditions. Garcilaso de la Vega refers to the province of the Cañares as "the capital of many provinces," and continues, "once the conquest of the Cañares was accomplished, the great Tupac Inca Yupanqui

auspices.

¹⁷ Pilar Ponce, ed., *Relaciones historico-geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito (siglo XVI-XIX)*, 2 vols. (Quito: Marka-Instituto de Historia y Antropología Andina, Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1992), 1:374.

¹⁸ Ponce, *Relaciones historico-geográficas*, 1:382-96.

undertook the study, organization and settlement of the many and diverse peoples who are included under the name Cañar."¹⁹ Here Garcilaso ratifies the consensus that there were many independent groups.

As argued above, before the coming of the Incas, there is no evidence that a unified Cañar polity existed. The challenge represented by the Inca invasion, however, forced the local groups into alliances for purposes of common defense. It was during this period of challenge and conquest that an entity the Incas called "Cañar" was forged; it is unclear when the local peoples inhabiting this region came to consider themselves Cañares. Upon submission, those who lived in the path of the Inca domination were amalgamated into a new ethnic group, created from the perceptions and for the administrative convenience of the new lords.

The Inca conquest of the province of the Cañares was a long and never entirely successful process.²⁰ Between 1463 and 1490, approximately, the Incas struggled to impose their order in a series of advances, failures, and reconquests. From the archaeological remains of their reign, it appears that they achieved effective control in centers of dense population while the dispersed settlements in outlying areas were but tenuously incorporated into the Inca empire.²¹

Tupac Inca Yupanqui made the first incursions into Cañar territory under orders from his father, Inca Pachacutec.²² He conquered the Jubones drainage and established a garrison at Guapóndelic, renaming it Tumipampa. Situated at the geographical center of the Cañar territory, Tumipampa was a strategic staging area from which to attempt further conquests. Thus Tupac Inca Yupanqui edified and fortified the city and began constructing fortresses (*pucarás*) at its outskirts. His son, Huayna Capac, was born here.

It became Huayna Capac's task to consolidate the Inca hold on the Cañar region and press northward. He built Tumipampa as a replica

¹⁹ Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales de los Incas*, ed. Aurelio Miro Quesada, 2 vols. (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1976), 2:161.

²⁰ Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris," 149-50.

²¹ Idrovo Urigüen, "Tomebamba," and "Culebrillas."

²² Idrovo Urigüen, "Tomebamba," 61; Linda A. Newson, *Life and Death in Early Colonial Ecuador* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 119.

of Cuzco,²³ added fortifications along the northern edge of the territory to hold it against the Puruhás, and imposed Inca control in Hatun Cañar and eastward into the Paute River basin. The local peoples did not particularly welcome or facilitate these efforts. As Idrovo has pointed out, the dispersed settlement patterns and the relative self-sufficiency of the chiefdoms made the imposition of control difficult.²⁴ For this reason the Incas were more successful in imposing themselves among urbanized or densely settled populations, and regularly failed to conquer the semi-nomadic hunter/gatherer groups of the eastern jungles. In Cañar, local self-sufficiency allowed for a guerrilla type warfare that the Inca armies could not effectively address.

Both Tupac Inca Yupanqui and Huayna Capac implemented the *mitma* system of colonization in the province of the Cañares, to reinforce Inca dominion and to dissipate the possibilities of local uprisings against them. This Inca policy both diluted the Cañar population, and helped define the emergent Cañar ethnic identity. First, large numbers of Cañares were removed for resettlement in what are now Peru and Bolivia, as well as in northern Ecuador.²⁵ Waldemar Espinoza Soriano, who has done extensive research on *mitma* communities, states that Cañares were resettled throughout the empire, to punish them and also to employ them in agricultural and police work. Of particular interest in the present context, he says that more than 50 percent of the inhabitants of Cañar were relocated.²⁶ In this way the

²³ Martín de Murúa, *Historia general del Perú*, ed. Manuel Ballesteros (Madrid: Historia 16, 1987), 113.

²⁴ Idrovo Uriguen, "Tomebamba," 55; see also, Fresco Gonzales, *La arqueología*, 58.

²⁵ Manuel Miño Grijalva, *Los Cañaris en el Perú, una aproximación etnohistórica* (Quito: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 1977); Roswith Hartmann and Udo Oberem, "Indios Cañaris de la sierra sur del Ecuador en el Cuzco del siglo XVI," *Revista de la Universidad Complutense* 28 (1979):373-90; and Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris."

²⁶ Waldemar Espinoza Soriano, "Los mitmas Cañar en el reino de Yaro (Perú) siglos XV y XVI," in *Etnohistoria ecuatoriana: estudios y documentos* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1988), 346; see John H. Rowe, "Inca Policies and Institutions Relating to the Cultural Unification of the Empire," in *The Inca and Aztec States, 1400-1800: Anthropology and History*, ed. George A. Collier et al. (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 107, for other estimates of native/*mitma* proportions elsewhere in the empire.

Incas removed potentially disruptive influences from the conquered area and dispersed those suspect of inciting rebellion.

Second, large numbers of subjects from different parts of the empire were resettled among the Cañares.²⁷ These *mitmaq* served to establish a loyal presence among possibly resentful, anti-Inca people, to set an example of correct demeanor and practice, to teach the Quechua language, and to provide Inca authorities with intelligence regarding local security. Both of these results of the *mitma* system encouraged a gradual mixing of aboriginal practices and beliefs. Thus while Cuzco influences were surely most significant, *mitmaq* from Chachapoyas, Huancabamba, and Ayabaca in what is now northern Peru, and Charcas, Collao, and what is now Chile, also contributed to Cañar culture. Murúa described Tumipampa as a markedly multi-ethnic city.²⁸

The total population transferred in and out of the province of the Cañares is difficult to reconstruct with precision. Cieza de León and Cabello Valboa wrote that Tupac Yupanqui took fifteen thousand Cañares to Cuzco.²⁹ Huayna Capac took as many or more during his reign.³⁰ According to Oberem³¹ these fifteen thousand were men, and the total Cañar population in the Cuzco area was fifty to seventy thousand. Cañar *mitmaq* are noted as having been present in Lima, Jauja, Huánuco, Huamanga, Cajamarca, Yaro, and Cajabamba in Peru,³² and in Copacabana, La Paz, and Sucre in Bolivia.³³ On the

²⁷ Segundo Moreno Yáñez, "Colonial mitmas en el Quito incaico: su significación económica y política," in Moreno Yáñez and Oberem, *Contribución*, 115; Hartmann and Oberem, "Indios Cañaris," 386.

²⁸ Murúa, *Historia general del Perú*, 113. He says, [Huayna Capac] "Hizo para perpetuar allí más nombre, y que fuese mayor población, que todas las naciones que desde el Cuzco le habían seguido y de las Charcas y Collado y Chile, todas poblasen allí en torno de Tomebamba...."

²⁹ Miño Grijalva, *Los Cañaris*, 16.

³⁰ Hartmann and Oberem, "Indios Cañaris," 376.

³¹ Udo Oberem, "El período incaico en el Ecuador," in Ayala Mora, *Nueva historia del Ecuador*, 2:153.

³² Brian Evans, "Migration Processes in Upper Peru in the Seventeenth Century," in *Migration in Colonial Spanish America*, ed. David J. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 80; Miño Grijalva, *Los Cañaris*, 19; Espinoza Soriano, "Los mitmas Cañar," 345, and "Los Chachapoyas y cañares de Chiara (Huamanga), Aliados de España," in *Etnohistoria ecuatoriana*, 321.

Peruvian coast there were Cañar *mitmaq* near Lambayeque and on the eastern side of the Andes, in Jaén de Bracamoros, Moyobamba, and Chachapoyas.³⁴

North of their home territory (see Figure 2), Cañar *mitmaq* lived in Pujilí, near Latacunga, where they retained a separate identity and their own *caciques*, or native leaders, until at least the mid-eighteenth century.³⁵ Angamarca, west of Latacunga, had a Cañar group with its own *cacique* into the late seventeenth century. In 1677, the city of Quito had over seven hundred Cañar tribute payers under their *cacique*, Diego Cañar. There were also Cañares nearby in Cotacallao, El Quinche, and Pomasquí.³⁶

By the end of the Inca reign, over seventy thousand Cañares had been resettled in different parts of the empire.³⁷ *Mitmaq* transferred into the province would have replaced those removed. Alcina suggests a total population of fifty thousand in the Cañar territory before the Spanish conquest,³⁸ as did the priest Pablos.³⁹ A large percentage of this population would have been *mitmaq*. If Waldemar Espinoza Soriano⁴⁰ is correct, 50 percent, or between twenty-five thousand and thirty-five thousand of the residents of the province of the Cañares were *mitmaq*.

The Inca civil war (1525-32) had additional disastrous consequences for the Cañar population. The disruption and confusion ensuing from the dispute between Atahualpa and Huascar presented the Cañares with an opportunity to rid themselves of Inca domination. After a period of exchanged insults and killings of messengers, the two half brothers went to war. At first, Atahualpa successfully defended the northern empire against Huascar's armies, but he was defeated and

³³ Roberto Santos, *Los mitimaes cañaris-chachapoyas de Copacabana (siglos XVI-XVII)* (La Paz: Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, 1986), 6-9.

³⁴ Oberem, "El período incaico," 153.

³⁵ Yolanda Navas de Pozo, *Angamarca en el siglo XVI* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1990), 101, 105.

³⁶ Frank Salomon, *Los señores étnicos de Quito en la época de los Incas* (Otavalo: Instituto Otavaleño de Antropología, 1980), 337; Moreno Yáñez, "Colonias mitmas," 115.

³⁷ Oberem, "El período incaico," 153.

³⁸ Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris," 146.

³⁹ Ponce, *Relaciones historico-geográficas*, 1:375.

⁴⁰ Espinoza Soriano, "Los mitmas Cañar," 346.

Audiencia of Quito (partial map)



Figure 2

taken prisoner at Tumipampa. He was able to escape and fled to Quito. There he reorganized his army, returned to Tumipampa and killed as many Cañares as he could. According to Fernández de Oviedo and Zárate, sixty thousand men died in this single battle. According to Cieza de León, Sarmiento de Gamboa, and other chroniclers, there was no battle, but rather a massacre. Huascar's troops, under his brother Huanca Auqui, had evacuated Tumipampa ahead of Atahualpa, leaving the city and the province defenseless in the face of Atahualpa's superior force of trained soldiers. Some Cañares, fearing Atahualpa's vengeance, went into hiding, taking with them the mummy of Mama Oollo, Huayna Capac's wife. They joined Huanca Auqui and went south. As Atahualpa's troops approached Tumipampa, the Cañares went out to plead for mercy, but to no avail. Atahualpa killed men, women, and children, and then he leveled Tumipampa. So thorough was his Cañar extermination campaign that Atahualpa brought four thousand more *mitmaq* from Cuzco to repopulate Tumipampa.⁴¹ These further drastic reductions in the native Cañar population were primarily of men; while disease epidemics, discussed below, would have killed people without sex discrimination, fatalities in war tend to be greater among men.

Other chroniclers have described the effects of the civil war on the population of the province of the Cañares. According to Hernando Pablos, "all the Cañares died, of the fifty thousand that there had been, no more than three thousand were left, which was at the time the Spanish arrived; and since then up to now, there are twelve thousand souls, because now they are very unburdened and free and not so tied down as they were during the reign of their lord the Inca."⁴² These figures probably apply to the central region around Tumipampa where the massacre occurred. Another chronicler, Fray Reginaldo de Lizárraga, writing in 1587, reported that Atahualpa killed nearly all the Cañares, leaving only eight hundred in the valley of Tumipampa.⁴³ He also noted that when he was there even fewer Indians were present.

⁴¹ Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris," 155; Thomas C. Patterson, *The Inca Empire: The Formation and Disintegration of a Pre-Capitalist State* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1991), 121.

⁴² Ponce, *Relaciones historico-geográficas*, 1:375.

⁴³ Quoted in Victor Manuel Albornoz, *Cuenca a travez de cuatro siglos*, 2 vols. (Cuenca: Dirección de Publicaciones Municipales, 1960), 2:233.

These population reports subsume *originarios* (Indians who, for colonial administrative purposes, were classified as native to a given jurisdiction) and *mitmaq*, giving the total number of *ánimas*, or souls. Taking Pablos's figure of three thousand Indians and applying the *mitmaq* to native proportion suggested above, there would have been fifteen hundred *mitmaq* and fifteen hundred Cañares left after Atahualpa's revenge.⁴⁴

By 1582 when the *Relaciones Geográficas de Indias* were being compiled, population estimates show massive losses in the numbers of Indians in most of the parishes. For the area of Pacaybamba, near modern Girón, Pedro Arias Dávila recorded an Indian population of five hundred. In the Paute area there were two hundred Indians. Fray Lizárrago estimated many fewer than eight hundred Indians for the Tumipampa area. Based on these counts,⁴⁵ Alcina suggests that there were five thousand Indians left in the entire Cañar region in 1582. Again maintaining the 50 percent *mitmaq*/Cañar proportion, this figure implies the survival of twenty-five hundred natives and twenty-five hundred *mitmaq*. These population estimates are compatible with the lower figures recorded above, for Alcina is referring to the entire Cañar territory, while Pablos and other chroniclers were referring to the arenas of the Inca civil war.

One of the principal causes of a further decline in the Indian population was the introduction of European diseases against which the Indians had no immunity. Though much of the population loss occurred after the Spanish conquest, as will be discussed below, epidemics had preceded the conquerors into South America and had already had devastating effects. In 1524 and again in 1526 smallpox spread through the Inca empire, the first epidemic having killed the Inca Huayna Capac and his son and appointed heir, Ninan Cuyochi. Between 1530-1532 two more measles epidemics have been documented by Cook.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pablos was referring to the Indian population of the Cañar region, without distinguishing among the various ethnic groups integrating this population. Presumably, more native Cañares than *mitmaq* would have perished in the war against Atahualpa. Thus the *mitmaq* to native proportion was likely even more skewed in favor of *mitmaq* than the equal halves estimate suggests.

⁴⁵ Alcina Franch, "Los indios Cañaris," 146.

⁴⁶ Noble David Cook, *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520-1620* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); see also Suzanne Austin Alchon, *Native Society and Disease in Colonial Ecuador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37;

Shea⁴⁷ concludes that the pre-conquest population of Peru was declining due to smallpox and other epidemics, and that the decline would have been more rapid where arable land is scarce, as in Peru. Truhan suggests that before the Spanish arrived, the native population may have declined by at least a third and possibly by half, due to these early epidemics and their repercussions in decreased food production, disorganization, and despair.⁴⁸

The demographic profile emerging from the combination of factors described above is one of severe decline of the total Indian population. The *mitma* program removed half of the native Cañar population and replaced it with outsiders, many of them from the Cuzco area. The remaining Cañares were scattered over their 10,400 square kilometer territory, had lived for the sixty years of Inca domination in proximity or intermixed with peoples from all over the empire, and had lost family and community members to military campaigns, to epidemics, and to *mitma* relocation. The Cañar ethnic category had been created by Inca military challenge and for Inca administrative purposes. In this context it is perhaps significant that when the Cañares went to meet Pizarro at Tumbes to offer him their support against the Incas, they did not send an emissary who represented their polity, nor a leader who spoke for them all. Instead, a party of local leaders went in the company of their supporters. One of these leaders was Vilchumlay, of the Paute area. They accompanied Pizarro to Cajamarca, where they witnessed the demise of Atahualpa, and then returned north with Sebastián de Benalcázar. Cañar alliances with Benalcázar came to him through the agencies of individual lords, such as Vilchumlay and Oyañe of Cañaribamba, who represented their local groups rather than a Cañar confederation or nation.⁴⁹ Thus it seems that even after sixty years of Inca efforts to impose their model of

and Newson, *Life and Death*, 144-54.

⁴⁷ Daniel E. Shea, "A Defense of Small Population Estimates for the Central Andes in 1520," in *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, ed. William M. Denevan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 176.

⁴⁸ Deborah L. Truhan, "Evolución de la historiografía de la 'conquista' de los pueblos andinos," *Revista del Archivo Nacional de Historia, Sección del Azuay* 9 (1992):46.

⁴⁹ Oberem, "Los Cañaris," 135-36; Joan Bistancela, *Probanza de don Joan Bistancela, cacique de Toctesí* (Quito: Cuadernos Guapondelig No. 1, 1976).

social order upon the peoples occupying the province of the Cañares, these peoples were not unified and did not act in concert.

The arrival of the Spanish in 1532 heralded an unprecedented disruption of all aspects of life in Cañar territory. The diseases that had preceded them continued to cause high mortality rates among all the native peoples of South America, but particularly among those in the densely populated areas of the Andean highlands. For the *audiencia* of Quito as a whole, the native population declined by 50 percent between 1561 and 1591.⁵⁰ The years 1533, 1558, 1586, and 1587 were particularly devastating to the Indian population. The *Relaciones Geográficas* document this decline for most of the individual communities in the Cuenca area. The conquest itself caused some native peoples to fight or to flee, either choice implying their removal from their homes and communities. The Spanish struggled to establish control over the former Inca empire throughout the sixteenth century. Thus, the dismembering and reconstitution of native communities was a prolonged process. Colonial administrative and economic institutions provided a constant impetus for natives to leave their homes. The various civil and ecclesiastical taxes imposed unbearable hardship on native economies. A number of institutions attempted to recruit and control a native labor force in the service of both individual and collective Spanish interests. Taken together these institutions both transferred Indians to distant places where their services were needed and encouraged them to escape the dire effects of staying home. The result of the imposition of the Spanish colonial regime on the population and social organization of the province of the Cañares is assessed below.

Throughout the conquest the Cañares would serve the Spaniards as soldiers, guides, intelligence agents, and porters. In these activities Cañares moved all over the Inca empire, and apparently few returned to their homes. In 1533 three thousand Cañares joined Sebastián de Benalcázar when he passed through Tumipampa on his way north to conquer Quito.⁵¹ This contingent took part in the battle of Tiocajas

⁵⁰ Robson Brines Tyrer, *Historia demográfica y económica de la Audiencia de Quito: población indígena e industria textil, 1600-1800* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1988), 26; Alchon, *Native Society*, 42-49.

⁵¹ John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 156; Oberem, "Los Cañaris," 137.

against Rumiñahui's forces with much loss of life on both sides. From here Benalcázar continued north with the Cañares still accompanying him for more fighting in and around Quito. As testimony to the Indian allies remaining where their military activities had taken them is Benalcázar's 1535 decree, as president of the *cabildo* (town council) of Quito, that all the Indians who had accompanied him and other Spaniards on the northern campaigns be required to return to their places of origin.⁵² The Spanish had no means of enforcing such an order, the very existence of which testifies to a substantial population of displaced Indians.

In 1536 the *encomendero* (recipient of a royal grant giving a right to tribute collections and/or the labor of a certain number of native laborers) of Cañaribamba, Diego de Sandoval, took five thousand Cañares to rescue Lima from the siege of Manco Inca. In 1540 Pedro de Vergara took eight hundred Cañares to serve as porters on his expedition into the eastern jungles. In 1547 Benalcázar took Cañares to Peru to help defend La Gasca against Gonzalo Pizarro's rebellion. Throughout the rest of the sixteenth century the Spanish conscripted Cañares to serve on their military campaigns. In 1594 Cañares went to the north of Quito to help put down native rebellions in Lito and Quilca.⁵³ Despite extensive Cañar support for Spanish military operations, they were never rewarded with the tribute and *mita* exemptions that could have been expected under these circumstances.⁵⁴ Given the nature of these activities, few Cañares would have survived these outings, and those who did probably settled down wherever they found themselves.

Census information collected by Spanish authorities shows a steep decline in the native population for the sixteenth century. In the *audiencia* of Quito, by 1560 two-thirds of the native population had perished; by 1590 the remaining population had declined by half.⁵⁵ During the latter half of the sixteenth century, the colonial administration attempted to collect detailed information on the Indian population of the jurisdiction of Cuenca. In 1567, ten years after the founding of Cuenca, the tribute list for the area contained 5,470 tribute payers,

⁵² Chacón Zhapán, *Historia del corregimiento*, 84.

⁵³ Oberem, "Los Cañaris," 138-40; Iglesias, *Los Cañaris*, 24.

⁵⁴ Salomon, "Ancestors," 212.

⁵⁵ Alchon, *Native Society*, 55.

suggesting a total Indian population of 24,615.⁵⁶ This significant apparent increase since 1533 may be the result of immigration and perhaps population underestimates for the earlier date. In 1570 the *cabildo* of Cuenca recorded eight thousand tribute-paying Indians within its area, but within this total fifteen hundred were "Cañares, etc.," who were distinguished from Tiquizambe, Alausí. In 1582 Pablos recorded a population of twelve thousand for the Cañar region.⁵⁷ In 1590 the *Relación de Zaruma* reported three thousand tribute payers in the same area. In 1591 a census carried out by Morales Figueroa found 1,472 tribute payers again in the same area. Tyrer considers the Morales Figueroa total to be the most accurate because it combined *encomienda* data with census figures from individual parishes. Multiplying the number of tribute payers by 4.7 as Tyrer suggests to estimate the total Indian population, there were 13,160 Indians in the province of the Cañares in 1590.⁵⁸

Mining activity during the early colonial period had brought significant numbers of Indians from elsewhere to the Cañar region. Mining was labor-intensive, making the recruitment of workers a top priority. The local native population was so depleted by 1540 that mining entrepreneurs were looking for outside sources of laborers and lobbying the colonial authorities for the right to recruit them. Those who could afford it were importing or buying black slaves to use as miners. Apparently, most of the Indians who were brought to work as miners were Puruhás from the Riobamba area.⁵⁹ In 1564 the *corregidor* of Quito, Salazar de Villasante, brought two hundred Puruhás from Riobamba to work the Santa Barbara mines near Gualaceo. He described his efforts to promote mining in Cuenca: "and then I went to visit that city (Cuenca), to see the mines, and they

⁵⁶ To obtain the total population figure the writer multiplied the tribute list total by 4.5, an intermediate figure between Tyrer's 4.7 and Shea's 4.1. For later in the colonial period Tyrer's higher multiplier is followed. There is no general agreement on the value of the multiplier because circumstances varied greatly in time and space and theoretical considerations are no less varied. Chacón Zhapán, *Historia del corregimiento*, 23, 34. See also Newson, *Life and Death*, 55: she uses a multiplier of four, and thus gets even lower population figures for Cañar territory in the sixteenth century.

⁵⁷ Ponce, *Relaciones historico-geográficas*, 1:374.

⁵⁸ Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 27, 267.

⁵⁹ Espinoza and Achig, "De la sociedad comunitaria," 85.

looked promising, so I sent to the province called Puruhá, located near the village of Riobamba, to the *caciques*, to ask if they wanted to send Indians to work in the mines, that they should send me two hundred and they would be paid a good daily wage."⁶⁰ Colonial records from 1575 show that three hundred more Puruhás were recruited to work the Santa Barbara mines. The mines at Malal near Hatun Cañar were also served by Puruhás as well as by slaves and two hundred more Indians, as recorded on one mining permit.⁶¹

All the colonial records pertaining to mining in the *corregimiento* of Cuenca speak of the lack of Indians available locally and the need to bring Indian miners from elsewhere. The difficulties of maintaining a foreign labor force were many: the Indians did not want to go to distant mines where, according to many descriptions, they suffered greatly from hunger, malnutrition, overwork, and change of climate. *Encomenderos* and priests were not amenable to removal of Indians from their control because it depleted their labor force. Thus a fundamental conflict existed between local interests and royal interests, which wanted to promote mining as much as possible. Mining entrepreneurs were of course allied with the crown on this matter, and in some parts of the colonies the crown made provisions for a special mining *mita* to ensure the miners of their labor force.⁶² These provisions did not apply to Cuenca, but the entrepreneurs found other ways to obtain grants of Indian laborers from *audiencia* officials. Despite energetic efforts to establish mines in Cuenca, mining was never a very profitable activity because of the difficulties of obtaining laborers. The decline and eventual disappearance of mining from the regional economy have been blamed principally on the labor problem, although lack of interest, investment capital, and technology have also been recognized.⁶³ Poor quality mineral deposits must have also discouraged protracted mining efforts.

While mining was one of the principal causes for the early introduction of Indians from elsewhere into the province of the Cañares

⁶⁰ León, *Compilación de crónicas*, 2:67.

⁶¹ Chacón Zhapán, *Historia del corregimiento*, 178-81.

⁶² Juan Chacón Zhapán, *Historia de la minería en Cuenca* (Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, 1986), 12; and *Historia del corregimiento*, 140-44.

⁶³ Chacón Zhapán, *Historia de la minería*, 77-80, 119.

during the colonial period, it was also responsible for drawing Spaniards out into the countryside and thus generating a population of rural mestizos. The Spanish enthusiasm for discovering mineral deposits had guided the founding of the first settlements in the region. These *asientos* (a rental agreement celebrated between the Spanish crown and individuals, and later companies, regarding a specific commercial concession) were settled without previous planning, for the single purpose of mining exploration and exploitation, in Baños, Sayausí, Gualaceo, Azogues, Molleturo, and Malal.⁶⁴ In 1535 the *cabildo* of Quito had been informed that there were rich gold deposits in Tumipampa and it noted that "many Spaniards have gone to the town of Tomebamba" where they were using illegal means to force Indians to work mines for them.⁶⁵ Notarial records of testaments reveal early mixing of Indians and Spaniards in these mining areas.⁶⁶ Although mining did not prosper as an economic activity in this region, agriculture, which came to replace it, served to maintain white and mestizo interests in the countryside.

The seventeenth century saw a gradual recovery in the native population of the *audiencia* of Quito. However, the increase recorded for the Cuenca area appears to be due to immigration rather than to higher birth or survival rates. In 1683 Cuenca's tribute records showed a total of 3,924 tribute payers, of whom 2,232 were considered native and 1,692 were *forasteros* (Indians from somewhere else).⁶⁷ This total implies a native population of 17,658, using the 4.5 multiplier Tyrer suggests for the seventeenth century. Moreover, Cuenca's tribute payer lists included "imaginary" or absent Indians as 12 percent of its total. Thus the native population apparently stayed much the same until 1690 when a series of natural disasters, famine, and epidemics hit the northern half of the *audiencia*. Based on official estimates, the Indian population diminished by a third to a half between 1691-1693. In 1698

⁶⁴ Ana Luz Borrero Vega, *El paisaje rural en el Azuay* (Cuenca: Banco Central del Ecuador and Centro de Investigación y Cultura, 1989), 92.

⁶⁵ Chacón Zhapán, *Historia del corregimiento*, 135.

⁶⁶ Testamento de Magdalena Vasquez, india de Molleturo, 1617, Archivo Nacional de Historia, Cuenca (hereinafter cited as ANHC), 3a Notaría, libro 502, fol. 265.

⁶⁷ Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 45-46, 50, 69. See Ann M. Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change: The Forasteros of Cuzco, 1570-1720* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) for full discussion of *forasteros* in the Cuzco area. Alchon, *Native Society*, 98.

there were severe earthquakes in Ambato, Latacunga, and Riobamba. Epidemics of measles and diphtheria, combined with preceding years of famine, caused high mortality rates among the Indians. These events, together with onerous labor and tax levies, provoked significant migratory movements out of the northern region and towards the south. For example, crown officials discovered that 21 percent of Indian emigrants from Riobamba went to Cuenca's jurisdiction.⁶⁸ Emigration to escape *mita* obligations was the ubiquitous pattern throughout Spanish America, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁹ In this regard, Cuenca's Indian population experienced similar fiscal pressures and responded in like fashion to fellow tribute-payers and *mitayos* elsewhere in the Andes.

Taxation, such as tribute payments in cash and goods, labor levies, and payments for church maintenance and Catholic catechism, together constituted a significant incentive for Indians to leave their homelands. The censuses, visits, and re-counts carried out by colonial officials testify to the importance of knowing of, and taxing, each eligible Indian. As the Indians devised tactics to diminish or evade the tax burden, colonial officials invented ways to keep track of them, though judging by their sometimes bitter and frustrated correspondence, their efforts were not always successful. The examples that follow offer testimony to the results of colonial taxation policy on migration patterns in the *corregimiento* of Cuenca.

In 1651 a group of *caciques* from the Cuenca region was imprisoned for failing to pay the tribute due from their numerous absent subjects. The following year they were released so that they could collect the tribute due for 1652. Their release bore no pretense of their being able to collect the missing tribute for either year.⁷⁰ Clearly, the absent tribute payers had eluded not only the colonial administrative apparatus, but their ties to their communities as well.

In the 1660s an *encomendero* in the *corregimiento* of Chimbo reported that many of his Indians were living in Cuenca's jurisdiction

⁶⁸ Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 53; Karen Viera Powers, *Prendas con pies, migraciones indígenas y supervivencia cultural en la Audiencia de Quito* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1994), 135.

⁶⁹ Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, *Indios y tributos en el Alto Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1978), 51. See also Rowe, "Inca Policies," 114.

⁷⁰ Powers, *Prendas con pies*, 253.

and had been incorporated into the royal crown tribute category.⁷¹ Tribute payers in this category were assessed at a lower rate and were exempt from the *mita*. He explained that they had fled to avoid paying a large sum of overdue tribute, and noted that this pattern was common throughout the *audiencia*. Indians who managed to join the crown tribute category usually succeeded in retaining this status because it served interests of the crown.

Over the following century the Indian population of the jurisdiction of Cuenca slowly rose to 50,822 by 1778. The census carried out by the newly formed *gobernación* of Cuenca in that year shows 36,654 Indians in what is now Azuay province, and 14,168 Indians in Cañar province.⁷² Contrary to the usual image of urban areas as Spanish space, nearly 50 percent of the city of Cuenca's residents were Indians. As part of the total population of the *gobernación*, the Indians represented 67 percent, while whites and mestizos made up 31 percent. The remaining percentage points represent the slave and free black group. Even more significantly, the tribute records show that fully 75 percent of these Indians were *forasteros*.⁷³ Thus, as in the previous century, the majority of the region's demographic increase was due to immigration. These figures make it clear: there were 12,706 Indians classified as native to the region (including descendants of "native" *mitmaq*) and 38,116 immigrant Indians or their descendants sharing the same social category and economic conditions.⁷⁴ If we were to apply the 50 percent native to *mitmaq* proportion to the native total, there would have been 6,353 descendants of native Cañares present by this time. However, even this calculation is surely too high because it does not take intermarriage between the Cañares, *mitmaq*, and colonial immigrants into account, a process which would have diluted the Cañar population even more.

⁷¹ Powers, *Prendas con pies*, 313-14; and Karen Powers Viera, "Indian Migrations in the *Audiencia* of Quito: Crown Manipulations and Local Cooptation," in Robinson, *Migration*, 317.

⁷² Leonardo Espinoza, "En el bicentenario del primer censo de población de la gobernación de Cuenca 1778-1978," *Revista del IDIS* 5 (1978):70.

⁷³ Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 69.

⁷⁴ As Sánchez-Albornoz points out for Alto Perú (in *Indios y tributos*, 53), *mitmaq* were not confused with *forasteros* in Spanish colonial records; rather they were categorized as *originarios* of their places or origin, or grouped with the local *naturales*, as seems to have been the prevalent pattern in Cañar.

In 1735 the *corregidor* of Chimbo denounced the migration tactic for evading *mita* requirements and suggested that the king abolish the exemption from the *mita* that *forastero* Indians enjoyed. He explained that all the Indians would disappear from their registered native communities unless the exemption was removed as an incentive for migration. He added, "the majority of Chimbo Indians have moved out, most of them to the province of Cuenca."⁷⁵

Not only did those from Chimbo move in with the Cañares; those from Loja did, too. In 1759 José Gabriel de Piedrahita, *corregidor* of Loja, wrote about some of the methods used to evade tribute and *mita* exactions. "Foreign" Indians not only were exempt from the *mita* but they paid a much reduced tribute as well. Moreover, marriage between *forastero* and local Indians provided the children of such unions with additional advantages. He denounced their evasion of all controls and responsibilities, and their unwarranted allegations of belonging to the category of Indians assigned to the crown, for the purpose of having a lower tribute assessment and *mita* exemption.⁷⁶

Natural disaster, disease, and migration each contributed to the demographic profile of the *gobernación* (a colonial political unit ruled by a *gobernador*) of Cuenca in the eighteenth century. Volcanic eruptions of Cotopaxi and Tunguragua, and earthquakes, forced people to leave these regions as they had in the seventeenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century, the textile workshops (*obrajes*) in the northern provinces of the *audiencia* were in definitive decline due to new import/export regulations dictated by the Spanish crown and to the availability of cheaper textiles from Europe.⁷⁷ Indian laborers from these workshops scattered in all directions, but particularly toward the coast and the southern highlands.⁷⁸ Thus, more migrants from the *corregimientos* of Otavalo, Quito, Latacunga, Ambato, Riobamba, and Chimbo probably arrived at this time. In Cuenca a relative textile

⁷⁵ Loreto Rebolledo, *Comunidad y resistencia: el caso de Lumbist en la colonia* (Quito: FLASCO, Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1992), 131.

⁷⁶ Rebolledo, *Comunidad y resistencia*, 132.

⁷⁷ Alchon, *Native Society*, 122. See also Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 237-60, chapter 8 on textile decline in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁸ Espinoza and Achig, "De la sociedad comunitaria," 76.

bonanza was in progress⁷⁹ which may have made it an attractive destination. Epidemics spread through northern Ecuador repeatedly during the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ While Cuenca was not free of illness, Otavalo, Quito, Latacunga, and Riobamba suffered high periodic mortality rates due to contagious disease. Tyrer estimates an average annual mortality rate of 15 percent among Indians. These epidemics would have encouraged emigration from the affected areas, and thus sent some migrants toward Cuenca. Both Tyrer and Espinoza explain Cuenca's relatively large population at the end of the colonial period as based on the economic, social, and epidemiological factors that pushed Indians out of the northern sierra.

One of the most detailed descriptions of the constituents of local populations in the *corregimiento* of Cuenca is provided by the *corregidor* from 1763-1767, Joaquin de Merisalde y Santisteban. In his *Relación histórica, política y moral de la ciudad de Cuenca, población y hermosura de su provincia*, Merisalde observed the ethnic make-up of each town in his jurisdiction, and provided extensive geographic and economic information. He concluded with an impassioned denunciation of the *mita*. In his summary of the relative proportions of Indians to whites, and both to mestizos, he found only two areas inhabited solely by Indians. These were Cañaribamba and Taday/Pendetel (Pindilig), in the cordillera east of Azogues (see Figure 1). He explained that the six hundred Indians of Cañaribamba represented the remnant of a much larger population that had been destroyed by the *mita*, and that they would not permit whites to live among them, having observed that whites ended up owning all the land wherever they settled. For Taday and Pindilig he said, "All the inhabitants, who number more than fifteen hundred, are Indians, and they, like those of Cañaribamba, are especially adamant about keeping to themselves."⁸¹

Merisalde's review of the population in each of the rest of Cuenca's towns showed that white/Indian mixing had been extensive. Beginning with the outskirts of Cuenca, he found that mestizos greatly

⁷⁹ Leonardo Espinoza and Lucas Achig, *Proceso de desarrollo de las provincias de Azuay, Cañar y Morona Santiago: breve historia económica y social de la región Cañari* (Cuenca: Centro de Reconversión Económica del Azuay, Cañar y Morona Santiago, 1981), 36-37.

⁸⁰ Tyrer, *Historia demográfica*, 66.

⁸¹ Albornoz, *Cuenca*, 2:48, 63.

outnumbered Indians and that "noble" white families were very few. South of Cuenca in Girón mestizos predominated, while Indians were a minority and mostly confined to the haciendas. In Oña there were more Indians, all of them associated with haciendas. To the south east in San Bartolomé Merisalde found one thousand inhabitants divided between mestizos, Indians, and *hacendados*. Paccha was entirely mestizo, while Quingeo was mostly Indian. East of Cuenca, in Gualaceo, he found many white people with a few Indians confined to the haciendas. In Paute there were two thousand inhabitants with many whites and the Indians attached to the haciendas. North of Cuenca, Azogues's population of eight thousand was divided between whites and Indians. In the surrounding communities he found mestizo majorities. In Cañar he found one thousand mestizos living in town and four thousand Indians living on the surrounding haciendas. Moving further north, in Alausí he found an Indian majority of two thousand. In Chunchi, Guasuntos, Sibambe, and Tixán (formerly Tiquezambe) there were mixed mestizo and Indian populations and a few intermittent *hacendados* and priests.

The general demographic picture suggested in Merisalde's report is one of widespread mixture among Indians and whites with notable local differences in the extent to which this process had advanced. A few areas were homogeneous. Many areas had mestizo majorities and nearly all had some people classified as having mixed ancestry. Comparing the two regions that would later become the provinces of Azuay and Cañar, distinct demographic characters were already apparent. Azuay had a significant mestizo population present in nearly all its towns and in the countryside. Cañaribamba was its only free Indian community and was in the process of shrinking. The rest of the Indian population was scattered except for small groups attached to individual haciendas. In Cañar on the other hand, particularly around Hatun Cañar, the Indians were concentrated in the countryside while the mestizos and few whites lived in town. The Azogues area displayed a pattern more like that in Azuay.

In retrospect the significance of these demographic patterns has become more clear. Where whites settled in the countryside, they mixed genetic and cultural heritages with their Indian neighbors. This occurred to a much greater extent in Azuay than in Cañar. Two centuries after Merisalde's survey, Azuay has almost no self-identifying Indian population, while Cañar has a predominantly Indian population

in its central zone. White immigrants to Cañar in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries arrived as *hacendados* and small-scale entrepreneurs who maintained the boundary between themselves and the Indian peasantry. Where white or mestizo peasants settled in the countryside, as for example east of Azogues, some of them intermarried with Indians. Over the last two hundred years this mingling has produced a Spanish-speaking majority bearing a syncretistic cultural heritage.

Some of the tactics Indians used to evade colonial taxes and demands on their labor and produce have been described. Another obvious possibility was to remove oneself from the category of Indian. This could be accomplished, after a generation, by intermarriage into the white or mestizo category, but a more expeditious way to become a non-Indian was to change significant identity markers such as language, dress, and name. This choice was most feasible for Indians who lived in towns and cities where anonymity facilitated the making of such changes. Colonial authorities became aware of these tactics and tried, without much success, to put a stop to them. Rebolledo has transcribed some of the exasperated correspondence between an official responsible for counting Indians for tribute purposes and his superior, in the early eighteenth century.⁸² The census taker explained that Indian women and girls moved to Quito to work as household servants and wet nurses. Once employed, they had children who were often named after their employers. The male children were never entered on the tribute roles (the *forastero* tactic), and they grew up to dress like city dwellers, from whom they were indistinguishable. The superior official in turn described how Indians forged baptismal records "in perfect likeness and with much skill" when they could not convince a priest to baptize their children as Spaniards or mestizos in the first place.⁸³

This official went on to order the priests to take special precautions when giving names to babies in baptism. Priests were to make sure that the siblings did not have identical names because this was another strategy Indians used to confuse census takers and hide the true number of eligible tribute payers. Additionally, priests were to baptize Indian babies with one personal name only because when they

⁸² Rebolledo, *Comunidad y resistencia*, 103-4.

⁸³ Rebolledo, *Comunidad y resistencia*, 104.

had two they were able to alternate between them, and in this way become someone other than the person on the tribute list.

For Cuenca, this process is amply documented in notarial records of last wills and testaments. Illegitimate children were commonly given Spanish surnames, allegedly those of their fathers'.⁸⁴ Others took on the names of their employers'.⁸⁵ Some took the Spanish surnames of their mestizo spouses'.⁸⁶ Some switched to the names of their adoptive parents'.⁸⁷ Still others switched names apparently at will. For example, Francisca Palat of Paute, daughter of Pedro Palat and Petrona Centala, became Francisca Veintimilla.⁸⁸

Such play with names and surnames did not require a change of social category, though it was a useful accessory in such changes. The lists compiled by colonial census takers reveal an apparently boundless flexibility in Indian naming practices. From the first years after the conquest, Indians were given Spanish names when they were baptized and their native names became surnames. Colonial records show that some Indians were given or adopted Spanish surnames. As mentioned above, some took the surnames of their employers or patrons or other Spanish authorities. Others took place names, Spanish nouns, or numbers. Inca names were also taken. Flexibility in the use of names provided Indians with one more tool with which to attempt to confuse and confound the colonial control apparatus. It complemented a change of social identity and invalidated Spanish record keeping. It was an adaptive mechanism Indians used in attempting to survive and thrive under colonial institutions. When used for passing, however, it was part of the larger process of shifting from Indian to mestizo ethnic identity, a process implying a further drain on the Indian population.

⁸⁴ Testamento de Isabel Sañay, india de Pacaybamba, 1617, ANHC, 3a Notaria, libro 502, fol. 238; libro 509, fols. 64, 812.

⁸⁵ Testamento de Magdalena Vasquez, india de Molleturo, 1617, ANHC, 3a Notaria, libro 502, fol. 265; Testamento de Francisco de Tapia, india de Zaruma, 1605, ANHC, 3a Notaria, libro 489, fol. 253.

⁸⁶ Testamento de Francisca Durán, india de Girón, 1676, ANHC, 3a Notaria, libro 521a, fol. 240.

⁸⁷ Juan Tamiguan es Juan Tarque, 1677, ANHC, carpeta 116.589b, fol. 3.

⁸⁸ Juicio de Pedro Palat, indio de Paute, 1666, ANHC, carpeta 116.263a, fol. 3. Deborah Truhan generously provided information regarding the documents referred to in this paragraph.

The Indian residents of Cañar were a multiethnic group at the beginning of the colonial period. Over the three centuries of colonial rule, institutions such as the *encomienda*, the *mita*, and various taxes contributed to varying the mixture. Indians from the north, fleeing natural, epidemiological, and social disasters, moved into the region in significant numbers. Indians from Cuenca moved out to take advantage of the exemptions the *forastero* category could offer, among them the possibility of simply disappearing. The minuscule proportion of the Indian population of the *gobernación* of Cuenca, descended from the original, pre-Inca inhabitants of this region, were thoroughly mixed with not only the foreign Indian majority, but increasingly with the white population as well. In the future province of Azuay they lived in close contact with the white and growing mestizo population, both in Cuenca and its rural parishes.⁸⁹ In Cañar the whites lived in the towns leaving the Indians concentrated in the countryside. While rural Azuay was early divided into ever smaller land holdings, in Cañar the latifundio dominated the landscape until very recently. These distinct residence and landholding patterns, already evident in the late 1700s, surely help to explain why Cañar has an Indian population today while Azuay has only remnants of one (such as Quingeo) and fading or suppressed memories of an Indian past.

The disarticulation and reconstruction of Indian communities during the colonial period has been well documented throughout Latin America. Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz detailed this process for Alto Perú and stated explicitly that today's communities are "later recreations," rather than pre-conquest survivals.⁹⁰ Rebolledo's study of Lumbisí in the Quito valley documents a process of extensive inter-ethnic mixing and migration, similar to the process here described for Cañar. Her conclusions concerning the consequences of this process for ethnic identity and community formation are particularly relevant in this context. Rebolledo views the various Indian responses to colonial

⁸⁹ Espinoza, "En el bicentenario," 64.

⁹⁰ Sánchez-Albornoz, *Indios y tributos*, 63. See also Enrique Florescano, "La conquista y la transformación de la memoria indígena," in *Los conquistados: 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas*, comp. Heraclio Bonilla (Quito: Tercer Mundo Editores, FLACSO, Libri Mundi, 1992), 67-102; George Lovell and William R. Swezey, "Indian Migration and Community Formation: An Analysis of *congregación* in Colonial Guatemala," in Robinson, *Migration*, 18-85.

institutions as adaptive, and not necessarily destructive of Indian identity. Rather they formed the bases for a reconstruction of Indian identity emphasizing territoriality rather than kinship.⁹¹ Based on residence in a given territory, Indian groups transcended their identifications with pre-Columbian chiefdoms and kinship as the principal means of organizing social life. In doing so they created new ethnic identities, as generic Indians (a concept the Spanish had created for them in the first place) rather than as Burgays, Tadays, Sigsigs, Peleusís, etc.

This sort of recreation of Indian identity has occurred in Cañar. The Cañar term of self reference, *runa*, implies simply an Indian human being and is thus in keeping with Rebolledo's proposal. "Indian" as a separate category has persisted from 1532 to the present, but the contents of the category are a product of five hundred years of integrating and reworking extraneous people and relationships. At present the pre-Columbian past has practically no pertinence for the Indians of Cañar. Their pre-conquest heritage is a composite containing contributions from all over the former Inca empire. Most people who were native to the region now known as Azuay and Cañar were killed, scattered, forced away, or enticed away in the tumult of two conquests, massive epidemics, and the imposition of colonial and republican regimes intent on managing them as a labor force. The people who replaced them were a diverse stream representing a broad variety of local cultures, social statuses, and reasons for coming. In their efforts to survive and prosper they have created the Indian communities found today in Cañar.

Finally, given this tumultuous demographic history it is not surprising that some Cañares today consider themselves descendants of the Incas. The *mitma* contribution to the Cañar population assured the presence of many Inca and Inca-sponsored ancestors for subsequent generations. Thus, the ethnohistorical vision of Cañar informants corresponds more closely to the story implied by colonial era docu-

⁹¹ Rebolledo, *Comunidad y resistencia*, 258. Such an adaptation is in diametric opposition to the Inca tradition, frequently pointed out by Espinoza Soriano ("Los mitmas Cañares," 164, and "Los Chachapoyas," 19, 350) of descent taking precedence over residence. The persistence of ethnic boundaries around *mitma* communities, even hundreds of years after the Spanish conquest, lends support to the idea that "blood" mattered more than place of residence.

ments than do the ethnohistorical interpretations mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The apparently irresistible appeal of discovering the roots of millennial pasts under the surfaces of the present should be tempered with a recognition of the historical processes that created today's communities.