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Puruhá Fashion as Aesthetic Sovereignty: Identity Making and Indigenous Dress in Ecuador

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PURUHÁ FASHION AS AESTHETIC SOVEREIGNTY: IDENTITY MAKING AND
INDIGENOUS DRESS IN ECUADOR

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, for the stories they told me and the journeys they inspired, and to

the ancestors I'll never know, whose stories I'll never hear.

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ABSTRACT

Puruhá fashion designers, vendors, and sellers have used their cultural heritage to create an emerging dress market that is both locally productive and nationally disruptive. These entrepreneurs have combined traditional dress with contemporary elements to create a new style that is distinctly recognizable as Puruhá, and thus acts as both a cultural and an individual brand. In a nation-state that offers its Indigenous people tokenism and concessions that don't otherwise challenge the status of existing governmental and legal systems, having control over one's own narrative through branding is a revolutionary act. In fact, the fight for economic autonomy against state sanctioned development programs is central to how many Puruhá social actors describe their shared history and current motivations. For Puruhá dress designers and sellers, autonomous economic success eliminates the notion that Indigenous people need a middleman to help them negotiate any non-local market, a rhetoric unfortunately still present in Ecuador today. It also gives them access to social capital, such as business networks and high fashion language, which had previously not been accessible because of the devaluation of Indigenous artistry in Ecuador. In this way Puruhá entrepreneurs have been able to sidestep legal political recognition within Ecuador in favor of broader social visibility through economic achievements, which can be implemented without the direct support of the nation-state.

I focus specifically on how the entrepreneurial strategies they use rely on both global capitalist models and Andean community-oriented and reciprocal models, which challenge neoliberal state ideologies that have been exploitative of Indigenous Ecuadorians in the past. In addition, I argue that this dress is a special form of commodity, since it also acts as an art object and as a malleable marker of identities. Thus, this research necessarily contributes to semiotic theory in practice, the ability to understand Puruhá dress as part of semiotic processes that negotiate relationships in context and the political, economic, and social stances that emerge in these processes. Dress, as an intimate art form, enables Puruhá producers and consumers to establish shared sartorial discourses and form semiotic communities. Moreover, the production and circulation of Puruhá dress enables Indigenous actors to reclaim the economic potential of their aesthetics, contributing to ongoing endeavors in economic autonomy and *aesthetic sovereignty.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CONAIE .... The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

IMF .... International Monetary Fund

JNDA ...*Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano* (National Committee for the Defense of the Artisan

REDMUJCH............*Red Provincial de Organizaciones de Mujeres Kichwas y Rurales de Chimborazo* (Provincial Network of Kichwa and Rural Women's Organizations in Chimborazo)

USFQ .... *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (University San Francisco of Quito)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: OF PLACE, POSITIONALITY, AND PURPOSE

The research presented here is now bound to its particular times and spaces, but it remains malleable in its interpretation and usefulness to anyone interested in the questions, themes, and ideas that emanate from the world of Puruhá fashion, such as the usefulness of sartorial semiotic analyses, the sustainability of Indigenous economic systems, and understanding appropriation as a shifting and co-constructed process. I work with and am accountable to my participants, the majority of whom identify as Puruhá. This is an identity that entails a pre-Incan and pre-Spanish Indigenous heritage and continues to be situated in relation to the Chimborazo province of Ecuador, regardless of where Puruhá individuals move and travel. Puruhá designers and entrepreneurs have combined traditional dress with contemporary elements to create a new style that is distinctly recognizable as Puruhá, and thus can act as both a cultural brand for the Puruhá and an individual brand for the designer. In a nation-state that offers its Indigenous population tokens of recognition and concessions that don't otherwise challenge the status of existing governmental and legal systems, having control over one's own narrative through branding is a revolutionary act. Consequently, these designers and entrepreneurs have been able to achieve broader social visibility through forms of economic autonomy and aesthetic sovereignty that circumvent nation-statist structures of recognition. In this way, they do not have to rely on support from the government or its institutions and are able to control their own narratives of Puruhá-ness.

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Most succinctly, my research centers on the question of what Puruhá designers, producers, sellers, and buyers do with and through this dress style, and what this dress does to and for them. Throughout my dissertation I attempt to answer this from different angles, with more grounded questions. For instance, how does this dress negotiate and complicate expectations about racial, ethnic, gendered and classed identities? How does this fashion market remain socially and economically sustainable for the Puruhá community, while expanding for those designers who mentioned they are seeking national and global recognition? How can semiotic analysis allow us to see processes of meaning-making that converge and diverge through the dress sign? How do differences in understandings of ownership create tension, both within the Puruhá community and between the community and the nation-state? Why is it significant that this market is primarily by and for Indigenous women, and what might it tell us about shifting gender dynamics in Ecuador? In my answers I foreground the ideas and themes significant to my participants, but I want to make evident how this dissertation is also a dialogue between my participants and myself, and what that means for the project as a whole.

1.1 PLACE AND POSITIONALITY

I wanted to get to know my father and mother's lives a little better, and maybe learn a bit more about myself along the way. I was born in Bolivia, but my family left when I was a year old, making me their only child that relied entirely on re-constructed memories of that place. I grew up on stories of Bolivia that made it sound like an entirely different world, but I couldn't really *feel* that place the way my parents, or even my brothers and sister did. At 19 I hadn't left the country, at least not since I first traveled from Bolivia to the U.S. I had no memory of what it was like to be sheltered by the

Andes, or any idea about the strange cucumber-artichoke-pepper flavors of the *achocha*. I had never had a favorite vendor in the market or had to navigate my way through colonial era streets. My undergraduate study abroad, however, would not be my ticket to this mysterious homeland. There were no programs in Bolivia, but there were programs in Ecuador, another Andean nation with experiences that I thought would at least give me hint of my parents' past lives. That was my first trip, and I've been back several times since. Now, with old friends I can muse about the college years with, and a map of Quito firmly established in my head, I do feel like I learned a bit about my parents, but I also learned about a unique place that stays with me as I leave and return again. Place is central to anthropology, even as it moves from being predominantly understood as physical and bounded space, to being a process of social reproduction that is always embodied. The materiality of place/space is symbolic as well as physically located and can therefore be carried about in the body and reproduced by social practices (Low 2009). This is that feeling I have, shared with other immigrants and children of immigrants, of carrying a place (or places) with me, even if they are entirely (re)constructed. We act from the body on the world, and the world also acts on us.

Place is mobile when embedded in people's senses and memories; it can be absorbed in bits and pieces of everyday life and carried with you. Ecuador is not my homeland, but it is a place I carry with me, which complicates when and how I can or should be able to talk about it. As Esteban, one of my friends from my college years at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito*, has said to me several times, "You're Ecuadorian now." Still, the song he and a few friends made up for me in college reminds me that I'm not, in the silliest way possible. *"Anais de maiz que no tiene raiz en este*

pais." The translation is a bit ridiculous: *"Anais of corn, who has no (root/origin) in this country."* Another friend of his was upset when she first heard the song, thinking he was being rude to me, which I found funny since it reminds me of longstanding friendships in this place that I am, indeed, not from. I don't remember how exactly they came up with the little rhyme, but it doesn't matter. The point is that this dichotomy of belonging and not belonging to a 'place', in this case to a fieldwork site but more than a fieldwork site, is not really a dichotomy at all. Field sites have always included but been much more than space or place; they are constituted by the anthropologist their self, as a practice and process that incorporates their own positionality, including social origins, affiliations (always attached to the academy), and position in their (academic) field (Coleman and Collins 2006). I am performing and co-constructing, along with my participants, the field site as a 'carry-able' place, both when I am in that physical place and when I am away (ibid).

This relationship to place was something I had to reckon with in my research. Histories of ethnographic mapping, where Indigenous people are organized into discrete localities has long been critiqued in anthropology (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), regardless of the fact that it is still present in institutions of the Ecuadorian nation-state. The Puruhá people I worked with carried place with them too, in this case the towns and cities of the Chimborazo Province. Yet most of my fieldwork time was spent in Quito, in the Pichincha Province, which many of these same participants had established as the site of their businesses and (other) homes. They embodied (Chimborazo as) place, and indeed *dressed* in place- that embodiment and carrying of 'home' made visible. At the same time, their traditional Puruhá dress incorporated global and *Mestizo* elements, allowing

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them to also embody and wear new local, national, and global spaces. Still, questions of Puruhá identity centered first on the land that was theirs prior to both the Inca and Spanish conquests, often the rural towns of Cacha and Colta that lay just outside of Chimborazo's capital Riobamba. Imagined communities become attached to imagined places as displaced people cluster around imagined or remembered homelands, which can be powerful in anticolonial contexts (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Indeed, the power of Indigenous movements in Ecuador are also tied to a deep connection to land, reiterated by Indigenous leaders and community members alike, regardless of whether or not they live in that physical place. Insistence on place can be many things, including support for autonomy and sovereignty based on land rights, a means of retaining cultural heritage and tradition, and a way of keeping markets that create a sense of authenticity. For many, it anchors their identity as Puruhá, even as they incorporate other spaces as part of their contemporary identities.

It is important, therefore, that place and space in this research are viewed as constant reconstructions, not just by my participants but also by myself. The places of Quito and Riobamba in this dissertation are at times co-constructed with the help of my participants and other scholarly writing, but often filtered through questions of my own place in the fieldwork space. My positionality haunts me, as I imagine it does for many anthropologists, and leads to an endless stream of questions. If Latin American nation-states were imposed, and conquerors were not of this place, can their *Mestizo* descendants (can I) be? If so, to what extent? How does being further relocated, growing up in the U.S., affect belonging? What are these places, my fieldwork site and my homeland, anyway? How does my tendency, and often the tendency of my participants, to draw on

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relationships between Bolivian and Ecuador affect my research? What categories and boundaries do we or should we use to orient ourselves, as anthropologists, as non-Indigenous people, as immigrants who can't remember their birthplace? For whom does this matter and how can I deal with my own place(lessness), as part of the academy, an American *gringa* and a Bolivian *Mestiza* woman? How do I not fall into the trap of seeing myself only as these categorizations, and recognize the mutability of power dynamics? How can I honor the voices of my participants (and friends) while acknowledging that I am always a guest in the space of their land and their lives?

To be critical of the way *Mestizo* and other non-Indigenous people use and understand Indigenous aesthetics is, ultimately, to be self-critical as well. I obviously do not speak for any group of people or individual people, but in relaying the words of others, and in formulating my own understanding of the complexities of the Puruhá dress market and everything that underpins it, I am still speaking to a world that I do not participate in every day, an experience that I do not live every day. This must be taken into consideration, that my research and analysis is obviously shaped by my own racial, ethnic, gendered, classed, and daily lived experiences. Anthropologists often relay their own positionality at some point in a text, but it is important we continue to look for that person, that individual, *throughout* their writing, so as not to forget how this type of information, whether a dissertation, an article, a book, or any text or talk, is co-created. I encourage readers to seek further research and reading on Puruhá dress, culture, and identity from Puruhá people.

Positionality is now a given in anthropological writings, although the fine line between navel gazing and making your influences explicit is an ever-present challenge.

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Explaining myself in categories that are significant to me can be helpful in understanding how I see myself, but it is small ethnographic moments that give any indication of how my participants see me, and how this affects my work. Still, I am not the subject and I will do my best to avoid falling into a trap where I assume opposition and static power dynamics (Elie 2006, Robertson 2002). The myth of insider versus outsider status has long been dismissed, and instead recognition of (and in some cases attempts to remedy) uneven power dynamics are at the forefront of positionality questions (Merriam et al 2001). Power dynamics can change depending on who you're talking to, when, in what context, and simply change over time. Questions of representation that assume one "truth" are also much more complex (ibid). Human research is based on human interactions, so there will always be a multiplicity of 'truths' uncovered. My research can never be reproduced by anyone else for the same results. Neither can the interactions that I do not include in research, but which affect the way I think and write about the women that I work with in particular. I was interviewing Martha, a Puruhá woman who owned a shop in Quito that mainly sold sweaters. The store was a family affair of sorts; her father had a factory that made the sweaters, and she lived with her son and daughter in her parent's home, but the store was hers and she had named it *Tejidos Naomi* after her daughter. Like much of Quito's historic center she was in a line of stores selling similar products, something that no longer strikes me in the way it initially did. She was excited about the fact that I knew the brand *Sumak Churay,* whose designer Sisa became a key participant in this research. She was also happy that I knew of Cacha and had plans to visit, which may have in some way spurred her to keep talking after I turned the recorder off. She mentioned more personal anecdotes of a friend who she worked with from

another country, who would bring tourists to her store specifically (one of the ways having similar stores next door to each other without crippling competition began to make sense). Talk about this friend was a form of intimacy and felt like the *chisme* (gossip) as bonding that I had previously experienced in my life. Though the friend's personal life is irrelevant to my research, it is very relevant to connection.

This particular form of closeness would happen again and again, and I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that being a single Latina woman in my late 20s through early 30s didn't affect what my participants felt comfortable sharing with me (and what they didn't). It also affected how some male participants treated me, for better or worse, but how too might these responses be strategic or incidental? I will never really know. It was very obvious to me that my positionality and power shifted with different participants, in different spaces, at different moments. Their mutability was never a question for me, but then what to make of this? That fieldwork is always personal and recognizing power dynamics doesn't get rid of them, but it is important to remember that these dynamics are always created between people, not in isolation (England 1993). Identities are always formed in relation to one another too; you can only be a *gringa* when you cross a border, for instance (Nelson 1999). My body and my place were understood and interpreted by others in a way I will never fully understand, but which can perhaps be revealed a bit in moments of articulation throughout the dissertation.

1.2 METHODS AND ANALYSIS

This research started in small ways while doing my master's fieldwork, in an interaction with a Puruhá participant who it seemed nearly always wore Puruhá dress. This was notable not only because he was a man (women tend to wear the full dress

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more) but because at the time I had just started seeing a confluence of contemporary Indigenous dress designs that, while not my focus at the time, I couldn't help but investigate. I began to look for friends of his that might be in the dress industry, more out of my own curiosity than anything formalized. In this sense I began with natural snowball sampling, combined with research through social and other media outlets that had published on prominent vendors and designers within the Puruhá community. Snowball sampling in particular has been noted to allow researchers to see organic networks of interaction (Noy 2008), which is very useful in a community like the Puruhá, where there are significant social networks that someone outside the community would be unlikely to see initially. Although it excludes and includes certain groups or individuals, it is often beneficial in research where there would be low numbers of potential participants, sensitive topics (Browne 2005), or in my case a history of interactions with anthropologists and exploitation by institutions and organizations. However, I also sent messages through Facebook or WhatsApp to potential participants, since I was working within a specific market that relies on promoting a brand and/or getting new customers through word of mouth, where a professional approach might be mutually beneficial. I did sometimes stop into shops or open-air markets and strike up a conversation, which helped me find people working within Indigenous fashion broadly and from a variety of backgrounds. I spoke with vendors and designers of Puruhá dress, but also consumers of Indigenous dress, *Mestizos* who had or wanted to start businesses that used Indigenous aesthetics, museum or cultural institution employees, and one director of a folkloric dance troupe that used Indigenous costumes for the stage.

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My time with participants was spent either in participant observation or interviewing. Interviews were semi-structured, with an interview schedule prepared, but many times it would change or deviate. While this makes it difficult to make systematic comparisons between interview responses or gather more easily quantifiable data, it also allows for a greater breadth and dept of information, which would allow me to search for naturally occurring themes (Blee and Taylor 2002). Many of my participants only did one interview, which lasted for around an hour or so depending on the interviewee, and what was happening in their store or studio space at the time. For other participants, there were interviews and participant observation, either spending time at their stores, watching them interact with clients, sew, or doing other daily tasks with them. Sisa Morocho was my main participant, and I spent time with her and a group of her friends over an extended period, but the other main designer I spent time with was Franklin Janeta. While both designers had shops in Riobamba and in Quito, Sisa worked in her Quito shop predominantly and Franklin in his Riobamba shop. I spent a little over a month of my fieldwork time in Riobamba, so I spent far more time with Sisa than Franklin. Interviews were done in Spanish, and later transcribed into English where necessary, but I do wonder about loss in information due to the fact that I don't know any Quichua. There were often moments when participants would teach me a phrase or a word in Quichua, either directly or because I heard it repeated and asked, but there were also conversations in Quichua, for instance between a store owner and customer or between two friends that I was completely unable to participate in. While not detrimental, learning Quichua would be a goal for any further research alongside Puruhá designers and vendors. These methods formed much of the raw data of fieldnotes and transcriptions, but I also analyzed

visual marketing in various mediums (Davila 1997, Pink 2013) from social media to billboards, which was particularly useful with regard to unpacking the history of Indigenous and female representation in visual mediums (Masi de Cassanova 2004, Poole 1997, Muratorio 1998). Moreover, social media as a research tool has become increasingly beneficial not just in the field but also after returning home to write, since the development of several brands, their advertising schemes, changes in styles and fashion lines, and any events are generally posted on social media. This allowed me to continue to do research on aspects of economics and gender while writing. Since this is not my main focus, however, I shy away from considering it a research site because I am not necessarily following the connections and conversations going on between social media users through the platform, the way traditional digital ethnographies might (Postill and Pink 2012). While these ethnographies focused on online communities or on ethnographic approaches to digital media, I am using it as a tool to stay in contact with participants and keep up to date on their businesses and lives (Miller 2018). It is indeed an extension of the existing field site and a methodological tool, but not a site in and of itself.

I was in the field between January and December of 2017 to do the majority of my research and began my analysis in January of 2018. Initial analysis was combing through fieldnotes and listening to interview recordings to pull out any significant themes, based on how often they came up or the depth and time spent on them. I charted out significant themes crossed with interviewees via Excel documents. Reoccurring themes were then noted, and significant quotes within particular interviews were transcribed and translated. For some key participants entire interviews were transcribed,

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and then significant quotes were translated. I recognize that process of transcription requires choices, it is selective, interpretive, and is theoretical in nature (Davidson 2009, Ochs 1979). I am not engaging in linguistic transcription, nor am I using entire interviews in the dissertation. Moments of pause, for instance when customers would come into a shop and I would observe their interactions, are not transcribed and in many instances not recorded for the benefit of the customer. Problems with audio capture were present, especially since I was often interviewing in public spaces where music, other speakers, and sounds of traffic were competing for the attention of the recording device. In these instances, I choose to either interpret the word based on a partial pickup, memory, and logic, but more often than not I leave them out entirely and mark the missing word. At times I also make the choice to summarize part of a conversation, usually because it was not part of a formal interview but happened during participant observation, and there is no recording to draw from. Returning to the idea that field work is always personal and subjective, so too is transcription. However, I can say that these transcriptions and the quotes selected are representations of moments, ideas, and interactions that were significant in the research.

During transcription and field note readings I also began the writing process. Doing both in conjunction allowed me to get significant information down first, and then look for any literature that was either new or not something I looked for before leaving for the field. Therefore, while the bibliography from my comprehensive exam and proposal still proved useful, I also began to integrate new literary research based on my findings at a relatively early stage of analysis. By summer of 2019 I also began to integrate visual analysis of images from my own photographs taken in the field, from

paper media like newspapers and magazines that I bought while in Ecuador, and from social media sites and news sites mentioned previously. I apply a semiotic visual analysis to both these images and the materiality of the dress objects themselves based on the Peircean triadic model (Nöth 2011). The work of Peirce academic lineage, including Asif Agha (2011, 2015), Constantine Nakassis (2012) and Paul Manning (2010) contributed to an analysis premised first on questions of how advertising makes its object and how branding can be read in different ways. However, this also allows me to look at what dress does (both as an object and image), the agency it mediates for its maker and wearer in the vein of Gell (1998) with the semiotoic processes that make that agency possible (Kockelman 2011, Peirce 1991). Visual analysis is therfore as much about reading what the image or item indexes (along with verbal and textual information provided), as it is about sensory and social actions and reactions that act on individuals and commuities.

After about a year and a half of analysis and dissertation writing I was granted the opportunity to return to the field under the Bilinski Fellowship for Dissertation Writing. This proved invaluable to my research, particularly to my chapter centered on gender. Although I only returned to the field for two months in the Fall of 2019, during this time political upset at President Lenin Moreno's withdrawal of fuel subsidies as part of a loan deal with the IMF allowed me to spend time with Sisa and some of her friends in a new context. This period of participant observation, unintended as such, allowed me to more broadly understand her role in the Puruhá community, particularly when it came to networks of women. I was also able to get feedback on my analysis and key themes that emerged up to this point and was able to integrate any changes that were necessary after receiving this feedback. I again spent most of my time in Quito, partially because of

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travel restrictions during this period, but I did manage to spend a week in Riobamba as well. It is my goal to continue to receive and incorporate participant feedback whenever possible on future research as well.

1.3 A SENSE OF PLACE AND KEY PARTICIPANTS

To give a sense of place is not the same as being in place, but I do deep description of place at various moments in the dissertation because it helps to ground this market in the environments where the dress actually circulates and is worn on a daily basis. This will hopefully remind the reader that the significance place has for the Puruhá dress market is not inconsequential, even if it is not perpetually local or static. Localities can be global, and they move in and on the bodies of the Puruhá designers, vendors, and buyers who love them. Indeed, my major field site was Quito, the capital of Ecuador nestled in the Andes, and not Riobamba, where many Puruhá trace their familial and ancestral origins. Although if future research continues to center on Puruhá fashion I would like to spend more time there, many of the designers and sellers either moved to Quito to work or moved between Riobamba and Quito, so I had a wealth of data to gather within Quito alone. Quito is Ecuador's capital, a large international city that sits at the foot of the Pichincha Volcano in the Guayllabamba river basin. I often reminded myself during my fieldwork that the stunning view I had in my apartment was my privilege because of the original displacement of Indigenous people from this basin higher up into the mountains during the arrival of the Spanish. This was something a friend kindly reminded me of during my master's fieldwork, after I marveled at how cold it was higher up in the mountains where his family previously lived. Quito is a sprawling city, whose *Centro Historico* is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the best preserved and least altered

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historic center in Latin America (UNESCO 2020). Layers of human history build up like grime on the streets, both beautiful and a stark reminder of what was lost with these colorful and grandiose "Baroque School of Quito" (ibid) buildings. The historic center is almost always bustling, with sellers on the street calling out deals, friends meeting, and families running errands. On Saturdays vendors, performance artists, musicians, and dancers fill the streets through the early afternoon. Similar shops are often bundled together on blocks that, once in a while, still bear the name of their particular product. *Calle de Algodon* still holds most of the fabric shops in the area, another street holds the party shops which were my favorite to visit during *Dia de los Difuntos* (Day of the Deceased). The population here is representative of Quito, a milieu of complexity that evidences Quito's problems as much as its strengths. This is also where most of the Puruhá designers and vendors in the city had their shops or studios, and where Sisa lived.

Sisa was my key participant and a friend. I met the designer behind *Sumak Churay* when she was 29, and despite the fact that we were the same age she seemed to have a calm confidence that I still admire. Every time I've seen her she's wearing some version of Puruhá dress and, though I never asked, it seems likely its of her own design. She is friendly but authoritative when she needs to be, like when a younger friend messes up and needs some direction. She is single with no children and seems to be in no particular rush to change this. She continues to take design classes, expand her line, support her community and do professional talks and media spots when she can. I can't imagine that she is ever not busy, although she maintains a large social network as well. Her home and studio space are one in the same, an old colonial era building that is divided into homes, but still has quite a bit of space. Her shop is a few blocks away, very

walkable and convenient when she needs to run back and forth for things. If she isn't at the shop one of her friends is usually at the counter, holding a child if they have one, stringing beads on a necklace, or talking to a customer. The shop is one room but filled with a variety of pieces, everything you would need for the full female Puruhá outfit, save maybe the hat and the *bayeta* (a shawl or wrap), which I usually see older women wear on the streets in Riobamba. She also makes custom pieces, often for special events but casual tops as well. From my vantage she is a sharp businesswoman who doesn't sacrifice community for success.

Franklin is another highly successful Puruhá designer. He was 36 when I met him and about to be a father for the first time. I met him, his wife, and his friend/graphic designer all at the same time, when I magically stumbled into his shop during a rainstorm after days of trying to figure out where exactly it was. His brand VISPU is run primarily from Riobamba but he visits Quito frequently where he has another shop. When I visited the Quito shop it was his mother who was at the helm. Franklin would visit Quito to do model calls, fashion shows, or anything else his business needed that required the resources of the city. He was knowledgeable and excited about sharing information. It was Franklin who loaned me the book on Puruhá cosmology by Pedro Janeta Janeta, a relative of his. I found out later that he was also cousins with Inti, the participant during my master's program who I initially asked about Puruhá dress, and Franklin's sister is a prominent singer. The family appears to be full of creative and successful people, Franklin included. Although I spent less time with him, conversations about dress and Puruhá identity were invaluable. I focus on these two participants because they are the primary Puruhá designers I worked with, but I describe other designers, sellers, and non-

Puruhá participants throughout the dissertation Overall I had around 25 participants who did formal interviews, but also a handful of conversations that were not part of interviews but were aware of my research and contributed information that proved useful.

1.4 PURPOSE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intent and impact are both significant in this type of research, but not always or even often perfectly aligned. Initially my intent, in the broadest sense, was to learn valuable information and not do any harm to the community and individuals I worked with. I also wanted to positively contribute to anthropology as a discipline, but impact can never be measured until after research and writing is complete. Even then, not all impacts are visible right away. To assume that we are entirely in control of our impact is to assume that we, as anthropologists, hold primary power in our relationships (in all aspects) and have the principal responsibility to incite change, which is simply not true. My purpose in doing this research aligns more with Joshua Smith's (2015) interpretation of action anthropology as a different path altogether from other forms of anthropology, including applied. While some scholars use applied as an umbrella term encompassing action anthropology (Willigen 2002), Smith argues it is distinct, centered on mutual obligation and rejection of power over another, as well as centering Indigenous people as agents of their own cultural, political, and social destinies. In other words, that they may have to deal with coloniality and state governments, but it is not my place to use these models to incite change in a form of lingering paternalism. Instead my intent and (hopefully) impact with this research is primarily centered on what I can change about the knowledge that exists in Western education systems and in anthropology as a discipline that cannot eschew its colonialist roots. That being said, I recognize that Smith (2015) is

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assuming the position of a settler-anthropologist but I too have a position as a settler-anthropologist both in my *Mestiza* identity (as a Bolivian woman) and in my *gringa* identity (as an American woman and U.S. based scholar). I also recognize that there are ways for anthropology to be mutually/relationally beneficial. For instance, design anthropology recognizes design is a universal human process and attempts to de-center Western design as the central project into which 'othered' knowledges are incorporated where beneficial (Gunn, et al 2013). Instead knowledge, methodology, and processes are continuously produced in relation to each other and continuously shared, whether we acknowledge and incorporate them or not. Indeed, my fieldwork has been a process of continual co-production between myself and my participants, and has emerged from experiences that extend beyond time 'in the field'.

The fact that my research focuses on dress is not incidental. The politics and power of dress is something I learned quickly, in my daily movements as a young Latina woman in the Chicago area in the early 2000s. The same way that I understand my participants as being shaped by their context, their upbringing during the indigenous movements of the 90s and early 2000s, and how they and their peers negotiated their bodies and identities, is how I have come to understand my own interest in dress. My hometown was predominantly Latino and Mexican American, so I 'fit in' as a Latina but didn't share a lot of the family traditions, experiences, and backgrounds as my peers. My own naivety and external pressures convinced me I didn't have rights to certain aesthetics which some of my friends did. The rich stories told by, for instance, hoop earrings, not just about race or ethnicity but about a shared cross-cultural aesthetic and a particular semiotic community, were lost to me all those years ago. In addition, institutional

discourses of fear surrounding misidentification via dress were commonplace and created very obvious policing. Color combinations were deemed appropriate or inappropriate based on whether or not they were associated with a particular gang, which was not only reinforced through peer interactions but also monitored, coded, and printed out for distribution by school administrators and police officers. It was not a revelation for me that semiotic processes involving dress mediated relationships and the power dynamics in those relationships, whether social, political, economic or otherwise. I just didn't have the ability to articulate this significance before my years of research.

My experiences are not the experiences of my participants, but they did inform what the purpose of the research might be because they allowed me to see an emerging framework that could be deeply contextualized but also applied to different experiences, in different places, at different times. This framework takes into account the political economy of clothing production with sartorial semiotics as a means of analysis, and in so doing it acts as a means of making substantial claims about the significance of dress in reinforcing, shifting, or revitalizing the political, economic, and social realities of daily life. This is also my first contribution to existing theory, a particular semiotic intervention in dress. Key words and themes in studies of dress and art more broadly move away from being definable as terms and toward being understood and *observed* as *processes*. Two themes that reemerge throughout this dissertation and which I focus on extensively in Chapter 5 are appropriation and ownership. Appropriation has often been discussed or defined with relation to cultural exploitation, including commodification or uneven power dynamics (Coleman 2005), and then to counter assumptions of static and bounded cultures, replaced with terms like transculturation (Rogers 2006). At times, the

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conversation has been turned from questions of ownership and appropriation to negotiating mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Brown 2003). These are all useful ways to complicate appropriation and ownership, but I find Arnd Schneider's (2003) proposal particularly intriguing, that appropriation can be reevaluated as a hermeneutic procedure where actors negotiate symbolic elements whose meaning changes. However, I contribute a semiotic analysis that allows for exploration of those processes in a way that incorporates interpretation of signs along with political and economic contexts, the materiality of the dress itself, and the behaviors and actions that result during these processes.

In this sense conceptualizing ownership and appropriation is not just a top down process, but a relational and horizontal process. What specific items, symbols, or patterns are treated as appropriation or not? What features are considered shared cultural aesthetics, by whom and in what context? This also feeds into my focus on the shared cultural/aesthetic commons. The commons is a more or less informally agreed upon wealth of cultural knowledge, in this case aesthetics as applied to dress. My participants spoke to the complications of having a shared aesthetic and how it complicated ideas about internal copying. This is an example that contributes to the dissertation's second major proposal. The Puruhá dress market is both capitalist, and Indigenous, and yet more than just an amalgamation of both. It continues to incorporate economic strategies and tools that fluctuate and shift in daily relations, including via tensions between sharing and copying, between an aesthetic commons and aesthetic intellectual property. Moreover, claims to particular aesthetics are wrapped up in racial and ethnic understandings, which are mediated through the body in conjunction with dress. A third contribution is this

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examination of how the body is ever-present and co-constitutive with dress, even as the ghost of intention. There have long been attempts to understand multiple and fluid identities at both group and individual levels (Kondo 1992, Sökefeld 1999) as manifested through and co-constructed with clothing and adornment (Küchler 1987, 2009, Miller 2010), but what are the specific instances of bodies and dress together, in context, that limit or shape racial and ethnic identities? Particularly in the context of Ecuador, discourses about *mestizaje* and Indigeneity are (re)created in relation to one another and dress has the potential to strengthen, elide, or change those already malleable boundaries of identities.

Here again my research is deeply situated in place and its historical constructions. I am dependent upon an understanding of how race and ethnicity have been formulated throughout the history of the Puruhá people in particular spaces, whether the Andean region of Latin America, the expanse of the Incan empire, the political nation-state of Ecuador as its borders shifted, the invoked homeland of rural spaces in the Chimborazo province, or urban daily life in Quito (see chapter two). Place is especially significant because landed questions are central to Indigenous identities in Ecuador, particularly when it comes to agrarian movements, rights to natural resources, and the formulation of a community's political identity around a particular town or region (Andolina 2003, Jackson and Warren 2005; Zamosc 1994). For my participants, who grew up in or just after the Indigenous movements of the 1980s and 1990s, they witnessed the first in a shift from predominantly agrarian and peasant based reform movements (predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s) to a form of revolt that relied primarily on an Indigenous ethnic identity (Jackson and Warren 2005; Zamosc 1994). Moreover, these 'new' forms of

political upheaval were often backed mostly by Indigenous protestors from rural highland regions for various reasons (see chapter two) (Zamosc 1994). What is significant here is that a politics of recognition, which centered on Indigeneity as a strategy to mobilize and seek self-determination, was deeply tied to the rural and specifically certain highland Andean rural communities including the Puruhá. However, as Puruhá designers continue to move in and between cities as their primary residences and workspaces the rural homeland is even more distanced from daily lived experience and thus becomes a marker that is claimed through family, childhood, and frequent return trips. In my fieldwork, I came to see how cities are just as much a part of the (re)creation and (re)assertion of Puruhá-ness. Although I do not deal with it extensively in this dissertation, I ask how Indigenous urban identities, and the increase of Puruhá children born and raised primarily in cities, can come to be seen as constitutive of Puruhá identity in a way that compliments the more frequent reference to rural Chimborazo as a homeland. Moreover, I wonder how these urban spaces, in conjunction with the influence of the 90s Indigenous movements, access to social media, and class distinctions affect how my participants understand ownership, appropriation, and autonomy within the dress market.

I move to then ask questions about sovereignty, not only as it is tied to land but, in the case of Latin America, as it might be tied to other cultural features such as dress. Although I employ the term economic sovereignty in conversation with my development of *aesthetic sovereignty*, the way that sovereignty plays out in the context of U.S. Native Nations and Latin American Indigenous communities is very different. Courtney Lewis (2019) describes economic sovereignty as, "… the concept of securing authority over economic choices that support a sustainably stable and resilient economy while

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protecting economic bases (176)." However, ways of seeking sovereignty in Ecuador may be less direct than economic sovereignty in an American Indian context. Where political and legal channels are not available or are less desirable, the Puruhá dress market allows for self-determination and economic self-sufficiency that supports the community and (often indirectly) political ideologies. Therefore, I understand the Puruhá to have economic autonomy within the dress market though perhaps not economic sovereignty as such, in part because this economic market is not directly associated with political pushes for establishing a self-governing Puruhá nation. However, I do argue that the dress itself is a form of *aesthetic sovereignty,* my fourth contribution to anthropological research.

The concept of sovereignty in Latin America is still associated with the power of authority and political ideologies of self-governance to an extent, but in Ecuador ideological influences, such as the push for a plurinational state and its subsequent addition to the 2008 constitution, are subtle steps toward recognition as predominantly self-governing communities. The ways in which these political shifts are achieved often rely on visibility and what Robert Andolina (2003) calls legitimacy politics. In Ecuador the borders between civil and political society, between cultural politics and institutional politics are fluid and porous (ibid). Indigenous movements emerged to contest institutional boundaries and practices of citizenship through mobilization (Yashar 2005), which necessarily involves visibility. Being visibly Puruhá can then be a political stance because of the semiotic processes involving recognition when Indigenous actors mobilize in public space to contest ideas about legitimate political interests (ibid). This visibility is itself reliant on dress, particularly in a nation with a history of *mestizaje* (see chapter

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two). The red poncho is a prime example of a dress item being emblematic of political movements not just historically but also today in contemporary political struggles. It makes visible Puruhá political demands (tied to socio-cultural demands) *as* Puruhá and Indigenous. Therefore, it is part of aesthetic sovereignty, which I define as the concept of using culturally shared aesthetics, often based on historical and cosmologically significant elements, to support community self-determination and political ideologies of self-governance.

The fifth and final contribution of this dissertation is a focus on the role of Puruhá indigenous women's positionality in fashion. Indigenous women have been framed as bearers of tradition and images of the boundaries of nation-state citizenship in the Andean region (Poole 1997, Radcliffe 1997, Rogers 1998). In Ecuador the legacy of Indigenous women was one of distinction, representing the 'exotic other' who could fulfill her purpose for the nation by choosing a 'whiter' partner and passing that on to her family lineage (Radcliffe 1999). Women were, and are, constructed via the state as biological reproducers and reproducers of ethnic group boundaries, or transgression of these boundaries (Alonso 1994). They could keep alive what made Ecuador different for *Mestizo* and other elites, or for the Indigenous communities they belonged to (Rogers 1998, Weismantle 2001). Therefore, looking at two different sites where women are constructing their own identities through dress that are far more complex, and which have the potential to increase economic autonomy within their communities, can help to unpack gender theory within anthropology that focuses on the relationship between women and the nation or on the decolonization of Western feminism (Cervone and Cucurí 2017, Picq 2012).

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This move towards decolonization is also something I will pursue as I continue to employ a framework that looks at relationality and process first, which does not assume a top-down process but starts with daily interactions and co-constructed ideologies. It is my hope that this framework can be applied to other research projects, something I speak to more in the conclusion. Likewise, contemporary design theory takes seriously the notion that the de-centralization of Western design allows for a re-integration of design for the pluriverse or decolonial design (Escobar 2018, Tunstall 2013). Design is a *negotiation* of value systems and cultures (Tunstall 2013) and so it is my hope that this dissertation also begins to shift a narrative of where impactful design (as the artistic practice of fashion design and construction, and as the entrepreneurial practice of business design and management) is produced. I provide an outline of the chapters below as a brief guide to the dissertation structure.

1.6 A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Following this introduction, in chapter two I argue that race and ethnicity in Ecuador are predominantly understood through constructions of the body, place, and cultural (often aesthetic) markers. Race in particular has always been rooted in biological-cultural discourse, because cultural influences are ingrained in biological thought in the first place (Wade 2003). In Ecuador some bodies are more racially or ethnically marked than others, which is complicated by regionalized identities and ethnicities, as well as embodied and external cultural 'markers', such as food, dance and of course dress. Indigenous dress as an aesthetic marker reinforces the malleability of the body, particularly Indigenous Andean bodies in the context of Ecuador, but also makes its limitations based on racialized ideologies visible. This dress also embeds a sense of

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place without needing to stay in place, much like my participants who carried a sense of place with them.

Chapter three focuses on economic systems, and argues that Puruhá entrepreneurs work at multiple scales, local, national, and sometimes global. Economic anthropological theory has looked at power balances in global economic flow. However, assumptions about the direction of this flow has been problematized by contemporary economic anthropologists. Dependency theory and World Systems Theory, for example, forget local histories and cultures, denying the agency and resistance of 'non-dominant' people (Chibnik 2003). Development and economic power are not only hegemonic and Western (Escobar 1995, Kearny 1995, Andolina et al 2009). As my participants prove, multiple, fluid economic strategies are deeply rooted in place even as they move and shift globally. In the case of Ecuador, the strategies of my participants are often deeply entrenched in Puruhá-ness and ideologies that are by no means unchanging but are also still tied to a sense of communal *identidad*. This is also significant with regard to notions of branding and property rights, between the nation-state, communities, and individual designers/producers/vendors. Shared aesthetics can support a cultural commons or appropriation, and this dissertation aims to unpack these distinctions with an eye towards how control over narratives of identity support a growing Puruhá dress market. Puruhá dress also acts as different commodities, the material object itself and as images. For this particular commodity, a variety of producers with different price points sometimes created tensions regarding branding and copying, especially since there is a shared aesthetic cultural commons to draw from for designs. Still, relationships and economic networks persist as central support systems, and those designers and vendors who sell

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copies (regardless of how this is measured) actually end up supporting one another by creating a sustainable market and reinforcing economic autonomy.

Chapter four centers on sartorial semiotics, and the usefulness of moving towards a Piercian tripartite model to understand dress as part of a process that mediates relationships, and in turn the networks and power dynamics within those relationships. I ground this semiotic analysis in situated political and economic contexts, both historically and today, to look at the multitude of ways that dress and identity are co-constructed in daily interactions. Therefore, it is not just talk *about* dress but what dress *does* that allows us to see why the dress has such an impact on indigenous identity in Ecuador, whether through repression, retention, or revitalization.

Chapter five delves deeper into the contestation between different notions of ownerships over intellectual property, including Western and Indigenous knowledge bases. I do not assume that these ideological distinctions are wholly homogenous or clear cut and recognize how Puruhá understandings of ownership might complicate existing attempts to integrate Indigenous knowledges into Western legal systems. In my sixth chapter, I share how narratives of Puruhá female identity and expectations have long been shaped by both Puruhá community and cosmology, as well as external nation-statist desires, historically and today. This has not in the past, nor does it today have the power to obscure the narratives Puruhá women produce of and for themselves, which may or may not be in harmony with community or nation-statist ideologies. Regardless, my main focus here is on how the women I am accountable to and work with are controlling a market that does have such a large role in (re)constructing and (re)asserting Puruhá identity. While many of my participants spoke of their desire to preserve their collective

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histories and cosmologies through this dress, aligning with a role as bearers of tradition (Rogers 1998, Weismantle 2001) they also complicate what that Puruhá identity is, as women, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING RACE AND ETHNICITY: MAPPING THE DRESSED

BODY

2.1 VISUALIZING BELONGING

I returned to Ecuador in the fall of 2019, over a year after my fieldwork had been

completed. I was there to reconnect with some participants and receive feedback on my

analysis and writing so far. Sisa, the owner of the Puruhá fashion brand *Sumak Churay,*

was (and is) central to my research so I was a bit nervous that she would find some

glaring problems with my key themes. Still, she was always unwaveringly kind, and I

knew whatever she told me would only benefit my dissertation in the long run, so in mid-

October I made plans to drop by her shop. When I got there, one of her friends and

employees was running the counter. She called Sisa to come by and pick me up so we

could go back to her house, where she was working on a few blouses. She lived in the old

historic center in Quito, further uphill where the tourists thin out and residences

outnumber shops and restaurants. It was an old colonial building, and the layers of

flooring and paint evidenced that it had many past lives, but now served as her home and

studio. The studio was a large room, edged with tables and shelves that housed sewing

machines, fabric, and sewing accessories, but also a gas stove and cooking supplies. The

windows were huge, covering an entire wall, and a few cracks here and there broke up

the beautiful view of the city below. Sisa sat at her sewing machine, working while

chatting, and one of her several friends/employees sat with us. Though they were excited about my work so far, the friend did mention one thing she wanted to highlight. Some of their models and buyers were not Indigenous, but *Mestiza.* I had noted that although the majority of buyers were Indigenous there were some *Mestiza* clients as well, but I had forgotten to ask about how the models identify. Another designer I worked with, Franklin from *VISPU: Elegancia con Identidad,* had put out calls for Indigenous models specifically, and the women I had talked to on the streets or in shops who were wearing Puruhá dress identified as Indigenous, so it hadn't occurred to me to ask about the models. For me, the only indication of their racial or ethnic belonging *was* the dress style, layered onto a body that, given the context of the clothing, could be interpreted as Indigenous. This was far too presumptuous, but it is also indicative of how interpretations of race and ethnicity rely on markers that are never entirely definitive, regardless of whether they are of or on the body. Histories of Indigenous Andean individuals shifting between *Mestizo* and Indigenous dress styles to curb discrimination, to move between classes, or to reassert their heritage are evidence of how the body in Ecuador is a site of negotiation, but so too are histories of *Mestizo* individuals taking on Indigenous dress styles in local pageants, folk dances, or even in modeling gigs. Yet it is also significant that some bodies are understood in the general population to be more ambiguous or fluid than others, in part due to processes of *mestizaje* that favored 'mixing' with some populations over others, for instance Indigenous Andeans over Afro-Latinx individuals (Wade 2003). At the same time, this 'ambiguity' of identity is also not accessible for all Indigenous Andean individuals at all times, and for these individuals use of different dress styles may be contested or challenged in public spaces.

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Within Ecuador, racial and ethnic categorizations shift alongside historical moments, from the initial process of nation-building through today's contemporary Indigenous movements. Yet a consistent feature of racial and ethnic alignment in Ecuador is that there are bodily features that may be associated with particular racial/ethnic identities, but there is a simultaneous malleability of what these features signify, to what extent, and for whom, depending on cultural context. Racial ideologies in Latin America did not shift from early biological racial classification systems to contemporary cultural systems, but rather race ideologies are always both cultural and draw from biological criteria (Wade 2003). Cultural heritage and lived experiences work alongside notions of biological descent or bloodline to complicate the way Ecuadorians talk about race or ethnicity on the ground, but all are cultural products. Although there are physical similarities between Andean Indigenous and *Mestizo* citizens, certain features are focused on more than others at different moments (for instance, skin color over eye shape) that allows some Indigenous individuals to 'pass' as *Mestizo,* or vice versa. Just what features *are* significant in terms of making distinctions between racial and ethnic groups changes with context. For example, I have attended parties with predominantly whiter *Mestizo* families, where a very light skinned, blonde haired child was praised for her lightness and beauty, while darker skinned and featured children were ignored, even if in another context the other children would be seen as 'light skinned'. While hanging out with a few friends who identified as indigenous, they commented on the brother of one of the girls, mentioning that he's 'lighter' in skin tone as a half-joking attempt to get me to go out with him. I have heard an indigenous woman get referred to as *China*, meaning Chinese woman, because her friends think her eye shape 'looks'

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Chinese. It was said lovingly, not as an insult, and yet I wonder about the implications of this in a nation-state where significant racism against Chinese immigrants exists. Moreover, this idea of some Indigenous Ecuadorians having 'Chinese' eyes extends beyond just one group of friends. I've heard it used with reference to another Puruhá participant's newborn child in a way that seemed to be intended as humorous but affectionate. One of my participants mentioned that her baby was often mistaken for a girl because of his long hair, until she explained that he was Indigenous and it was traditional for men to have long hair, a physical feature associated not only with race and ethnicity, but conflicting expectations about gender. In all these cases different features (skin tone, eye shape, and hair) are commented upon over others in their specific cultural and situational contexts, but as contexts and interpretants change, so too can their prominence in particular discourses. In the case of my research, dress is both part of this context (it can affect how the body is read, how it moves, and where it is deemed "appropriate") but it is also part of the body itself and therefore takes on a significant role in marking an individual as either Indigenous or *Mestizo* (Lentz 1995, Melendez 2005). As previously mentioned, this malleability of identity for some individuals has allowed them to, for instance, wear fast fashion to pass as *Mestizo* and avoid harassment, or wear traditional dress styles to indicate a pride in being read as visibly Indigenous.

In many cases Indigenous Puruhá dress allows individuals to reclaim an identity that was historically repressed, but it also helps to distinguish between specific Indigenous groups, in the case of Andean individuals, de-homogenizing the broad category of Quichua. The ways that race and ethnicity are marked within Ecuador allow for this shifting between different identities, at least for many self-described Indigenous

and *Mestizo* individuals. In the case of the Puruhá, it is very much the case that wearing Puruhá dress is simultaneously a claim to indigeneity and Puruhá heritage, which then conjures questions about other cultural markers. For instance, do they speak the Quichua language, have certain food traditions, or were they born and raised in a particular region or city? The Puruhá are still tied to the province of Chimborazo as their ancestral home. They are, regardless of their mobility nationally and globally, understood to be from the area around Chimborazo volcano, inherently tied to the land and the traditions that come with it. This then, is another way that ethnic identity is organized in Ecuador, through place and environment. This is true not only for Andean Indigenous populations, but also for Amazonian groups and Afro-Ecuadorians, although it may not be as easy for these other groups to shift between ethnic identities using dress. For instance, an Amazonian Indigenous person may have a harder time wearing certain delicate and "revealing" cultural dress styles[1] in their day to day city life, and Afro-Ecuadorians may get associated with an identity based on skin tone by non Afro-Ecuadorians more quickly than by other cultural markers.

Therefore, to understand the specifics of how and why dress has become so significant in the fight for sovereignty among the Puruhá and other Indigenous groups, we must first understand how racial and ethnic categorizations have changed over time,

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[1] There were often comments to me about how the traditional style of Amazonian groups was to be naked, or mostly naked, but as the use of dress for cultural pride has grown, I have seen some attempts to create styles that can still be read as Amazonian but are less revealing. Still, much of the identification of Amazonian dress relies on delicate feather and beadwork, which would likely be impractical in daily city life, even if it didn't violate standards of modesty.

and who has benefited from and been left out of the creation of state-sanctioned identities. Race, ethnicity, gender, and class are never truly discrete categories in Ecuador. They overlap and affect expectations for behavior, and of group belonging. To be an Indigenous woman in Ecuador may carry with it different expectations than being a *Mestizo* woman, or someone who is Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous may be recognized as racially Black while their indigeneity is erased by external governmental or social organizations. Moreover, the very distinction between racial categories and ethnic categories is unclear, both in academic texts and when speaking with Ecuadorians on the ground. Colloredo-Mansfeld (1998) however, makes note of the problems with the co-existence of ethnic theory and race in the scholarship and politics of Andean society. Ethnic theory, which rests on cultural markers that are to some extent mutable, often ignore the lasting social divisions that race upholds. Thus, he seems to be distinguishing between race as historically constructed divisions based on notions of biological descent and ethnicity as rooted in cultural heritage and belonging (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). Wade's (1997) extensive investigation into race and ethnicity in Latin America also speaks to race as a cultural construction, the notion that races exist with definable physical and biological characteristics, rooted in periods of colonization, whereas ethnicity acts as a social construction centered on identifications of difference and sameness, though he notes, the same is true of gender and class (Wade 1997). Blood, heritage and bodies are dealt with outside of just biological discourses, and biological discourses from the early 19th century may be cultural artefacts, but they are not distinct from cultural discourses (Wade 2003). Moreover, as Ecuadorians attempt to organize one another, and make claims to their own identities, this complexity of race and ethnicity

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makes it difficult for my participants, and even people I had casual conversations with, to self-identify in single, clearly defined categorizations. They might respond to a question of ethnicity, for instance, with a list of markers, like Indigenous, Quichua, Puruhá, and from Cacha, while at the same time political and legal rights may highlight one central identity over others as a means to nation-state recognition. In some cases, it is arguable that ethnicity was more or less a replacement for race during the fourth moment[2] of nation building after World War II, but this shift did not displace the equation of culture, place, and biology that was also the racial 'soup' (Appelbaum et al 2003). Consequently, I will often use race and ethnicity together, to talk about these layered identities, but will at times use race when the focus is on the broader designation of Afro-Ecuadorian, *Mestizo,* and Indigenous, and use ethnicity when discussing different communities within those broad racial categorizations.

I begin, therefore, with a look at historical constructions of identity prior to the formation of the Ecuadorian nation-state, and what ideologies of race and ethnicity are being drawn on contemporarily by Indigenous, particularly Puruhá social actors as markers of "Puruhá-ness". I then discuss shifts in discourse on race during and after the formation of the nation-state, including environmental, social, classed, and gendered

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[2] Appelbaum et al (2003) note distinct periods of nation building in Latin America based in part on the relationship between elite practices and popular mobilizations, but these periods vary by country and region. They note their periodization should be understood as fluid and the racial discourses of each moment contested (4), but they are generally: First moment- early 19th century attempts to make citizens out of colonial subjects. Second moment- late 19th century emergence of countries from early republics; governments sought to maintain social and labor order. Third moment- early 20th century, increasingly populist national projects. Fourth moment- after WWII with doctrines of modernization, development, social movements and new scientific discourse around 'ethnicity'

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relations, as well as how the dressed body is both a tool of subversion and appropriation. The exploration here is of both the individual body as a means to the (re)construction and transgression of the limits of identity making, but also of the body of the nation-state as a form of organization that requires certain contrasts in racial and ethnic identities to maintain the hierarchy of *mestizaje.* This includes an exploration of how *mestizaje* continues to affect the way bodies are read and treated in Ecuador, both by the nation-state and Ecuadorian citizens. In the subsequent section I focus more narrowly on analyzing how Puruhá designers have crafted a distinctiveness not just from the *Mestizo* majority, but also from other Indigenous Andean groups, specifically Otavaleños, and how this ethnic distinctiveness is used for both cultural revival and economic attainment. This distinctiveness is intimately intertwined with dress as a bodily (on the body though not of the body) characteristic that is much more fluid and mutable than other bodily traits. It is this exact quality of dress that allows it to take on such a significant role in identity-based struggles for sovereignty, but this also means that Puruhá dress cannot be detangled from expectations about race and ethnicity that are being continuously (re)created in Ecuador daily.

2.2 I. (RE)CONSTRUCTING PRE-COLONIAL INDIEGNOUS IDENTITIES

All constructions of racial and ethnic categorizations rely, at least to some extent, on being reestablished through contrast to their other(s). The process of *mestizaje* as a movement towards whiteness relies on constantly recreating and reestablishing a contrast of Blackness (Wade 1993). The construction of indigeneity is also reliant on its placement among and between categories of 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness', reimagined by the nation-state in particular ways that may or may not align with how the public

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understand it. It is part of the assumed triad of the founding of many Latin American nations (African, Indigenous, and European people) (Wade 2003) but for the Puruhá it is also a category that contains multitudes in itself, both in terms of hierarchical value and regional differentiation. Race and ethnicity in Ecuador are conceived of by my participants far earlier than the formation of the nation-state, though perhaps this itself is a response to the way the nation-state has conceived of indigeneity in its foundational mythos. Pre-Columbian histories have been absorbed into the story of the Ecuadorian nation, despite cultural losses that have been incurred by Indigenous communities throughout both the Inca and Spanish conquests.

Ecuador is a nation that has long imagined and reimagined a national identity that could both distinguish it from Spain and incorporate a large Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian population, but still maintain a hierarchy that prioritized constructions of "whiteness" (Foote 2010, Olson 2013). Inca mythology in particular was used to represent an ancient heritage, which was useful during revolutionary periods, but still distanced the Inca from what were, at the time, contemporary Indigenous individuals (Foote 2010). This is something I will discuss further in section 2.3 while unpacking the relationship between *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* within the nation-state's history, but I note it here because this valorized Inca mythology is somewhat different from the perspectives of my Puruhá interviewees. There is a simultaneous acceptance of the influence of the Inca empire and reassertion of a pre-Incan Puruhá identity that was affected by the Inca conquest. Many individuals I spoke with reiterated that there was an Incan conquest of the pre-existing Indigenous groups, and that these distinct histories and worldviews were suppressed, but not entirely lost. The Inca Empire spanned the Andes,

and from the early 1200s through the mid-1500s they allied with or conquered various tribes, incorporating them into the empire (Malpass 2009). The conquests began around A.D. 1438 due to an invasion of their territory by a rival society, and this set in motion the development of the Inca Empire, which would only end with the Spanish conquest (ibid). However, the Incas only incorporated what is now known as Ecuador into their empire a few years before the arrival of the Spanish in 1534 (Becker 2008). The Ecuadorian Puruhá scholar, Pedro Janeta Janeta (2015), mentioned different "original" Puruhá pueblos prior to this conquest: Tungurahya and Carihuayrazo, and the Llakta. This term Llakta is described elsewhere as meaning the people/pueblo, but also related to a form of governance that involves communal property and work (Erazo 2013). It is established that even this pre-Incan population was highly diverse, and there were extensive interethnic relations and alliances that eventually became the Puruhá nation, with authority centralized in a hereditary monarch (Carmilema 2016). This is more of a regionalized mixing, based on distinct Indigenous populations but not necessarily racial difference, and was further complicated by the long-distance trade conducted by Andean merchants prior to the Inca conquest (Korovkin 1998), which likely created some shared aesthetics. While interviewees distinguish themselves as Puruhá, not Otavaleño or any of the other Andean Indigenous populations, they also often referred to themselves as Quichua. This aligns them with a much broader Andean Indigenous population through a shared language, which was imposed by Inca empire, although this itself may have been more a result of the Spanish invasion and colonial rule (Mannheim 1991). In an attempt to level out language differences, European invaders promoted Quechua (in Ecuador

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Quichua) above other languages (ibid)[3]. This Quichua ethnic designation, and the political weight it may hold, interacts with the self-designation by the Puruhá as a unique community within that broader designation. What then, is unique to the Puruhá as part of their pre-Incan conquest history?

The Puruhá are very open about certain gaps in historical knowledge, and the influences of other Andean groups on who they are today. Whatever their beliefs in shared bloodlines or genetic strains, the focus tends to be on distinguishing social and cultural features that they know are specific to them as an ethnic group, without discounting the importance of cultural exchange and, historically, economic exchange as well (Korovkin 1998). Most of my understanding of Puruhá pre-Incan cosmology comes from discussions with participants and a book by Pedro Janeta Janeta, which is still the most comprehensive document I've found on their history and belief system. There is a focus on ancestral knowledge, which in contrast to capitalism as it is practiced in the western world, incorporates the laws of nature, i.e. the rights that the natural world has to survival, respect, and fair treatment, as equal to the laws of humans (Janeta Janeta 2015). I emphasize that this is in contrast to western capitalism because the Puruhá are not against capitalism as a means to economic autonomy, but they also incorporate cooperative practices that are found throughout Indigenous Andean populations (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Fass 2017; Wilhoit 2017). The Puruhá cosmology does require that you do not favor your own needs above the needs of others in your community (Janeta Janeta 2015). Respect of the natural world is also key, as both the

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[3] Participants have contested this idea that the homogenization of language was primarily after the Spanish conquest, and instead see it as predominantly the result of Inca rule.

natural world and ancestors play a role in contemporary life. Harmony is not just among the community, but between individuals and the earth. Like other Andean populations this involves animism, particularly of the mountains (Bauer and Koshiba 2016, Swanson 1994). Elements of the natural world are agentive members of the community, and in a place like Riobamba it isn't difficult to see why. Volcanoes and mountains watch you from every side. To anyone sensitive to the natural world, they have a presence. That being said, it's difficult to know how much of this cosmology has been preserved, how much has been reinterpreted[4], and what has been lost and gained over time with regard to an ethnic identity based on place. It is arguable that the pluriverse of Indigenous Andean culture, which includes animism, has been replaced with the discourse of multiculturalism that focuses on ethnic categorizations in contemporary Ecuador (De la Cadena 2010). The pluriverse is not focused just on human cultural diversity, in the way that multiculturalism is. Instead, it takes into account humans alongside all other plant and animal species, and natural elements which have a sort of living force. I would argue, however, that the pluriverse cannot be stripped from multiculturalism, because the pluriverse is part of that cultural identity. For instance, the Puruhá culture includes animism, particularly when it comes to the mountains and volcanos that watch over them. Therefore, the pluriverse may not be explicit in the nation-state's multiculturalism, it is smuggled in to some extent, because it exists as part of Puruhá culture. Regardless, constructions of Puruhá-ness still rely heavily on the Chimborazo province as a physical place.

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[4] I use the term reinterpreted not as a marker of truth, but in the sense that all culture is created, and it is being created again, drawing perhaps on ancient sources and knowledge, as well as contemporary.

Another reoccurring theme is balance achieved through duality. Dualities like male and female, heat and cold, space and time must be balanced. This creates balance among the cosmos and with the land, which is the basis of Puruhá power, in contrast to economic strength or legal authority as forms of power in the Western world. During my fieldwork I noted an emphasis on heterosexual romantic partnerships and heard some Puruhá talk about the male and female balance, but I have also heard this from other Indigenous interviewees who are not Puruhá. Moreover, I have also met Indigenous Andean women from different communities, including the Puruhá, who have positive perspectives on unmarried older women and/or are happily single themselves, so it is difficult to say if the emphasis on a gendered duality that must unite to create harmony is changing in any way. Yet the emphasis on the natural world remains a significant topic of conversation and is particularly evident at various seasonal ceremonies, like Pwakar Raymi or Inti Raymi. It is in celebrations like this that Puruhá participants would speak to the Inca, or broader Quichua influence, on their traditions, but also retain that the dances, the clothes, and other important features were uniquely Puruhá.

Herein lies a complexity then, since the designation of being Puruhá is not completely separate from other nearby Andean Indigenous populations or the influences of the Inca but is still rooted in a pre-Incan population. Identity here is not simply a racial designation of Indigenous or an ethnic designation of Puruhá, but relies on layered identifiers, regardless of whether or not *all* Puruhá social actors rely on these identifiers *all* the time. The designation of Puruhá relies on ties to place (specific Puruhá pueblos within Chimborazo) ties to a shared cultural identity (the pre and post-Incan Puruhá cosmovision and experience), to its place within a racialized designation (being

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Indigenous and having Indigenous bloodlines), to a shared history of colonization (Incan colonization and the designation of the "Quichua" people), to a gender duality (which is also present in *Mestizo* culture, though in different ways)[5], and to the embodiment of that identity through certain markers (whether physical characteristics *of* the body or mutable characteristics *on* the body). The Puruhá share cultural heritage, including an aesthetic regardless of how much of that can be traced through artifact records and documentation but that aesthetic itself is as layered and complex as any ethnic or racial identification.

Take as an example the *anaco*, which may be one of the oldest articles of Indigenous Andean and Puruhá dress. The *anaco* is a large swath of fabric that is wrapped around the lower half of the body as a kind of wrap skirt and secured with a *faja* or belt. It was contrasted with pants by some of my participants as an example of Indigenous (women's) versus *Mestizo* dress styles. Despite the fact that its origins are unclear, it unites many Indigenous groups within the Quichua community. Franklin is the founder and designer at *VISPU: Elegancia con Identidad,* and he was very informative when it came to Puruhá history, if not through his own memory than by providing me with the text by Pedro Janeta Janeta. Like the designer Sisa, of *Sumak Churay,* he had multiple stores but unlike Sisa his main store was in Riobamba, with a secondary store in Quito. Therefore, the first time I met with him was in Riobamba during the little over a month that I spent there. His flagship store was in a sort of indoor mall with stalls as opposed to walled shops and he often worked with his wife. He was excited to speak with

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[5] It is difficult to say if or how much of this strong emphasis on gender duality is a result of Incan or Colonial influences, but among my Puruhá participants I have never been offered information about any non-binary cultural history.

me and spoke to the origins of particular dress elements where he could. Of the *anaco* he stated:

> *Veraz, por ejemplo el anaco, este es el anaco, dice que a la conquista de los*
> *españoles … Eran desnudas pues en el pasado. Pues … No tenían, como se dice?*
> *Con la que prendaba la naturaleza, hojas y todo eso, se cubrían sus partes.*
> *Entonces ya cuando has llegado los españoles y con la conquista les dieron para*
> *que se abría unos pedazos de tele. Entonces ellos quisieron, ellos no sabían que*
> *es lo que es costura, bordado, no sabían nada. Que hicieron ellos con estos*
> *pedazos de tele? Cortaban y se ponían se volvían y con el resto teles ahora*
> *también aquí, con para cubrirse del frio, estas otras cosas. Entonces, por eso es*
> *que quedó como el anaco ya. Incluso muchas regiones aquí de Ecuador, y*
> *muchas regiones de mas todo de la sierra cuando hace frio. Entonces, eso podría*
> *ser la aparición del anaco aquí en este país, especialmente aquí en la sierra.*

Look, for example the anaco, this is the anaco, says that at the conquest of the Spanish … They were naked in the past. They didn't have, how do you say it? With which he turned to nature, leaves and all of that, they covered their parts. Then when the Spanish arrived and with the conquest they were given some pieces of fabric. They maybe, they didn't know what sewing is, embroidery. They didn't know anything. What did they do with these fabric pieces? They cut, and put on, and turned, and with the rest of the fabrics also covered from the cold these other things. This is why the *anaco* stayed, even in many regions here in

Ecuador and many regions in the mountains when it's cold. That could be the appearance of the *anaco* here in this country, especially here in the mountains.

Here Franklin is aligning the use of fabric as dress with the Spanish conquest, and the pre- and even -post Incan Indigenous populations with nakedness, or at least dress that did not primarily use fabric. This situates the *anaco* as a marker of a shared post-conquest Indigenous Andean history, which unites them as Indigenous Andean communities but also distinguishes them from both the colonizers and later the *Mestizo* populations. Yet certain other distinctions between types of *anacos* also distinguish different Indigenous groups from one another, such as the use of the white underskirt (another swath of wrapped fabric) that peaks out from the *anaco* of Otavaleño women. This key aspect of dress designates racial, ethnic, and regional identities, as well as histories of conquest, but it is also something that can be put on and taken off the body. It is a choice that for many Andean Indigenous people facilitates recognition as Puruhá or Quichua if they are understood to be somewhat racially or ethnically ambiguous. This supposed ambiguity is based on the notion that processes of *mestizaje* have created populations that are all 'mixed' with Indigenous and Spanish blood to some extent, but some are more or less Indigenous than others. This in itself stems from the unique amalgamation of biological-cultural markers of race and ethnicity that have shifted over the course of the Ecuadorian nation-state's formation, never entirely abandoning the notion of 'mixing' or processes of *mestizaje* that valorize and yet rely on Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian contrast to survive.

The boundaries of any one particular Indigenous identity within Ecuador are therefore very convoluted, but the claims that Puruhá people make are not always to racial or ethnic 'purity'[6], but rather to a heritage they share with one another. Some aspects of that heritage are clearly delineated, and others less so, but claims are not invalidated by this ambiguity. Some reported that Indigenous traditions, for instance the ceremonies during Inti Raymi and Pawkar Raymi use symbols and rituals that are both Incan and pre-Incan. Within the dress world, the influences, whether pre-Incan, Incan, Spanish, or otherwise are not invalidating either. It is instead the way in which these aspects have blended together which is unique to the Puruhá, and which distinguishes them from other Andean groups, and makes them recognizable to each other. The different influences on the Puruhá, whether Incan, pre-Columbian, Spanish, from contemporary Indigenous Andean communities, or from other global communities *are* part of what makes the Puruhá unique. Still, however accepted this 'mixed' heritage is within the Puruhá community, within nation-state institutions like museums Indigenous ethnicities are not explicitly labeled as 'mixed'. They are framed as 'pure' and singular, without the complexities that are actually present within each community. We can understand this as a part of continual nation-building processes, that today rely on a certain marketable indigeneity. Exploration of these processes can also help to analyze

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[6] Many of my interviewees who spoke about their Puruhá or Indigenous identities in depth mentioned that there was likely some Spanish heritage in their community, and many of my interviewees who spoke about their *Mestizo* identities mentioned they had to have some Indigenous heritage, but they did not know about it and therefore did not claim indigeneity. However, I did come across memes and statements posted on Facebook from Indigenous Ecuadorian friends that reasserted Indigenous identity as 'pure' in opposition to the 'mixed' *Mestizo* identity that placed an emphasis on the value of purity during the time of the October 2019 *paro,* or uprising against Lenin Moreno's austerity package.

how other racial ideologies were and are formed in relation and contrast to indigeneity, lending a fuller picture to how bodies are and are not racially and ethnically malleable, for whom, and in what context.

2.2 II. NATION-STATIST IDEOLOGIES OF IDENTITY

I sought out Patricia, who worked in the *Casa de la Cultura* ethnographic museum, because I wanted to gain a perspective on how institutions like museums reinforce certain understandings of race and ethnicity, especially with regard to Indigenous Ecuadorians. Patricia was from a small town called Licto, which was predominantly Indigenous and in the Chimborazo province, but she had come to Quito for university and now worked at one of the most prominent cultural institutions in the city, the *Casa de la Cultura Benjamin Carrion,* which also has 24 regional branches throughout the Andes, Amazon, Coast and in the Galapagos. Patricia did not claim Indigenous identity, but her upbringing in Licto was a talking point that bonded her to the Puruhá community. She told me a narrative about Puruhá survival that mirrored what my Puruhá interviewees mentioned. The Puruhá still exist; they were a very strong community, inhabiting what are now many provinces. After Inca colonization there was some cultural exchange, but elements of Puruhá identity were retained. According to Patricia, local Indigenous languages were the first thing lost or suppressed by the Inca, a means of making colonization easier through assimilation. As a result, Ecuador's Andean Indigenous populations today still speak the Incan language Quichua. Therefore, the categorization of the Puruhá as Quichua, while often framed as a means to autonomy and political access, aligns them with the Incan conquest, as subjects to the grand empire of

the Inca. This homogenized them under Inca rule historically, and to some extent continues to do so today, but now under the rule of *Mestizo* political elites.

This narrative of the survival of pre-Incan populations therefore lives on in certain public spaces. Museum imagery, including the ethnographic museum Patricia helps run, demonstrates the variety of ancient Indigenous populations and their social and political structures. Populations are regionalized as belonging to the coast, the sierra, and the lowland Amazon, in much the same way that contemporary racial categorizations are regionalized. The broadest racialized mapping includes Indigenous (primarily Quichua) in the Andean highlands, a variety of Indigenous groups in the Amazon, and the association of Afro-Ecuadorians with the coastline (Foote 2006). Yet within this broader regionalization of racial and ethnic identities, there are also narrower regionalizations of specific Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations, which draw on origin stories that rely on ties to land. This can be seen in the two images below, from two different ethnographic museums. The second is from *Museo Ethnohistórico de Artesanias del Ecuador Mindalae* and focuses on regional dress styles. The first image, from the *Casa de la Cultura* contains this excerpt:

People of Ecuador in the Spiral of Time:

Ecuador is a plurinational, multiethnic and pluricultural nation, marked by the presence of *Mestizos*, Indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians and descendants of Spaniards. In addition, there are mulatos, zambos, and diverse immigrants from other countries and continents.

Within the Indigenous culture, 14 (villages/communities) are recognized a nationalities, and have their own customs, cosmovision, dress, lifestyle, food, religiosity/spirituality, artisans, music, stories and myths. The majority maintain their ancestral traditions and others adopt new processes due to globalization or the influence of other cultures over time.

Figure 2.1 Image from the Ethnographic Museum at the *Casa de la Cultura Carrión*

Figure 2.2 Image from the *Museo Etnohistorico de Artesanias Benjamin Ecuador Mindalae*

This excerpt and the mapped imagery accompanying it are not uncommon in Ecuador. Identity is mapped to place, predominantly for Indigenous communities, although sometimes for Afro-Ecuadorians as well. What is interesting is that they distinguish Spanish ancestry as its own community within multicultural Ecuador, which would presumably be *blancos* or *criollos,* although I have never heard anyone refer to themselves in this way. They also designate *Zambos* and *mulatos*, colonialist caste

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designations that today designate a racial/ethnic mixture of Afro-Ecuadorians and Indigenous people, or Afro-Ecuadorians and *blancos*. There is some attempt, therefore, to designate the *Mestizo* category as distinct from Spanish ancestry alone, and to speak to a complexity of Afro-Ecuadorian identities, however briefly. Still, in both images *Mestizo* and Spanish descendants are left out of the mapping, and the majority of "placed" people are Indigenous groups. It is indigeneity that is most strongly associated with land and place, a reminder of 18th century scientists, geographers, and naturalists who began to "map" racial variation in the same way they would topography, or plant and animal species (Appelbaum et al 2003, Orlove 1993, Poole 1997). Space and race were, and continue to be, mutually constructed and reinforced, which in turn (re)constructs the nation-state (Appelbaum et al 2003). This reiteration of the relationship between race, ethnicity and place is significant in a museum that caters to both Ecuadorians and foreign visitors. It shows us how the nation wants to present itself and its Indigenous populations. Moreover, much of this relationship between race, ethnicity and place also relies on other cultural markers to reiterate that these are unique cultures and communities, such as 'traditional' dress on non-descript bodies (all white outlined figures with no physical features). The body here can *only* be read by its relationship to place and dress. Narratives of pre-Columbian descendants persisting ,and having claims to land and distinct aesthetics, help to counter the once powerful Inca mythos. This supports contemporary fights for land and other rights, but the cartography of indigeneity has also remained a useful tool of the nation-state and other state based cultural institutions for marginalizing these same communities.

Still, pre-Incan sierra populations have been strategically incorporated into Ecuadorian history by those in power in other ways as well. Outside of today's museums and cultural events, pre-Incan indigeneity is also as part of a historical mythos centered on the Quitu. Padre Juan Velasco, a Creole and Jesuit Priest exiled to Italy during the Bourbon Reforms in 1767, wrote a history of Quito, Ecuador that included the idea of a highly sophisticated pre-Incan kingdom, centralized in the area that is now the city of Quito (Foote 2010). Although extremely disputed, again we see the tendency to focus on place as a marker of race and ethnicity, and to focus on highlighting "advanced" Indigenous identities over others to build national identity. This happened initially with the Inca, who were thought by the Spaniards to be more 'civilized' in part because of their dress, which was more complex in construction than other Indigenous groups, but also because some groups were associated with 'nakedness' and therefore 'primitiveness' (Melendez 2005). After the writings of Padre Juan Velasco in the 18th century the Quitu were more highly regarded but Ecuador would not see resurgence in this myth making of Quito until the 1940s. The focus on the Quitu as a general name for Indigenous sierra groups unique to Ecuador and their Kingdom of Quito was a strategy that allowed Ecuador to distinguish itself from Peru, also an Andean nation with Incan ties, during the Peru-Ecuador conflict (Foote 2010; Radcliffe and Westwood 1996). However, some scholars related the founding of an Ecuadorian nationality to the Incan Atahualpa, brother of Huáscar. The conflict between the brothers was referred to as a war between the Kingdom of Quito and the Kingdom of Cuzco, and Atahualpa was seen as distinct from the rest of the Inca Empire or the inheritor of it depending on the historian (Foote 2010).

This helped give Ecuador its own founding story, rooted in indigeneity, but also in a wealthy, advanced empire that could and *did* rival Peru.

Therefore, claims to either an Incan history, a more encompassing Quitu history, or the specific regional ancestral groups we see mapped out today are claims that rest on the desires of the person or people involved, whether that be a historical context wherein Ecuador's elites attempted to rival Peru, or Puruhá people today visualizing and verbalizing pride in their ancestry. Indeed, the nation of Quitu was never brought up by any of the Puruhá people I worked with, which makes sense since despite the fact that many Puruhá people lived and worked in Quito their own descendancy is deeply tied to the province of Chimborazo with Riobamba as its provincial capital. It seems the contemporary narrative focuses on difference as unity, at least with regard to Andean populations, who are often contrasted to Indigenous Amazonian and Afro-Ecuadorian populations, much in the same way that indigeneity itself is framed in relation to Afro-Ecuadorians and *Mestizos*. Moreover, if place is meant to be a marker of race and ethnicity, what happens with a highly mobile population and/or a population that is understood to be more 'ethnically ambiguous' even as those markers of ambiguity are culturally constructed? What role does the body take on and how does dress in particular help those individuals integrate or transgress certain classed, racialized and ethnic spheres?

2.3 I. CONSTRUCTING THE NATION THROUGH RACE (BODIES)

Ambiguity is a strange thing, because you can only be ambiguous in a context where certain features are valued over others as markers of difference. In Ecuador I 'blend in', which is to say by my physical attributes alone are not disruptive to ideologies

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of what an Ecuadorian *Mestiza* does or should look like by much of the general population, regardless of the underlying complexities of actual *Mestizo* identities. Once I mention being Bolivian born, the question of indigeneity arises, unsurprising since Bolivia is noted for its large Indigenous population. My participants could easily see me as Indigenous too, even though I don't make claims to this. In part this legacy of ambiguity is crucial to processes of *mestizaje,* supporting the idea that some populations could more easily assimilate into the ideals of the nation-state than others (Foote 2006). Indigenous Andean people were seen as better suited to this process than their Afro-Ecuadorian or even Amazonian Indigenous counterparts (ibid) and my participants mentioned the ability to "pass" for *Mestizo* at times when being visibly Indigenous meant being discriminated against as they moved to cities and through institutions. Moreover, in Latin America neo-Lamarckian ideas about improving the environment to improve the 'race' were perpetuated through, for example, bringing in more 'White' individuals as examples, implementing Western forms of education, and disseminating ideas about social hygiene (Nelson 1999, Wade 2003). These ideas about 'whitening' as a social process, not necessarily (or just) about miscegenation evidences the layering of cultural and biological understandings of race in Ecuador, but it does not eradicate the role of the body. The very creation of racial types was based on conceptual abstractions that could not be empirically observed, an attempt to use physical *and* environmental/cultural traits to get at some assumed 'underlying' racial truth (ibid). Thus, some bodies have historically been understood by the nation-state to be 'less' able to adapt to these processes, such as Afro-Ecuadorians (Foote 2006) and some places were thought to determine the character of the people, and could thus even 'degenerate' European

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descendants who lived in that place (Wade 2003). Place, body, and cultural markers (language, dress, music, food, etc.) work in conjunction with one another to varying degrees in different historical contexts and yet the fact remains that for some individuals their bodies are highlighted for physical features that indicate 'difference' (i.e. less Whiteness/*Mestizo-ness*) more than others.

Within Ecuador, the racial categories of Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, or *Blanco* (White) are set in contrast to the *Mestizo* identity, which is colloquially understood to be a 'mixture' of Indigenous and Spanish heritage and thus unique to the post-conquest nation-state. This is the 'founding' racial triad that is continuously reinforced as the basis for Latin American nations like Ecuador (Wade 2003), and the only supposed possibilities for valid racial identities in Ecuador outside of the majority *Mestizo* category. Indigeneity, Afro-Ecuadorian, and White identities are framed as 'purer', though not necessarily more valuable, categorizations despite the fact that they too may encompass forms of racial and ethnic 'mixing' in the same way that *Mestizo* identity does. This discourse within Ecuador about the singularity of 'Blackness', 'Whiteness', and 'Indian-ness'[7] reproduces *mestizaje* as their contrast and vice-versa. The narrative of the three pure and one mixed identity elides and highlights certain affiliations and heritage claims, including claims to complex ethnic identities regardless of racial classification. Take for instance Juliet Hooker's (2005) article on Black exclusion from multicultural citizenship in Latin America. Racial discrimination against Afro-Ecuadorians has affected the collective rights they've been able to win under

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[7] Although as a racial category Indigenous identities are framed as singular, i.e. not "mixed", the distinct ethnic groups within indigeneity are recognized as part of a multi-cultural racial group.

multicultural citizenship reforms throughout Latin America, in a way that is more exclusionary than it has been for their Indigenous counterparts. In part, this is because many cannot make claims based on cultural distinctiveness the way Indigenous groups can, and Latin American elites tend to perceive Indigenous communities as distinct cultural groups, but Black communities as racialized but not ethnic groups (Hooker 2005). Of course, Afro-Ecuadorians can and do encompass and claim ethnic identities, including Indigenous identities. This erasure is not accidental or incidental. Hegemonic discourses reiterate Blackness as a monolith, and therefore Afro-Ecuadorians have different legal and political positions than their Indigenous counterparts who can make claims to an ancient history, cultural heritage and land rights (Wade 1993). Although this is changing today (Rahier 2011) Indigenous Andean groups in particular still have a more secure place in the nationalist imagination.

During the Liberal Revolution (1895-1944) highland groups were assumed to be better suited to cultural transformation than other Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian populations (Foote 2006). They were treated with a paternalistic concern from the state, and as legislative moves to deconstruct the power of the church and hacienda complex went forward, the state focused on education and modernization (ibid). Their interest in the Andean Indigenous populations was in part based on regional stereotypes, and in part because of the sustained contact they had already had with them; Andean Indigenous people had been conquered and used for exploitative labor by Spanish colonists in a way that Amazonian people had not (Perrault 2001). This isn't to say that there wasn't colonization, missionary work, or exploitation of the Amazon, but that it was very different, and control was much more variable over time. It wasn't until much later in the

20th century that they became part of the nationalist project (ibid). They too were discursively related to their land as wild, difficult, and exotic, but rich in natural resources. The discovery of gold in the 1930s, of petroleum in 1967, and the agrarian reform in the 1960s and 70s spurred increasing interest in such a difficult people and terrain (ibid). Costal Afro-Ecuadorians, however, were never integrated into the Liberal project, and were instead seen as a hindrance to the progress of the state, despite the fact that Afro-Ecuadorians from Esmeraldas and Manabí once formed the core of Eloy Alfaro's Liberal army (Foote 2006). This rejection is striking because Eloy Alfaro is a national hero, who opposed Catholic conservative president Gabriel Garcia Moreno, and served as president in 1895-1901, and 1906-1911, after leading the Liberal Revolution in 1895. He is remembered in part for his push to modernize the country, particularly through a railroad that linked the highlands to the coast (Clark 1998). Instead, Afro-Ecuadorians and those mixed with Afro-Ecuadorians were typified as aggressive, and lazy (Cervone 2010), and blamed for Ecuador's political instability due to their supposed lazy, drunken, and criminal leanings (Foote 2006). They were so despised as a racial group, efforts were even made to construct them as Colombian, not Ecuadorian (ibid), a tool of nation-state building that was not unfamiliar in Ecuador. They fulfilled the role of ultimate "other" because the nation-state worked to frame them this way, instead of incorporating them into nationhood to the same extent as they did with Indigenous, especially Andean Indigenous social actors.

Moreover, in Latin America *indigenismo* cultivated respect for Indigenous roots even as it negated self-determination for the Indian population (Safa 2005). However, in the context of liberation theology in the 1970s, Christian based communities and the

growth of the human rights movement in Latin America seemed to favor Indigenous populations over Afrodescendents. Indigenous individuals receive more support from international organizations and they had land claims that Afrodescendents did not (ibid). Due to gendered racial conceptualizations, marriage with Indigenous women has been allowed for much longer than intermarriage with Black women and Indigenous women have been studied as a culture in their own right (ibid). It also became evident in my fieldwork that Indigenous and *Mestizo* individuals were understood to share physical features to the extent that many Indigenous people could "pass" as *Mestizo*, evidence that biological and cultural conceptualizations of race have always gone and in hand (Wade 2003).

The state has arguably incorporated certain bodily features into national inclusiveness and rejected others, based in part on social practices from the elite that have permeated Ecuador at different class levels. For instance, Masi de Cassanova (2004) argues that the ideal Ecuadorian woman is still 'White' but not exactly the same as the U.S. ideal. She has dark features, primarily long dark hair, and a *'cuerpo bueno'* or the hourglass figure (ibid). Moreover, while the process of settler colonialism in the United States primarily centered on removal rather than exploitation, in Ecuador the exploitation of Indigenous labor contributed to *mestizaje*, resulting in the majority of the population regarding themselves as descendants of "mixed" Indigenous and European ancestry (Pineda 2017).[8] Therefore, in the U.S. physical characteristics associated with European

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[8] As previously mentioned, Ecuador is a settler colonialist state since it both disposed Indigenous people of their land and exploited their labor, but the focus on exploitation and "mixing" as central to the process of *mestizaje* is distinct from the treatment of Native people in North America (Speed 2017).

descent stand in stark contrast to those associated with indigeneity, while processes of *mestizaje* relied on increasing sameness (on the path to whiteness) between supposed physical markers of Indigenous and European racial/ethnic identity. Although some individuals may be read as Indigenous more quickly, or with more conviction because of certain physical features, it is much more likely that this distinction is made based on a number of other visual and auditory cues, including notions of 'cleanliness' (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998), languages and linguistic styles, work being done, and among others, dress styles. Thus, the choice of whether to wear Indigenous dress is often a choice about being read as ethnically Indigenous or not, an ability granted to many Indigenous individuals but not their Afro-Ecuadorian peers. This has very real political and social effects as well.

Ecuador is one of only six Latin American nations that have extended some collective rights to Afro-Latinos, but even so they did not gain the same rights as their Indigenous counterparts (Hooker 2005). While rural and Indigenous politics are similar, rural Black communities that make claims to a distinct cultural identity are only a small portion of the Afro-Latino population in Latin America, and they are not aligned with their urban counterparts. Not all Black communities can make claims based on cultural distinctiveness in the same way Indigenous groups can; Afro-Latino claims are instead often posed in terms of race or racism (via a Black identity) as opposed to cultural difference or ethnicity (via an Indigenous identity) (Safa 2005). In other words, the nation-state's multiculturalism in Ecuador, but also in other Latin-American countries, focuses more-so on ethnic diversity and less-so on racial justice, which affects Afro-Ecuadorians because they continue to be racialized first, through emphasis on the body,

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and are less likely to claim or be understood as a particular ethnic cultural group. However, this is not to say that the body is not a point of focus when it comes to the treatment of Indigenous people as well, only that their bodies are understood to be more fluid based on a (re)constructed historical narrative.

2.3 II. CONTRIBUTION AND CONTRAST OF INDIGENOUS BODIES TO MESTIZAJE

Discourses of explicit racial difference that depends on notions of 'objective' phenotypical markers of difference and discourses of *mestizaje* as having created a homogenous 'mixed' population which supposedly disposes of difference are really the same (Nelson 1999). Both still rely on the body to 'race' individuals, and both erase the gendering and sexualization of those bodies on which notions of blood purity or miscegenation rely (ibid). In the case of Indigenous Ecuadorians, desires are written on the body and often reclaimed through dressing the body, not just in clothes, but in clothes as markers of indigeneity. I was talking to Malvi, an Otavaleña woman in her 20s who has a strong social media presence and often poses in Otavaleño dress with sometimes funny, sometimes sincere (sometimes both) captions about romantic relationships. She is energetic and talkative, and when I met her with another friend of hers she took a backseat for a few moments here and there to start her own social media livestream as I interviewed her. When I asked why she thinks Indigenous women like to use their traditional dress style gave a litany of reasons, including claims to ancestral identity and community, but she also mentioned that it's a more beautiful dress style and that more men say it's sexy, that anywhere you go they look at you. She did not racially or ethnically categorize these men, but her confidence in the attraction implicit in this dress

did make me think about how Indigenous women I've met reclaim a beauty and sexuality that has historically been the root of tensions between Indigenous, *Mestizo*, and White men who act out their fears and desires on the bodies of Indigenous women (Nelson 1999, Radcliffe 1997). Dress becomes both a marker of ethnic and racial identity, as well as a marker of desirability. However, it is not only projected onto the woman but also emerging from her, tied intimately to her indigeneity. I will speak more to this in chapter six, since the intimacy of gender and Indigenous identity require much more time in an industry where women's bodies are both producing the product and wearing the product. Still, it is necessary to keep in mind that any discourse about how indigeneity and *mestizaje* reinforce one another as categories also relies on the Indigenous woman's body as (re)producer, whether of 'bloodlines' or cultural markers. Moreover, the production of indigeneity as a racial category emerges only in articulation with the Spanish invasion and conquest, and it continues to articulate with nation-statist ideologies and (re)emerging ethnic, gendered, and classed categorizations (Nelson 1999).

With the arrival of the Spanish the racial categorization of *Mestizo* was created to hierarchize and differentiate between Spanish descended 'White' populations and the 'mixed' Indigenous and Spanish populations, along with categorizations like *zamba* (Indigenous and Black) or *mulato* (Black and White)*, mentioned earlier to categorize Blackness. The *Mestizo* people were not something the Spanish crown had been counting on, and in the first half of the sixteenth century some were given honorary 'White' status as a means of dealing with a shortage of Spanish women, but as both the Spanish and *Mestizo* populations grew, *Mestizos* became perceived by Spain as more of a threat to their power in Ecuador (Powers 2005). In an increasingly multiracial society, the Spanish

regime responded with a race-based legal caste system, based on phenotypical categorization, but also things like religion (ibid). It wasn't until after the Age of Enlightenment, when there was a push for increasingly scientific methodology and organization, that the *'Mestizo'* as a race was understood to be foremost a biological racial mixture of primarily Spanish and Indigenous individuals (Poole 1997). Even so, this 'shift' was not a clean break or an entirely new understanding of race. In pre-conquest Latin America the mother's race legitimized or delegitimized the child of a Spanish man, and descent from an Indigenous woman was likened to impure blood, which is tied to the materiality of the body, even as other aspects like religion were a factor (Nelson 1999). Still, prior to the Enlightenment era, *mestizaje* was not strictly a mixture of Indigenous and Spanish individuals (Poole 1997). During colonial times *Mestizo* could indicate offspring from an Indigenous individual and Spanish individual, but it could also mean the offspring of an Indian cacique with a tributary Indian woman (De la Cadena 2005:264). This is because the Inca were understood by the Spanish to be socially distinct from other 'Indians'. Again, this complicates the history of pre-Incan populations and those who became part of the empire but were not designated as Inca themselves. Moreover, during the conquest period to be *Mestizo* was also representative of a purity of faith, wherein those who had become more Catholic would be considered more 'White' on a scale of *mestizaje*, and those who wanted to forsake the Spanish crown and church would purposely intermix with the Indigenous population (De la Cadena 2005:266). This would mean they would be even more *Mestizo* in the sense that they were not trying to work up to whiteness, but to continue agitating the political order of the crown (ibid). As they 'mixed' they were no longer politically 'pure' Indians, and

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therefore didn't pay tribute as Indians did. De la Cadena (2005) argues therefore that *Mestizo* is thus more of a political categorization than a biological one. However, discourses on physiological features and based on the need of the Spanish crown, as mentioned with the *Mestiza* women who were at first elevated to fill a child making role and then treated as a threat for this same possibility, would have fed into this political ranking as well.

Post-Enlightenment Social Darwinism contributed to a positive state outlook on this form of racial mixing known as *mestizaje*, provided it was used to "whiten" the population (Radcliffe 1999:215). Unlike the Social Darwinist biopolitical economy of Europe and the U.S., which blamed miscegenation for the failures of Latin America, the Latin American response was a form of neo-Lamarckian eugenics which emphasized nurture and state intervention as a means of *mestizaje* 'whitening' over nature (Nelson 1999). This is significant, in part because there are still narratives of nurture, education in particular, as a means for the social elevation of Indigenous people, but so too is there an emphasis on lineage and blood that complicates self-identification and muddies the line between Indigenous and *Mestizo* identities. The very notion of being *Mestizo* relies on a sameness and a national identity that obscures histories of physical, bodily violence (Nelson 1999, Wade 2005). It also relies on indigeneity as a 'pure' and different race/ethnicity, both culturally and physically via blood heritage. Once 'mixed' Indigenous ancestry becomes a bloodline only, and a forgotten one at that.

Sebastian is a student at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (USFQ)*, one of the most expensive universities in Quito (and in Ecuador, generally) with a long history of exchange with students from the United States. Demographically the student body has

predominantly *Mestizo* students, as well as a diversity program that brings in Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian students (around 500 out of the almost 9,000 students) (Universidad San Francisco de Quito 2018). Sebastian identifies as *Mestizo*, though he was formulating a project to work with Indigenous artisans at the time I spoke with him. He mentioned that there is this idea, stemming from *blanqueamiento*, that to be *Mestizo* is not very Indigenous. He feels *Mestizo* because his ancestors were *Mestizo*, but he also doesn't feel *Mestizo* because he doesn't know anything about the Indigenous part of his history. To be *Mestizo* in other words, is to be of "mixed" Indigenous and Spanish heritage, but to not identify with the Indigenous side. On the other hand, many young Indigenous people are dealing with the same issues when explaining indigeneity in terms biological "mixing". This is evidenced in a conversation between Franklin, designer at *VISPU: Elegancia con Identidad* and his friend, who does graphic design work for him:

> *Franklin: ... ya nadie es puro. Somos casi, si puede ser una mezcla, no? Y mejor los que ... A veces los mas Cholitos, esos somos los que mas juzgan a uno que es Indígena. Sea los mas así, que se pude decir la... Como lo digo, los mas Cholito son los mas critican así.*
>
> *Friend: Porque es que están mal, porque la esencia es las culturas puras, Indígena, negro. El Mestizo es mas bien como que menos, porque es una mezcla.*
>
> *Franklin: Pero gracias a dios, lo que es en esta nueva, se pude decir, en el 2017 que nos encontramos, poco a poco como se va a valorando ya, (crosstalk) recuperando, hablando, ya de lo que es esta perdiendo. Esto es bueno. A lo menos aquí en Ecuador, con este gobierno ...*

Franklin: Nobody is pure anymore. We're almost … we can be a mixture, right? And better those that… Sometimes the more Cholitos, those are the ones who most judge those who are Indigenous … As I said the more Cholito are the ones that criticize more.

Friend: Because they are wrong. Because the essence is pure cultures, Indigenous, Black. The Mestizo is better rather than worse, because it's a mixture.

Franklin: But thank god, what's in this new … What can be in 2017 that we find, little by little it's going to be valued, recuperated, talking about what is being lost. This is good. At least here in Ecuador, with this government.

Franklin is an Indigenous designer, and identifies as Indigenous, but explains that even that is often a mixture to some degree. In addition, it is those who are more *cholito* (in my understanding, as opposed to *mestizo)* who are the most critical of indigeneity. It is important to note here that his use of the term *Cholito* seems to speak to a *Mestizo* person generally understood to be more Indigenous, and from a particular lower, working class background, although this definition is by no means definitive (see Roitman and Ovido 2017). He is therefore saying that those who are understood to be more White *Mestizos* (such as Sebastian) are less critical of indigenous identity than *Cholito Mestizos,* who in the literature are usually understood to be less White, less educated, and have less money. His friend who supports his statement is a *Mestizo*, and he praises this racial and ethnic 'mixing'. Here even indigeneity is not a 'pure' category for Franklin, although his friend reiterates that there are 'pure' cultures that make up *Mestizo* identity, including

indigeneity. Yet the two friends don't seem to contradict one another on the basis of distinguishing between *Cholito* and (whiter) *Mestizo*. Moreover, they allude to a class distinction between *cholitos* and other *Mestizo* communities, which may account for a desire to criticize and differentiate themselves from Indigenous people. Identification is not simply one's bloodline, but also community affiliation.

Franklin, in stating that Indigenous people are often mixed, speaks to his construction of Indigenous and in this case Puruhá identities specifically. It is constructed within a particular historical moment, through lived experiences and shared heritage, grounded by a relationship to a particular place. He, like Sebastian, is 'mixed', but while Sebastian's *Mestizo* designation centers on an erasure of Indigenous heritage, Franklin's Indigenous designation centers on highlighting that Indigenous heritage over any potentially existent Spanish heritage. Both men are trying to navigate a historical heritage of blood lineage (supposed biological/racial mixing) with historical and contemporary cultural heritages (family and individual lived experience as (White) *Mestizo* versus Indigenous). With regard to the use of *Cholito* and *Mestizo,* it is also important to note Marisol De la Cadena's (2005) distinction between *Mestizos* as social actors who have been defined as conceptually and empirically hybrid throughout history and *mestizaje*, which only speaks to the process of 'whitening' (Cervone 2010). *Mestizaje* was, and to some extent still is, a term denoting morality aligned with whiteness, in contrast to '*indios*', a term that was used to denote backwardness and distance from modernity (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996). *Mestizo* does not necessarily have these same connotations. Although the two terms are often used in conjunction, this does not necessarily erase the history of the *Mestizo,* which was not always based on an impetus to

'whiten-up'. In fact, some conceptualize *mestizaje* as simultaneously a resistant, counter-hegemonic process that breaks open categories of ethnicity *and* as part of the official discourse of nation formation that denies a racial/ethnic hierarchy (Mallon 1996). I should also note again that the categories of *Blanco, Criollo,* and *Blanco-Mestizo,* a mixed categorization that emphasized being more white than other 'mixed' people, are drawn from academic literature more than my own experience. The *Blanco-Mestizo* category seems to be discussed primarily in relationship to the process of *blanqueamiento,* or whitening (Swanson 2007), or as a way to distinguish a particular form of elite *Mestizo* identity that emphasizes more White and European origins (Beck et al 2000, De La Torre 1999, 2006). I never heard anyone claim *blanco* or *blanco-Mestizo* identity, although I did hear the term *mishu* used twice, in conversation with an both older Puruhá woman and a young Otavaleña woman. This Quichua term has been translated as *white-Mestizo* (De La Torre 2006), and *Mestizo* (Weismantle 2001), although it likely encompasses more meaning in the original Quichua. Regardless, I make this point because I also want to make the claim that Black, Indigenous, and *Mestizo* categorizations form the most basic organization of racial identification in Ecuador today- the White categorizations have all but disappeared regardless of how whiteness as a trait (remarked on in relation to skin, hair and eye color at the very least) is still valorized and recognized as a feature of beauty.

Some authors point to the disappearance of both 'whiter' categorizations such as *Blanco, Criollo, and Blanco-Mestizo* and the disappearance of varied *Mestizo* identities. Lynn Meisch (2002) notes five ethnic categorizations commonly used in the 1970s; *Blanco, Mestizo, Cholo, Moreno* and *Runa* or *Indígena,* were replaced in the 1990s by

Blanco-Mestizo, Indígena, and *Afro-Ecuadorian* or *Negro* (205). She relates the disappearance of *Cholos, Mestizos* and *Blancos*, in part to the disappearance of their distinct clothing styles (Meisch 2002), but this argument is flawed based on real world observation. In Franklin's conversation *Cholo* is very much still a used term, and *Mestizo* has never been replaced by *Blanco-Mestizo,* which itself is a term I have never heard used on the ground. Still, the argument for the role of dress in making claims to an ethnic (and racial) identity is something which has been consistent throughout different periods of Ecuadorian history. Despite the ambiguity of some racial and ethnic categorizations, including their fluctuation over time, the effects of being classified and re-classified over time are very real, and shared cultural aesthetics are part of these classifications. The presentation of self, based on cultural markers, through style of dress and manner of speech for instance, affect how individuals are read and thus individual treatment (De La Torre 1999).

The problem here is that there is a homogenization of *Mestizo* identity, via both the erasure of whiter categorizations and of mixed categorizations that are not only Spanish and Indigenous. Thus 'Indigenous *Mestizos'* have not been, and are still not recognized as such, in part because they don't fit into the modernist demand for Indigenous authenticity (De la Cadena 2005). They would be a different kind of *Mestizo,* that type that is distinct from the process of *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento* and, it has been argued, would therefore also be of lower status (Cervone 2010). This is a similar *Mestizo* identity to *Cholos, Chagras* and *Montuvios* (ibid), in the sense that they are not the idealized *Mestizos* of the nation-state. In coastal Ecuador individuals classified as mixed Indigenous and White peasants are known as *Montuvios*, and in the Peruvian

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Amazon *Ribereños* are understood to be 'de-tribalized Indians' who are semi-acculturated (Bauer 2014). Neither of these groups are outside of the *Mestizo* spectrum, and in fact they uphold the notion of Indigenous and White as *Mestizo*, but they are on the margins, overshadowed by the dominant *Mestizo* identity of the Andean highlands (Bauer 2014:6). This is also true of the *Chagras*, *Mestizo* highland peasants, once deemed by local White people as 'Indians who believe they are White' on the basis of their rural lifestyle, proximity to Indigenous people, and supposed bad taste and manners (Cervone 2010).

With the devaluation of these "other" forms of *Mestizo* identity, those that did not align with the whitening model, and the emergence of groups as early as the 1900s that encouraged seeing value in indigeneity, claiming *Mestizo* identity was not always preferable to claims of indigeneity. As we can see in Franklin's brief conversation with his friend, this is still the case as *cholitos* seek to indigenize themselves, made all the more confusing since Franklin himself identifies as Indigenous but speaks to some long-lost potential mixing. Again, any claims to identity have to do foremost with contemporary lived experience, including but not limited to discrimination, family traditions, and cultural knowledge. At the same time, the national mythos of "mixing" premised on histories of *mestizaje* and ideals of homogeneity co-exist with (and in fact depend on) nation-statist ideologies centered on diversity, of both the physical environment and of distinct populations.

This multi-culturalism depends on valuing but also reasserting the difference of Indigenous cultures, which is not a new strategy. As early as the 1900s there was a growing *indigenismo* movement that rejected Spanish 'modernity' and standards for art

and education, instead seeing the value in Indigenous creativity and knowledge (Poole 1997). However, this form of Indigenous pride that still relied on participation in Western education system as a means of elevating one's status and cultural 'whitening' (De la Cadena 2005). In the 1920s the popularity of *indigenismo* focused on a "soul" or "spirit", and not biological markers of Indigenous identity (Wade 2003), which in turn makes it easier to incorporate into *Mestizo* homogeneity as part of an idealized past that now contributes to the unique Latin American 'mixed' identity (Wade 1993). It would not be until much later in the century that an Indigenous movement heralded by Indigenous people, as opposed to *indigenismo,* which was headed by White and *Mestizo* elites, would really challenge Western institutions. Education is still, however, a place where we can see class clearly entangled with ethnic and racial identities. Western education is still a primary means of achieving status in Ecuador and attending university (especially the top universities) often takes a certain amount of wealth. Despite efforts to value Indigenous knowledge as equal, and at times superior to Western knowledge, many young Indigenous individuals have gained their status and recognition in part through university credentials. There are certainly programs, like the *Programa de Diversidad Étnica* at the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* that list their objective as helping any minority student with little resources (Universidad San Francisco de Quito 2019) and yet I have heard it called by students a program for bringing in Indigenous students. Images on the home page highlight Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian students, including a photograph of eight students wearing different Indigenous dress styles, presumably of their own communities. Thus, Indigenous individuals, more so than *Mestizo* individuals of little economic means, are gaining entry into a Western academic system that is understood as

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having the potential to gain resources for economic success in the future. It seems this would continue to align an ethnic or racial identity with a particular class identity. However, deeper analysis of demographic information that is unavailable would be necessary to support this interpretation. Regardless, what is clear is that access to predominantly *Mestizo* and wealthy institutions does highlight Western and elite education models that only marginally include Indigenous knowledge as a means of 'success' for Indigenous students.[9]

This contributes to the increasing centrality of indigeneity as an identity that contributes to Ecuador's national discourse on multiculturalism and the value of an Indigenous heritage, as well as global discourses on the value of Indigenous knowledge and leadership. However, this Indigenous identity tends to obscure any other racial or ethnic mixing within it, and the *Mestizo* identity that continues to also be central to the nation is one kind of *Mestizo-ness,* which obscures its Indigenous side. Thus, there remains a gradient of value, where more whiteness is more valuable. *Mestizo* people who I have spoken to talk about the value of whiteness as if it is something in the past, or something outside of their own daily experiences, but I can see how this value system is reinforced through everyday practices. As I mentioned at the start of the chapter, I was at a family event with a friend, and it was a birthday party for her youngest, a plump, pale baby with curly blonde hair and light eyes. The praise for this child was, in my own view, extravagant, not because she wasn't cute, but because the terminology used focused on

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[9] This is not to say that universities in Ecuador do not provide opportunity or are detrimental to Indigenous communities, but rather to question what knowledge systems are being valued over others, and whether or not different (i.e. non-Western) forms of knowledge are being given equal value.

her whiteness, her hair color, her eyes, and those were equated with being beautiful. It was something I had seen before, particularly with this child in relation to other children around her with darker features, and something noted by other scholars as well (de la Torre 1999). For many, whiteness is still aligned with beauty. I have heard an older *Mestiza* woman blatantly say an Afro-Ecuadorian woman's children were prettier than other Afro-Ecuadorian children because they were lighter skinned. Yet for many younger individuals who identify as *Mestizo*, they are finding it increasingly difficult to explain just what that means, perhaps in part because those variations of *Mestizo* that aren't part of the discourse of *mestizaje* are not included. In other words, the language of *Mestizo* identity is that it is a 'mix' of Spanish and Indigenous, and yet many of these individuals may have other racial and ethnic identities within that or not know anything about their Indigenous lineage, even though their identity is built on this very lineage which makes them not entirely Spanish or White.

2.4 I. CONSTRUCTING THE NATION THROUGH RACE (PLACE)

There is a certain romanticism of place in Ecuador, particularly of the natural environment. Across race and ethnicity, pride in place seems to permeate Ecuadorian citizens, perhaps in part because there is so much to take in. Ecuador is one of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world, and contains four geographical zones: the coast, Andean mountains, Amazonian tropics, as well as the Galapagos Islands, famous for biological research (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2019). All this exists in a country about the size of Colorado. I am not immune to this romanticism, and delight in regional differences in food, dance, traditions, and general lifestyle. How these rationalities have come into existence, however, are not just a result of human adaptation

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to the environment, but also constructed through particular historical moments and human networks. It might be helpful then to look more deeply at how race and ethnicity are mapped onto place in Ecuador, as a way to understand how place is also embedded in dress. Although ethnicity is often tied to real or imagined shared ancestral origins, in Ecuador physical place is one of the strongest indicators of ethnic or racial identity, not just in terms of what community you belong to, but how that place actually shapes a communal personality. Ecuadorian groups who are Indigenous, and certain *Mestizo* populations, are strongly tied to towns or regions (Andrade 2002; Bauer 2014; Cervone 2010). Within Ecuador, Afro-Ecuadorians also get affiliated with region, though some argue there is less of a relationship to the land (Safa 2005). Land and environment are strongly associated with regional 'personalities' and create a sort of "racism without races (Andrade 2002:237)." The broadest mapping includes the primarily Quichua in the Andean highlands, the variety of Indigenous groups in the Amazon, and the association of Afro-Ecuadorians with the coastline (Foote 2006). *Mestizos*, on the other hand, are often associated with everywhere; they are the central figure of the nation-state (Radcliffe 1999), and they permeate every region and town. In some ways I would have expected this to mean that they do not have the same regional stereotyping as non-*Mestizo* or non-ideal *Mestizo*[10] individuals, regionalization is so embedded in Ecuadorian culture that they too are 'placed'. Years ago, during my master's fieldwork, I was with my friend Eduardo in Quito, and we were going to meet up with two girls he referred to as *la gemelas* (the twins) at the mall. They were animated, interested in global social justice

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[10] This refers again to those *Mestizos* who do not fit the *blanqueamiento* ideal, such as *montubios, chagras, and cholos.*

issues, and overall pleasant to be around. Before meeting them Eduardo told me to pay attention to the way they speak, and then he did a very sing-song, tonally up and down speech pattern, and made himself laugh. It's because they're from Cuenca, he explained. Cuenca is a city in Ecuador's Azuay Province that I had been told by various people was noted for its beautiful architecture, panama hat production, and tourism. Thus, while *Mestizo* identity is 'everywhere', there are still specific associations with cities that may also take on regionalized characteristics. I purposely listened for this speech pattern while I was with them and heard what he was referring to, which he also joked with them about while we were all hanging out. Regional dialects are of course just as common in Ecuador as elsewhere in the world, but it was surprising to me because it was the first time I was exposed to these regional differentiations for *Mestizos* in particular. I understood from the first moments I arrived in Ecuador how Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian people were regionalized, but it took much longer to see this play out among *Mestizo*s.

In this way, everyone in Ecuador is discursively attached to a place, but only Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian individuals are physically mapped out for nations and tourists alike to see. It is possible that this mapping is part of an inherited Inca classification system, particularly with regard to mapping groups in the Andean region, and therefore they exist today as constructions of constructions (Salomon 1982). It would make sense that the Spanish and other Europeans, once in the Americas, would use the existing categorizations of people to place as a means to help organize their understanding. The 18th century saw several scientists, geographers, and naturalists who began to map racial variation in the same way they would topography, or plant and

animal species (Orlove 1993, Poole 1997). These would later give way to the *carte de viste,* photographs that promoted stereotypes about populations and emphasized signifiers of supposedly negative qualities based on white-centric physiognomy, that was popular in the 19th century (ibid). Whatever the intent of the Inca in regionalizing populations, the attempt to classify these distinct humans[11] during the second wave of colonization suited the creation of a nation-state. Many nation-sates rely on concealing the topography of power with the power of topography (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). They naturalize, via place, hierarchies that are culturally constructed. For instance, the stoic, sad, and isolated Andean people are a reflection of the cold, sad, isolated, but sturdy mountains they lived among (Orlove 1993). These now naturalized stereotypes give the state reason to intervene in particular ways. Social controls persist in development programs and museums that reinforce hierarchies while 'celebrating difference', mapping the 'typical' body of a racial or ethnic group to a region (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996), while leaving the *Mestizo* identity to stand for the Ecuadorian everyman. In this instance, I am using every*man* purposely, since the Mestizo ideal of a working citizen is male. Men embody *Mestizo* nationhood, often aligned with their role in wage work (Cervone 2010, Radcliffe 1999, Weismantle 2001), while women embody future opportunities for offspring as 'whiteners' (Radcliffe 1999) or are meant to resist this whitening as Indigenous bearers of 'tradition' (Rogers 1998, Weismantle 2001). Thus, while *Mestizas* are significant as representatives of a supposed biological ideal, borne out in physical features and childbearing, *Mestizos* are significant as ideal citizens, and as workers and

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[11] Of course many of these scientists understood native people to be a different species, and therefore could be classified in the same way various animal species were.

thinkers who help to move the state forward. Still, both *Mestiza/o* identities might be associated with place in some regard, such as having a regional accent, they are not understood to have rights to specific place/land but rather to all place/land within Ecuador.

This tension between being 'mapped' and being 'ubiquitous' creates levels of identification that pull from various markers including place. To identify oneself as an Indigenous person or as a *Mestizo* often felt like a sort of verbal dance that my participants would do, designers, sellers, but even just consumers I spoke with. I'd ask broadly how someone identified, and many times those who identified as Indigenous would use that term, or just Quichua, or a more specific community, like Puruhá or Otavaleño, or their town or city, Riobamba or Cacha, but most often they used some combination thereof. They would say they were Indigenous, Otavaleño, or Puruhá from Cacha, for instance. Many *Mestizos* I interviewed would say just that they were *Mestizo*, or Ecuadorian, although some mentioned the town they grew up in because it supported the way they spoke about the experiences that led them to where they were today, most likely in terms of career. They felt they had a claim, not to an Indigenous ethnic identity, but a cultural identity that paralleled it because of place. Their rural, primarily Indigenous hometowns were significant because they served to explain their interests in and understanding of Indigenous people. For instance, Rafael, the most famous folkdance instructor/company owner in Ecuador, was influenced by his upbringing in a primarily Andean community and continues to work with both Indigenous and *Mestizo* dancers reproducing local (often Indigenous or Indigenous influenced) dance styles. Patricia is a *Mestiza* woman who works at the *Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamin Carrión,*

which covers exhibits on cultural diversity, including Indigenous diversity. She is from Licto, a small and primarily Indigenous parish of about 13,000[12] people, in the rural area of the Chimborazo province. When I met her, she was set to go downstairs from the museum where a small outdoor market was, primarily of Indigenous sellers. She spoke with a woman that had a table selling natural remedies, among other things, about the fact that they were both from small towns in the same region. In other words, place gave them a sense of cultural belonging, that wasn't based on ethnicity but on place. This is similar to a sense of pride I've heard other *Mestizo* people claim to an Ecuadorian aesthetic that includes Indigenous elements, and at times is primarily Indigenous. This question of how place and identity affect the ability to use/share certain is not just something that *Mestizo* participants mentioned.

It is important not to disregard the sense of place and rights to land that are significant for many in the Indigenous dress business. However, a deep connection to a space should also not 'freeze' Indigenous communities and individuals in place. To do so would be to disregard histories of movement, exchange, and globalized identities. When I met with Silvia of *Bordados Galilea* she was with her husband and daughter, who she held in her arms. We sat outside in the *plaza grande* of Quito's historic center, talking over the normal chatter that permeates the very large and very busy square. Silvia was young, just 26 years old, and yet had been in business for four years already. She had been to USFQ (in Quito, Pichincha province) where she learned how to sketch and took

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[12] It seems very difficult to get clear statistics on Licto. Various government documents put the population at about 7,500-8,000 people (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censos 2001) but most are from the early 2000s. The authors Rutgerd Boelens and Paul Gelles (2005), however, puts the population at 13,000 which would make sense assuming a steady growth.

courses in tailoring at a women's workshop in Guamote (in the Chimborazo province), where they were learning how to make their own blouses. She then started to make clothing for her family and although she now does designs for other clients, she still works at a smaller scale where the blouses can be personalized. She brought up a question of place and identity that I heard time and time again, that now there is an identifiable Puruhá (or from the Chimborazo area) dress style, whereas prior to this dress reemergence Otavaleño dress (and culture) had taken over the community. I will discuss the Otavaleño community more in future chapters, but for now it suffices to say they are a prominent indigenous community in Ecuador, well known globally for their textiles. Although Silvia takes prided in Puruhá dress, the sharing of dress styles in and of itself wasn't framed as negative or as de-legitimizing claims to Puruhá-ness. Silvia mentioned that she uses *Mestizo* and Otavaleña dress herself, along with the Puruhá dress she makes and wears. This shift between styles is in a sense also a movement across space, as embedded in materiality. As her husband chimed in:

> *Cuando hablan de ropa occidental digamos es casi solamente un tipo de, un standard. En cambio cuando hablamos de ropa Indígena, para cada pueblo tienes sientes particulares, y generalmente esta, digamos enfocada a la vivencia propia de lugar, entonces ahora esperar tal vez en la naturaleza, en el diario vivir …*

When they talk about Western clothes, let's say it's almost just, kind of a standard. When we talk about Indigenous clothes, every town has a particular

feel, and this is usually, let's say, focused on the experience of each place …
maybe in nature, in the daily life…

Ties to a particular place in one regard (the Chimborazo province as home and a
marker of ethnic affiliation) do not exclude Puruhá people from having other ties to
places- local, national, and global. Silvia, like my other participants, maintained a deeply
rooted sense of place without that static identity that nation-statist institutions tend to
present and promote. Place matters at all scales (nation, environment, region, parish, city,
town), and it informs a sense of belonging and, to some extent, a sense of ownership over
cultural heritage, which can also create comradery and conflict. Regionalization runs
deep in Ecuadorian culture, even among *Mestizos*, but often one's ties to place still seem
to predominantly reference Indigenous communities. Some of these communities draw
on ties to place as a part of ethnic and cultural identity, and therefore rights to sovereignty
and land, *because* there is a sense of ancestry situated in place. This is distinct from their
Afro-Ecuadorian counterparts, many of whom are descendants of previously enslaved
people (Hooker 2005), or *Mestizos* who could not exist as they do today without the
Spanish conquest. There are indeed ancient histories that situate Ecuador's Indigenous
populations in *place*, in the regions and environments they are still associated with in
what is today recognized globally as Ecuador. However, there is also a long and
continued history of relationships to other people and places outside of those land claims.
For my Puruhá participants these relationships continue to be negotiated as they
(re)create a distinctly Puruhá aesthetic.

2.5 I. PURUHA-NESS, PLACE, AND BODY

The Puruhá are associated with ancestral lands in the Chimborazo province, named for Ecuador's highest mountain, an inactive volcano which watches over the provincial capital of Riobamba. Riobamba is certainly not as large as Quito, but it's a formidable city, with a bustling center and several other neighborhoods that expand into a sprawling metro area. At the center are colonial streets and buildings that mostly follow a grid pattern with a couple popular plazas, except where the train line disrupts it. The center is so much like the *Centro Historico* in Quito, except it's smaller, flatter, and as I was told, safer to walk in at night alone. In part, this might be because you never *are* alone. In Quito's center people may stay out past nightfall, but not for very long unless there is a festival going on. By 10:00 the streets can be silent, save for cars taking people to and from destinations. I was told it's unsafe, particularly for a woman walking alone, but in Riobamba I only heard this once. I was often out past nightfall and the streets were crowded with high school students getting snacks from food trucks, people shopping at stores with flashing lights and blasting music as if they were dance clubs, and smatterings of visiting mountain climbers who had come to add Chimborazo to their conquests. During the day it is just as active, but unlike Quito's center where all party stores would line one road, and all fabric stores another, Riobamba's shops are somewhat more mixed. It does, however, have a pocket that is clearly for Puruhá dress.

In a central part of the city is the train station. Whatever capacity it used to serve for shipping or daily transportation has been replaced with its role in tourism, as part of the *Tren Ecuador* system that offers expeditions throughout different parts of the Ecuadorian Andes, and 'experiences' along the way. Though the route from Riobamba

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has changed, it still features a visit with a Puruhá community as one of its highlights. Past Riobamba's train station is a trendier neighborhood, with vibrant cafes and boutique shops, and further on still is a more industrial area, where the largest grocery store sits in front of a few miles of open land, framed on the other side by the mall and another bustling neighborhood. Near the grocery store is the major university. If you travel in the opposite direction, not toward the train station initially, you'll reach the city's border more quickly, framed by a cemetery, and a beautiful park with miles of hiking, fields for soccer, statues, and play areas for kids. The edges of Riobamba are not hard to find, and although I would take buses or cabs every once in a while, I was able to reach most of them by foot. These borderlands nearly always looked the same, a thinning out of buildings, into a more industrial area, and then just space, with a smattering of roads that were sometimes impossible to locate. When I traveled to Cacha, a rural town where many Puruhá people are from, I took a cab on one of only two roads that went in that direction, the aptly named *Via a Cacha* (way to Cacha).

The center of Cacha is about one long block, with a community center and a historic church, but felt deserted when I got there, despite there being a few houses on this block. The museum and tourist center are only about a 10 minute walk away, if you can figure out which direction from the town center to go. What it lacks in sites, it makes up for in sights. The area is immense and beautiful. You can look down on an endless rise and fall of green fields and sierra forests. Most of this land seems to be dedicated to farming, although a huge sports complex is the only other discernable "place of interest". I realized after taking a cab there that I would never be able to find a cab back, since there was no real reason for cabs to be looking for people in this area unless it was during a

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festival. I walked for about an hour back toward the city, until I was finally able to catch a bus, and along the way saw pockets of homes with farmland that stretched for miles, a school that taught "traditional" crafts, and a cemetery, but not much else. Cacha seems to be much like the other small towns associated with Puruhá people. It is expansive, with agriculture as the main form of work, and although the population varies depending on the day of the week, and any holidays, it seems many young people have moved into the city to pursue other work. I can understand how someone could become attached to this land, how it could permeate your body. The grit from the soil, the smell of the air, the sharpness of the *paramo* plants, and the vibrancy of the colors are all things you continue to feel when you lay down at night to sleep.

Puruhá individuals migrate throughout Ecuador and globally, but many of them seem to keep this sense of place with them. The reasons for this are many, not the least of which includes having their land taken from them and being forced to work their own land in support of the *hacienda* system and its privileged landowners (Becker 2008). There is also the question of ethnicity within Ecuador, but it is not just categorization passed on and rearranged through different political regimes. Claims to ethnic identity *in* place is a way of affecting the historical configuration of space, particularly hegemonic constructions (of nations and regions for instance) (Applebaum 2003). This is a response to space as construct that can reinforce or challenge power construction and distribution, particularly in Latin American nations that racialized regions to reinforce a *blanco* as ideal hierarchy (ibid). Many of the Puruhá are still living on their ancestral land, or at least have family who are. The major designers I interviewed were from the Chimborazo province, even if they are now living in Quito. I don't know how this association would

change for children born outside of Chimborazo, who perhaps only visited or don't know the area at all. I didn't meet any "first generation" individuals born and raised outside of the Chimborazo province. Regardless, with the influx of Puruhá people in Quito, Guayaquil, and other cities more children will be born outside of Riobamba and surrounding rural areas, and they may or may not have the experience of traveling back there consistently to be with family, but how this will transform (if it does) a sense of place is yet to be seen.

What is clear is that designers of Puruhá dress see it as a marker of place as much as Puruhá identity. As Silvia, Franklin, and several other interviewees mentioned, contemporary Puruhá dress is something that you can identify as being from Chimborazo, as opposed to styles from Otavalo and other areas that many Puruhá people had used prior to the emergence of this dress in the past decade or so[13]. Much of the mainstream Ecuadorian media presented on Puruhá fashion begins after 2010, but it is difficult to set an exact date for when this market opened up. Also, it is significant that some dress items had more consistent use throughout Puruhá history, such as the *poncho rojo* for men and *bayeta* or shawl for women.

The *poncho rojo* is discussed in chapter four as well, but I touch on it briefly to talk about how the place, the body, and its actions become linked to a particular sartorial object. Among my participants this particular poncho within Ecuador is linked to the Puruhá, the Chimborazo province, and at times Cacha specifically. Literature on

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[13] I did find one article that mentioned a business for Indigenous fashion in Ecuador starting in the year 2000, but the article itself is from 2016. All other articles I have found are published within the last decade, so it is unclear what the start date of this dress revitalization is, but at least a decade, possible two is a close approximation.

historical uses tie the red poncho to an Andean cosmovision, the knowledge of the wise, power, and a high status within the Puruhá community (Arévalo Ortiz 2018, Carmilema 2016). The type and color of the poncho is meant to be representative of the individual who uses it, with the color red indicating a status of authority or leadership (ibid) although as Franklin explained to me, really anyone can wear it now. There are also, however, different patterns and cuts that indicate what the use of the poncho is (Carmilema 2016), but I focus here on the significance of the red poncho in general, since that is often what both Indigenous and *Mestizo* participants focused on in interviews. The *poncho rojo* is also associated with rebellion, not just because participants mentioned the color red was said to symbolize Indigenous bloodshed against colonialism and other historical repression, but also because the poncho has ties to revolt. In 1871, Puruhá indigenous leaders Fernando Daquilema and Manuela Leon led a revolt against President Garcia Moreno's program of modernization and exploitation of Indigenous people (Becker 2008, Hidalgo Flor 2000). Daquilema's image is still present throughout Chimborazo, iconic in his poncho, although it is unclear in images what the color is. However, the *poncho rojo* is clearly visible during the June 4, 1990 Indigenous uprising. This uprising was a response to agrarian reform legislation, neoliberal policies, and other ongoing class and ethnicity-based oppressions (Becker 2011). Indigenous people from Chimborazo moved into Riobamba from the surrounding rural areas wearing their typical red ponchos, which as Patricia from the *Casa de la Cultura* mentioned, scared *Mestizos* who closed up their shops and houses. It seems that the association has stayed in the imagination of some *Mestizos*. During an early interview (2013) with a Puruhá participant he mentioned how he was harassed by a group of men for wearing his red

poncho in Quito. During the 1990 and subsequent protests Indigenous bodies confront the *Mestizo* population with their visibility and actions. They use tactics of revolt, such as blocking roads with objects like rocks, tree trunks, and their own bodies to stop traffic (Huarcaya 2015), or as I witnessed in the most recent protest in October 2019, burning tires and other objects to deter traffic and break down public structures. To be dressed in the red poncho reinforces associations of these active and visible protestors with rebellion and with Chimborazo. A friend of Sisa's mentioned this association with the red ponchos again when discussing news during the 2019 protest, saying that now things were going to change because the people from Chimborazo were coming in their red ponchos. Here we see how place, ethnic identity, and agentive action are interwoven with the image of the *poncho rojo*. The dressed body, in this case an Indigenous Puruhá man in a *poncho rojo,* evidences a particular cosmovision, leadership, rebellion, and actions that are associated with a place (Chimborazo) and people (Puruhá) but this requires the addition of the poncho to the body.

2.5 II. PURUHA-NESS AND DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY IN THE ANDES

Puruhá identities are therefore based in part on a shared cosmovision and history (mediated through aesthetics like dress), but they also form and reform in contrast with both *Mestizo* and other Andean communities. Within the dress market, Puruhá aesthetics and their significance were often framed in contrast to the Otavaleño community. When discussing local businesses and economics many of my Puruhá interviewees drew on comparisons to specific Andean Indigenous populations, and in particular Otavaleños. In many ways the Puruhá in the fashion market have found an economic solution to disenfranchisement in lieu of political solutions and have used their Otavaleño peers to

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express both their economic potential and difference. This comparison, however, never focuses on an understanding of biologically rooted difference but rather distinctions of culture and regionality, mediated through cultural markers like dress. It is dress that is the marker of difference, tied to regionality and community but not to physical features of the body. This is increasingly important to Puruhá designers, who attach a sense of pride to the dress style, and use dress from Otavalo as an example. As Sisa mentioned, she saw that Puruhá girls had nothing that identified them as Puruhá and often used dress styles from Imbabura (Otavaleño). Now …

> *Entonces, estamos tratando que la gente valorice lo que es nuestros, si como los de Imbabura. Ellos vayan a la ciudad, o al país que vayan, siempre van cargado esta ropa. Entonces eso es que lo nosotros también buscamos. Por el mismo hecho ya de que la gente nos identifique como Puruhás.*

> We are trying to make people value what is ours, like Imbabura. They go to the city, or to the country, always loaded with these clothes, so that is what are looking for too, for the same fact that people identify us as Puruhá.

Many Puruhá individuals alluded to this use of Otavaleño dress, but so too did Sonia, who from Cotopaxi, the community of Casa Quemada, but was also friends with the Otavaleña participant Malvi (see 2.3. II). I was interviewing the two of them together, as they moved quickly from answering questions, to joking, to talking between themselves. Sonia mentioned that some people from Riobamba copied Otavaleño dress: "*Las culturas*

de lo que son igual de Riobamba copiaron primero a las diseñadores de Otavalo, porque ellos fueron los primeros en modernizar todo los diseños de blusas que había. Ellos copiaron eso pero le modernizaron más, mas Mestizo," or "The cultures that are the same of Riobamba copied the designers from Otavalo, because they were the first to modernize all the blouse designs that existed. They copied that, but they modernized more, more Mestizo." Later, Malvi mentioned that they (the Puruhá) have modernized a lot and won various awards for this modernization but have been losing a little more of what is really the dress from that region. This tension is strange, since individuals from Chimborazo (Sisa), Imbabura (Malvi), and even Cotopaxi (Sonia) are agreeing on a history of shared dress between the Puruhá and Otavaleños, with the borrowing being unidirectional, and for which Sonia uses the term 'copying'. Yet Malvi and Sonia valorize the pioneering 'modernization' of Indigenous dress, while simultaneously agreeing that it can go too far and lose its meaning, which they claim is happening for the Puruhá. This is a delicate balance, and yet I never encountered a Puruhá designer or seller who thought their own innovation had erased the Puruhá identity or its meaning. In fact, innovation in the spirit of revitalization is what countered much of the use of Otavaleño dress by Puruhá women and girls in particular. It is not that traditional Puruhá dress styles had disappeared, just as the Puruhá cosmovision never truly disappeared, but both had been suppressed and devalued since the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. At times, this dress was abandoned in favor of attempts to integrate into *Mestizo* identity, a result of discrimination that lessened the use of Indigenous, and specifically Puruhá dress.

Historical context speaks to why this abandonment of Puruhá dress may have been replaced by Otavaleño dress for a time prior to the last decade or so. With the

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Spanish arrival in Latin America came a need to reinforce ideologies of difference. One of the primary means of doing this was to distinguish between nakedness or near nakedness as primitive and clothing as superior (Melendez 2005). The Spanish colonists aimed to dress the Amerindians with, as Melendez (2005) states, "fabric, religion and reason." Groups like the Inca, and particularly Inca leaders were thought to be more "civilized" because of their dress and perhaps their distinctions between dress types. This hierarchy of Indigenous communities is something that the nation-state would continue to practice as well as the regulation of dress styles. By the 18th century a multiracial society had grown and certain physical features, such as skin color, were no longer (or had never been) a good way to distinguish individuals. The ability to dress above one's class, to an extent, and the punishment that came along with doing so too extremely, were features of societal subversion and control (Melendez 2005). This regimentation of dress was meant to control the Indigenous population but also to control women, who were supposed to be less visible and not have the power that came with transgressing class boundaries. Thus the "problem" of the Spaniards shifted from a lack of clothing and the need to "civilize" the Indigenous populations, to having too many fashionable clothes available and not being able to strictly control class and racial distinctions (ibid). Still, this transgression was not possible for everyone, in part because of other markers of class, like language, wealth, and regional identity. Moreover, this historical tension between attempting to use dress to create a class hierarchy, and to 'place' people, then subsequently having that hierarchy transcended replays itself in contemporary Ecuador. In the 1990s internal migration patterns of Andean Indigenous people spurred many individuals, particularly Indigenous men, to start wearing *Mestizo* clothing (Lentz 1995). This was an attempt to

curb discrimination and give men in particular access to job opportunities they might only have access to if they could 'pass' as *Mestizo*. The Puruhá were no exception to this shift in dress styles. However, the Otavaleño community has had more success in retaining and garnering economic growth from their distinctive dress style.

It makes sense then that Puruhá participants have referenced their own identity in alignment with or contrast to Otavaleño identity. Historically, non-Indigenous people have held Otavaleños in higher regard than other Andean communities. These non-Indigenous Ecuadorians regarded Otavaleños as cleaner, and more attractive than other Indigenous populations (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998, Saenz 1933), which also elevated their status as economically successful, clean, and healthy (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). This favoritism came not from other Indigenous communities, but from Spanish and *Mestizo* elites throughout various moments in Ecuador's history. During Spanish colonialism Otavaleños even held a 'free' Indigenous community status (Stephen 1991). In contemporary Ecuador, however, part of their recognition is the fame they have garnered in the textile industry globally (Bowen 2011). Puruhá fashion entrepreneurs are therefore hyper-aware that Otavalo is (at least in the minds of many non-Indigenous Ecuadorians) the prototype for the work they are doing. In fact, the discrimination that pushed many Puruhá to use *Mestizo* clothing may also be responsible for this phenomenon of Puruhá women, prior to the revitalization of the new dress style, sometimes wearing Otavaleño dress styles.

At the same time, trade with Otavaleños is certainly not new and the aesthetic influence between Andean Indigenous groups is clear in certain dress features. Many populations, for instance, share variations of a black wrap skirt, or utilize similar weaving

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techniques. Yet Puruhá women were using Otavaleño dress, and not that of any other Andean group, which makes me question if this is due to the status placed on them historically and today by Ecuadorian hegemonic institutions. Some designers, like Franklin, attributes this shift from some individuals "passing" as *Mestizo* or Otavaleño (whether purposefully or not) to being visibly Puruhá, to a lessening of discrimination. He stated that:

> *Lo que se puede decir es que ha cambiado ya al respeto de muchas personas por lo que nosotros somos ... incluso aceptar ya como se viste cada persona y todo eso. Antes eran criticados, o eran de risas y veras a un hombre así con poncho y todos, pero ahora no. ... Se puede decir que ya casi no hay como antes ya la discriminación racial.*

> What can be said is that it has already changed, to the respect of many people for who we are … even accept how each person dresses and all that. Before they were criticized, or they were laughing and you will see a man like that, with a poncho and everything, but not now. … You can say that there is almost no longer racial discrimination like before.

This is significant because individuals are shifting between being read as different racial and ethnic identities due to the dress styles they were using. The instability of racial and ethnic categorizations and especially the malleability of attributing physical characteristics to either, is very obvious in instance like these, but so too is the

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persistence of race as a means of organizing and interpreting identities in Ecuador (whether there be less discrimination or not). Dress is, at least for some, a medium for asserting Puruhá identity as opposed to Otavaleño or *Mestizo,* and in so doing reasserting the very real discrimination that led to using other dress styles in the first place. This is not to say discrimination is the only reason Puruhá individuals have or continue to use other Indigenous or *Mestizo* dress styles, something I will cover in greater depth in chapter four. However, it does speak to the significance of dress as a social and political tool.

In fact, Puruhá designers regard their own culture and its aesthetic as distinct from Otavaleños, but this does not require eradicating trade with Otavaleños and other groups from the Imbabura province. Margarita, a woman from Cacha who sells in the artisan market in Riobamba mentioned to me that her items are 'pure' Cacha, but that there are often copies made in places like Otavalo and Salasaca that are sold in artisan markets in Riobamba. It seemed she was trying to make a case for her items being more locally made but while her booth clearly displayed original, handmade items (some of which she made herself) from Cacha, she also had goods from other regions in large quantities. This indicated that there is very much still internal migration and trade happening, particularly with goods that are marked as Andean, and that some of these goods are likely produced in large quantities, in factories or cooperatives.[14] To me this did not immediately involve questions of authenticity, but larger sources of production were evident in various

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[14] In fact, many of my participants spoke about factories or cooperatives that produced large quantities of goods from different Indigenous communities, and some even had their own factories, such as *VISPU*, which were not large relative to an established corporation, but still had several employees to help produce more goods, more quickly.

markets. In Quito's *Mercado Artisanal,* which is very much set up for tourists, I observed vendors buying similar products from individual sellers who walked to stalls with big plastic bags of commodities. Nevertheless, there was an insistence with many sellers on income, caution in disclosing the origin of your goods is understandable since notions of having handmade products or original products.[15] For people who rely on tourism for an "authenticity", itself a complex and flawed term, have long dominated tourist markets. Yet, even those who sell primarily to Indigenous buyers are open to criticism from other Indigenous communities. This is interesting considering that Andean trade predates the Inca Empire (Korovkin 1998) and it makes perfect sense that shared aesthetics have, and continue to have, a huge influence on what Indigenous Andean people wear.

Yet Otavaleño and Puruhá dress are discernable for a few key features, and yet similar enough that it is likely many non-Indigenous Ecuadorians or tourists wouldn't notice, at least as of yet. Continued media attention and a desire to expand business by some designers could spread this knowledge outside mostly Indigenous communities. The main distinction my participants mentioned is that in Otavalo, women wear their *anacos* with a white layer underneath, which peaks out from the swath of black, whereas Puruhá women only wear the black. The traditional cut of the Otavalo blouse also has distinct belle sleeves and a high ruffled collar, both generally made out of a delicate lace. The top of the blouse is also usually decorated in a bright and delicate floral pattern. The necklines of Puruhá dress and the sleeves are, in contrast, much more varied. In general, the neckline is slightly lower with more variation of elements for pattern. Flowers are

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[15] I address these questions of authenticity, handmade, and originality further in chapters three and five.

common, but so too are geometric elements, which are present at the top of the neckline but often through the entirety of the bodice front. Sleeves are generally straight, whether they are long or short. *Chumbis* (woven belts) are worn by both, as are *bayetas*. Many women from Otavalo also wear stacks of gold beaded necklaces, where Puruhá women also have stacked, beaded necklaces but generally in red. However, these distinctions are not always all present at once, and of course other markers of class differentiation, age, or community affiliation make it unlikely solid guidelines for one or the other style would be terribly useful. Indeed, mixtures between Puruhá and *Mestizo* dress, an *anaco* with a t-shirt and *bayeta,* for instance, are common. This is something that becomes significant with regard to sartorial semiotics and the reading of a particular community identity (see chapter four), but I mention it here because it contradicts the notion that there is one homogenous 'traditional' Puruhá style.

While it is difficult to tell whether recent attempts to distinguish Puruhá identity are a phenomenon spurred by market competition or not, what is clear is that 'authenticity' of a Puruhá dress style does not require the dress to be static, only to be distinct. At the same time, this reinvigoration of Puruhá dress is premised, at least in part, on the emergence of a Puruhá *fashion.* Terms like traditional dress or costume have been used by anthropologists and cultural institutions alike, but the emergence of a fashion, particularly what I would call high fashion based on technique and cost, is an elevation to the global discourse of *fashion.* Fashion need not live outside of "culture" and borrow from it for a Resort 2020 line. Instead a Puruhá identity can be attributed to all 'scales' of fashion, from mass produced daily wear to commissioned couture pieces. Two of my central participants, Franklin and Sisa, are designers and had a price range that included

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very expensive pieces ($100-$200 for a blouse), particularly considering the average income of Ecuador hovered around $450 a month in 2018 (Trading Economics 2020). In being designers, they are well recognized, gain media attention and have broad social networks, but they have also begun to deal with problems of copying and copyright (see chapter three). Still, many of my participants spoke about owning a business and selling items, but never used the word designer. Regardless, a convergence of past and present seems to be a shared discourse at all scales of production and sale and news media has picked up on this. A Deutsche Welle (2020) news article begins:

> *Las jóvenes Puruhá de la ciudad de Riobamba, en Ecuador, ya no se avergüenzan de llevar la ropa de sus antepasados. Hace una generación, la población indígena a los pies del Chimborazo todavía escondía esas prendas cuando llegaba a las ciudades. Ahora, nuevas diseñadoras crean prendas de cortes más actuales con los colores y símbolos ancestrales de la cultura Puruhá.*

The young Puruhá of the city of Riobamba, in Ecuador, are no longer ashamed to wear the clothes of their ancestors. A generation ago, the Indigenous population at the foot of Chimborazo still hid those garments when they arrived in the cities. Now, new designers create garments of more current cuts with the colors and ancestral symbols of the Puruhá culture.

From a 2017 article focusing more specifically on Sisa and *Sumak Churay:*

> *Los trajes de lentejuelas, canutillos, brillantes y bordados de colores que diseña Sisa Morocho tienen algo especial, capturan el 'glamour' de los trajes de luces de la cultura occidental y se fusionan con el estilo andino, conservando la identidad cultural de las clientas que los visten. La talentosa diseñadora de 30 años pertenece a la etnia Puruhá y se inspira en la cosmovisión andina, los atuendos originarios y las tradiciones de esa cultura Indígena para sus creaciones.*

The sequin dresses, bright earrings, and colorful embroidery designed by Sisa Morocho have something special, they capture the 'glamor' of the costumes of Western culture and fuse them with the Andean style, preserving the cultural identity of the clients who they dress. The talented 30-year-old designer belongs to the Puruhá ethnic group and is inspired by the Andean worldview, the original outfits and traditions of that Indigenous culture for her creations.

This narrative of the unification of Western and non-Western, traditional and modern creates a sphere of hybridized fashion, and as Sisa and other designers, producers and vendors have mentioned, is open to more than just the Puruhá community. Although the market is sustained predominantly within Indigenous communities, and this does help to protect against appropriation to some extent (see chapter five), I think the take of

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anthropologist Gabriela Bernal is too simple. She is interviewed in an article in Distintas Latitudes (Mendieta T. 2017):

> *En este contexto, la antropóloga Gabriela Bernal, en entrevista para Distintas Latitudes manifiesta que esta manera de expresión de la cultura no es una forma de comercialización como es vista desde los imaginarios tradicionales. Sostiene que "no se vende la cultura, se vende una ropa que utiliza una cultura y se vende porque hay alguien quien compre y son propiamente mujeres Indígenas, no son Mestizos ni turistas, no son compradores externos.*

In this context, the anthropologist Gabriela Bernal, in an interview for Different Latitudes, states that this way of expressing culture is not a form of commercialization as seen from traditional imaginary. She argues that "Culture is not sold, clothing that uses culture is sold, and it is sold because there is someone who buys it, and they are Indigenous women themselves. They are not Mestizos, or tourists, they are not external buyers.

While this is still mostly true, it reminds me of my own initial mistake in assuming that Sisa's models were all Indigenous. These designers can and do retain a sense of Puruhá identity in their fashion but this does not mean that by growing their market to non-Indigenous buyers that they will lose any sense of this identity. In fact, this is not a fear any of them ever expressed to me. Like questions of race, ethnic identity, and place this dress is steeped in far more complexity than a static, homogenous aesthetic or

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culture. Indeed, in many articles even the placing was multilayered and complex, with references to Riobamba, Chimborazo and Puruhá culture sprinkled throughout, and sometimes with additional references to Quito, Colta or other towns and cities where Puruhá fashion emerged and/or migrated. This placing too was hybridized, between rural and urban, insisting on the significance of the natural world and the city markets. At the end of this same article, both Sisa and the author speak to this complexity of being 'both and:

> *Para Sisa Morocho "es recordar la esencia de sus propias vestimentas y de paso seguir las tendencias de la moda. Se puede mostrar la vestimenta y con los bordados mostrar la esencia de su ancestralidad". Estar en la moda no es negar una identidad ni aculturarse. Es una evidencia de que la cultura está viva y que vive en el siglo XXI.*

> For Sisa Morocho "It is to remember the essence of your own clothes and also following fashion trends. You can show the clothes and with the embroideries show the essence of their ancestry." Being in fashion is not denying identity or acculturation. It is evidence that culture is alive and that it lives in the 21st century. (Mendieta T. 2017)

Thus some questions of what it means to be Puruhá are answered through this clothing, both what is shared and what is individual. Yet as a commodity this dress style also has different price points and thus speaks to differences and tensions within the

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Puruhá community. The Puruhá 'brand' encompass all the intricacies discussed so far, but it can also reveal intersectionalities of race, gender, class.

2.6 INTERSECTIONALITY AND HIERARCHIES WITHIN THE PURUHA COMMUNITY

"Puruhá-ness", that sense of some more or less agreed upon cultural identity, is marketable both within the Puruhá community and within Ecuador more broadly, even if the ways in which it is consumed (and therefore marketed) vary. The Puruhá identity is, to some extent, an economic and political brand. Embedded in a commodity like dress, it can be bought and sold within the Puruhá and non-Puruhá community. Politically, it can be used by the nation state in its own branding as part of a multicultural, pluri-national state. Many of the Puruhá individuals I spoke with seemed to understand how Puruhá identity was marketable, or at the very least they represented their cultural heritage as something that was powerful, that had value and significance for Ecuador as a whole, not just their own community. Still, I wonder about who exactly is (re)constructing this narrative. Differences in status within the Puruhá community, as within other Indigenous Ecuadorian communities, are often left out of the stories told to foreign visitors. Discussions about the advantages of education, or a successful family were not absent, but they also weren't associated with class tensions, for instance. Therefore, while there is a sense of community reciprocity, there is also obfuscation of the social hierarchies that, even if not formalized, restrict and enable access to power. This sense of equality within the community is promoted both exteriorly and interiorly, as stemming from historic populations. For instance, Pedro Janeta Janeta (2015) discusses the *llakta* as:

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… la organización del pueblo originario en forma horizontal. No existe jerarquía

vertical, solamente hubo lideres o ancianos con sabiduría de honradez,

laboriosidad, honestidad, y administraron al grupo social bajo sus principios

sociales.

… the organization of the Indigenous people in a horizontal form. There is no

vertical hierarchy. There were only leaders or elders with wisdom of honesty,

industriousness, honesty, and managed the social group under its principles (29).

I don't dispute that this was a non-hierarchized system, at least formally, or that

those principles still govern much of the existing Puruhá philosophy. However, there are

families and individuals who seem to have gained a certain status through resources like

formalized education. Again, ethnic or racial identity has been at various times dependent

on class ranking, education, or religion (De la Cadena 2005), and movements towards

using Indigenous identity as a political or social platform can erase class difference, and

further marginalize the already marginalized (De Zaldivar 2008). For instance, the

recession of the 1980s spurred neoliberal reform, which focused on indigeneity as an

identity to foster certain reform projects, in place of projects that focused on land reform

and distributions of social capital that affected disparities in class status (ibid). Many

contemporary Indigenous organizations have their roots in class-based organizations

established in the mid-20th century, since it was class and labor-based organizations who

received state benefits (Perreault 2001). Yet culture and identity politics were later

favored at the expense of class based "peasant" agendas, a theme that seems to remain

strong today. As with the *Universidad San Francisco de Quito's* program to assist marginalized students, while the intention is broad, in practice it seems to focus on Indigenous or Afro-Ecuadorian cultural identity. Of course, a focus on cultural identity, and particularly Indigenous identities that have long been suppressed, is beneficial to communities as a whole. However, it does expose a new complexity, that of internal hierarchies.

Elite ideals have replaced many racial and ethnic categorizations (Bowen 2011), but how do "elite" ideals vary between and within particular ethnic groups. Elite Ecuadorians externally may be from any ethnic or racial background, yet the history of the nation leaves a lingering favorability for White *Mestizos* from a middle to upper class background. Within the Puruhá community, it seems there are several factors at play. One is the idealization of certain physical traits, which are often gendered and racialized and the other is education. As I mentioned, historically women in Ecuador were valued for their status as 'whiteners' through childbirth (Radcliffe 1999) and there are *blanco-Mestiza* ideals of beauty that have been and still are prevalent throughout Ecuador (Masi de Cassanova 2004). The distinction here is that among the Puruhá I did not explicitly hear or see a preference for a particular look, nor did I get a description of the ideal Puruhá woman. I instead garnered this information from both social media images presented, and images in other forms of mainstream media, like billboards and articles. Long dark hair, fairer skin, small features, and a relatively thin frame were prominent in advertising, runway shoots, and other media that promotes Puruhá fashion. These are also features that tend to visible in advertisements and images of *Mestiza* Ecuadorian

women[16], which is one reason why the choice to dress as visibly Puruhá is so significant. This visual ideal is gendered, in part because Puruhá dress itself is overwhelmingly produced, sold, and worn by women. If and when male dress becomes more of a focus, a male ideal may emerge. However, at least the brand *VISPU*, which was started by a male designer, has made a conscious effort to include male dress and male models. If this becomes a trend for other designers as well, I may get more insight on the Puruhá male ideal and aesthetics.

Regardless, what I argue is not that there are true biological racial boundaries that have been softened with time and genetic 'mixing'. Rather, the characteristics that are being highlighted in both Puruhá and *Mestizo* media are those that the Ecuadorian nation state has developed over time as significant and 'beautiful' features. Using dress to establish a particular ethnic identity gives Puruhá women, in particular, control over how they are ethnically identified, and in many instances what they see as feminine indigeneity. Yet, it is difficult to say how much of what these women portray is influenced by the attentions and interpretations of their male counterparts, or the broader *Mestizo* community. This can be detrimental for individuals in both communities who do not fit into a particular physical mold. I will discuss this at length in chapter six, but it is significant when thinking about hierarchies and status within the Puruhá community. Who is offered modeling jobs? Who wins the *Reina de Riobamba* title, a local pageant for a woman to act as representative of Riobamba for a year? Who is visible as part of this new, exciting fashion world and who is not? What is clear is that with increasing

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[16] There are also a variety of *Mestiza* images that are even lighter in skin tone and have lighter hair and features that would not necessarily overlap with a large segment of the Puruhá population.

variety in this dress style, women feel they have more choice in what to wear, and more means of expressing themselves as individuals, while still being grounded in their community.

Education is also a major means of expanding opportunities, and thus gaining status, for both men and women. Education provides skills and networks that allow Puruhá individuals to grow businesses or seek professional opportunities in other cities, albeit through very different paths and experiences. At the same time, there are other forms of education, such as collectives where traditional sewing techniques are taught, that don't rely on Western university systems. Within Riobamba there are at least three major universities, *Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo,* and *Universidad Interamericana del Ecuador.* While I have no personal experience with these universities, at least two have postgraduate studies, and *Politécnia* offers plenty of extra services, like study abroad programs and certifications for seminars. They are certainly competitive within the Ecuadorian university system and may also be competitive internationally. Education broadly may affect class structures within the Puruhá community, but within the world of Puruhá dress the impact is unclear. Some designers I spoke with attended university in Riobamba, and some in Quito, but some didn't attend university at all. Across the board, my interviewees varied in educational background, although this makes sense in the world of fashion. Many design elements in Puruhá dress were and are learned through watching family or friends, and entrepreneurial work is, as I've observed, widespread throughout the community. Business startups rely on the support of family and friends, whether it be family members working in a store when the owner isn't there, or friends opening up branches of stores

together, or just helping out the vendor next to you with change. Moreover, in the world of Indigenous fashion, attending university prior to the last decade or so, might have actually been a hinderance.

I touched on how clothing has long been a way of marking both ethnicity and class in Ecuador, and that many Andean Indigenous women in particular had the ability to "pass" as *Mestiza* through the use of dress (Lentz 1995, Melendez 2005). This was reflected in my interview with Patricia, the *Mestiza* woman from Licto, who moved to Riobamba, and then later to Quito for university. She mentioned a lot of Indigenous women at her university would change their dress styles to be more *mestiza*. Patricia did acknowledge that this was in part, for comfort. The women would say it's easier to ride the bus, for instance. However, there was also a lot of discrimination against Indigenous women who went to university, and therefore many of them would change their hair color a bit or start wearing miniskirts and other non-Indigenous styles to avoid harassment and be able to study. Though she didn't articulate exactly what form this harassment took, she did indicate it was based on an ethnic or racial identity. Today, this has changed. Many Indigenous women are wearing their traditional Indigenous dress to university, although there is also a lot of room for play and using elements of both Indigenous and *Mestiza* dress. Yet, by virtue of attending university at all these women (and men) now have access to a world once restricted to them, and education is still a means of achieving status, both within the Puruhá community and Ecuador more broadly. Thus, while higher education is not necessary for success within the world of Puruhá dress, it does give status to many people in the Puruhá community that those without education do not have. Moreover, certain skills learned in business or fashion courses, as

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well as connections made with other students from prominent backgrounds, could likely help distinguish some designers or business owners from others. This is something that remains to be seen as the market for Puruhá dress continues to grow.

2.7 CONCLUSION: SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH IDENTITY, IDENTITY THROUGH BODY, PLACE, AND AESTHETIC

Many of the designers and sellers I spoke with believed they have the same capacity for widespread success as Otavaleños and want to use this success not just to make money but also to educate others on who they are as a culture and community. They also hope to avoid the subsequent failures that Otavaleños met in the market (Kyle 2000). Their Puruhá identity is used as a source of power, an ethnic categorization that is self-imposed and self-described, layered with other identities of race (Indigenous) and place (town, province). Although some government and cultural institutions do distinguish different Indigenous groups and might show an image of a 'typical' dress style, house, or other cultural marker, they also simplify and homogenize this image. This is why the emergence of Puruhá fashion is powerful as a means of creating community-based narratives of "Puruhá" identity. Given the history of Ecuador since the Spanish conquest, this ability to not only (re)create but also more widely distribute complex identities based in a shared cosmovision and experience is a tool for reclaiming sovereignty. The historical categorization and regulation of Indigenous, and particularly Indigenous women's bodies was often dictated by external powers, whether they be Inca or Spanish. This does not mean that the Puruhá did not still have control over their identities in the past, whether cultural, communal, or individual, but rather that their constructions of self were in competition with the narratives of those in power, something

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which has continued through contemporary Ecuador. Aesthetics, manifested in a commercial product like dress, is a means of continuing to challenge those nation-statist narratives.

This works in concert with political and legal pushes towards sovereignty for Indigenous communities in Ecuador, which are nearly always more complex and less progressive than they would seem at the outset. Indigenous communities in the Andes have some hard-won local power, both politically and legally. In the 1930s the category of *comuna* was created for local settlements, where 50 or more people could obtain legal recognition, elect their own government, and hold property collectively (Lucero 2003). Initially, this was part of the project of modernization, a means to utilize groups for cooperatives, but the *comuna* became the base of revolution. By the 1990s Indigenous social movements stemming from local community leaders and governments were increasingly demanding recognition, and CONAIE was established based on collective control over land, natural resources, infrastructure, government programs and education (Andolina 2003). They criticized colonial rule and sought self-determination, which was only somewhat adopted within the 1998 constitution (ibid). In 2008 Indigenous groups, and CONAIE as an organizational leader, contested the laws regulating mining and water sectors, and laws limiting Indigenous people's autonomy in bilingual education without consulting the Indigenous populations directly affected by regulative measures. They also sought to implement the principles of *sumak kawsay,* an ethical paradigm that envisions human beings in harmony with each other, nature, and the spiritual world (Seider and Vivero 2017). However, this concept, which would seemingly legitimize Indigenous knowledge and values after being integrated into the 2008 constitution, has been argued

to be a form of ventriloquism (Martínez Novo 2018). The term *sumak kawsay* is a creation that does not exist in Indigenous or non-Indigenous records prior to around the year 2000, with unclear origins. While it is attributed to Indigenous leaders, many Indigenous people do not see it as a contrast to Western development, but rather synonymous with Western development (ibid). Therefore Martínez Novo (2018) argues that framing it as an Indigenous critique to development and modernity is rather the explanation of *Mestizo* elites. Moreover, the implementation of the idea did little to curb the aggression of the national government when it comes to natural resource extraction and the protection of Indigenous land.

In the legal sphere, customary law was recognized in 1998 with the Indigenous influenced constitution (Thomas 2016). This meant that the local Indigenous governments would have local councils, *cabildos*, which had actually existed during the colonial period, before declining in power in the 19th century (ibid). Restoring this legal power meant that cases that were primarily Indigenous, would go first to this local level, a form of legal pluralism that saw Indigenous people having jurisdiction over their own local cases. However, there were no coordinating rules developed between customary and national laws, leading to cases where various legal entities would dole out verdicts and punishments, and when it involved local sovereignty as a the subject of debate, the state would immediately move to prevent an increase in the Indigenous authorities' jurisdiction (see Thomas 2016). As with the power gained through constitutional recognition of Indigenous values, so too has Indigenous legal sovereignty been achieved partially and with little stability.

I would argue then, that while progress has been made to some extent within the existing framework of a *Mestizo* governmental and legal system, it is tenuous, and thus Indigenous communities work to seek other forms of sovereignty, through economics and aesthetics. White and *Mestizo* elites still have primary control over the media, over museums and cultural institutions, and over the government. They have therefore constructed Indigenous peoples for the consumption of other non-Indigenous Ecuadorians and foreign tourists, and these constructions are often reductive. In part, this is a response to the fear that Indigenous people are entering the political sphere "legitimately" through written documents and could soon on equal footing with *Mestizo* and *blanco-Mestizo* elites (Viatori 2014). However, the Puruhá are disrupting external constructions of identity by utilizing social media, education, and economic to distribute their own visions of their communities and themselves. Cultural recuperation and revitalization is fundamental to building a political identity (Radcliffe 2019), and dress is an integral part of this construction of identity, in turn a means of staking a claim to self-determination. In fact, in Ecuador Indigenous dress has always been a site of conflict, not only due to discrimination against wearing particular dress styles as I mentioned previously, but also by being physically torn from the body. Stripping Indigenous people of clothing has a long history in Ecuador, and in the first half of the 20th century hacienda and *Mestizo* authorities would use this tactic to get what they wanted from Indigenous individuals. When they wanted to get free labor or payment they would take an item of clothing forcibly, for instance a shawl, poncho, or hat, and ask the individual to perform a job or make a payment to get it back (Martínez Novo 2018). This humiliation tactic has not disappeared. In 2015 there were protests by the Saraguro people against having their

territories being allocated to mining companies, demanding the government respect bilingual education, and asking the state to strengthen dairy production and commercialization at the local level. The police humiliated Indigenous individuals by taking dress items from them that were symbols of Saraguro identity, again like shawls, hats, and even the *anaco* (ibid). Moreover, media images of Indigenous people, particularly those who protest, show them as violent and belligerent, or on the other hand marginalizing and infantilizing (Krupa 2009, Viatori 2014).

Therefore, dress matters to sovereignty at a very basic level, since it creates a sense of identity and unity that is clearly recognized by the nation-state as a site of power. This is even more powerful when the boundaries of racial and ethnic identities are (and always have been) fluid and changeable, and yet these same categorizations are used to legitimize political, legal, and even economic and aesthetic claims. Much like legal and governmental powers granted to local boards, granting rights to wear Indigenous dress styles or counter discrimination only go so far, since it still reiterates the ultimate control of the national government. However, Puruhá and other Indigenous dress businesses, run by and for Indigenous buyers, marketed through open channels, with recognition that contributes to economic and social visibility throughout Ecuador (not just among other Indigenous individuals) is a form of self-determination. Moreover, relationships between place and racial or ethnic identities are also made more complex, as designers and vendors travel for work and family, set up stores in multiple cities, and circulate products globally. Through this emerging fashion, the Puruhá community is not being translated or ventriloquized by *Mestizo* individuals, but rather the Puruhá are establishing shared ethnic and cultural aesthetics that speak to both historical and contemporary experiences.

Moreover, the weight of economic successes stemming from this aesthetic and increased mobility of Puruhá designers and sellers are still wrapped up, or rather on, the body. Yet, for those in the Puruhá fashion world the dressed body is a site of negotiating and contesting imposed racial and ethnic dictates, both historically and as they manifest today.

CHAPTER 3

NEGOTIATING THE CULTURAL COMMONS: PURUHA ECONOMIC

STRATEGIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE DRESS MARKET

I stood in front of a giant computerized screen, looking at myself as I waved my hand awkwardly in order to make virtual clothes appear on my body. I tapped in the air to choose my gender, which was unsurprisingly limited to either male or female. Ecuador is still a nation that primarily recognizes two genders, and as discussed in chapter one, gender identity overlaps with racial classifications and notions of citizenship (see Radcliffe 1999). Puruhá culture also reiterates a dual gender system, recognizing male and female as balancing energies (Janeta Janeta 2015). The positionality of Indigenous Puruhá women is thus constructed as a contrast to and equilibrium for Puruhá men within their community, and they are simultaneously marginalized within broader discourses on women's rights, something I touch on in chapter six. Nevertheless, because of this focus on gender duality both within and outside of the Puruhá community, having only a men's and women's dress option didn't seem unusual. I tapped on the side to choose a style, including dressing as a *Chola*, as a *Montubio*, or as someone from *Otavalo*, *Cañar, or Cacha,* with ten choices in total. These dress style categorizations were odd, since some refer to towns (Cacha), some to provinces (Cañar), and some to economic, social, and racial categorizations (Chola, Montubio). Often the name of a town is also used as the

name of a particular Indigenous group from that area, (Las Salasacas), but in other cases, such as Cacha, the Indigenous people are called Puruhá, which extends beyond any one town. I wondered about how these categories emerged as I zoomed in and out to get the clothes tailored to my body. While I maneuvered the different styles and fits of the clothing, I couldn't help but be reminded of my obsession with Cher Horowitz's seemingly magical dress-up computer program in the 1995 movie *Clueless*. I remembered how futuristic it seemed that her tops, bottoms, and accessories scrolled over her image on the computer, making outfit matches or mismatches. At the time the computer program seemed so innovative, and now over twenty years later, standing in front of this giant motion-sensing virtual outfit maker in Quito, Ecuador, I couldn't help but be both impressed and a bit confused.

The *Casa de la Cultura (House of Culture) Benjamín Carrión* had a healthy amount of funding from its various events and museums, but it also receives other contributions set forth by the government in *Ley Orgánica de la Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión,* including *"Las asignaciones que consten anualmente en el Presupuesto General del Estado,"* or "The assignments that appear annually in the General State Budget" and *"…dos por ciento del ingreso anual bruto de las autoridades portuarias que operan en el país o sus concesionarias …"* or "…two percent of the gross annual income of the port authorities operating in the country or its concessionaires … " (Espinoza Diaz 2006). It seems the actual amount of funding changes, but yearly pay for employees alone, as reported for October 2019, was 2,784,133.20 (Casa de la Cultura ND), not including numerous other maintenances, programming, and structural costs. Therefore, it is an autonomous institution with the ability to support a large staff and

many programs, but it is simultaneously supported by the Ecuadorian government. In fact, it was created through a government decree in 1944 by then President of Ecuador, Dr. José María Velasco Ibarra (Executive Decree No. 707) (Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana ND).[17] Compared to other museums in more rural areas, such as the *Pucara Tambo* ethnographic museum in Cacha, outside of Riobamba, the resources at the *Casa de la Cultura* are vast and the space of the building itself is incredibly impressive. The main building is a massive and modern architectural feat covered in mirrors which reflected the surrounding mountains, was both imposing and welcoming. However, in this moment I couldn't help but ask myself: why would they spend so much money to let visitors play virtual dress up inside of an ethnographic museum, particularly when Indigenous dress styles could be found throughout the city? I eventually found that the answer, in part, was because this ethnographic museum was a vehicle for the visual consumption of indigeneity, a primary way that Ecuadorian *Mestizos* and foreign tourists interacted with the ordered and categorized 'other'. *Mestizo* is an incredibly complex ethnic term in Ecuador, that is colloquially understood to be a biological 'mixing' of Indigenous and Spanish, but this has only been foregrounded since the Enlightenment (De la Cadena 2005, Poole 1997). Despite this 'mixed' ancestry, *Mestizo* individuals

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[17] Although the president at the time formalized its creation, the founding is credited to politician and journalist Benjamín Carrión for whom it is named, who proposed it as a means to lift the country's morale after their defeat in the Peruvian-Ecuadorian war in 1941(Casa de la Cultura ND). There are also other instances of funding for specific entities within the institution, such as the *Museo Nacional del Ecuador,* housed in the *Casa de la Cultura,* which is funded by the *Banco Central del Ecuador,* the national bank founded in 1925 (Banco Central de Ecuador ND).

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often do not know about or speak to their Indigenous heritage and use *Mestizo* as an opposing category to Indigenous.

Later, after interviewing Puruhá fashion designers, sellers, and consumers, it also became clear to me that non-Indigenous Ecuadorians and foreign tourists were not the
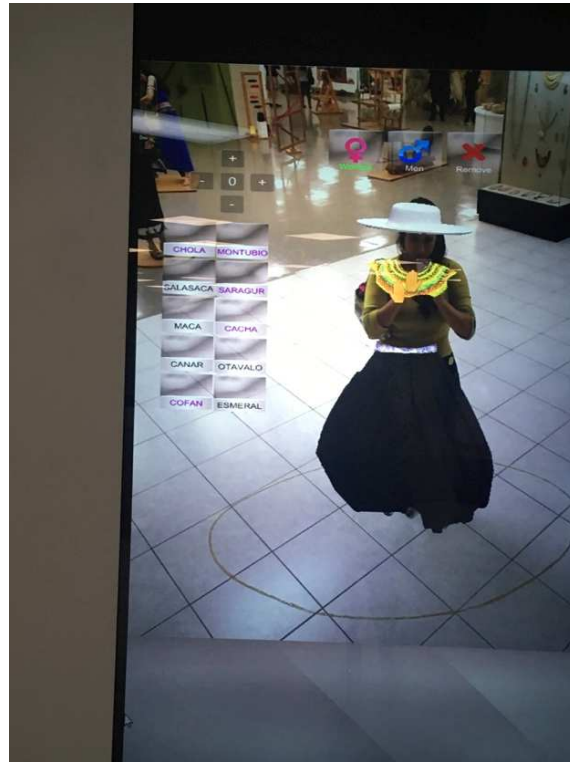
Figure 3.1 Photo of the author using a
Computerized dress-up game at the *Casa
de la Cultura Benjamin Carrión*

primary consumers of contemporary Puruhá dress. In fact, they barely bought these clothes. This wasn't purposeful on the part of Puruhá designers and sellers, who would energetically say their dress was for anyone who liked it. Rather, its consumption was a reflection of the history of this particular commodity: these clothing items make visible a long Puruhá history of conquest, exchange, discrimination, and recently pride,

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community, and heritage. These were experiences that foreign tourists and non-Indigenous Ecuadorians did not share. Among Ecuadorians in particular, identifying as *Mestizo* has, for the most part, long meant obscuring the Indigenous part of that heritage. Thus, the stories told through Puruhá dress were not their *Mestizo* stories, and to wear this dress would be to claim otherwise. However, the visual consumption of this dress, much like in the dress-up game I played, would be acceptable. As *Mestizo* citizens, this visual consumption was understood to be a way of learning about the nation-state's history and its current diversity.

Contemporary Puruhá dress therefore operates within multiple economic spheres. While multi-market commodities are not a new concept, the multiple and coexisting scales of production, circulation, and consumption of such goods upsets notions that local markets are within and secondary to the global capitalist market. Instead, local markets often work alongside global ones, as another primary market (Nash 1981, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999, Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009, Willmott 2014). Puruhá dress not only circulates within these various markets, but it also acts as interrelated, but different commodity types. At the local level, the dress object is bought and sold as a material commodity between the Puruhá, and occasionally other Indigenous groups. At a national level, the dress continues to physically circulate among a network of Indigenous internal migrants, but it also acts as a visual commodity that is consumed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals alike. Images, videos, and runway shows of Puruhá individuals participating in the fashion world at a national level give them the kind of exposure they need to become well known and sought-after brands among their current clientele. At the same time, this visual consumption cultivates their status as fashion

designers and artists on par with their *Mestizo* counterparts, which opens up potential for these designers to reach a global audience. Some Puruhá designers intend to use that global visual circulation to encourage international consumers who are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

A major component of this emerging Puruhá dress market is consequently tension between those who are branding within a capitalist market model for their individual businesses, and those who are not focused on branding outside of a cultural, collective Puruhá identity, a sort of community brand. The pursuit of particular forms of branding is also the pursuit of particular identities and markets. Most often I encountered Puruhá individuals who saw themselves as fashion designers and artists, and wanted to expand to global high fashion, or those who saw themselves primarily as vendors, and focused on selling as much as possible in their local shops. Those who saw themselves as artists had a sense of intellectual property and a company brand, which other producers and vendors did not. In fact, this idea of artistic copyright counters traditions of copying and replication within the Puruhá community (see Rozental et al 2011, Colloredo-Mansfeld et al 2012). All my participants drew on a cultural commons, but in different ways and to different ends. All were entrepreneurs, though at different scales. Although none of my participants offered the term 'entrepreneur', instead calling themselves owners or designers, I use the term for two main reasons. The first is that they are individuals who saw a space or need in the market to fill, and they are the creators of their individual businesses based on that need, two central tenants of entrepreneurship. The second is to make visible those who are excluded from common narratives of entrepreneurship, which often center on masculinity (Hjorth and Steyaert 2004) and non-marginalized ethnic or

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racial groups. Although entrepreneur can be loaded with individualistic notions of the self-sufficient genius/leader, entrepreneurship can more broadly be described as a social, creative process that changes daily practices (ibid). Puruhá designers and vendors I spoke with often did have individual origin stories for their businesses, but these stories also brought in family, friends, and their community, usually as inspiration or support. Therefore, I would argue that they are entrepreneurs but specifically Indigenous Puruhá entrepreneurs, a context which means they will always take into account community.[18]

However, these distinctions between branding and not branding a business also expose a second component of this dress market- stratification within the Puruhá community based on class and income. The price of dress items vary, along with the branded or not branded identity of the producer. In turn, the identity of the producer relies on access to education, family wealth and recognition within the community, and other forms of economic support or social capital. Moreover, the logic behind whether or not a particular aspect of this Puruhá aesthetic, an embroidery pattern for instance, was individual creative work that should have protections against copying (even if it did not), or was part of the collective aesthetic commons that all could draw from, was dependent on how individuals interpreted the sartorial lexicon of Puruhá dress. Again, the very notion of copying was not inherently negative or fraudulent across the community, the way it might be in Western legal systems. Therefore, this tension between branded and unbranded designs still exists, but it also validates both sets of Indigenous dress producers, within the market and externally.

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[18] I speak more to direct support, such as giving jobs to friends, later in the chapter but also in chapter five with regard to networks of women supporting each other.

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In addition to operating in multiple economic spheres and tensions of branding at various scales, there is a third key component of the Puruhá dress market: social relationships and economic support networks. The circulation of Puruhá dress can be visualized as various branches in an ebbing and flowing rhizome of human and object relationships. These interactions, mediated by dress, can create connection and reinforce bonds through shared cultural heritage. Family and friends contribute monetary and marketing support where government might not, banking cooperatives are favored over privatized banks, and in day to day life, shop owners give each other change or sit outside to talk to one another as they wait for customers. However, some interactions can also reinforce hierarchies of gender, race, and class within the Puruhá community (see Fass 2017). Social and economic mobility divides those who can buy Indigenous designer brands, or un-branded 'knock-offs'. Access to education divides those who use a Western academic model to speak with authority about their dress history, and those who do not.

Moreover, this dress is interpreted as a racialized and ethnicized product, and as such it carries with it the responsibility of acting as a signifier for Puruhá culture. Ecuador's attempts at nation building have historically framed Indigenous Andean people as childlike (Foote 2006), needing the support of the state through religion, education, and government institutions to develop and contribute to society. Yet, the success of the Puruhá dress market contributes to the economic autonomy of its community, in lieu of provisions granted by the nation state that often rest on little more than recognition, and fail to support, for example, in land rights or legal autonomy (Radcliffe 2012, Thomas 2016, Sieder and Vivero 2017). These Puruhá entrepreneurs are creating new narratives of economically self-sufficient, innovative dreamers, but their success does not only

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support their individual careers. It is dependent on shared cultural aesthetics which reach broader audiences and help to represent Puruhá identity, in turn supporting the popularity of other vendors at a local level. I discuss this in relation to economic sovereignty in section 3.6. Moreover, practices of reciprocity and supporting of a community (particularly for women, which I discuss in chapter six), are characteristic of this dress market. The wealth and beauty of that culture form the basis of their market successes, not just in monetary income, but also in recognition and understanding. At the same time, the use of a shared cultural commons, promotion of different forms of consumption, and price-point diversity within the Puruhá dress market help to protect against potential pitfalls, such as forms of economic power that would challenge and potentially incur backlash from the nation-state, or external appropriation of Puruhá dress by *Mestizo* or international designers and vendors. Yet as Puruhá individuals exert more agency over telling their own stories, and challenge existing hegemonic narratives, the question increasingly becomes whose stories are we hearing, and what is missing from those who don't control this Puruhá image?

3.2 PURUHA HISTORY AND RESISTANCE

To understand how narratives of Puruhá culture become embedded in dress, we must first recognize the histories and mythologies community members draw upon to create a collective identity. The Puruhá are from the primarily agricultural province of Chimborazo, with Riobamba as its provincial capital. There are many rural towns surrounding the capital, where women can be seen tending to fields by hand, wrapped in brightly colored, but less embellished versions of the garments I found in Riobamba's shops. As I mentioned in the previous chapter the original *pueblos* (towns) in the area

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were Tungurahya, Carihuayrazo, and Llakta (Janeta Janeta 2015). However, Llakta is a broad term that refers to an Indigenous community or the land of that community (Carter and Sarmento 2011) and has been used in naming semi-autonomous Indigenous territories that have collective ownership or collective resource projects (Erazo 2013). Thus, while it is difficult to say exactly what form of political organization the Puruhá might have had prior to the Inca Conquest, this term suggests some form of collective ownership and, as with other pre-Incan Andean communities, a small-scale, local chiefdom (Lyons 2006). It is also difficult to say when exactly the Puruhá community would have emerged from the alliances of these populations mentioned by Pedro Janeta Janeta (2015), except that it would have been prior to the latter part of the 15th century. In fact, the Inca Conquest in the last decades of the 15th century (Lyons 2006) and the subsequent Spanish conquest in the mid-16th century obscured much of this early history. Therefore, there is a long gap of time that Puruhá participants don't mention when describing what it means to be Puruhá. Individuals draw from pre-Incan worldviews, and then move forward to 19th century dynastic-like families, primarily Fernando Daquilema and his descendants.

Daquilema is an Indigenous Puruhá hero from the *pueblo* Cacha, a rural community about an hour's walk outside of Riobamba's outskirts. Cacha is where many Puruhá people today were born or trace their heritage. Daquilema is therefore a hero of Cacha and the Puruhá, but he is also lauded as a revolutionary in the fight for Indigenous rights more broadly. In 1871 he spearheaded a movement to end increasing tithes and exploitation of Indigenous labor by landowners, practices supported by then President Gabriel García Moreno's program of modernization. After independence in 1822 from

Spain, Ecuador saw the formation of a liberal and conservative party. Garcia was staunchly Catholic and conservative, and focused on cutting corruption and fixing an existing governmental debt (Latourette 1961). Part of his solution was a program that insisted on four days of unpaid work yearly, or a monetary contribution to support the nation's public works programs (Larson 2004). The Catholic Church, which had close ties to the president, sanctioned these efforts, but these programs were not implemented equally across the Ecuadorian population. Instead landowners, with the support of the state and the church, exerted financial control of Indigenous populations via the exploitation of taxes and free labor (Hidalgo Flor 2000). This was made possible because, unlike Peru or Bolivia where mining was the focal point of the economy, Ecuador relied heavily on the hacienda system (Clark and Becker 2007), land estates granted to elites during the colonial period where peasant laborers worked in serf-like conditions, the majority of whom were Quichua-speaking Indigenous people (Lyons 2006).

The rebellion in Cacha was a response to being unfairly burdened with building the nation-state's infrastructure and would have ideally put an end to Garcia's modernization tactics, as mediated by landowners. Unfortunately, Garcia's militias executed Daquilema, along with a female army leader, Manuela Leon, and the uprising was put to rest (CCE Benjamin Carrion, n.d). Not long after, in 1875, President García Moreno was assassinated by Faustino Rayo along with two more liberal conspirators and noted Freemasons (Berthe 1889). This was an indication that the Liberal Movement was gaining steam, and although another conservative followed President García Moreno, by 1895 the Liberal Revolution had put José Eloy Alfaro Delgado in his place as president. A core tenant of this new government included rhetoric of *indigenismo* or valuing

Indigenous contributions to culture and society. Though flawed, the concept supported popular mobilization against landowners (Clark and Becker 2007), which a few decades prior had been so swiftly cut down. However, Fernando Daquilema and Manuela Leon remain central figures in Puruhá culture, as individuals who refused to be the back upon which the nation was created, without the opportunities afforded to non-Indigenous and elite Ecuadorians.
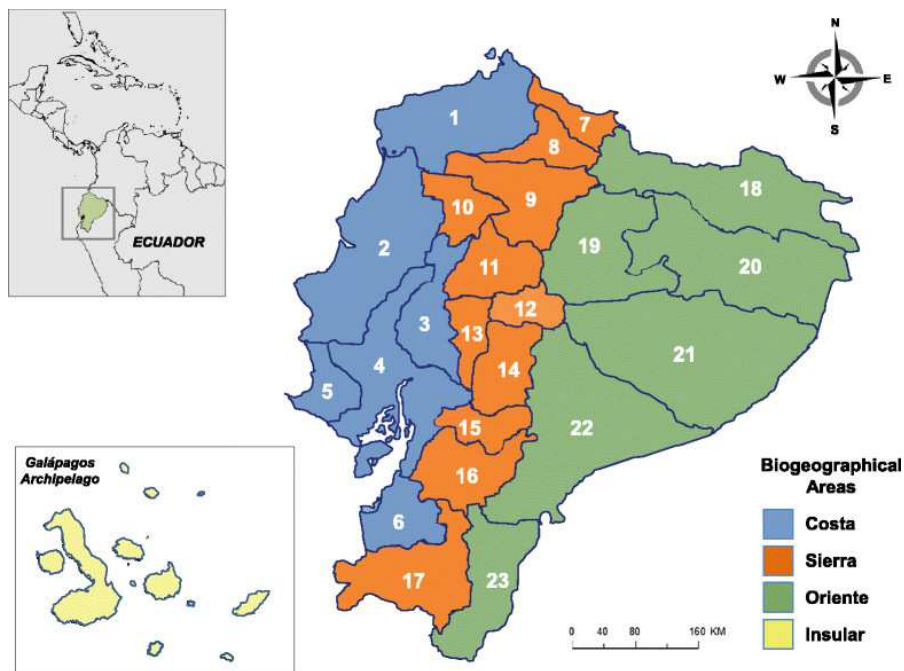
Figure 3.2 Map showing political provinces of Ecuador (1) Esmeraldas, (2) Manabí, (3) Los Ríos, (4) Guayas, (5) Santa Elena, (6) El Oro (7) Carchi, (8) Imbabura, (9) Pichincha, (10) Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, (11) Cotopaxi, (12) Tungurahua, (13) Bolívar, (14) Chimborazo, (15) Cañar, (16) Azuay, (17) Loja. (18) Sucumbíos, (19) Napo, (20) Francisco de Orellana, (21) Pastaza, (22) Morona Santiago, (23) Zamora Chinchipe. "Insular" region: Galálapagos islands (From Brito Vera and Borges 2015).

A particularly intriguing instance of this hero status is a financial cooperative named after Daquilema, which clearly targets Puruhá and other Indigenous clientele, but

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is also based on non-Catholic Christian principles (Cooperativa Daquilema 2018). That this local hero should be aligned with an entity that supports both financial independence and community cooperation made sense to me based on Daquilema's history, but how were Christian religious principles interlaced with this spirit of resistance?

The end of president Garcia Moreno's presidency symbolized a shift from a deeply Catholic colonial system with tributes, to a republican state that interacted with Indigenous groups, although not always benevolently (Hidalgo Flor 2000). As Catholic control waned, a period of Liberalism that lasted into the 20th century grew. During this time President Eloy Alfaro made labor concerns central to the government and supported Indigenous resistance to abusive landowners (Clarke and Becker 2007). Yet, this was still a paternalistic relationship of the state with Indigenous peoples. By 1925 some military officers and a restless middle class overthrew liberals in the Revolución Juliana, initializing a period of political instability and economic crisis (Clarke 2007). This instability included Indigenous peasant uprisings against continuing abuses in agricultural labor, and paternalistic behaviors of the state (ibid). The Glorious May Revolution of 1944 saw a coalition between Indigenous individuals, workers, peasants, students, and low-ranking military personnel to overcome then president Carlos Arroyo del Río, though Indigenous people were notably absent from the Constituent Assembly that followed (Becker 2007).

The history of the Puruhá in the mid-20th century was also notably missing from conversations with participants. There were vague references to discrimination, but it is not until the 1999-2000 uprising that I again heard specific mentions of a collective Puruhá identity. During the 1990s, resistance focused on critiquing urbanization and

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western liberalization, which the Puruhá saw as a threat to their community in Chimborazo (Hidalgo Flor 2000). This was also the core of the 1999-2000 uprising opposing President Jamil Mahuad's presidency, particularly his support from corrupt banks, ties to the World Bank and IMF, the dollarization of Ecuador, and his overarching neoliberal ideologies. In response to these capitalist neoliberal ideologies, Indigenous groups made claims to ancestral land, and aligned with worker and student movements that countered exploitation of land and resources (ibid). Yet even President Rafael Correa who took power in 2007 under the banner of multi-culturalism and inclusivity of Indigenous peoples as agents in the formation of nation-state policies, would eventually forgo progressive plans and continue neoliberal policies that exploited Indigenous land and resources (Becker 2011). Thus, there was little trust of government and international banks among Indigenous Ecuadorians, particularly banks associated with neoliberalism. Within many Indigenous communities smaller, local banks and cooperatives, such as *Cooperativa JEP*, were appealing since they were not tainted with the memories of either Catholic sanctioned labor exploitation or neoliberal government support.

The rise of Protestantism and Evangelicalism as forms of Christianity that reject Catholicism has been well documented in Ecuador (Kangay 1990, Lucero 2006, Swanson 1994). Non-Catholic Christianity aligns with the rebelliousness of local leaders like Daquilema. For example, the focus on individualism and democracy within Protestantism (and it's difference from Catholicism), gave the conversion to Protestantism the appearance of protest against nationalist structures, particularly since during the hacienda period control of Indigenous labor would have been exerted through elite landowners, the State, and the Catholic Church (Kangay 1990). Thus, a cooperative, such as *Cooperativa*

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Daquilema, that targets Indigenous clients, resists Catholic domination, as well as big neo-liberal banking institutions, and still has the support system of a non-Catholic Christian church would likely be successful. In fact, *Cooperativa Daquilema* has 15 branches in 11 cities throughout Ecuador, and is responsible for massive and well-attended Evangelical Christian concerts (Cooperativa Daquilema 2018).

The relationship of both Evangelical Christianity and Protestantism to the Andean region, and Chimborazo specifically, is of course incredibly complex, and both have challenged CONAIE for legitimate claims to Indigenous representation in terms of social justice and political contributions (Lucero 2006, Swanson 1994). However, CONAIE is still Ecuador's largest Indigenous organization. Formed in 1986, it is aimed at social change and known for spearheading many of the most prominent Indigenous uprisings (Becker 2011). It is therefore evident that Puruhá economic systems have been and continue to be influenced by these political and religious systems, which have in turn shaped the shared histories of Puruhá people.

Puruhá ideological struggles have, at least since the 16th century, also been economic struggles. This brief historical backdrop serves to frame Puruhá identity as one of resistance through the fight for economic security, which is also a fight for self-determination. This same spirit was evident in the Puruhá entrepreneurs I spoke with, regardless of the market scales they participated in, or the type of dress product they distributed. Still, differing forms of financial support available to Puruhá dress producers have also emerged from these historical relationships between people and institutions. For instance, government sanctions may support artisans, but not artists. I make this distinction because artisan work is very significant to the Ecuadorian government and

economy, to the point where they have a governmental organization for the defense of the artisan (JNDA), discussed further in the following section. Their legal definition focuses on key features, including the products being predominantly handmade (a murky definition at best) and there being no more than 15 operators and five apprentices of the business[19]. On the other hand, the definition of art and artist in anthropology is perhaps

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[19] Under the *Reglamento General de la Ley de Defensa del Artesano* (The General Regulation of the Law of the Defense of the Artisan) it states (Titulo I, Generalidades y Definiciones):

Art. 1.- El presente Reglamento tiene por objeto aplicar las disposiciones de la Ley de Defensa del Artesano, regulando la estructura y funcionamiento de los organismos creados en virtud de dicha norma, y la forma en la que han de otorgarse los beneficios legales previstos en la misma para la clase artesanal. Art. 2.- Actividad Artesanal: Es la practicada manualmente para la transformación de la materia prima destinada a la producción de bienes y servicios con auxilio de máquinas de equipos o herramientas, es decir que predomina la actividad manual sobre la mecanizada. Art. 3.- Artesano.- Es el trabajador manual maestro de taller o artesano autónomo que debidamente calificado por la Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano y registrado en el Ministerio de Trabajo y Recursos Humanos, desarrolla su actividad y trabajo personalmente y hubiere invertido en su taller en implementos de trabajo, maquinarias y materias primas una cantidad no superior al 25% del capital fijado para la pequeña industria. Art. 4.- Maestro de Taller: Es la persona mayor de edad que, a través de los Colegios Técnicos de Enseñanza Artesanal, establecimientos o centros de formación artesanal y organizaciones gremiales legalmente constituidas, ha obtenido el título otorgado por la Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano y refrendado por los Ministerios de Educación y Cultura y de Trabajo y Recursos Humanos. Art. 5.- Operario: Es la persona que sin dominar de manera total los conocimientos teórico - prácticos de un arte u oficio y habiendo dejado de ser aprendiz, contribuye a la elaboración de obras de artesanías o la prestación de servicios, bajo la dirección de un Maestro de Taller. Art. 6.- Aprendiz: Es la persona que ingresa a un taller artesanal o un centro de enseñanza artesanal, con el objeto de adquirir conocimientos sobre una rama artesanal a cambio de sus servicios personales por un tiempo determinado, de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el Código de Trabajo. Art. 7.- Artesano Autónomo: Se considera artesano autónomo al que ejerce su oficio o arte manual por cuenta propia, aunque no haya invertido cantidad alguna en implementos de trabajo o carezca de operativos.

(Translation) Art. 1.- The purpose of this Regulation is to apply the provisions of the Law of Defense of the Artisan (Craftsman), regulating the structure and operation of the

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even less clear. Some theorists highlight an aesthetic purpose over or in addition to a practical one (Haselberger 1961), others focus on how art pieces are vehicles of communication, stemming from Aristotle, or try to combine the aesthetic and communication functions (Layton 1991). Alfred Gell (1998) put forth a theory of art as a form of agency, predominantly social since it is a means of influencing thoughts and actions of others. There have been numerous responses to defining both art and artisan since, and so I use my own definitions based on both how Ecuadorian institutions view these Indigenous designers and how the designers view themselves. The artist recognizes their work as unique and creative but the artisan, while creative, is reproducing a

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organisms created by virtue of said standard, and the manner in which the legal benefits provided therein for the artisan class.

Art. 2.- Artisanal Activity: It is the manual practice of transforming premium materials for the production of goods and services with the help of machines or tools, that is to say that manual activity predominates over machining.

Art. 3.- Artisan: Is the manual workshop master worker or autonomous craftsman who duly

qualified by the National Board of Defense of the Craftsman and registered in the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources, develops their activity and work personally and have invested in their workshop in work implements machinery and raw materials an amount not exceeding 25% of capital set for the small industry.

Art. 4.- Workshop Master: Is the person of legal age who, through the Technical Colleges of

Craft Education, establishes or centers craft training and trade organizations legally constituted, has obtained the title granted by the National Board of Defense of the Craftsman and is endorsed by the Ministries of Education and Culture and of Labor and Human Resources.

Art. 5.- Operator: It is the person who operates without fully mastering theoretical knowledge. Practitioners of an art or trade, no longer an apprentice, who contributes to the development of works of handicrafts or the provision of services, under the direction of a Workshop Master.

Art. 6.- Apprentice: Is the person who enters a craft workshop or a teaching center craft, in order to acquire knowledge about a craft branch in exchange for their personal services for a certain time, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Job.

Art. 7.- Autonomous Craftsman: It is considered autonomous craftsman who exercises his craft or manual art on their own, even if they have not invested any amount in work implements or lack operators.

traditional style with less attention or focus on their individual innovation or creativity. Still, there are arguably no clear boundaries between the two, and they become further complicated by the notions of copying, which I discuss in section 3.4. Therefore, although there are institutions that support artisans (e.g. JNDA) specifically and/or Indigenous producers (e.g. bank cooperatives) specifically, there are also complications that underlie the ability and desire to use these resources. Indeed, the majority of entrepreneurs I spoke with focused on family networks as core sources of financial support.

3.3 CONTEXTUALIZING CULTURAL REVIVAL: THE MARKET FOR PURUHA DRESS

The market for contemporary Puruhá dress began around the early 2000s, although the emergence of the most popular designers, and the media response to these designers, really took hold around 2014 and continues today. This might be attributed in part to increasing visibility of Indigenous people in government institutions, higher education and popular culture in Ecuador, which has helped to lessen discrimination against visibly Indigenous individuals. However, discrimination against Indigenous dress styles has been documented as recently as the 1990s (Lentz 1995) and has arguably not been completely eradicated. Indigenous dress, regardless of the quality of the clothing, has historically been associated with being 'dirty', poor, and rural by the mainstream *Mestizo* majority because being visibly Indigenous was associated with these same qualities (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). The only exception to this rule seemed to be the dress of Indigenous Otavaleños, who have historically been favored above other Andean Indigenous groups as cleaner, tidier, and physically more attractive, i.e. having more

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European features than other Indigenous populations (ibid). Some of my interviewees even spoke about Otavaleños as a sort of model for achievement due to their economic success in textile and craft markets worldwide, without mentioning the history of relative national favoritism toward Otavaleños (also see Bowen 2011, Kyle 2000). This is not to disregard the racism suffered by Otavaleños, but rather to understand the complexities of ethnic relations within indigeneity in Ecuador. Puruhá dress has not had the same prestige as Otavaleño dress in the past, and interviewees spoke directly to both this historical discrimination, and subsequent shame that prevented the use of Indigenous dress styles.

Sisa, the owner of the brand *Sumak Churay*, is acutely aware of how this discrimination affects her business pursuits. She was young, 29 at the time I met her, personable, and articulated her thoughts with ease and grace. I first spoke with her at her shop in the historic center of Quito, although she also has branches in Riobamba and Guayaquil. Her shop was small, but filled with a variety of blouses, skirts, belts, and shoes. She had beads and pieces of embroidery lying about, things she clearly worked on in between conversations with customers. A friend's daughter was running around as we spoke, and every so often she would calmly call the girl over, or get up to watch her, never missing a beat in whatever idea she was trying to express to me. This type of shared caretaking seemed common in her group of friends, who were often also employees. I was the same age as Sisa when we met, but she seemed much more refined in contrast to my clumsiness. Near the end of the interview I sat up from the bench I had been sitting on and spilled a container of tiny, bright beads all over her floor, which she was entirely unfazed by. Her effort was spent on reassuring me that it was fine.

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I had already become aware of her popularity through newspaper articles and social media before I landed in Ecuador and sought her out as a pivotal figure in this new dress style, which indeed she was. When I mentioned her name to young Puruhá women I had just met, I would often get an excited response, and she has since given talks in other Ecuadorian cities about her successful business. She told me she became interested in Puruhá dress at a young age through her mother, but it wasn't until she was in university that she got the idea to start her brand, *Sumak Churay.* Her father had passed away in a traffic accident, and so she had to figure out a way to support herself. Most of the family had previously worked in the father's factory but the siblings now had to figure out their own paths (Marquez 2017). She thought about the lack of clothing Puruhá girls had at the time to identify with, and how many of them wore Otavaleño dress, if they wore any Indigenous styles at all. This was in part due to this historic discrimination against Puruhá dress. As she said:

> *Años anteriores atrás, las chicas Indígenas saber gozaban[20] de la ropa por el mismo hecho de había mucho racismo, bastante racismo, y entonces, incluso también saber gozaban la verdad por la vestimenta que tenían. Estudiando todo eso, este, entonces yo dije, entonces necesitamos crear algo novedosa y algo nuevo. Entonces, por eso yo vi mucho le que es la ropa occidental, y pues le metimos bordados. Es lo único, la única diferencia, y allí las chicas ahora si, ya se identifican y se sienten a la vez orgullosos ponemos una ropa, siempre lo hacemos y te estilizada y con las referencias de ellas mismas.*

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[20] This is the conjugation Sisa used but *sabían gozar* may be used elsewhere.

Years before, Indigenous girls knew how to enjoy the (Puruhá) clothing. At the same time here there was a lot of racism, much racism … even knowing they enjoyed the clothes they had. Studying all this, then I said, we need to create something novel and something new, so I looked at a lot of the Western clothes, and then we put embroidery. It's the only difference, and there, the girls now, they identify and at the same time feel proud to wear the clothes; they always do it with style and reference to themselves.

It is clear that some of her motivation in starting the brand was to give Puruhá women something they felt spoke to their heritage in a contemporary way, that could be their own, and that this was something that had emerged in the current historical global context.

Since the turn of the last century the social and political climate in Ecuador has shifted. Indigenous uprisings and protests are not new, but in the early 2000s there was a pan-Latin American push to include Indigenous voices and philosophies in the political sphere. In 2000 President Jamil Mahuad was forced to leave office by the army and Indigenous protestors who were responding to a banking crisis in 1998-1999, which led to a cut in the armed forces budget, as well as actions that would later lead to the President's jail sentence, including ordering banks to close, and freezing citizen's accounts to protect bankers he had relationship with (BBC News 2014). In 2002 Indigenous protests brought oil production to a near standstill (BBC News 2012), which had a huge impact as it was, and is one of Ecuador's main exports, besides agricultural

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products (Societe Generale 2018). This happened again in 2005 **(**BBC News 2012**).** In 2006, Rafael Correa, aligned with the social democratic party PAIS Alliance, had been elected with the promise that he would be inclusive of Indigenous populations in the nation-state's government (Radcliffe 2012, Sieder and Vivero 2017). The government instituted a new constitution in 2008 which framed Ecuador as a pluri-national state, recognized Indigenous rights and protections, and incorporated the notion of *sumak kawsay*, translated as *buen vivir* or good life/living, a philosophy that is prevalent in various Latin American Indigenous populations (Hill and Fernández-Salvador 2016, Seider and Vivero 2017). However, in practice, Correa's government had many failings and governmental relations with the Indigenous organizations united under CONAIE began disintegrating (Seider and Vivero 2017). By 2012 Indigenous people from different communities in Ecuador staged a two-week protest against mining projects in the Amazon (BBC News 2012), although this fight against foreign, most recently Chinese, mining companies continues today.

The political and social atmosphere of the last two decades, relative to the early 20th century, was conducive to the resurgence of a dress market that highlighted Puruhá heritage and pride. In addition, government programs that supported artisans, like the *Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano*, (JNDA) have facilitated Indigenous entrepreneurship and training alongside non-Indigenous artisans. In an interview with a JNDA official, he explained the three-step intake process and privileges associated with registration as an artisan, including a teaching title, credits for exportation, and a sanctioned presence at various expositions. However, these benefits were not specifically

targeting Indigenous producers. The same benefits were given to the non-Indigenous artisans from the famous Artisan Market in central Quito.

In an interview with Luis, who owns a shop across from the Artisan Market, he mentioned that the market was not initially the government-funded entity that it eventually became. The Artisan Market's website confirms this. It narrates how a group of entrepreneurs arrived to sell handmade products before 1999, though it doesn't specify exactly when, in the same few blocks where it is currently located in central Quito, next to El Ejido Park. In 1999 the City of Quito conducted a census verifying the number of artisans. A facility was created by the municipality of Quito in 2000, suffered a fire in 2004, and was then rebuilt by the city (Ministerio de Turismo 2017). Artisans I interviewed in the Market confirmed that the city rents the stalls to them. However, government endorsement and infrastructure support of the Artisan Market has increased the artisanal market competition for sellers like Luis. Luis and his wife sell goods from various artisans throughout Ecuador in their store across from the Market. He mentioned that after the rebuilding many tourists would go directly to the Artisan Market, so he and his wife have a harder time attracting customers. Moreover, although the majority of sellers in the Market are Indigenous, there are no ethnic or racial requirements to sell in the stalls, and though the objects they sell are mainly Indigenous artisanship, there are also things like commercial chocolate bars and piercing jewelry.

The categorization of artisan, regardless of whether they identify as Indigenous or not, enables government support, even in terms of taxation. The JNDA's "Tax Guide for Artisans SRI" states that as long as certain requirements are fulfilled, artisans will be taxed at 0% (Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano 2015). While there is nothing that

explicitly grants these protections to Indigenous artisans, the term artisan was often conflated with the idea of an Indigenous producer of handmade or locally crafted goods, as exemplified in the Artisan Market. When I would explain my research to Ecuadorians they would often point me to the Artisan Market to find Indigenous artisans to talk to or would recommend it to buy Indigenous goods. Those who sell in open-air markets and were designated as artisans did overwhelmingly sell Indigenous goods, but they were not all handmade. Still, many of them would emphasize products that were handmade as a way to validate the authenticity of their product. I found a strange tension existed between participants who would tell me very rarely are things handmade, and sellers who claimed objects were handmade, in part because the boundaries of "handmade" are just as variable as the boundaries of "artisan". The official at JNDA who I mentioned previously also made the practical assertion that some artisanal work has always been aided by machinery, but that doesn't take away from the individual's labor. I think of this in relation to the way a fashion designer can use a sewing machine but is still doing the work 'by hand'. It is not automated and requires construction skills.

Yet the term artist was not used in conjunction with artisan, although the boundaries of artist and artisan are as murky as the boundaries between handmade and machine-made. My working definition, informed by my participants and government documents, is that the artist is a creative individual who recognizes their work as unique, and the artisan, while creative, is reproducing a traditional style, with an emphasis on technique and ties to historical objects. In the case of Puruhá clothing, the term fashion designer would align with an artist more than an artisan. Therefore, artisan protections do help support Indigenous creative producers to some extent, but only if they fit within

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assumptions that underlie the categorization of artisan. Thus, to self-identify as an artist or designer might mean to eschew government support systems that could protect an artist from those who attempt to sell cheaper copies of their designs. Yet, it also means insisting on the visibility of Puruhá individuals and acquisition of cultural capital garnered from participation in the high fashion world.

Additionally, 'tradition' and 'authenticity', which are often described as the most valuable attributes of artisanal work (Scrase 2003) are not lost to these designers, who also root their work in Puruhá cultural traditions and practices. The designer as artist may use embroidery techniques that have been passed down from family members, or construction patterns that are visible in archival photographs, even as they use their own aesthetic to modify and play with these traditional features. They also attempt to counter the erasure of Puruhá visibility due to dress discrimination. In fact, Sisa's brand *Sumak Churay*, one of the most recognizable Puruhá dress brands, translates to "good/beautiful dress", mirroring the philosophy of *sumak kawsay*, meaning "good life", whether intentional or not. As previously mentioned, the concept of *sumak kawsay* is commonly related to integration of an Indigenous worldview into the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008 (Hill and Fernández-Salvador 2016, Seider and Vivero 2017). The philosophy of *sumak kawsay* is a guide for how to live morally with other people and the earth, associated with Indigenous identities across Ecuador, although non-Indigenous Ecuadorians would be familiar with the concept as well. Although Sisa's brand name may not be an intentional reference to this philosophy, the brand itself is certainly a marker of Puruhá-ness and speaks to their place within the wider Indigenous Andean community. The Puruhá community stands at this intersection of being recognized as one

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of several Indigenous Andean Quichua[21] communities, but also as a distinct people who have retained and in many cases *re*membered[22] their rebellious history. This is significant for how designers brand their clothing and where they seek funding to support their businesses.

3.4 I. REBRANDING INDIGENITY IN CONTEMPORARY ECUADOR

I return to Sisa and her brand *Sumak Churay*, for many reasons. Her demeanor is inviting, but she is also a successful businesswoman, and I attribute a great deal of this success to her ability to speak to with authority about both cultural heritage and personal inspiration. As I interviewed her, it became apparent she had answered questions like mine before. In fact, some of her responses reminded me of newspaper interviews I had read about *Sumak Churay* before meeting her, but this took nothing away from her interest in telling me her story directly. Like many other participants I would come to interview, her interest in Puruhá dress began with a story about her family.

> *Sisa: (La vestimenta Indígena) Tiene una historia bien espectacular, porque,*
>
> *bueno, converso con personas, con mi mami cuando éramos niñas, y entonces*
>
> *ella me indico que blusa era de nuestros antepasados, de nuestros abuelitos.*

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[21] The use of Quichua, a language, to self-identify as part of this Andean Indigenous population is complex, but still used today. There is some contestation whether the Quichua in Ecuador, known as Quechua in other Andean nations, was in use prior to the Inca conquest or only after the fact. Either way, this is still used as a sense of unified identity among Puruhá, regardless of a now lost, pre-Quichua language (Janeta Janeta 2015).

[22] *Re*membering, is used to indicate drawing from some collective memory, and also creating new meaning for those histories and interpretations that have been lost.

Entonces, era muy simple, pero tenia historia, o tenia significado cada flor ...

cada punto de cruz, todo eso tiene significa de la familia o-

Me: De la cultura?

Sisa: De la cultura en general. Entonces, decían que punto de cruz eran la

fuerza. Entonces así, cada cosa tiene significado.

Sisa: It (Puruhá dress) has a spectacular history because, well, I spoke with my mom when we were kids, and she told me what blouse was from our ancestors, our grandparents. It was very simple, but it had a history, or significance. Every flower, every cross point, all that has meaning for the family or-

Me: The culture?

Sisa: The culture in general. Then, she said the cross-point was the strength, so everything has meaning.

As mentioned previously, when her father passed away, Sisa knew she had to start working out of economic necessity. She initially thought she'd start working in a factory or cooperative, just to contribute to the family budget, but then she began to think about how Puruhá girls don't have any clothes that they identify with. This gap in the market was something other designers noticed as well. Many designers often commented with concern regarding how Puruhá women had, and in some cases continue to use Otavaleño dress styles in lieu of their own.

Otavaleños are, again, highly regarded relative to other Indigenous groups in Ecuador. Many of my Puruhá participants have used them as a frame of reference to help

me understand the contrasts to, and possibilities of, Puruhá style. It seems an easy reference point, particularly since Otavaleños have gained international recognition for their global travels, and success in selling their artisan goods, including their dress styles (Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009). Otavaleños have also inspired mountains of anthropological research (Bowen 2011, Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009, Kyle 2000), while academic resources available on the Puruhá community are significantly less. My interviewees had every right to assume I, as an anthropologist, would need Otavalo as a reference, but they also knew that the success of Otavaleños was something they could use to frame Puruhá identity as different, but capable of the same success. Designers, like Franklin of *VISPU,* and Carmenita, who had previously worked with Sisa, spoke to the need to preserve what is theirs in contrast to using the dress styles of Otavaleños. These designers, along with sellers like Rosa, who has her own storefront in central Riobamba, and Margarita, who sells wears in Riobamba's open-air market, also mentioned that what they sold were not cheap copies of somebody else's designs. This was often stated in reference to the mass production of artisanal products in Otavalo and the Imbabura province more broadly. There was a respect for the trade and travel of Otavaleños but still an attempt to create a distance and distinction. As Sisa mentioned, "We are trying to get people to value what is ours, like those from Imbabura (Otavaleños). They go to the city or to a country, always carrying their clothing. This is what we're looking for too."

As she tells it, Sisa saw Puruhá girls using Otavaleño clothing, so she started making new styles based on traditional Puruhá dress, at first just for herself. Soon her friends started to buy her clothes, and little by little the business grew. Franklin, the

prominent Puruhá designer behind the brand *VISPU*, had a similar insight. He was well educated and connected; it seems his extended family is filled with academically and artistically successful individuals. He was also very brand oriented, and was constantly looking for ways to expand recognition, by making clothes for the *Reina de Riobamba,* a beauty queen pageant that is still prominent in Riobamba, or by hand delivering gift bags with *VISPU* boldly printed on them. He said that although his business was also built from necessity more than anything else, he was very proud of the work he had done in preserving and reviving Puruhá culture. In particular, he explicitly spoke to the issue of awareness of Puruhá culture across Ecuador but also within his own community:

> *Entonces eso también es algo que nosotros mas sentirá. Si gente extranjera, gente de afuera, adoren lo que hacemos, porque no nosotros? Mas mejor. Es Buena entonces que se traen ideas y mas que todo a conocernos y todo eso.*

> So that's also something we really feel. If foreign people, outsiders adore what we do, why not us? Even better. It's good then, ideas are brought in, more than anything, to get to know us.

Both Sisa and Franklin have been highly successful, and both have done the work of branding and earned name-brand national and international recognition. Still, while awareness of their designs has transgressed any particular ethnic identification, the material consumers of dress items have still been primarily Indigenous. Their brand names, *Sumak Churay* and *VISPU* respectively, are visible on tags and shopping bags, on

social media, in fashion shows, and in reference to the *Reina de Riobamba*[23] beauty pageant. Sisa mentioned that *Sumak Churay* has become a recognized brand, and Indigenous people buy from her throughout Ecuador and even in the U.S. This branding success was evident every time I mentioned *Sumak Churay* to potential participants and received immediate recognition. This happened with Franklin's brand *VISPU* as well, although not as consistently.

3.4 II. CULTURAL COMMONS OR COMPANY COPYRIGHT?

Although branding themselves in contrast to other Indigenous Andean communities has allowed Puruhá designers to fill a market gap, it also had the effect of reinforcing a singular and shared Puruhá aesthetic. That is, to be read as Puruhá, some homogeneity of style was expected. The historical exchange between Andean groups did not eliminate distinct regional styles (Bowen 2011, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999, Korovkin 1998, Rowe and Meisch 1998), but it does make them difficult to distinguish. Again, the *anaco*, the long black wrap skirt that is sometimes embroidered at the bottom is the same as the *anaco* used by Otavaleños, but in Otavalo a white skirt is worn underneath, and visibly peeks out at the edge of the wrapping. The embroidery may also be unique, but not all *anacos* have this embroidery. Also, many people from Otavalo do not wear the traditional white skirt every day. Puruhá designers may therefore focus on unique cultural styles: blouses that have bold floral and pre-Incan embroidery, the belt or *faja* that uses

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[23] *Reina de Riobamba,* or Queen of Riobamba is the title for the winner of a local pageant. These pageants are reminiscent of beauty pageants in the U.S. but they focus heavily on these women as cultural representatives, and they are still very important at a local community level as well as a national level. The significance of these idealized women, particularly since the most recent winners in Riobamba have been Indigenous, impacts Puruhá dress brands and how the community is received at a national level.

Puruhá patterns and colors, the short cape women wear in the area, or the distinctive white bowler type hat. However, to adhere too strictly to traditional Puruhá styles would be unappealing to young, fashionable consumers, and not require the creative touches of the designers. Therefore, they do things like play with the cuts of these blouses, including sleeve length, neckline, and using corsetry. These are changes that are often unavailable in traditional Otavaleño dress, which relies on a distinctive high ruffled neckline and lace bell sleeve. They also experiment with embroidery images and colors, while for the most part adhering to a thicker, fuller detail, as opposed to the more delicate weaving, and use of three-dimensional ribbon flowers that many Otavaleño designers use.

Figure 3.3 Contemporary Otavaleño outfit worn by Malvi, photo by Malvi

Figure 3.4 Contemporary Puruhá outfit posted for *VISPU*: *Elegancia con Identidad,* on Facebook, January 2016

Therefore, some designers like Sisa and Franklin had been dealing with the fine line between their designs being recognizable as Puruhá, and recognizable as their particular brand style. For instance, while I was talking with Franklin in his shop, he offhandedly mentioned that there were people copying his styles, but he felt there was little he could do about it. A friend of his, who did some of the graphic design for the company, would periodically chime in. In this instance Franklin mentioned that there were:

Franklin: Bastante (copias). Lo peor que ellos se dicen originales. Y esto no indi como patentar. No hay como, porque nosotros quisimos patentar. Y que dijo la señorita de allí vera-

Friend: es una variante-

Franklin: Exacto. Basta! Que realmente una flor, ya no es igual, dijo-

Me: Es algo diferente-

Franklin: Ya es gasta de tiempo y dinero, es por esta razón no se puede patentar este.

Franklin: A lot of copies. What's worse is they say they're originals, and there's no way to patent. There is no such thing, because we wanted to patent, and what did the lady there say-

Friend: It's a variation-

Franklin: Exactly. Enough (said)! It's really just a flower, it's not the same, she said-

Me: It's something different.

Franklin: It's a waste of time and money, it's for this reason you can't patent this.

Franklin seemed to be very knowledgeable about the history of Puruhá dress in general. It was he who loaned me the book on Puruhá history by Pedro Janeta Janeta, a relative of his. He was animated as he talked and pulled different garments down from where they were displayed, showing the difference in pricing for densely beaded and sequined tops, or hand stitched designs on lighter cotton tops. My interest was piqued, therefore, when he mentioned problems with patenting certain aesthetic features, because he was already so knowledgeable about the shared symbols, colors, and other features of dress. In fact, it *was* often hard to tell one floral pattern from another, and yet I had watched as other Indigenous individuals, not just designers, but sellers, and even women in markets who would only sell to friends and relatives, sketched out their own individual designs on strips of fabric, to later be embroidered. These were individual creative works, surely, but some people seemed unconcerned with similarity and others, like Franklin, lamented it as not just a problem of having a shared aesthetic commons, but also as a practical issue of time and money. Yet, he admitted defeat in terms of pursuing legal remedies and, in the end, the fact that there were (what he deemed) copies of his designs didn't seem to hurt his brand visibility or sales.

However, a more direct example of problems with copying arose when I returned to Riobamba in the fall of 2019 to talk to some previous interviewees. I assumed I would easily be able to find Carmenita's store again, since the store she was working in was

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under the name *Sumak Churay*, and there was an address for it online. However, once I got to the location it was not only different than I remembered but there was no one named Carmenita there. I had a somewhat confusing conversation with the woman who *was* operating that *Sumak Churay* store and at first I found it strange how strongly she corrected me when I called it "her" store, insisting multiple times that she simply worked for Sisa, and it was not "her" store. I assumed she was just reiterating because she didn't want me to get confused, but after that I tried to send a Facebook message to Carmenita with no reply. When I returned to Quito I asked one of Sisa's friends about it, but she said she didn't know anyone by that name. When I finally asked Sisa directly, she said, *"Ya no trabajo conmigo. Veras de cuento, ella se puso a copiarme, los modelos, y entonces ya de de trabajar con ella, y por eso yo misma me puse local en Riobamba,"* or, "She doesn't work with me anymore. You see, she started to copy me, the models, and then I stopped working with her, and that's why I put my own local store in Riobamba." I knew it was a possibility something like that had happened, but it was still surprising to me. In this case it was the models, including the particular patterns and cuts of pieces, that were copied. This is perhaps arguable, since I never saw the pieces Carmenita produced, but considering that she had been working under Sisa, with patterns and instructions from Sisa, it seems likely Carmenita was reproducing these pieces either in part or whole. Still, Sisa dealt with the situation outside of the legal system, which doesn't seem unusual. In addition to Franklin's conversation about not seeking legal support, Indigenous women have historical and contemporary reasons for avoiding legal institutions, even in cases where they might be in physical danger (see chapter six). Instead, she simply stopped working with the woman and opened her own store in the same town, with another

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employee, one who would be very clear about who the designer and owner was. While these are unique cases, there is a tension created by the fact that it can be hard to deal with copying in a community where a shared aesthetic commons evidences a cultural style, and where the notion of copying is not inherently negative.

In fact there are several aesthetic choices that link all Puruhá dress, including the use of floral embroidery, graphic symbols like a zigzag, representative of day and night, or shifts in time, and the cross that represented the harmony of man and woman, among several other patterns that would show up time and time again (Janeta Janeta 2015). There is also the use of a rainbow of colors, ubiquitous across Indigenous groups throughout Ecuador, and in fact the rainbow flag in Ecuador is the flag of unified Indigenous nations. Other features will be explained in depth in chapter four, which deals with the semiotics of Puruhá dress, but I mention it here to say that the boundaries of ownership, individual or collective, are murky at best. There exists a sartorial semiotics of dress that allows some individuals to recognize whether an outfit is Puruhá, Otavaleño, or Saraguro, for instance. Yet, the finer distinguishing markers of business or designer brands are still being negotiated on a daily basis.

We can interpret brand as the relationship between particular commoditized objects and the immaterial qualities that these objects are thought to share, the 'essence' of that brand. This essence is ideally associated only with that brand, evidenced and reproduced by one object (e.g. a *Sumak Churay* blouse) but not another (e.g. a mass-made unbranded blouse) (Nakassis 2013). Within this understanding of 'brand', choosing to create a Puruhá dress brand and choosing not to both make sense. Unbranded dress items still have a Puruhá identity, which itself acts as a sort of cultural brand, much in the way

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Figure 3.5 Example of hand sketched floral design for blouse embroidery unbranded blouse

Figure 3.6 Example of hand sketched flower design for *Sumak Churay*

nation-states use certain ideologies and imagery to brand themselves(Manning 2010, Rodner and Kerrigan 2018). In fact, the *Sumak Churay* or a *VISPU* woman shares the 'essence' of being a Puruhá woman, to be proud of your culture and heritage, independent, and rebellious. Designers who wish to create a business brand for a broader market must therefore be able to include Puruhá identity in their brand identity, but also move beyond that shared cultural heritage to stand out as artists.

Yet many of those individuals who made and sold Puruhá dress were not interested in this style distinction, as long as their dress was legible as Puruhá, and they had clientele visiting their shops. There was, consequently, a lot of variation in how Puruhá designers and sellers marketed their clothing and accessories. Many did use social media, and some had business cards with their store name, but many others had a storefront with no name at all. For 'un-branded' producers and sellers the shop name, if it had one, seemed entirely less important than the person who ran it. This was because

Puruhá dress businesses are centrally situated in their ideal market both physically and socially. Physically, the majority of these shops are found in the historic center of Quito and Riobamba respectively. Socially, these entrepreneurs need look no further than their friends and families to find their ideal clients. Their in-person social networks were the core of their income, and these were by no means small networks. These entrepreneurs who were primarily dedicated to the local market may have also articulated a desire to sell globally, but in practice they focused on day-to-day local sales, rather investing in brand recognition. They tended to stay in Riobamba, and invested in relationships with people in that area, unlike those who were actively seeking national and global markets and therefore constantly uploading new fashion shoots to social media pages, preparing for runway shows, and advertising media that carried their brand story.

Branding itself emerged in Europe and the United States in the 19th century, as a response to new technologies that allowed for larger economies of scale, including selling and buying within mass markets (Wilkins 1992). Scholars have argued that if a market remains small, at least relative to a global scale, branding is less necessary to do the work of countering an object's similarity to other mass-market products, or from rampant counterfeits (Nakassis 2013). However, as we well know, the local is always global, and the global always local (Chibnik 2003, Little and McAnany 2011). In fact, the similarity of goods (which to some extent was needed in order to open the Puruhá dress market) and counterfeiting *have been* two major problems within the internal Puruhá dress market. However, as became apparent during my fieldwork, branding was just one way to deal with the problem of creating difference within the genre of Puruhá dress, and the problem of counterfeiting.

Copying, replication, and mimicry have been argued to be central features of Latin American culture, both historically and in contemporary practices, whether religious, social, or economic (Rozental, et al 2016, Colloredo-Mansfeld et al 2012). Puruhá producers and sellers market to consumers based on a shared cultural commons, but just as natural resource commons have been threatened in Ecuador and globally, so too has this less tangible commons been threatened (Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009). The threat, however, is not coming from the 'outside', via appropriation or cheap reproduction by non-nationals. It is coming from those within the Puruhá community itself, who make goods at more affordable price ranges, and sacrifice artistry for accessibility. This is somewhat different from the Otavaleño producers that the Puruhá designers often compared themselves to. Like the Puruhá, Otavaleños displayed key aspects of a commons, including shared commercial innovation and identity, community mediated access to resources, and community management of shared resources, but unlike the Puruhá they have also 'failed together'. Their market has declined since the 1990s due to some local producers who brought down the expectations of quality, and Peruvian producers migrating to sell copies, imposing on what was once a strong cultural identity (ibid). This might serve as a warning of what could happen to the Puruhá dress market, but there are some potentially beneficial differences. For the most part Puruhá designers and sellers are focused on head-to-toe Puruhá outfits, not on selling accessories that are more easily consumable by a wider range of people (and more easily counterfeited). Also, these commodities are primarily consumed in the national non-Indigenous market as images and manage to avoid appropriation and counterfeiting from outside of their own community. In the internal market, however, similarity of goods,

based in part on this shared cultural commons, does pose a problem for those who want to seek brand recognition and scale to larger national and international markets.

3.4 III. COOPERATION AND RELATIONSHIP NETWORKS AS BUSINESS RESOURCES

Internally, the ways in which consumers choose a particular brand, or unbranded shop or seller, depend on a multitude of factors. One of these factors is the desire for a particular embroidery, color palette, or style that the customer saw elsewhere. Some customers are shopping for a special event or have a personal aesthetic that is reflected in a beading style, color palette, or patterning. I saw this desire for a particular style while interviewing Carmenita. As previously mentioned, at the time she stated that she was in charge of the *Sumak Churay* store in Riobamba. Although she made some of the jewelry and worked with embroidery and other aspects of the clothing, she said that she worked with Sisa to pick colors and get feedback or direction on designs, and she considered Sisa the designer. She had a soft voice, and used my name as she spoke to me, which I took as a gesture of friendship and recognition. She was insistent on not losing Puruhá culture, and took her time mulling over the things her grandmother told her about the meaning of embroidery, colors, and other features of dress. This welcoming persona seemed to come in handy with customers as well. During our interview a woman came in looking for a particular item, something she had seen elsewhere, whether from *Sumak Churay* or another designer, I was unsure. Carmenita assisted the woman, took her information, and assured her they would have what she was looking for. Having a specific item in mind, and looking for a close replica, was not uncommon as a buying strategy. When I entered any smaller or artisan retail businesses in the historic center of Quito or Riobamba I was

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often asked very directly what I was looking for, not *if* I was looking for something in particular, or *if* they could help me. The implication was that I should already have something in mind that I was looking for and be ready to buy something if they could find what I wanted. When I began to catch on that I was supposed to have a specific response, I would create a need for myself. If they didn't have that item they would search through their stock to find something as similar as possible. Ideally, with enough variety, a seller could always find something the customer wanted. The point seemed to be less about the customer finding an exact replica of the item they were looking for, and more about the willingness of the seller to search for that customer. Reproducibility and availability took precedent in this business strategy. Thus, to avoid buying in every shop I entered, I began creating highly specific needs, so that my rejection of a purchase was not about pricing, or the seller, but about the fact that I *did* know exactly what I wanted, but they simply didn't have it. Established social relationships are therefore one way a customer might choose a particular seller. If the customer is friends with a particular seller, or has some sort of other connection to them, they will return to that seller. It is up to the seller then, to produce whatever item they may want or need (or as close to it as possible), so that the relationship is maintained.

Those who saw themselves as designers, however, worked against this reproducibility, and to some extent relied on less availability, and more on one-of-a-kind work or high price tags. This made their dress more "high-fashion" and gave it a status that seemed to appeal to beauty queens and singers, for instance. They were creating a harder to get commodity, which aligned with global high fashion. There is a small segment of the population that can actually afford the clothing presented on runways and

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in high fashion magazines. However, as a visual product, in videos of runway shows, glossy editorials, and on the social media of influencers, high fashion is readily consumed, reinforcing the intangible qualities of the brand, and allowing individuals to imagine themselves in a world that is currently restricted to them. Cultural capital (Bourdieu 2011[1985]) is provided as knowledge of designers and fashion cycles. Visual consumption thus becomes important to Puruhá individuals who can imagine themselves as part of an emerging Indigenous global elite, just as the buying and wearing of high-fashion Puruhá clothes is important for those emerging elites.

For the more affordable Puruhá dress, however, the markers of value may not be the same as high end Puruhá dress. For instance, a recognizable brand may have little importance. Again, seller-consumer relationships are at the forefront of this business model. Moreover, there is no need to use a brand to confirm the origin, and therefore quality, of a product (Nakassis 2016), as consumers of a particular fashion designer might want to do. These clients, who are more invested in factors like cost and availability, already know the quality and source of what they're buying, because they know the designer or the seller personally. That relationship is the source of trust for the brand or store. For instance, while I was in Riobamba I interviewed Rosa, who had her own shop, and sold locally made dress items, but did not design them herself. She was a very animated speaker, who never hesitated to great a customer and have long conversations within other conversations. She switched between Quichua (with customers) and Spanish (with me) fluidly and was straightforward with some questions and expository with others, which seemed, to me, varied depending on whether she was interested in the topic or not. The things she sold were unbranded items, but this didn't appear to matter to her

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frequent customers, who seemed more like friends. I had to stop my interview with her three times in about half an hour so that she could chat with people who came by, and this was by no means unusual during interviews. Sometimes people would come to purchase and sometimes just to talk. Buying and selling was based on relationship maintenance and personal trust, which can then carry over to brand trust. They did not need Rosa's items to be branded, either because they knew or trusted that they would be locally produced and good quality. This trust in a seller is simply a different marker of quality, much like hand sewing, traditional fabrics, or innovative design might be for other Puruhá dress producers. This also helps to explain a seeming lack of competition among retailers, especially since in these historic city centers similar shops are often placed in the exact same area. Moreover, neighbors may go to one another's stores for change, or stand outside their storefronts chatting to pass time, something mirrored in open-air artisan markets. These reciprocal practices are often central to many Indigenous economies, but characteristics associated with entrepreneurship are part of Indigenous markets as well, including the Puruhá dress market (Stephen 1991).

Economic cooperation has been long documented among Andean communities (Fass 2017, Paerregaard 2017). In Ecuador, communities often rally together to do cooperative work for the town, a practice known as *mingas* (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999, Fass 2017). Other cooperative exchange practices that don't easily fit into assumptions about capitalist economic models continue to emerge, such as Elena Wilhoit's work on female labor exchange practices in Peru (2017). It is not just that these forms of cooperation exist, as they surely do in all economic systems, but that they are so prevalent because they are fundamental to the success of Indigenous communities in

Latin America. These are not secondary practices for when wage labor is lacking; they are integral to daily production and consumption, including wage work. Yet this literature also demonstrates that Andean economic cooperation is never completely altruistic and conflict free. In the Puruhá market, high-end designers fear internal copying by unbranded shops and sellers, which reflects, among other things, class divisions and strategies. This suggests that although there is a shared aesthetic commons based on cultural identity, boundaries for sharing aesthetics vary between producers. This research also exposes the complexities of copying within a local, Indigenous, and culturally based market, as opposed to focusing on global corporations and counterfeiting in the "third-world", such as Brent Luvaas' (2013) investigation into Indonesian independent clothing labels. As A.J. Fass (2017) mentions, "Forms of reciprocity and cooperation are riddled with contradictions and tensions—material, semiotic, relational—between cooperative mutual support practices and unequal power relations, and they are often intimately tied to the preservation, (re)creation, and contestation of Andean identities (410)." This is also the case in the Puruhá dress market.

When asked about business origins, some designers and sellers mentioned financial need, but all mentioned some form of cultural retention, or in many cases *re*membering, and revival of a shared cultural heritage through this particular material culture. It is not access to this shared culture and heritage that is contested, but the notion of quality. Furthermore, in the case of Puruhá dress, quality is tied to conceptualizations of authenticity. Authenticity is a term that seems to be a measurable quality, that by virtue of an item's age, materials, who made it, and any other set of qualifiers it is in fact more 'authentic' than another item. There are different interpretations of what is

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'authentic', but these are predominantly based on the perspective of the buyer, not the producer (Lamrad and Hanlon 2014). Some argue for authenticity in the context of quality, value, technique and expression based on indigenous artists themselves, to get away from that authenticity 'trap' that happens when buyers' assertion of authenticity is foregrounded (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2011). While this is a useful, I am not looking for a more or less stable definition of authenticity based on some particular qualities or origins. Authenticity is neither inherent, nor measurable as such. It is rather a cultural construction that is based on relationships, between people, places, and things (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, Jones 2010, Lamrad and Hanlon 2014). My research analyzes authenticity of Puruhá dress not as a *thing* dependent on, for instance, the producer's identity, especially since these items are still understood to be primarily Puruhá produced. In a market that is still dominated by Puruhá producers and consumers, the question of the creator's ethnicity or cultural background as a marker of 'authenticity' doesn't even come up. Instead, 'authenticity' is often dependent on markers like the quality of the product being made, though judgment of that quality is itself subjective. Thus, authenticity is a relational *process* that designers, producers, vendors, consumers, and even the public as viewers continually co- and re-constructed.

Among my respondents, quality was tied to either being a historical product or reproducing historical patterns, being handmade, or items that are machine made but with some original features. Originality was usually attributed to the embroidery, but at times intricate bead and lace work were also noted. Yet these requirements were inconsistent and claims to having quality items were prevalent among designers and sellers regardless of whether they fit all or none of those qualifications. While I could propose my own

framework for quality of different Puruhá dress designs, it would be irrelevant for understanding how the internal Puruhá market relies on a heterogeneous class system to thrive. Different price points for dress items, serving different income levels within the community, ensures that there are more buyers across the community, and it does not become a 'specialty' item only. Specifically, there is a distinction between higher end designers who are doing the work of branding, and those who aren't. In other words, copies within the Puruhá community are obviously not appropriation, and therefore not invalidated based on the individual making the item. They are also not surfeit commodities for global brands that are produced in nations where the locals are priced out of the product (Nakassis 2013, Luvaas 2013). They are instead local knockoffs of local brands, targeting those who cannot afford the designer prices, which at the same time help to validate and distinguish those designers as artists, not artisans.

This problem of copies, which plagued Otavaleños (Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009), albeit from non-Ecuadorian Indigenous and non-Indigenous producers, is something that has been tempered by branding and by seeking a different market. While there may be little need for branding in the primary local market, in the secondary national and global markets branding is not only a useful tool, but also makes expansion possible. The brand is inherently a detached thing, an ethos which is indexed by the commodity, but is also exists outside of that commodity (Nakassis 2013). The brand does work of creating excess value. In this case, that excess value is the way in which visual consumption of Puruhá dress supports the idyllic multi-ethnic and pluri-national Ecuadorian identity, thereby allowing Ecuadorians to adopt Indigenousness as part of their national citizenship, without having to do so on a personal, ancestral level. At the

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same time, it disrupts current government regulated narratives of multi-culturalism, and exposes Ecuadorians to Puruhá identity, made visible by Puruhá social actors. Instead of Puruhá identity being a subset of Ecuadorian diversity, relatively homogenous and static, the Puruhá brand makes Puruhá-ness the primary identity and Ecuadorian-ness secondary (if mentioned at all), while highlighting the malleability and diversity *within* the Puruhá community.

3.5 I. MULTIPLE MODES OF CONSUMPTION: ESTABLISHING RIGHTS TO CULTURAL PROPERTY

The significance of having two different markets for Puruhá fashion is rooted in a history of regionalization in Ecuador, which mapped ethnicity onto particular physical spaces (Andrade 2002; Foote 2006; Radcliffe & Weston 1996; Roitman 2009). As described within the previous chapter, within national media and institutions, such as museums, Afro-Ecuadorians are framed as costal, and Indigenous people have very specific *pueblos,* cities, and provinces that correlate with their perceived or self-described heritage, whereas *Mestizos* and *Blanco-Mestizos* are ubiquitous throughout Ecuador, but sometimes tied to the cities they grew up in based on accent, or physical and cultural closeness to one of the other aforementioned ethnicities. The racial and ethnic constructions in Ecuador are complex, and generally consist of Afro-Ecuadorians, largely forgotten in national discourse, various Indigenous groups from both the Andean and the Amazonian region, *Mestizos*, who are understood to be a 'mixed' blood population, and in some instances, *blanco-Mestizos*, who would be understood to be mixed by virtue of being Ecuadorian, but mostly 'White' (Huarcaya 2015). However, I did not hear the term *blanco-Mestizo* outside of academic research, and it has likely fallen out of favor,

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engulfed in the concept of *Mestizo*. In many cases *Mestizo* participants understood themselves to be of 'mixed' Spanish and Indigenous descent but would not claim indigeneity as part of their identity outright, and opinion was divided on rights to usage of particular products of Indigenous origin, although any use was still limited to accessories. These ethnic categorizations are therefore imperfectly layered onto racial categorizations, where Afro-Ecuadorians and Indigenous Ecuadorians are at times understood by the general population to be 'pure' categories. For instance, indigeneity is a 'pure' bloodline, not 'mixed' with Spanish or Afro-Ecuadorians, and recognized by its link to particular rural regions, even when Indigenous individuals move to cities (Andolina, Laurie and Radcliffe 2009). I even noticed a few Facebook posts by Indigenous Ecuadorians I'm friends with that mention their 'purity' as a response to *Mestizos* identities, asserting a sort of superiority based on not being 'mixed'. Still, both Indigenous and *Mestizo* interviewees at various moments acknowledged the fallacy of this purity, as in both categories some individuals understood themselves to have 'mixed' blood, regardless of racial and ethnic self-identification. Moreover, Mestizo is not by any means a homogenous category of evenly "mixed" people, but a claimable and changeable socio-political distinction (see Bauer 2014; De la Cadena 2005; Mallon 1996; Wade 2005).

This affects regional indexes like dress as well. To some extent this notion of 'purity' and regional, rural ties are still markers of belonging for the Puruhá, indexed by their dress style. Yet, research in the highland Quichua region evidences a long history of participation in the global market alongside retention of local production and distinct town styles particularly with regard to textiles and embroidery (Bowen 2011; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Korovkin 1998; Rowe and Meisch 1998). The notion of 'traditional' or

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'authentic' dress in regional variations within Ecuador does not indicate a lack of change or exchange. There are gaps in the historical record, shifting ethnic boundaries, and a long history of conquest, wherein both the Spanish and the Inca controlled the textile industry (Rowe and Meisch 1998). In addition, Puruhá producers and consumers argued that Indigenous dress has always been global and involved some form of exchange, whether through trade with other pre-conquest groups, or through international trade with European, and more recently, Chinese fabric producers. Therefore, Indigenous regional dress is not, and has likely never been without some form of contact, whether regional or global.

However, this does not mean there was an even *aesthetic* exchange. Rights to the use of Puruhá styles, or Indigenous styles more broadly in Ecuador, have been mutually constructed through social and political interactions, regardless of the lack of definitive legal rights.[24] Puruhá dress styles may have developed through exchange, but they were, and still are, in their finished form, made by and for self-identified Indigenous Puruhá people. Moreover, designers and sellers of Puruhá dress at all levels constantly reinforce discourses of tradition and authenticity. Like the brief discussion of authenticity in section 3.2, something which I will also touch on in chapter five, the term 'traditional' is also dependent upon cultural context and relationships between people, places, and things. Traditional is a term that denotes a long, unchanging heritage, and often the

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[24] There are trademark protections in place through Ecuadorian Intellectual Property Law as well as Andean Community Decision 486, which is a multi-national agreement that unregistered marks do not get protections, but brand names, signage, and trade dress is protected if it has been continuously used in public, in good faith (Horowitz et al, 2007). However, neither of these speaks directly to protections for Indigenous design and production in the same way that, for example, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act does in the United States.

tangible and intangible cultural products that represent this heritage. However, traditions are always invented, and then continuously reinvented within social and political contexts (Chibnik 2003; Little and McAnany 2011). Therefore, cultural heritage, a collective resource tied to tradition, is also constantly changing, constructed and reconstructed from *re*membered histories and current community goals.

3.5 II. LEGAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSES ON HERITAGE AND AUTHENTICITY

Hence, Indigenous dress is authentic, traditional, and an aspect of cultural heritage, but in a very different way than has been framed by Western legal and political systems. In addition, it is important to note that analysis of Puruhá dress with regard to these terms (authenticity, tradition, cultural heritage) is dependent on the frame of reference, whether I look at its use, its sale, or its design. As discussed earlier, authenticity is culturally constructed and subjective. Earlier understandings of authenticity in anthropology focused on the notion of there being an objective truth of the 'other', a certain state of genuineness that (somehow) anthropologists were able to discern (Wang 2007), but this concept has long been challenged in tourism studies especially (Cohen 1998, Taylor 2001, Wang 2007). To be 'authentic' in Puruhá culture is measured by quality of a product and also adherence to some tradition. Tradition itself is a very fluid term. In the Western world it was perceived as something handed down unchanged, and by the mid 19th century it was framed by scholars as the enemy of progress (Graburn 2001). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was a romanticization, especially of the 'traditions' of colonized people (ibid). However, tradition is both a *process* of handing down from generation to generation, and that *thing,*

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custom, or thought that is passed down (Horner 1990). It is not the opposite of modernity but continuously created during modernity (Graburn 2001). Like Alice Horner (1990) I think of it as a reservoir that one can draw from, but which is not static. My use of the (aesthetic) cultural commons is a way of talking about this reservoir but for specific cultural elements. Cultural heritage is often divided into material (art, architecture, landscape) and intangible (language, music, ritual) heritage, those *things* which help to form personal and community identities but can also incite conflict over the boundaries of those community identities and territories (Silverman and Ruggles 2007). Therefore, all three are intimately intertwined but not static, and for Puruhá dress this ability to change and innovate without losing tradition is also part of its success. Still, the value in Puruhá dress being traditional but not static has to do with who is selling, who is buying, and the context and function of the product.

In political institutions or legal institutions, the goal of dress, and therefore its reading as 'authentic' or not, can be very different than markers of authenticity for a vendor in the process of making a sale. The notion of property rights as developed in the Western world now speaks to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage 'properties' due in part to the insistence by Indigenous individuals that group property is valid, and it can be an idea or style as easily as a material object (Brown 2009). The creation of 'culture' as a unifying ideology has been central to protecting Indigenous rights to knowledge, style, and objects (ibid). However, the boundaries of a cultural property rights, are also the boundaries of community affiliation, and in an attempt to gain rights through an existing Western system, Indigenous populations have had to define themselves in opposition to the west, and create boundaries for group affiliation that

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cannot account for the complexity and fluidity of human relationships, and could foment existing conflicts (Brown 2009, Coombe 2009). Instead, discourse on cultural heritage, and its ties to authenticity and tradition, should focus on these very relationship dynamics between people, things, and places that are doing the work of negotiating the boundaries of community and cultural rights on a daily basis, alongside, and often in conflict with, legal and political institutions.

For instance, although Ecuador adopted UNESCO's 2003 *Convención para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial* in 2008 as part of the new constitution, their iteration broadly defines cultural heritage, and does not distinguish it from patrimony, but does make the state its protector (Hill and Fernández-Salvador 2016). This is complicated with regard to Indigenous cultural heritage, which is then framed as dependent on the nation-state for recognition and protection as *patrimonio* (ibid). Moreover, the state cannot always adequately deal with contestation between various 'protected' peoples, places, and things. In addition, the 'constitutionalization' of everyday life by Indigenous communities and organizations has facilitated the creation of hybrid Indigenous and Western legal systems that seek to protect Indigenous interests, but which also fall victim to internal conflict and hierarchization, creating homogenizing boundaries of community belonging, and negotiation with the nation-state's government (Sieder and Vivero 2017). In order to understand cultural heritage then, we should look not solely to institutional safeguards, but also the daily renegotiations of material and immaterial cultural heritage on the ground. In the case of Puruhá dress, take into account how Indigenous and *Mestizo* designers are consistently reinforcing and challenging existing boundaries of rights to shared cultural heritage and appropriation. This perspective also

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allows us to recognize that prior exchange and change does not inauthenticate Puruhá dress, nor does it negate the racial and ethnic indices associated with that dress style.

To use or not use this dress is a continuous choice, emerging from discourse around what it means to be, or not be, Indigenous in Ecuador. Past discrimination against the visibly Indigenous, and subsequent attempts to claim *Mestizo* identity (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998), are now being upturned in a nation-state that has integrated a variety of Indigenous identities into its own brand. This concept, of nation-state as brand, has been explored across disciplines, sometimes with regards to how the nation-state brands itself through political actions, and sometimes through existing global corporate brands (Anderson 2006; Manning 2010; Rodner and Kerrigan 2018; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2000). In particular, the use of Indigenous identity as part of a nation-state's brand (Hill 2007, Robertson 2015; Rodner and Kerrigan 2018) is visible in Ecuador, often as patrimony. Yet indigeneity is not just visible in guides, advertisements, and museums aimed at foreign tourists, but also painted on the walls of Quito and Riobamba, in locally circulating newspapers and magazines, and on billboards for events like *Fiestas de Riobamba.* As globalization and increased movement deconstructs boundaries between local, national, and global, identities that rely on the imagined local community become increasingly valuable as cultural capital (Robertson 2015; Willmott 2014). This is especially true in Latin American countries, such as Ecuador, where patrimony is a lingering concept that turns Indigenous cultural heritage into national cultural heritage when and where it is conducive to political and economic success. Postcolonial statecraft relies on patrimony, which itself relies on the broadly agreed upon conceptualizations of 'authentic' and 'traditional' Indigenous products, and copies or

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reproductions of these products (Rozental et al 2016). The segmentation, categorization, and localization of particular Indigenous communities therefore serves the Ecuadorian brand well in a global market.

3.5 II. CO-CONSTRUCTING BOUNDARIES OF IDENTITY AND APPROPRIATION

Why then, is it acceptable for non-Indigenous Ecuadorians to consume indigeneity visually, but not wear Indigenous dress styles? It may seem obvious, that there is a respectful distance between accepting a multi-cultural national identity and 'playing the native' (Deloria 1998) by dressing up in clothing that has a very deep personal, political, and social significance for those who were discriminated against, in part, because of that dress style. To some extent this is true, and I did hear vague references to ownership, in the sense of Puruhá dress being 'ours' (in an interview with Puruhá designer Franklin), or not being 'ours' (in an interview with *Mestizo* college student Sebastian). However, the use of an Indigenous aesthetic, Indigenous labor in fashion production, and Indigenous produced accessories by non-Indigenous Ecuadorians speaks to a much more complex and fluid understanding of ownership. The categorization of *Mestizo,* briefly touched on earlier, helps to explain this fluidity.

As mentioned in chapter two, the process of *mestizaje* in Ecuador created the very fluid category of *Mestizo,* where shared phenotype features blur the boundaries of belonging and allow for forms of sartorial subversion. While in the settler colonial context of the U.S. characteristics associated with European descent can create stark visual boundaries for appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics, the fluidity created by *mestizaje* makes the choice of whether to wear Indigenous dress also a choice about being read as ethnically Indigenous or not. Moreover, although the term *Mestizo* evades any

solid definition, the persistent definition assumes a singular 'mixed' bloodline, descendants of ancestors who were both Spanish and Indigenous despite consistent evidence of much more complex socio-political hybridities (Bauer 2014; De la Cadena 2005; Mallon 1996; Wade 2005). Afro-Ecuadorians often do not factor in and these 'mixtures' instead have their own classifications (Bauer 2014). Yet, having either Indigenous or Spanish ancestry does not make one Spanish or Indigenous. Each of these categorizations is understood to require a state of assumed genealogical purity and while the *Criollo* classification is no longer commonly used, the categorization of Indigenous does remain. It is a self-identification that relies heavily on acknowledgement of that Indigenous ancestry that both Indigenous individuals and *Mestizos* claim to share, but as their primary ancestry. *Mestizo* and Indigenous participants of mine mentioned that they likely had both Spanish and Indigenous heritage to varying degrees, but my *Mestizo* participants had no information about the Indigenous ancestry, and my Indigenous participants had no information about the Spanish ancestry. For many of them, making a claim to one identity or the other was based on a multitude of factors, including family customs and traditions, historical treatment of one's community, lived experience, and region or *pueblo* of origin more so than certain physical characteristics[25].

Just as *Mestizos* can have a 'little' Indigenous blood in them, but not claim to be Indigenous, so too can they use Indigenous styles and products in a minimal fashion,

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[25] Despite the fact that many Indigenous and *Mestizo* individuals do share common physical features, there are certainly those individuals who, because of their physical characteristics, are read only as Indigenous. The ability to "pass" as *Mestizo* is not necessarily accessible to all Indigenous individuals, just as there are many *Mestizos* have inherited characteristics that are understood within Ecuador to be more aligned with Western European features, as opposed to Latin American *Mestizo* features. These varied features have effects on social treatment, including access to jobs.

enough to represent their Ecuadorian-ness but not enough to be mistaken as Indigenous. How and why these boundaries are drawn and redrawn emerge from individual interpretations of appropriation and a cultural co-construction of ethnic identities. Sebastian, a self-proclaimed *Mestizo* university student in Quito, focuses on what the community and artisan are willing to share, and to what extent the symbols and colors they use are very symbolically significant or not. He doesn't use full Indigenous dress, just accessories like bags. Mirta and Andrea are both *Mestiza* accessory designers, and both borrow from the weavings and design aesthetic of Indigenous groups to include as elements in their designs, but the designs remain wholly 'theirs'. Mirta also uses Indigenous labor, which provides money and business guidance to particular communities, but it also allows her to market her items as hand-made and ethical. Yet much like theory on authenticity, the notion of an ethical product is a fluid, and changeable designation. It was also a term that was missing from the branding and discourse of the Puruhá designers and sellers I worked with, suggesting that it was not especially relevant to their target demographic, unlike the buyers targeted by Mirta[26].

Instead, Indigenous designers were heavily focused on a community identity, the previously referenced cultural commons, and the value that designers associated with their community. In July of 2018 Franklin posted on Facebook a video from a *VISPU* runway show, and the words, *"No es la apariencia, es la esencia. No es dinero, s la educación. No es la ropa, es la clase. VALORA LO NUESTRO, REALZA TU IMAGEN,*

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[26] Mirta sold primarily to clients in the United States, Europe, and some Asian Pacific nations. She adjusted to what she saw as the tastes of each country where she sold and aspired to a wealthier clientele. She was proud of her success in getting support from musician Steven Tyler, and Italian film producer and director Livia Giuggioli, who is also married to Colin Firth.

PREFIERE Vispu, Elegancia Con Identidad y sé original … " or "It's not the appearance, it's the essence. It's not money, it's education. It's not the clothes, it's class. Value what's our own, enhance your image, choose Vispu, Elegance and Identity, and be original … " This speaks directly to elements of branding that were consistent with other designers and sellers. What is valued is not the thing itself, superficial in the simplest form of the word, what is on the surface. It is not the appearance, or the clothing, but qualities and essence that the material commodity conveys. It is representative of a value system based on class, education, community, ownership of an Indigenous identity, but also promotes the ability to be a unique individual by choosing this brand. There is a utilization of community values in concert with, not in contrast to, individualism. A *Sumak Churay* post with a series of three model photos from May 3 of 2018 reads, *"El éxito trata de crear y dejar huellas de valor e identidad, siempre enfocada hacia el por venir. #SumakChuray By: #SisaMorocho #IdentidadSinLímites,"* or "Success is about creating and leaving traces of value and identity, always focused on the future. #SumakChuray By: #SisaMorocho #IdentityWithoutLimits."

Here we see again a focus on a communal value system, but also looking towards the future, participating in modern life, and an (individual) "identity without limits," the tagline for the *Sumak Churay* brand. In the Western world, regardless of whether dress is mass-produced or high fashion, the emphasis tends to be on how the clothing reflects the individual's personality or subgroup affiliation but less commonly a family or cultural heritage (see Clarke and Miller 2002). The opposite is true of Indigenous dress in the Andes, which is understood to be a representation of region and group identity (Andrade 2002; Korovkin 1999; Rowe and Meisch 1998). Therefore, consistent reinforcement of

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the multitude of identities that Indigenous individuals have, tied both to group values and personalities, makes visible the complexity of what it means to be, in this case, both Puruhá and a creative individual.

3.6 ECONOMIC AUTONOMY THROUGH PURUHA STYLE

This ability to exert agency, and (re)construct the Puruhá brand, as both a community member and an individual, is impactful not just locally, but among the global Indigenous community. It is a form of Indigenous economic autonomy that speaks to other communities worldwide but is deeply tied to the history of the Puruhá people and the Ecuadorian nation-state. The cultural brand is a way of establishing a cultural identity that is recognizable and that can be marketable, and thus a means to economic autonomy, which in turn has the potential to support economic sovereignty. In discussion with Courtney Lewis (2019) I recognize that economic sovereignty is directly political, in a way that the Puruhá fight for self-determination is not. Moreover, the political status of Indigenous communities in Ecuador is significantly different than Native Nations in the United States. While the nation-state recognizes 14 Indigenous Nations, several groups throughout the Andes, including the Puruhá, are grouped into the Quichua designation, and although these nations have some representation in the national government, they do not have full guarantees of civil, political, cultural, and territorial rights. Contemporary movements towards political and legal sovereignty for Indigenous communities in Ecuador from above are nearly always more complex and less progressive than they would seem at the outset. Therefore pushes towards autonomy within the Puruhá community, such as a dress market that keeps wealth within the community, without relying on governmental support, and control over the narrative that dress communicates,

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could act as supports to other forms of political, economic and legal sovereignty. However, this dress does have political significance (see chapters two and four) that are embedded in sartorial processes and talk about dress, even if it is not stated outright.

In looking at the problems that have emerged from pushes towards political sovereignty from the 'top', consider the 1998 and 2008 Ecuadorian constitutions. In 1997 the Congress ousted President Abdalá Bucaram, after he was declared mentally unfit to govern (Andolina 2003). The next general election was advanced from 2000 to 1998, and President Fabián Alarcón acted as interim president until the election. During this time CONAIE pushed for a constituent assembly and plurinational state, however the government response was an election for the assembly which would be held with general elections and reiterate existing governmental power systems. This spurred massive protests by Indigenous communities, and in Riobamba local leaders were sworn in as candidates for *Pachakutik*, an electoral coalition that would eventually win seven seats in the official constitutional assembly in 1997 (ibid). Yet the push for a plurinational state was not successful, and the constitution did not include language like 'Indigenous autonomy', although it did include Indigenous collective rights (ibid). Despite the failings of the 1998 constitution, the achievements of *Pachakutik* were evidence that the Chimborazo province, Riobamba as the capital, and Puruhá people as local leaders, were once again pushing for sovereignty despite the interventions of state hegemonic power. The 2008 constitution was also a partial success for Indigenous sovereignty. The 2008 constitution integrated the principles of *sumak kawsay,* an ethical paradigm that envisions human beings in harmony with each other, nature, and the spiritual world (Sieder and Vivero 2017). However, the implementation of the idea did little to curb the national

government's aggressive natural resource extraction, or protect Indigenous land (Radcliffe 2012, Sieder and Vivero 2017). In the legal sphere, customary law was recognized in 1998 with the Indigenous influenced constitution (Thomas 2016). This meant that local Indigenous governments would have local councils and cases which were primarily Indigenous would go first to this local level, in a form of legal pluralism that saw Indigenous people having jurisdiction over their own local cases. However, there were no coordinating rules developed between customary and national laws, leading to cases where various legal entities would dole out verdicts and punishments, and when it involved local sovereignty as a the subject of debate the state would immediately move to prevent an increase in the Indigenous authorities' jurisdiction (see Thomas 2016). As with the power gained through constitutional recognition of Indigenous values, so too has Indigenous legal sovereignty been achieved partially and with little stability.

However, Indigenous communities like the Puruhá have been seeking
 in conjunction with, and perhaps as a bolster to, the somewhat shaky provisions of the national government. Their dress market is still primarily by and for other Puruhá people. It supports the livelihood of vendors and designers from the lowest price points to the highest but does not have the economic power externally to intimidate the nation-state. Having too much economic power can actually threaten economic sovereignty (or in this case autonomy) by incurring intervention from the nation-state (Lewis 2019). However, Puruhá dress remains primarily within the Indigenous community, and is therefore not a threat to *Mestizo* or external dress production. Moreover, this internal Indigenous dress market sustains the narrative of multiculturalism and diversity of the nation-state's brand, and thus contributes to government supported tourism and cultural institutions, at least

indirectly. Puruhá dress also garners national attention from prominent newspapers and media outlets, gaining national recognition across demographics while the Puruhá cultural brand remains distinct. In addition, this cultural brand draws from a shared cultural aesthetic commons, but still allows for individual brands like *Sumak Churay* and *VISPU* to differentiate themselves. This, in turn, allows for variation that keeps the market from, at least as of now, being too saturated. This is significant because Puruhá designers do not seem to suffer a crisis of authenticity based on change over time, or on having external influences. They do not favor a static, homogenized aesthetic, but instead draw from an aesthetic cultural commons for inspiration. Indigenous textile producers often find themselves negotiating the seeming contradiction between individual creativity, and demand for what is understood to be 'traditional' by outside consumers, between cooperative productions of creativity and the individual artist ideal (Little and McAnany 2011). However, a visible number of Indigenous entrepreneurs are disrupting this archaic dichotomy, with a "both and" approach (Willmott 2014). In the Ecuadorian context, where dress is often used as shorthand for an entire ethnic group, disruption of this dichotomy is still a burden Puruhá designers deal with. However, they negotiate this burden through both the physical product and the mediated product, i.e. the visual consumable that has long been available to non-Indigenous Ecuadorians.

In Quito and Riobamba Indigenous styles are often represented on mannequins and displays without any discernable phenotype, and sometimes even objects like bottles. The body of the wearer does not matter, because the dress already suggests a generalized wearer. The dress indexes a localized, ethnic group, but the nuance of this particular sartorial discourse, the intertextuality of this dress, is limited for non-Indigenous

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observers. This brings us back then, to how the nation-state utilizes indigeneity as a brand, and how Puruhá dress upsets this branding. This consumption of dress as a visual medium, without buying the product itself, has a clear precedent in Ecuador, in museums in particular, but also through other performances and media, including folkloric dancing, TV and paper advertisements, new stories, and festivals. The image of indigeneity has always been consumable, but it leaves out the actual Indigenous individual. This is something that some Puruhá designers seem to understand but are utilizing in their marketing in a way that forces the secondary consumer to see the individual underneath the clothing. In other words, the body is reintroduced as a necessary element of the dress itself. This creates imagery in various mediums (film, print, social media) that is as much about the model as it is about the design, which in turn creates another set of questions around idealized Puruhá femininity and gender dynamics.

This production of these images is therefore linked to the creation and reinforcement of Puruhá ideals and values, both within and outside of the community. Utilizing the tools of high fashion has a lot to do with this visibility of Puruhá identities globally. High fashion worldwide is consumed more commonly as a visual product rather than as an actual tangible commodity. There is a small segment of the population that can actually afford the clothing present on runways and in high fashion magazines. However, as previously mentioned, it is still consumed as an aspirational visual product, which in turn influences brand formation and style trends. This parallels Puruhá designers who participate in a secondary visual market. They price their items so that they are available to some, but not all, in the Puruhá community. They become specialty items, sought after for events, or by prestigious Puruhá women. At the same time, there are also videoed

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runway shows, and images plastered in both paper and on social media, ready to be consumed by not one, but two restricted groups. The first being economically restrained Puruhá buyers, and the second being socially and culturally restrained non-Indigenous Ecuadorians and international tourists. Visual consumption thus becomes important to both Puruhá individuals who can imagine themselves as part of an emerging Indigenous global elite, and non-Indigenous individuals who can imagine themselves as part of a multi-ethnic Ecuadorian community, where they can consume, but not control, Puruhá identities.

In many ways this is akin to Cory Willmott's (2014) use of 'radical entrepreneurs' to reference Canadian First Nation fashion designers, who, by virtue of working with clothing, are equipped with forms of symbolic capital that allow them to counter-appropriate "Indianness" (96). Different historic and contemporary treatment and understanding of Native populations in North and South America make for very different forms of symbolic capital but exhibiting agency over what it means to be Indigenous through creative entrepreneurship is clearly present in both Willmott's and the Puruhá case. However, fostering an ethnic economy and drawing from cultural roots are only two features of radical entrepreneurship, along with creating social value, facilitating upward mobility, and transforming the roots of social, economic, and political institutions (Willmott 2014). Puruhá entrepreneurs not only focus on a shared cultural commons and heritage as a basis for this dress market, but they challenge existing racial and ethnic stereotypes and categorizations. What it means to be Puruhá, at both community and individual levels, is primarily the purview of these Indigenous designers, sellers, and also the primary consumers. This works to upset any hold Ecuadorian governmentally

sanctioned cultural institutions have over the representation of the Puruhá. Moreover, it is primarily women in the roles of designer, producer, seller, and consumer who are taking on the challenge of reframing Puruhá identities.

Unlike *Mestizo* made accessories that use pieces of non-descript Indigenous patterns and weavings as accents, the Puruhá dress style is not a nod to some ambiguous Indigenous identity. It is wholly Puruhá, and as it expands for visual consumption more Ecuadorians are being exposed to a particular sartorial semiotic discourse that allows them to make that distinction. More importantly, regardless of whether it's a print medium, social media, or an event, an Indigenous woman is the primary model for Puruhá dress, and even when pictured as part of a display, the designer or seller is frequently in the image. Thus, dress as cultural heritage is primarily read in conjunction with the female ideal, which shifts depending on the lens of the designers, producers, or anyone else involved with media production. The human element is ever present, not as a homogenous idea of an ethnic or regional population, but as an individual who happens to also be Puruhá. Thus, the dress remains easily consumable, in a visual form that non-Indigenous Ecuadorians and tourists are comfortable with, but it sneaks back in the Puruhá individual, alongside wording that reminds both primary and secondary consumers that identities are mutable, and multi-layered.

3.7 CONCLUSION: ECONOMIC SOVERIEGNTY

Returning to the image of myself at the *Casa de la Cultura Benjamín Carrión,* with superimposed Salasaca dress awkwardly hanging in the space between reality and virtual reality, I realize why it felt so unsettling. While the technology is impressive, at different points in my fieldwork Indigenous participants and friends suggested dressing

Figure 3.7 Example of *Mestiza* accessory designer piece, bracelet using cutting from an Indigenous *faja* (belt or hair wrap)

Figure 3.8 Promotional Image for *Sumak Churay*, design by Sisa Morocho, posted to Facebook page February 5, 2019. Model: Jisela Gualan Bagua Photographer: Raul Illana

me up in Indigenous dress styles. I can't speculate on people's motivations, but their explicitly expressed desires were, broadly, to have me experience what I was studying as a means of cultural exchange. I am a young woman, born in Bolivia, raised in the United States, with long dark hair, and physical traits that are familiar to Ecuadorians. I also see myself in a lot of the individuals I work with, both Indigenous and *Mestiza,* but I am simultaneously a *gringa*, and enjoy all the privilege that being a U.S. educated anthropologist affords. I am not quite a tourist, but enough of a stranger to be praised for my interest in the Puruhá community, and its fashion. All this to say that relationships are at the core of Indigenous sartorial discourses, and as we find our place in these relationships our semiotic vocabulary grows. What unsettled me during this digital dress-up is I couldn't find the relationships. What it means for me, as an individual with my

own complexities, to be in that dress style is obscured by this technology. It is also a form of visual consumption, but it is profoundly distancing.

In contrast, Puruhá entrepreneurs who are in the fashion industry, and who are utilizing branding and media to make consumable images, are ever present. Selling culture and heritage requires relationships, and it requires the designers, sellers, models, and buyers to give that dress style value. Puruhá fashion designers have not just changed a product's marketing for an audience, but also changed what that end product is and how it is consumed. This allows for preservation of that 'local', that cultural commons, that intangible cultural heritage within the Puruhá community, while also opening up to potentially transformative relationships of exchange within Ecuador and globally. At the same time, it provides a form of economic autonomy, where political and legal forms of sovereignty have failed the Puruhá. Sellers, storefront owners who sell cheaper versions of Puruhá styles, give designers something to brand themselves against, a contrast that validates high fashion Puruhá dress. These sellers also make this style, and therefore some of the cultural capital that comes with it, accessible to all members of the community. It has yet to be seen if this balance can be upheld, since growth of the Puruhá dress market comes with just as many complications as a stable or even decreasing market. Moreover, the fact that women are at the forefront in every aspect of this market, whether producing or consuming, both reinforces and upsets value systems and expectations around female Indigenous identity, something that I explore in the subsequent chapter. Regardless, contemporary Puruhá dress serves as an example of how a thriving Indigenous market can help to reframe the position of indigeneity, both as a

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community and as individuals, in national and global markets, while remaining focused on the fluid and mobile 'local'.

CHAPTER 4

SARTORIAL SEMITOICS AND DISCOURSE ON DRESS

4.1 SARTORIAL SEMIOTICS

In approaching a semiotic analysis of Puruhá dress I examine talk about dress but also dress itself as communicative material culture which creates cohesions and disruptions between social actors and within communities. Many of my participants spoke about dress and elements of dress (color, pattern, weave) as a sign-signified relationship where, for instance, a chevron pattern indexes the Puruhá cosmology, particularly the rising and setting of the sun and moon, and the harmony that is evidenced by this cycle (Janeta Janeta 2015). Yet this Saussurean sign is not adequate for understanding the actual process through which dress is communicative, how it is interpreted, and how it is effective and affective for communities and individuals. To do so, I apply a Peircean structure that reintroduces the interpretant, and (in this case) the sentient being who interprets. Thus, it is not just a matter of decoding some 'true' meaning of each dress feature but rather a matter of what dress *does*, how meaning is co-created or disrupted in interactions that are mediated through this particular material culture. This is evident even in conversations about dress where meaning was explained to me from a structuralist approach a la de Saussure. My participant's explanations shaped the way I interacted with particular dress styles, as my questions and presence had an effect on what dress they showed me, what they explained , and how. Moreover, their talk about dress expanded beyond this sort of decoding elements, to stories about how

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their movement in the world was and is affected by the interpreters' responses to their dressed body. Therefore, I primarily take up a thematic analysis of their experiences with Puruhá dress and what underlies their desire to have these conversations. For instance, I heard about though did not witness instances of racism that targeted Indigenous dress styles. It is possible that my presence and positionality, being read as either a *Mestiza* or *gringa*, affected the behavior of a passerby who would otherwise act differently. I also spent much of my time with participants in their own stores, studios, or neighborhoods, where it was fairly common to see Indigenous dress. Regardless of this speculation, my participants did make it clear that wearing Indigenous dress was a choice . They were not passively dressing but expressing an ideology and interrupting existing narratives about Puruhá identities. This speaks to the power of sartorial semiotics and how dress acts on the world. Dress can communicate in various contexts, in conjunction with or outside of spoken and written language.

However, to move from a structuralist model built off de Saussure to a Peircean triadic model that is also reflective of what material culture does in and to the world, I must first look at this progression in linguistic anthropology broadly. In so doing, I also discuss the way material culturalists and art theorists have negotiated the reintroduction of action and in some cases theorized object agency. Saussure's (2011[1959]) linguistic sign is made of a dual signifier and signified, a sound image and a concept, which challenged the simplistic notion that all signs are merely names for objects in the world (66). The bond between this signifier and signified is arbitrary, in that there is nothing inherent in their association with one another. Rather it is fixed through habitual use (Saussure 2011[1959]:67-71). This constant reproduction not only solidifies the

relationship between signifier and signified, but it also allows for change; it is fixed with regard to one individual in a community but can be altered over time by communal use (Saussure 2011[1959]:71-75). This dual sign gave scholars a way to discuss intangible concepts and language change over time, which in turn spoke to questions of agency and hegemony. It also allowed individuals like Roland Barthes to organize fashion into a semiotic system. These attempts to create a sort of lexicon of dress followed structuralist semiotic anthropology in the 1970s, texts which Layton (2003) suggests Alfred Gell (1998) was responding to decades later when he wrote *Art and Agency*. Gell outrightly rejected the application of semiotics to art, which would include fashion. When he put forth *Art and Agency,* he suggested that the intention of art is not to elicit aesthetic appreciation in the conventional sense (the pleasure of the object itself), or to communicate meaning as a sort of supplementary 'language', but rather art should and does mediate the agency of makers and users (ibid). In this sense art agency is the agency embedded in art by social actors and is communicated via that object. Gell later concedes to the degree that he understands how art indexes, and in so doing affects the viewer/recipient. Still, he argues that art cannot be given the same structure as a language (ibid). There is a tension between Gell's attempt to resist semiotics while still using the terms index, and to some extent icon, to talk about *how* an art object is agentive (Layton 2003).

While I agree with his reintroduction of what art *does*, there are ways to acknowledge the failures of previous structuralist attempts at creating a 'language of dress' without denying semiotics entirely. Indeed, the Peircean tripartite model is useful when thinking about processes of communication because it adds back in some sentient

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being to interpret the object or occurrence in the world, which makes it a sign (Gal and Irvine 2019). Charles Peirce's (1991) tripartite sign system includes the sign vehicle, object and interpretant (67). This means it is possible to look at the relationship between the interpreter and the sign-object using a Peircean typology that focuses on what the sign-object does to the interpretant (Kockelman 2011). In my research, the interpretant is often human cognition and the voluntary or involuntary reactions and behaviors that follow. These different interpretants can also be categorized as involuntary (like an involuntary bodily reaction), energetic (voluntary actions and involuntary behaviors), representational (signs that frame events in terms of relatively propositional contents), and ultimate interpretants (variants of these other three, sometimes creating preparation for future events) (Kockelman 2011). While I do not attempt to classify the interpretants that arise in my research, this does lay out the possibility for variations of both cognitive and physical reactions, including those that would potentially modify behavior in preparation for future occurrences.

This shift in linguistic anthropology is also influenced by Bakhtinian translinguistics. In Bakhtin's view the study of utterances requires an approach that transcends the concerns of individual existing disciplines, which is translinguistics (Wertsch 1993). "The Problem of Speech Genres" (Bakhtin 1986) deals with the difference between Saussurean linguistics and language as a living dialogue. What matters isn't just the sign but the whole utterance and Bakhtin insists on focusing on situated action (Wertsch 1993). That is the site at which consistency and systematicity (e.g. grammar) enter into contact with situated performance (ibid). This is something William Hanks (1996) seems to deal with as well when he states that linguistic

anthropology sits at the intersection of two propositions, one that verbal systems have their own properties (grammar) that has rules; the other that actual forms of talk are a practice, situated in time and space, and thus variable, locally adapted, affected by context, constantly changing and never exactly the same (Hanks 1996). Hanks also touched on linguistic communities as co-constructing meaning and ways of evaluating speech, which get produced and reproduced over time (Hanks 1996, Wolf 2001[1985]). This movement to linguistic, and more broadly semiotic communities also requires looking at shared or different interpretants, via interpreters as community members. Within the world of Puruhá dress, both the physical experience of the dress object(s) and interpretation of its features as signs are factors in the creation of a sartorial semiotic community. They create shared meaning, which is central to Puruhá cultural maintenance and revival. Just as statements about language always also entail ideological positions, often in contested ways, that have consequences in the material world (Gal and Irvine 2019), so too are statements about dress and the dress itself forms of communication that also speak to ideological positions. They implicate knowledge about social life, in the case of my participants including everyday racism, histories of revolt, and gender ideologies.

To return briefly to what dress does, it is a medium through which cultural heritage and memory is embedded and transferred, through which community boundaries of belonging and ideology are shared and contested. Although I do focus predominantly on how dress is a medium of human agency and elicits emotional responses, I also incorporate research in material culture studies, including Daniel Miller's (2005, 2010, 2012) work on dress as an agentive form of material culture. Arguably the concept of

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object agency might blur the lines between what objects can do and what humans think they can do (Morphy 2009). However, we can frame this as material culture inciting action, including and beyond eliciting an emotional or cognitive reaction from viewers/users. Miller (2005) refers to the "tyranny of the subject" which buries the value of the 'object'. Objects do work. They condition and therefore create people as much as people create the objects. Here the focus shifts to networks of people, institutions and things that create habitus (ibid). Yet it is also a physical object that acts on the body and in place. It enables and restricts a person's movement in space regardless of the user/wearer's intentions. The dress object is doing something to the body, to the person, and that is coming from the object itself as agentive, not from the intent of the user or viewer. For example, in Puruhá dress it is customary to have a long black swath of fabric for a wrap skirt, tucked into woven belt or *faja*, without findings (like buttons or snaps) to keep it in place. Many Puruhá women I spoke with noted that when working or going into the city they would wear *Mestiza* dress, like jeans, because it was more comfortable. The skirt was not inherently more difficult to wear but in those specific spaces it was uncomfortable because of how and where they needed to move about. An extreme example might be the physical restriction of Kim Kardashian's Thierry Mugler dress and corsetry at the Met Gala, which restricted her ability to sit and changed her breathing patterns (Frey 2019). More common examples, like the change in gait from heeled shoes or the inability to cook over an open fire stove with angel sleeves, suggest that everyday dress can cause accidents and have unintentional effects on its wearer.

My structure to some extent follows this overall trajectory. I begin with a general exploration of how Indigenous dress communicates and maintains difference in public

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space in Ecuador. I then focus on how participants used a Saussurean structure to talk about Puruhá dress as cultural heritage, followed by an analysis of talk about dress and the dress itself in a Peircean framework, which subsequently allows me to argue for the creation, maintenance, and at times disruption of a semiotic community centered on Puruhá dress. I will look at the various ways this dress is interpreted, as a full outfit, via independent articles or aspects of the dress, and through *qualia*, sensorial qualities like color and texture that act as affective signs and are given cultural value. Embroidery is a particularly special case within Puruhá dress, which reveals tension between a shared cultural aesthetic and individual design choices. Yet central to all these analyses of dress is the body. While dress can be experienced as a disembodied thing (on dress racks, in museums), it is more commonly experienced as something worn on the body and therefore appeals not just to visual, but also tactile (and arguably auditory and olfactory) senses. It is felt as much as seen. However, shared understandings and experiences do not only strengthen cultural identity, but also create contestation over ownership. In this case, ownership over bodily experience (Who can or should wear it? Where are the boundaries of appropriation?) *and* over rights to meaningful dress aspects or symbols (Who can or should make and sell it? What is part of the cultural commons and what is individual intellectual property? Who makes determinations about these boundaries and interpretations, and who is given authority and legitimacy to make them?). I will delve more into this question of ownership in the subsequent chapter but here I ground what the signs of this sartorial community are, how they have been interpreted, and the role of the dressed body as individuals move and act within the world.

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4.2 I. CONVEYING IDEOLOGIES OF PURUHA DIFFERENCE

The power of this particular art, Puruhá dress, is that it moves in public spaces, often on a daily basis, and is physically attached to an individual. As it moves through these spaces, dress mediates narratives of Puruhá-ness, which are not determined by the nation-state or its institutions but instead by Puruhá people themselves. In this way it serves aesthetic sovereignty (see chapter one). In turn, these social actors create political, social, legal, economic and other counter-narratives to external, specifically state-sponsored, institutions. Still, all forms of communication are variable (Hanks 1996) and no community or market is a monolith. While I can make claims of intent where participants have expressed it and provide certain instances where something the wearer or designer intended was or was not conveyed, these are only glimpses into the complex processes of communication that are happening (and changing) constantly via dress as a medium. For instance, while Puruhá dress may signify indigeneity and difference from *Mestizo* identity when interpreted by a *Mestizo* individual, it may signify Puruhá identity and difference for an Indigenous individual from Salasaca. At the same time, the notion of aesthetic sovereignty relies on the fact that there is an intent by more than one individual to impart some features of a shared cultural history and heritage. This in turn rests on the fact that there *are* shared cultural aesthetics, and for my participants the histories, ideologies, and experiences these aesthetics signify were central to talk about dress.

In the broadest sense Puruhá dress is not simply a symbol of being Puruhá; it creates, sustains, and revives a culture. It also affects the way that individuals move through the world, both physically, and socially. Yet even at its most complete and

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'traditional'[27], the rules of just what constitutes a Puruhá ensemble, and what would be recognized as specifically Puruhá, are not hard and fast. I will focus first on female dress, mostly because it is more commonly used among Puruhá people than male dress is and there are more elements that a woman's dress consists of. I will subsequently touch on male dress and particular gendered ideologies that are evident through ways of wearing and talking about Puruhá dress. To some extent the heart of Puruhá dress seems to be the blouse, and its embroidery. This lightweight and elaborately decorated blouse is tucked underneath the wrap skirt, or *anaco*, which is a long swath of black fabric, sometimes with embroidery at the edge, or with a selvage edge that bears the country of origin, often 'Made in England' or some other European nation. The skirt and blouse are held in place with the *faja*, an embroidered belt, which also has no notions[28], but wraps around the body and is tucked in at the end. A complete outfit would have at least these items, but could also include slip on shoes, *alpargatas,* a short woolen cape, *bayeta* pinned or tied together, a *shigra*, or woven bag, and a white hat with a rounded top and short brim[29], that is wrapped with ribbons of various colors, indicating whether a woman is single or married. Each one of these items has variations, and each one has gone through its own changes throughout the history of the Puruhá people, whether in the materials used, aesthetic forms, cultural meaning, or in most cases, all of these aspects together.

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[27] The term "traditional" is contested, both by my interviewees and within anthropology (Conklin 1997; Rogers 1998; Rowe and Meisch 1998), but I use it here to reference a dress style that is seen as distinctly Puruhá, whatever its origins and the ways it changes.
[28] I am using the sewing term notions (or findings), meaning items that are attached to a finished dress article, like buttons, snaps, or boning. Sometimes the term also means small tools of sewing, such as seam rippers, but in this case I'm referring to the former.
[29] This hat is most strongly associated with Colta (Rowe and Meisch 2011) one of the Puruhá communities outside of Riobamba.

Figure 4.1 Example of the embroidered blouse, belt or *faja,* and wrap skirt or *anaco.* From *VISPU: Elegancia con Identidad* store in Quito

Figure 4.2 Example of embroidery at base of an *anaco*

Figure 4.3 *Shigra* (woven bag) made by Margarita in Riobamba's *Plaza Roja*

Figure 4.4 Example of male and female Puruhá Dress, where you can see the traditional hat, *bayeta* (shawl) and the male poncho. Tourism exhibit in Riobamba's El Paseo Mall (2017)

Information on how these aspects changed came from participants themselves, but were often framed in terms of difference, to *Mestizo* dress, to other Indigenous groups, and to other Puruhá sellers. In this way, my participants often positioned their dress in terms of difference to make ideological claims regarding Puruhá culture and identities. Differentiations are part of semiotic organizations called ideologies, which are also the base of social action (Gal and Irvine 2019). This is true for statements about dress and the dress itself (the choice to wear it, how, where and when), which communicate Puruhá distinctiveness. Talk about dress difference was centered on narratives of history and cosmology that were not shared with *Mestizo* fashions, and which were said to be embedded in the dress itself through markers like color choice, embroidery, and cut. At the same time, among my Puruhá participants I noticed more work was done to distinguish Puruhá design from other Indigenous groups, particularly Otavaleño fashions (see chapter two), based on a lot of these same markers. This insistence on differentiation makes sense with regard to the historical use of Otavaleño dress by Puruhá communities and the attempt to create a visible Puruhá cultural 'brand' (see chapter three). Moreover, in Ecuador Indigenous and *Mestizo* dress have long been seen as profoundly different and recognizably so, evidenced by the existence of dress-based discrimination and sumptuary codes. Therefore, ideologies about distinction from *Mestizo* dress centered on both embedded historical and cultural difference *and* use difference, where and when *Mestizo* or Indigenous dress was permissible and desirable. That being said, difference here does not mean complete dissimilarity. The influence of *Mestizo* and other Indigenous dress styles on Puruhá dress was not a secret but also did not invalidate the uniqueness of Puruhá dress. In fact, part of the difference of Puruhá dress is that designers have been

bold in adopting parts of *Mestizo* style they enjoy, while the clothes remain completely legible as indicative Puruhá-ness.

4.2 II. COMMUNICATING DIFFERENCE IN PUBLIC SPACE

Dress may reinforce racial and ethnic boundaries of *Mestizo* and Indigenous identities, though these categorizations are not as clearly defined as they might seem at the outset. In Ecuador, racial and ethnic categorizations overlap. People are generally understood to be Indigenous, *Mestizo,* or Afro-Ecuadorian, and in some cases classifications of 'whiteness' (for example, *blanco-Mestizo* in recognition of being "more" Spanish, or German descended Ecuadorians) *and* 'foreignness'[30] were also significant identifiers. However, within each of these categorizations are ethnic complexities. As explained previously, Indigenous individuals are generally split into Andean, Amazonian, and Costal populations, identified by place, which is used as a common marker of ethnic identity (Andrade 2002, Orlove 1993, Poole 1997). *Mestizo* identity also encompasses other categories like *chagras* or *montuvios*. Moreover, what it means to be *Mestizo* has changed throughout time, whether a designation of class, religious affiliation, or a supposed biological mixing. To be Afro-Ecuadorian is generally understood by other Ecuadorians to be one thing, also a racial connotation of Blackness, but recently there seems to be more investment in museums, for instance, on distinguishing between various Afro-Ecuadorian, and Indigenous Afro-Ecuadorian populations. Increasing immigrant populations have also become a factor, for instance

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[30] *Gringo/a* is a term used to distinguish foreigners, primarily 'White', and American or Western European. However I, as someone with Latina heritage, could be read as *Mestiza* or in some cases Indigenous, and simultaneously be called a *gringa* because of my American identity.

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Chinese-Ecuadorians who seem to upset the existing and understood categories of identity, with some Ecuadorians simply referring to them as Chinese, not imagining or recognizing them as members of the nation-state at all. Regardless of their time in Ecuador, they remained 'foreign'[31]. This is all to say that there have historically been constructions of what a 'typical' person in a given ethnic designation looks like physically, and to some extent these categorizations persist. These expectations, in turn, might change how certain dress styles are understood. For instance, what happens if someone with a skin tone read as Black wears Indigenous Andean dress? Is that dress style interpreted differently than it might be on someone who fits expectations of Andean Indigenous phenotypes?

At the same time, I consistently come across evidence that Ecuadorians know these racial and ethnic distinctions are much more fluid and complex, particularly within the *Mestizo*/Indigenous dichotomy. Both self-identified *Mestizos* and Indigenous individuals recognize that most Ecuadorians have both Spanish and Indigenous ancestry, if not also Afro-Latino ancestry. However, despite these 'mixed' heritages claims to one identity often mean foregoing the other. Patricia, who works at the Ethnographic Museum inside the *Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamin Carrion,* referred to this erasure of Indigenousness within *Mestizo* identity. As previously mentioned, she is from a small parish outside of Riobamba and says that her parents are *Mestizo* with Puruhá origins. She identifies by her nationality but also recognizes and takes pride in her Indigenous

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[31] This is further complicated by the ways in which Indigenous Andean Ecuadorians sometimes reference their own features, particularly eyes, as Chinese. In captions on photos, for example, I have seen self-references, and references to an Indigenous child as having "*ojos Chinos*" or secretly being part Chinese.

heritage. She told me a story about when she came to Quito and studied anthropology. One of her professors asked who in the class had Indigenous ancestry and a few students, including Patricia, raised their hands. He encouraged those who didn't raise their hands to go back and talk to all their family members, to ask about their ancestors. When the students returned he asked the question again, and every single student said they had some Indigenous origins. The point he was making is a fair one, that to be *Mestizo* you inherently must be Indigenous, because it is a way of referencing people with mixed Spanish and Indigenous heritage[32], yet as a concept *mestizaje* is something altogether different.

This matters, presumably for both Indigenous and *Mestizo* social actors, because by making Indigenous dress distinct from *Mestizo* dress, these styles help to construct and reinforce ethnic boundaries that are actually more fluid than they appear. This is not a new phenomenon. In chapter two I mentioned the use of sumptuary laws in the 18th century, established by the Spanish crown and aimed at establishing racial and social divisions by controlling the use of certain clothing. Punishment for dressing outside of one's station, including stripping clothing from the body and physical violence, was undertaken by elite citizens to control this form of societal subversion (Melendez 2005). In the first half of the 20th century, many Indigenous people wore Indigenous styles, although regardless of the quality of the clothing, it was associated with being 'dirty',

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[32] Afro-Ecuadorians are often left out of the conversation of *Mestizo* identity, historically they were not considered part of the nation-state (Foote 2006), and in contemporary society they are still treated as a distinct population (Beck et al, 2011; Safa 2005; Roitman 2009). This lack of significant incorporation into the story of the nation-state exaggerates their "otherness", which can in turn have effects on their political, legal, and social rights.

poor, and rural by the mainstream *Mestizo* majority, because being visibly Indigenous was associated with these same qualities (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). By the 1990s internal migration patterns of Andean Indigenous people spurred many individuals, especially Indigenous men, to start wearing *Mestizo* clothing (Lentz 1995). This was an attempt to curb discrimination and give men in particular access to job opportunities they might only have access to if they could "pass" as *Mestizo*. This subversive assimilation was and remains possible because of the history of conquest in Ecuador, which relied on exploitation of Indigenous labor and attempts to whiten the population through the process of *mestizaje* (Pineda 2017, De la Cadena 2005). To reiterate, some Indigenous individuals are understood to be more ethnically and racially ambiguous than others by non-Indigenous Ecuadorians (which is obviously subjective and culturally constructed), but regardless the use of Indigenous dress reinforces being visibly Indigenous in public space, which in turn incites response and affects movement.

Educational spaces have been mentioned by both participants and other scholars as places where dress choices may shift for comfort, whether physical or social. Silvia, the designer of *Bordados Galilea,* attended the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), a wealthy university in a middle upper class suburb of Quito, and mentioned that when she was studying she would wear *Mestizo* clothes, including pants because, "*La otra es un poco mas deportivo, cuando tengo que hacer estudios, porque es un poco mas cómodo, no? Pues, sentarte como tu quieres,*" or "The other is a little more sporty, when you want to do your studies, because it's more comfortable, right? Well, you can sit how you want." Yet women certainly do perform daily tasks in *anacos*, and there are other socio-cultural layers of reasoning for wearing pants that have nothing to do with the

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object's physical restrictions on movement. Returning to Patricia[33], she mentioned that many Indigenous girls began being admitted into universities in the 1990s, after the *primer levantamiento Indígena* (first Indigenous uprising), and despite newfound rights still faced discrimination. In her experience, they often changed their hair color to be a bit lighter and wore miniskirts or other *Mestiza* styles to avoid harassment and be able to study. She didn't detail exactly what kind of harassment this was, but other scholars have mentioned that Indigenous people who display their ethnicity in their presentation of self, through aspects like dress or manner of speech, can encounter racist reactions like verbal or physical attacks, glares, and being restricted from certain places (De la Torre 1999). Indeed, it was not uncommon in the 1990s for Indigenous people to be yelled at and kicked out of spaces like car dealerships and high-end restaurants. Although the Ecuadorian government in the 1990s allowed individuals to wear Indigenous dress in schools and permitted young Indigenous males in the armed forces to keep their braids, this did not eradicate reactions to that dress and its wearer (Meisch 1991). There are semiotic processes occurring in educational spaces that involve interpretation of Indigenous dress as difference, a difference that is tied to racist ideologies of indigeneity which manifest as, for instance, verbal assault. Therefore, *Mestizo* dress may indeed be a product of comfort for Indigenous students, but this comfort is both physical *and* social.

Here the relationship between the object, sign vehicle and interpretant is a particular third[34] that is reproduced and shared in common (Keane 2003, Kockelman

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[33] Patricia works at the Ethnographic Museum at the *Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamin Carrion,* and was mentioned earlier for her identification as *Mestiza* but with recognition of her Puruhá heritage.
[34] A third is this triadic relationship (object, sign vehicle and interpretant); in a third the roles of each aspect (object, sign vehicle and interpretant) can be switched (Kockelman

2005), regardless of the intent of the producer or the wearer. In this particular case it is a third that relies on long standing racist ideologies about Indigenous bodies in particular locations (See Figure 13 and 14). The resulting interpretant speaks to how the agency of the wearer is or is not being mediated through their choice of dress style, whether it be *Mestizo,* Indigenous, or some combination thereof.

c

Object:
whatever the
sign stands for

Interpretant: whatever a
sign creates insofar as it
stands for an object

The Sign
(a third)

a

b

Sign vehicle:
whatever stands for
something else
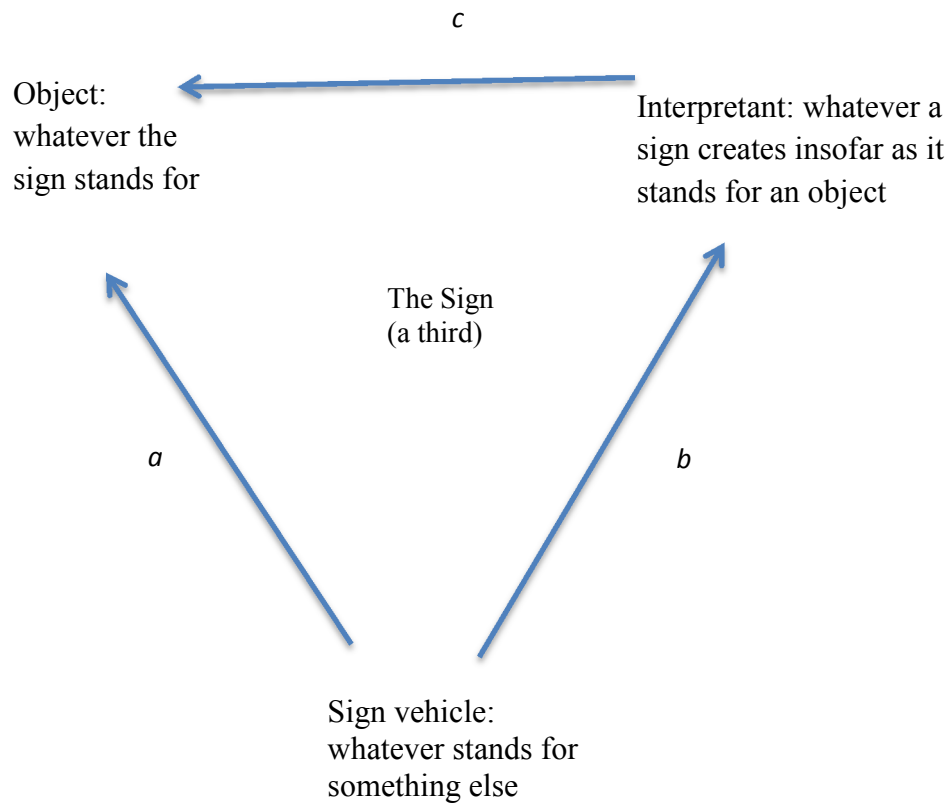
Figure 4.5 Third modeled from Kockelman's (2005) Figure 1, wherein…
*" A sign stands for its object on the one hand (a), and its interpretant on
the other (b), is such a way as to bring the latter into a relation to the
former (c)corresponding to its own relation to the former (a) (236)."*

2005); it is related to 'thirdness' in that thirds are experience, reaction and reflection- the cognitive process of linking an object with an interpretant.

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Object: Puruhá
identity

Interpretant: cognitive
process of viewer
interpreting dress to mean
ethnic difference;
resulting expression of
racist ideologies

Sign vehicle: a
Puruhá
ensemble
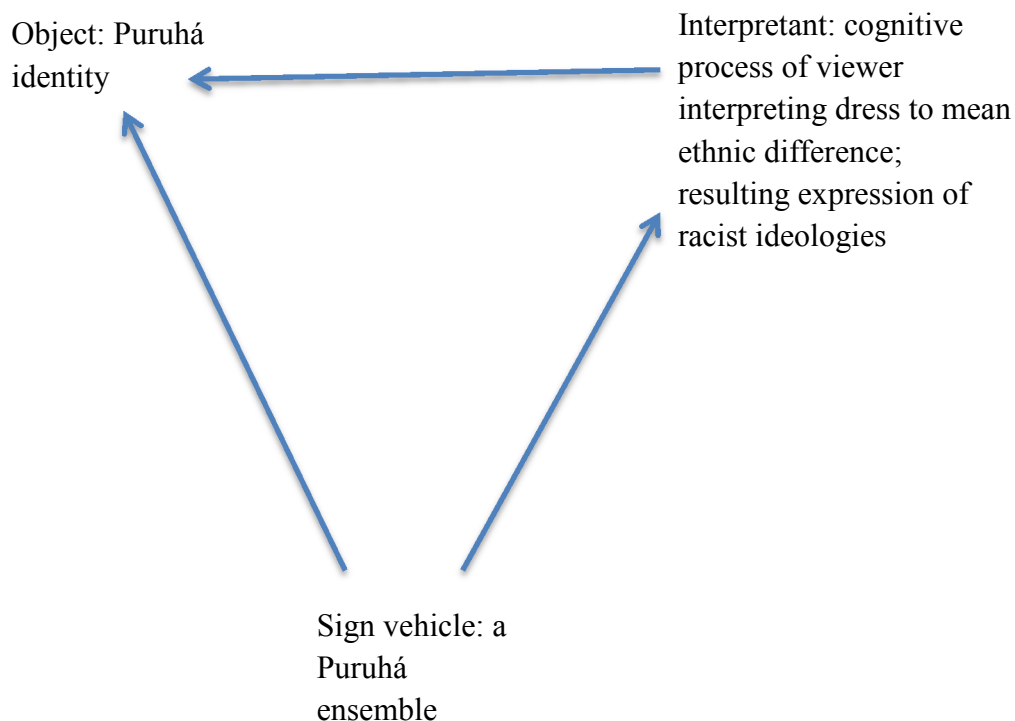
Figure 4.6 Example of Puruhá dress sign as a particular third, which when shared creates a certain code.

While in this case the result can be detrimental, there are multitudes of other thirds that are produced and reproduced in public space, in different contexts. These communicative practices are dependent upon the interpreter, the time, the wearer's body (including gender, age, ethnic identity, and physical features),what tasks the wearer is performing, the season, and any other number of factors a la William Hanks' (1996) application of a relationality thesis, which focuses on particularity and the actual circumstances of talk in context, to an irreducibility thesis.

Moreover, clothing does not need to be worn by a person to be communicative, even when what is being communicated are ideologies about racialized and ethnicized

bodies. For instance, food markets are spaces where Indigenous dress is noticeable, either for its visibility or lack thereof. While living in Quito's historic district I did the basics of my grocery shopping at the *Mercado Central,* a multi-story building where individual vendors sold produce, meats, dairy, grains, and sometimes miscellaneous household items like candles. These were products with minimal packaging, that were relatively cheap compared to grocery stores and were predominantly produced in Ecuador. Many of the vendors and buyers in this market wore Indigenous dress styles from various areas as everyday dress. When I returned in 2019 and lived further north, outside of the *Centro Historico* I was across the street from a Supermaxi, a chain grocery store that has local and imported goods. Here there are no independent vendors and while the demographic of buyers varies, it was much rarer for me to see anyone in Indigenous dress. In fact, there are several Supermaxi stores within Quito and at least one in Riobamba, and it was common to see independent sellers who *did* wear Indigenous dress sitting outside of the store, a few feet away, selling their own produce or home-made foods. None of the Supermaxi employees ever wore Indigenous dress, regardless of what position they held, and it was far more likely to see tourists from other countries there than it was in the *Mercado Central.* Regardless of the ethnic or racial demographic, Indigenous dress was obscured in the grocery store and prevalent in the *Mercado*. There may be multiple factors that contribute to this, but I did notice one place in Supermaxi where Indigenous dress was highlighted, as a commercial product. Local bottles of alcohol are sold wearing dress styles indicative of specific Indigenous groups.

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Figure 4.7 Liquor bottles dressed in Otavaleño clothing, sold at Supermaxi grocery stores

4.8 Liquor bottles in Indigenous dress, sold at Supermaxi grocery stores

Here the bottle becomes the body, and it is the responsibility of the doll-sized outfit to reference an entire population, without the nuance of variation. This marketing may target Ecuadorians who shop there on a daily basis or tourists, but what is it communicating as a product in a space where the dress itself is rarely worn? In this moment, difference becomes a commodity mediated through dress but erasing the complexity of the actual people who make and wear this dress. In conjunction with other forms of typifying, such as museum displays or tourism guides, these dress styles can become iconic as well as indexical.

Icons are signs that depict what they represent by some kind of similarity with it, and they work in conjunction with indexical signs, but are understood via comparison (Gal and Irvine 2019). For marketing purposes these dressed bottles are icons of actual worn Indigenous dress and the ethnic difference they represent to particular buyers. They may index the bodies that have been removed, the culture of different communities, and

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any other number of things, but to understand them as icons requires contrast to Western and mass-produced fashion (and the bodies who wear this fashion). The contrast between these dress styles is representative of the contrast between *mestizaje* and whiteness as cultural homogeneity (or non-culture) and indigeneity as (consumable) cultural difference. For this particular product (the dressed bottle), consumption (as interpretant) is predicated on this interpretation of this difference and the typification of this dress.

Commodities act as sign objects (indexical and iconic) at the token level, which are transferred in the cultural imagination as totalities (type level) in support of a brand (Manning 2006). If we take the 'brand' of these bottles to be Ecuadorian distinction (the Ecuador name and flag colors being most visible on the packaging) we can also see how this 'brand' is mediated by tokens of indigeneity. This product becomes an example of how Ecuadorian distinction requires Indigenous difference, especially as displayed by Indigenous women (see chapter six) yet remains removed from the actual complexities of difference between and within Indigenous communities as reproduced through the bought and sold dress these bottles represent. However, Puruhá designers, producers, and vendors rely on the complexities of difference from other Indigenous communities and within their own community to support their own personal branding and the Puruhá brand. Here the instances of the material objects in space, including where they are worn, how, by whom, with what other styling, who is interpreting them, and how they interpret this dress all matter to the reproduction of Puruhá identity. It is not a dematerialized monolithic *thing* but a constantly reproduced (and re-materialized) process. Therefore, Puruhá dress also acts like a language because language is a type level totality that reproduces itself through sign objects (Manning 2006). In the context of the Puruhá dress

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market, interactions about and around dress allow for relationships, where attempts to 'type' dress styles, in museums and on liquor bottles, creates distance.

4.2 III. DISRUPTING EXISTING NARRATIVES

I told myself several times that I would buy a designer blouse, most likely from Sisa, but as someone who has never put down $150 for an article of clothing I kept pushing back the timeline in my head. I told myself I needed to pay bills first, or buy food, or make sure I had enough stored away in case I had to pay for a visa, or extra luggage, or something that would surely be more of a necessity. I will eventually buy one, but my own indecisiveness made me wonder about the clients that *did* buy these designer clothes, and not just a blouse but several full outfits. One of the things that came up with both participants and in casual conversation was the price of some of the clothes that were made by the most well-known Puruhá designers. Not all Puruhá dress is expensive, and this is a distinction made within the Puruhá community (see chapter three). However, even individuals I spoke with who were not designers or vendors of Puruhá dress would mention the high price points of some pieces. Part of my analysis was to look at emerging themes and ask what it means that they continue to arise. Talk about Puruhá dress (and in one case Otavaleño dress) coupled with mentions of price situate this style alongside other high-end and more expensive fashions. However, they also situate it as a value understood by Indigenous buyers, which *Mestizo* buyers might not understand. As Sisa told me, more *Mestizos* don't want to pay high prices, but Indigenous buyers tend to know why these pieces cost so much. Moreover, the dress itself communicates this cost but only for those who are able to read it, like individuals who understand sewing and fashion. When I looked at some of these couture pieces I

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could see the quality of the materials, of the finishing, and of the construction because I have experience sewing. The use of plastic gemstones, sequins, and other glitzy findings also indexed to me the intricacy of the work, the extra cost, and the desire for a glamourous quality. Here the dress itself communicates being expensive, and the discourse about the dress supports this, which justifies the pricing and potential buying. However, not all semiotic processes involved in seeing this dress or hearing about its price would have the same interpretant since, as Sisa put it, some buyers don't understand the value, i.e. do not have a shared semiotic code that would make this price reasonable. Still, in insisting on a discourse of value based on cost some of my Puruhá participants were working to interrupt existing *Mestizo* narratives that associate Indigenous dress with poverty and dirtiness (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). The focus on expense, an indication of wealth within the community, helps disrupt the colonialist equivalency of race to class (De la Torre 1999). Thus, while this dress is still centered as different to *Mestizo* dress in terms of the actual materiality (color choice, pattern, cut, embroidery) and the embedded cultural heritage (histories of resistance, discrimination, and revival), there is a push to increase recognition that it is *similar* to *Mestizo* dress in terms of quality, level of work, and therefore justifiable cost.

There is a similar disruption that is beginning to happen in narratives of local versus global reach for Indigenous dress more broadly, but there are tensions that underlie this talk. For instance, when discussing fashion as cultural exchange with Malvi (see 2.3 II) she mentioned brands like Zara and Hollister to give an example of *Mestizo* brands, which are known worldwide. She compared this to Otavaleño dress and suggested that part of the problem for not having the same global recognition might be

because they lack a union or cooperative where they could bring everyone who does Indigenous fashion together to make a company, give it a brand name, and export it. It is not uncommon to view Indigenous Ecuadorian dress in opposition to *Mestizo* dress, and therefore, as local in opposition to global.

At the same time, other participants like Christian, an Otavaleño man who worked as a tour guide and at a small artisan market alongside his wife, directly stated that Otavalo artisans *were* known worldwide for their work, something reiterated by anthropological scholarship on the topic (Kyle 1999, Meisch 2002). Moreover, there are unions that exist within the artisan community, but other factors such as an influx of Peruvian sellers in the Otavalo area did negatively affect global growth (Colloredo-Mansfeld and Antrosio 2009). In conversation with Malvi, a lack of circulation marked Otavaleño dress as different than *Mestizo,* in a way that reinforced the alignment of *Mestizo* dress with globalization and Indigenous dress with the local, despite contestation that it is in fact global. Many of my Puruhá interviewees expressed a desire to have global reach as well but often cited cost as a main inhibiting factor, suggesting that as these businesses grow so too will the circulation of their products. Sisa mentioned her desire to expand *Sumak Churay* to a worldwide brand and mentioned that she does have some clients in places like New York and Washington because there are Puruhá people who immigrated there and want this dress, but she still admits that it is not the reach that Otavaleño artisans are known for. As she mentioned before (see chapter two):

Entonces, estamos tratando que la gente valorice lo que es nuestros, si como los de Imbabura. Ellos vayan a la ciudad, o al país que vayan, siempre van cargado

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esta ropa. Entonces eso es que lo nosotros también buscamos. Por el mismo

hecho ya de que la gente nos identifique como Puruhás.

We are trying to make people value what is ours, like Imbabura. They go to the city, or to the country, always loaded with these clothes, so that is what are looking for too, for the same fact that people identify us as Puruhá.

Therefore, while Indigenous dress has been aligned with place and the local along with the individuals who wear this dress (see chapter two), the actual movement of Puruhá and other Indigenous people, and the clothes they bring with them challenge this local designation. The clothing can retain a tie to place, to that sense of particular local spaces through both talk about the dress that stresses historical Puruhá communities and the dress itself which indexes local flora and fauna, while still circulating globally. For those designers seeking out a worldwide brand, however, this retention of scales (local, national, global) may be a challenge. The producer or source of a worldwide brand is often obscured and replaced with either a global nowhere or a specific *terroir*, assumed to be frozen in culture and nature (Manning 2010). Moreover, when an individual or an item cites a brand, they are not necessarily citing the legally sanctioned trademark or only the material qualities of a brand. Rather they are often referring to an immaterial 'quality' or 'style' (Nakassis 2012). It is this brand citationality (ibid) that, in Ecuador, takes the form of relating *Mestizo-ness*, Western-ness, and cosmopolitanism to a particular clothing style. In other words, this *Mestizo* style is not unified by any particular aesthetic trends, but rather by being branded in opposition to Indigenousness, and locality.

As a result, this dichotomy between local Indigenous and global *Mestizo* dress persists despite the fact that global cultural exchange by and with Indigenous Ecuadorians has been prevalent throughout history, in many cases for a longer period of time than international exchange of contemporary Western brands. Anthropological research has demonstrated the highland Quichua region's extensive history of participation in the global market alongside the retention of local production and distinct town styles, particularly with regard to textiles and embroidery (Bowen 2011; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Korovkin 1998; Rowe and Meisch 1998). In my research, Puruhá producers and consumers also argued that Indigenous dress has always been global, and involved some form of exchange, whether through trade with other pre-conquest groups, or through international trade with European, and more recently, Chinese fabric producers. Although there are interpreters who will ignore the global influences of and on Puruhá dress, those who ignore the histories of global exchange may be doing so in an attempt to legitimize their dress as more "traditional" aligning with definitions of that term that minimize external influence and change over time. As an example, I'll return to Malvi, the Otavaleña fashionista I just mentioned. When I interviewed her she was a friendly and talkative. She laughs a lot and takes care in dressing and posing for pictures she posts on Facebook in Otavaleño outfits. Seeing her interest in dress and her social media savvy, I was surprised when she lamented that dress styles in Riobamba had become *too* modernized. She acknowledged that dress in Otavalo had also been modernized, and claimed they were the first to do so, an idea that the Puruhá copied. Yet Puruhá dress, she said, had gotten many accolades for modernizing, but it was more *Mestizo* and "… *ha estado un poco perdiendo mas lo que es en realidad la vestimenta de allá*," or, "… it has

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been losing a little more of what is really the dress from there." She expressed a sense of losing what was traditional by incorporating too much *Mestizo* influence, which is aligned with global fashion.

However, I found that many of my Puruhá interviewees didn't think about modernizing and incorporation of *Mestizo* aesthetics as anything that took away from their dress being identifiably Puruhá. Individuals may try to reconcile these indexicalities (ties to Europe, China, *Mestizo* styles, or even other Andean groups, and Puruhá-ness), or simply allow them to coexist as layers of the same sign (vehicle), in this case the ensemble as a whole acting as the sign. Many of my interviewees did both. They reconciled by framing continental and global trade *as* something inherently Puruhá, that had always been done, and therefore global influences were as traditional as any pre-Incan styles. At the same time they acknowledged that there were distinctions between those things that *were* presumably pre-Incan, or Andean, from those that were global or *Mestizo*, and allowed an outfit to index all of these influences at once without concerns about adhering to a sense of tradition (again framed as minimal outside influence, and minimal change over time). As *VISPU*'s designer Franklin said, if you really go back to before the conquests they were likely mostly naked, wearing whatever they could from nature, like leaves. This seems strange, considering the cold of the mountain regions, although I have heard this more broadly in reference to lowland populations in the past, leaving me to wonder about who he was positioning as pre-conquest populations and how he was distinguishing them. Still, he was more concerned with the meanings that indigenous styles, specifically Puruhá dress, gained over time and how it evidenced changes in Puruhá history and contemporary life.

These narratives of Puruhá dress reflect the complexity of individual identities, which are always multi-faceted, fragmented, and intertextual (Kondo 1992; Sokefeld 1999). Dress styles may assist in regulating, or transgressing boundaries of identities depending on the individual wearing the outfit, the social and environmental context of the outfit, and also the degree to which others share or don't share semiotic codes. This is particularly important when claims to political recognition, legal rights, jobs, or other benefits are dependent upon being visibly part of a particular ethnic group. At the same time, visible markers of ethnicity that incite racism in some contexts (and on some bodies) may have a more celebratory response in others. In Ecuador some communities have been known to appropriate indigeneity through pageants and festivals, both at a broad scale, where Indigenous traditions become a municipal festival, and at a narrower scale, where non-Indigenous pageant competitors use what they deem traditional Indigenous outfits to signify municipal identity (Rogers 1998). There are countless ways this might be interpreted depending on the interpreter. Perhaps to a given individual the pageant competitor is a non-Indigenous person showing their regional heritage, which is necessarily mixed, and thus makes sense when utilized by a *Mestiza*. Perhaps the dress style is understood to be wholly 'traditional' and therefore the individual is also labeled as Indigenous. These are only two of a multitude of interpretations, so it makes sense that Puruhá designers would be interested in reinforcing a specific sense of cultural identity through talk about dress, akin to sharing aspects of a semiotic code that help to push interpretation to certain indexes over others. This spoken and written support, along with a pre-existing and recently constructed notions of dress as difference and as cultural pride, create a shared discourse among Puruhá individuals. However, there is also some

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sharing of the meaning of various dress signs, allowing individuals who are not Puruhá to interpret certain aspects of Puruhá dress, such as knowing that floral embroidery ties the Puruhá to the natural world and *Pachamama.* This sharing of the language of Puruhá dress to non-Indigenous individuals, however, is often done through newspaper articles or social media, where the explanations are fewer and more superficial, at least than those I received in conversation (which are presumably more superficial than conversation between Puruhá friends and family). Still, the hope for Puruhá designers seems to be that they will be able to help shape the national discourse on the significance of Puruhá dress, and in turn have control over what this style says.

4.3 I. TALK ABOUT DRESS: METASEMIOTOIC DISCOURSES AND CULTURAL REVIVAL

Conversations of Puruhá dress predominantly focused on two things. First, there was an attempt to teach specific indexes for dress features as a way of exhibiting Puruhá histories and cosmologies embedded in and visible on the body. This is a form of talk that, once learned, becomes available as enregistered emblems of distinction for everyday life (Agha 2011). In this case that distinction is centered on a particular type of knowing or desire to know that marks the consumer as community member or, in my case, admirer. This talk is a metasemiotic practice that imbues the dress object with sign values (ibid), although it can still fail, succeed, or change depending on *who* is interpreting these objects and in what context, including co-occurring signs. The second focus in this Puruhá dress talk was an attempt to position the use of this dress as a means of mobilization against erasures of Puruhá identity, not just due to *Mestizo* discrimination mentioned above but also due to conflation of Puruhá with Incan and homogenous

Andean Indigenous identity, with Otavalo as the cultural center. I will begin, therefore, with existing discourse from Puruhá dress designers and vendors as they attempt to (re)create and (re)enforce cultural value.

Much of the emphasis placed on retention of heritage via dress centered not only on having certain pieces that work together (e.g. the *anaco, faja,* blouse, *bayeta* and *alpargatas*), but also on the details of color, textiles, weaving and embroidery. In fact, code mixing with dress pieces, like an *anaco* and *faja* with a t-shirt and mass-produced sweater were far less common than, say, using a pop culture image in an embroidery pattern (see 4.5). Embroidery holds a special place in Puruhá culture and in the semiotics of material culture. When I walked into Carmenita's shop in Riobamba, she had small piece of fabric that she was hand embroidering over a design, which had been sketched out in pencil. Sisa also had pieces of fabric lying around with partially complete embroideries, and Tupperware brimming with beads and sequins that would be added to festive blouses, bolts of threads, and tools that had clearly been picked up and put down again, most likely when customers or friends came by to chat. Certain shops also had sewing machines around, some computerized, some not, used to make faster and generally cheaper embroidery work. Regardless, embroidery is very present for the Puruhá, both visibly and verbally. It is not just central to their style, it is also central to the stories they tell about themselves. Embroidery is an object and a sign system, and though it is often an icon, it can also act as an index, or a symbol as described by Peirce (1991:181) (or all three) at any given moment, depending on the interpretant and co-occurring signs.

If we take an icon to be a semiotic relationship where the sign vehicle physically resembles its object, much of Puruhá embroidery is an image of what it is representing (a flower representing a flower (concept)) or a llama representing a llama (concept)). An index is more indicative of some sort of a contiguous relationship to what is being represented. At times the embroidery will be somewhat abstract, blending icon and index, like a zig-zag pattern I was told represented the rising and setting of the sun and moon, two sets layered together as the harmony of these celestial bodies (Janeta Janeta 2015). To some extent this geometric pattern physically resembles the movement, but it is not actually a picture of a sun going up, a moon coming down, and so on. Moreover, the zigzag is indexing cosmological concepts, like the harmonious balance of sun and moon that is central to life's balance. To return to the icon of an embroidered flower, this can also act as an index the relationship of Puruhá people to the natural world. Floral embroidery is common on contemporary blouses, as a reference to local flowers and to nature in general, as mentioned by Carmenita of *Sumak Churay.* The same is true of animals, which were never explicitly given meaning to me but referenced a connection to and respect for the natural world. On the other hand, geometric shapes seemed to incite more explanation. For instance, Carmenita clarified that a reoccurring swirl symbol represented a place for guarding grain historically. However, this telling was a semiotic process that cannot be reduced to a structuralist model. Her 'decoding' made certain histories legible to me but also reproduced familial narratives that reinforced her status as a Puruhá woman and legitimate designer. Carmenita's knowledge relied on familial intergenerational relationships, in this case with her grandmother, and she told me as much. At the same time, she recognized that she was missing information, or rather that

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she couldn't fully translate the information from the embroidery, changes in sign-values that were dependent on her as interpreter (and subsequently myself as interpreter). The symbol she calls a *churrito* is, according to what her grandmother told her, representative of ancient labyrinths, but she couldn't quite remember what her grandmother explained to her beyond that.

> *En Quichua me explico que estos significan los churritos que antes menté habido como una cueva, así como redondeado para guardar las cosas, los granos, y todo eso. Entonces habido hacer estos círculos. Entonces, allí pasan ellos en este circulo, en estos churritos de aquí. No se mi recuerdo como … pero ya así, mas o menos.*

In Quichua she (my grandmother) explained to me that these represent the churritos that were like a cave, as well as rounded, to guard things, grains, all that. So, they were making these circles. Then, they would pass in this circle, in these churritos here. I don't know that my recollection … But that's more or less it.

Part of Carmenita's explanation for her loss of information, although she was the only interviewee to give me an explanation of the swirl symbol, is the fact that her grandmother explained it in Quichua. It is unclear what her comprehension level of Quichua is, but more important is the fact that she claims an inability to translate. What her grandmother explained to her in Quichua cannot be equally explained to me in Spanish, although she does give me a significant amount of information. Regardless of

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whether this is because of linguistic differences, faults of memory, or more likely a combination thereof, the semiotic understanding of the symbol produced here, that mediated her relationship with her grandmother, is different from the information shared with me. It cannot be the same and of course my relationship to her cannot be the same. Embroidered meanings create and maintain different generational bonds within the Puruhá community. My reading of this symbol is inherently different, despite the attempt to create a singular (structural) meaning. To me it represents a labyrinth, walked by Puruhá people in the past, which is protective, but the processes of generational/familial passing down that carries with it other meaning is lost and replaced by my own interpretant. This image that was protecting physical wealth, in the form of grain is also used on clothing, which I infer is possibly to protect the wearer, although she doesn't explicitly say this. It could just be that it was a common enough image that it was retained through hundreds of years of conquest and exchange. These are acts of conjecture on my part, and acts of conjecture can implicate further uptake that could lead to cumulative growth and change in knowledge (Gal and Irvine 2019). Yet I point out my own processing because I can only be inside my own head, where significant change in knowledge would take place through a broader audience, predominantly Puruhá and other Indigenous individuals, but increasingly *Mestizo*s and other non-Indigenous communities. What is clear from Carmenita's talk about dress is there are intergenerational attempts to retain and remember culturally significant histories.

Embroidery is a pattern and, according to Alfred Gell patterns are always intrinsically functional (1998). As Gell (ibid) states, "Decorative patterns applied to artefacts attach people to things, and to the social projects those things entail (74)." Thus,

they inherently *do* something, or else there would be no explanation for their presence. This is something reverberated in Puruhá ways of talking about pattern's function, even as a marker of individual taste. That function may at times be to represent a thing or a concept in the world, but it may also simply be to act as a marker of the pattern creator, and of their relationship to their cultural identity. The insistence on embedded cultural meaning in embroidery is part of Puruhá individuals' maintenance of their relationships with parents and grandparents. When Sisa told me about her interest in Puruhá dress, she mentioned it began with her mother (also see chapter three).

> *Tiene una historia bien espectacular, porque, bueno, converso con personas, con mi mami cuando éramos niñas, y entonces ella me indico que blusa era de nuestros antepasados, de nuestros abuelitos.*
> *Entonces, era muy simple, pero tenia historia, o tenia significado cada flor … cada punto de cruz, todo eso tiene significa de la familia o-*
> Me: *De la cultura?*
> Sisa: *De la cultura en general. Entonces, decían que punto de cruz eran la fuerza. Entonces así, cada cosa tiene significado.*

Sisa: It (Puruhá dress) has a spectacular history because, well, I spoke with my mom when we were kids, and she told me what blouse was from our ancestors, our grandparents. It was very simple, but it had a history, or significance. Every flower, every cross point, all that has meaning for the family or-

Me: The culture?

Sisa: The culture in general. Then, she said the cross-point was the strength, so everything has meaning.

Her mother uses the blouse to tie Sisa to her ancestors, and insists that there are detailed indexes, even while these specific details are lost, except for the cross-point meaning strength. The knowledge is passed down, in many instances incompletely. This could be attributed to the lack of Indigenous dress used by Puruhá people as recently as the 1990s. As Patricia, the woman mentioned earlier who worked at the *Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamin Carrion* mentioned to me, in the 90s Indigenous people were still often made to ride in the back of the buses. Being visibly Indigenous meant being a target of discrimination. In 1998, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld was making arguments for the lingering impact of sensory markers of poverty including 'dirtiness' in Ecuador, and their association with Indigenous bodies and all the material culture associated with these bodies, such as dress. Thus, it is unsurprising that many Puruhá would have chosen to forgo their traditional dress during this time period for *Mestizo* styles, in the hopes of reducing discriminatory actions and associations with 'dirtiness'. Subsequently, certain knowledge about the significance of that dress style, about embroidery patterns or colors, would have been lost since it was something that was no longer a part of their daily lives, and not something they necessarily would have thought was important for their children to learn. Although Colloredo-Mansfeld also remarked on social and political change in the 90s that impacted a shift away from this mentality (ibid), the racism of the 90s that was tied to being visibly Indigenous is still a part of the story of contemporary designers. In the same conversation Sisa mentioned:

Estudiando todo eso, este, entonces yo dije, entonces necesitamos crear algo novedosa y algo nuevo. Entonces, por eso yo vi mucho le que es la ropa occidental, y pues le metimos bordados. Es lo único, la única diferencia, y allí las chicas ahora si, ya se identifican y se sienten a la vez orgullosos ponemos una ropa, siempre lo hacemos y te estilizada y con las referencias de ellas mismas.

Studying all this, then I said, we need to create something novel and something new, so I looked at a lot of the Western clothes, and then we put embroidery. It's the only difference, and there, the girls now, they identify and at the same time feel proud to wear the clothes; they always do it with style and reference to themselves.

Young Puruhá people today still associate their grandparents and ancestors with this dress, but their parents', and even some of their own generation, watched Indigenous dress decline due to prolonged racist attitudes. There is a sort of generational gap of Puruhá dress, which affected enough people that it is still part of the conversation on emerging Puruhá dress today. These younger Puruhá individuals then watched dress shift again, and become valued within Indigenous movements, and even by the government.

Color and other qualia are also part of these reclaimed narratives, then reproduced for me (in the interview process) and for a broader public (through media and events). Qualia are "… indexes that materialize phenomenally in human activity as sign vehicles reflexively taken to be sensuous instances of abstract qualities … (Harkness,

2015; 574). In linguistic analysis, the 'softness', 'masculine-ness', 'rhythm of languages', all affect how we understand the language, and those who use the language. The same is true outside of language. The 'redness', 'roughness', 'airiness' of particular materials, as in Munn's analysis of shell usage in *The Fame of Gawa,* not only changes the interpretation of the material, but also affects the relationships that are mediated, at least in part, through that object. Thus, qualia, regardless of which semiotic process they belong to, can be theorized as "… the experience of qualities as a fact of sociocultural life, rather than to qualities as purported properties of things in the world (Chumley and Harkness 2013:4)." Moreover, like embroidery or any other feature of Puruhá dress qualia cannot be separated from their co-occurring signs. For instance, I was often told that redness indexed Indigenous bloodshed, particularly during periods of colonization, but that interpretation required 'redness' to be applied to Indigenous dress, and more specifically a male poncho or beaded necklace and earring strands that Puruhá women wear. In this case, gender also affects uptake, since a red male poncho may be tied to bloodshed, but red ponchos also indicate a position of leadership within the community, at least historically. Moreover, wearing a red poncho is indicative of Puruhá identity and the spirit of rebellion, which may be indexed by the female jewelry as well but to a far lesser extent, at least as read by other Puruhá and *Mestizo* participants. As explained by Margarita, *"La roja significa … En Cacha hay Fernando Daquilema … Y si habido pelear con, a ver, nosotros, este como se llama? Defendiendo de Cacha salido hasta pelear con (mishu) de donde, no se de … Eso, es que es sangre, sangre indígena, rojo,"* or "The red means … In Cacha there is Fernando Daquilema, and there was a fight with,

let's see … What's it called? Defending Cacha, which was left to fight with the *mishu*[35], from where, I don't know. That is blood, Indigenous blood, red."

Redness has thus become a third, shaped into a convention (Gal 2013), and particularly a rheme.[36] Here I am using Peirce's notion of firstness (qualities, abstract), secondness (qualia, embodied), and thirdness (linking an object with an interpretant in a sign relation) in order to understand *qualia* in semiotic process. The impact of qualia is that firstness, quality of feeling, while its relationship to the object, and other qualia may act as secondness, and thirdness then is the process of drawing these relationships, in the case of Puruhá dress, the cognitive process of aligning feeling with meaning through its place, context, or relationship. Qualia are inherent to material culture, since they are sensory qualities (ibid), and human interaction with material culture is an experience of sensory qualities. Dress in particular generally involves seeing and touching, though arguably could involve hearing and smelling (the very particular swish of taffeta, or the potent smell of sheep's wool). However, the focus within anthropological semiotics is not so much how these sensory phenomena are experienced individually, in the mind, as how they are socially significant in practice. The qualisign, a quality that is a sign (resulting from thirdness), is an action needed to create and maintain or change semiotic communities, and it requires shared codes. When shared and reinforced these qualities may also become rhemes, within and across certain semiotic communities. In the case of

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[35] *Mishu* is a Quichua word used to refer to *Mestizos*, or a racial 'mixing' (Weismantle 2001).

[36] The "iconic" color that has had legal battles fought over it in the case of Louboutin's red sole (Nakassis 2016), is not so commercially contested in the context of Ecuador, though its representation of rebelliousness, bloodshed, and a fighting spirit is equally, and arguably more intelligible across different class and racial categorizations within their respective frameworks.

Indigenous dress in Ecuador, we can look at "redness" as an example of socially (re)produced qualia that becomes a shared code within and across Indigenous Andean populations, and arguably now acts as a rheme, or "... signs whose interpretants represent them as being icons (Parmentier 1994: 17, in Gal 2013, 34)." I will discuss the red poncho further in section 4.4 but for now I argue that, along with embroidery and other dress features my participants gave new context to, color is particularly significant *if and when* an individual has access to a particular metasemiotic discourse.

Not all instantiations of color are as strong as redness or at least not as strong in as broad a community. Within the community of Puruhá designers, there was an insistence on showing the significance of color qualities as symbols, but the meanings of each color often varied, and many colors drew no reference at all. Martha listed out significant colors, and translated them to Quichua, but didn't give any further interpretation. *Azul marino* was a specific variation of blue mentioned twice, once in the Cacha museum and once in an interview with an Otavaleño tour guide, both in reference to the male poncho. In the museum the guide said it represented courage for Puruhá men, and the Otavaleño participant said it referenced the sky, fitted with a brown colored layer underneath that represented the earth. His wife, Elena, also mentioned the same *azul marino* but regarding female dress and stated that both this color and gray were used for engaged individuals.

Carmenita gave perhaps the most complete symbolic interpretation of colors, with green as the landscape, pink for hope, blue (again) for the sky, red (again) as blood, and yellow for the sun. These references to the natural environment were incredibly common, and the use of bright multicolor in general, perhaps best represented by the elaborate

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embroidery on female blouses, is meant to show respect for the *Pachamama* (Janeta Janeta 2015:35), and is often exemplified in local flowers, as explained by Margarita, who sold items in Riobamba's *Plaza Roja*. Even the colors that are representative of the Puruhá culture- black, blue, yellow, green, and red- are so many that they would seem hard to distinguish from any other multicolored items (Janeta Janeta 2015:204). Here the black, blue, and yellow are 'warm', and the green and red are 'cool' in contrast to the Western art theory conception that would consider blue cool and red warm. Multi-colored-ness in general is a reference point for Andean indigeneity in contrast to *Mestizo* and foreign identities, which the rainbow flag CONAIE employs reiterates. Moreover, this shockingly bright multi-colored-ness is possible because of synthetic dyes, which were not invented until the mid-19th century (Neufang 1971), which means for the majority of Puruhá, and other Indigenous Andean population's histories, only natural dyes would be available. This was referred to by some participants, who noted that there would be fewer, and more muted colors present until fairly recently. The very association of this bright multicolor with the natural world, today comes from synthetics, not the muted, natural tones that were available prior to synthetics. Anyone within the Puruhá dress industry would be aware of this, and yet it does not take away from the cultural heritage visible in Puruhá dress, but rather indexes the aforementioned history of exchange that Indigenous populations had prior to Spanish conquest, and which continues within the world of fashion.

Another example of significant *qualia* that have undergone change through time, though not mentioned explicitly, is texture and weight. While there is no suggested symbolism, textures also communicate historical relationships within particular shared

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sartorial codes. They create shared feelings that can connect individuals who have lived in this dress together, not just across space but in some instances across time. Wearing the blouse of your grandmother, for instance, moving in it the way she did, creates a sort of shared bodily experience, which embeds certain feelings. Much in the way certain linguistic forms evoke a deep feeling, which can be shared as a sort of intimate grammar (Webster 2010), so too can these dress forms or aspects evoke deep feeling and create a shared intimacy and experience. Yet, much of this shared feeling has to do with the materials used to make the dress, and in the case of Andean dress, there have been significant changes over time. Before the Spanish conquest, different animals and plants provided different fabrics. Although sheep were introduced with the first Spanish explorers, it is likely the camelids would have provided most of the wool prior to the expansion of sheep domesticity, and in fact it may be difficult to know what the distinctions were between the camelids and sheep, since there is evidence that the Spanish and other Europeans who went to the Andes referred to llamas and alpacas as *ovejas* or *carneros*, which would imply sheep (Gade 2013). Regardless, there is an understanding that many of the fabrics used today in the production of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous dress are not 'traditional' in the sense that they are not llama, alpaca, or from other natural materials, with the exception of the *shigras* which are made from Andean plant fibers, and some ponchos and bayetas which are still made with camelid wool. However, some refer to *lana* as more traditional than the currently used cotton.

Martha, from *Tejidos Naomi,* is from a family that primarily makes and sells sweaters and she said that which is "very Puruhá" is that which is wool, although this could refer to both camelid and sheep's wool. Either way, though it is not explicitly

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mentioned, the weight of these 'traditional' wools is a feeling that is specific to the dress and bedding in the Andes, one that I am very familiar with. It is still common to have alpaca or llama blankets on beds in Ecuador when you live in the mountains. It provides the sort of warmth that many other materials cannot, and it weighs heavily on the body in a way that helped me to sleep when it became bitter cold. There is also a particular smell associated with this fabric, one which sheep's wool and cotton are lacking, and which created a specific and localized sensory experience that I associate with the natural environment, the community, and (particularly) rural dress. This is the bundling of qualities (Keane 2003) that happens within communities, through individuals' relationships to one another and the material objects they share. For those who share these sensory experiences, it allows them to take pleasure or recognize the discomfort in their identities. To enjoy the warmth and comfort of a *llama* blanket on a bitter cold night in the mountains is a certain pleasure of Andean life. In fact, taking pleasure in the *feeling,* in the sensory aspects of daily life (including dress) can be a rebellious act because it is taking pleasure in one's own body and community, regardless of outside valuations. It can also happen in the process of crafting significant others (Webster 2010), those who haven't shared these sensory experiences, and therefore can't know how it *feels* to be, in this case, Puruhá. Certainly, class, age, gender, and other aspects of identity would also shape these sensory experiences, as would the time spent, for instance wearing Puruhá dress. If I wear the outfit once for a photoshoot, it is very different than living daily in it, but regardless many people I spoke with wanted me to wear the dress style, however briefly, because they recognized that there is an understanding that comes

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with a shared sensory experiences and, it seemed to me they wanted to synchronize the experience in a way.

Compounded with talk about dress, these sensory experiences create and reinforce knowledge bases. This is not just an act of sharing information but also of sharing the material reality of the dress itself in service of a particular kind of mobilization. For designers, vendors, and even buyers the goal is not just the exchange of information, or the exchange of the commodity itself, but also the actual wearing of the dress as an intentional action that reiterates difference and identity in public space. For me, access to this discourse made it easier to approach individuals who I could already 'read' as being part of the Puruhá community and often my own displays of this knowledge received a (perceived) warmth and interest that would likely have not otherwise manifested. For others within the Puruhá fashion market, however, these interactions may contribute to the formation of semiotic communities that share certain ideologies of cultural revival and attempt to make them known through the wearing of and talking about Puruhá dress.

4.3 II. TALK ABOUT DRESS: MOBILIZING AGAINST ERASURE

The insistence on a perceptible uniqueness to Puruhá dress works against erasure at two levels. First, the use of this dress works against the regulation and discrimination of Spanish colonialism and processes of *mestizaje*. Second, it works against narratives of Andean Indigenous homogeneity and/or the exceptionalism of particular Indigenous groups over others (in this case Otavaleños). In emphasizing difference from both *Mestizo* and Otavaleño dress Puruhá dress makers and wearers reassert and resist this erasure, historically and today. Yet the dress itself, through processes of semiotic engagement, becomes a commodity, cultural heritage, and any other number of things

depending on who takes it up, how, and in the context its co-occurring signs (Agha 2011). While I experienced both *gringos* and *Mestizos* articulating the fact that they had no idea about regional distinctions just by looking at the clothing, Otavaleño participants could often make distinctions between their own dress and Puruhá dress, although generally with a focus on how Otavaleño dress was unique. Here different semiotic engagements, and different interpretants, become evident. However, this does not negate different social actor's motivations and choices in using Puruhá dress. For designers, sellers and wearers it can communicate the survival of a people and a heritage that has been the target of eradication and/or assimilation by both the Inca and the Spanish. Much of the information about the assimilation of the Puruhá into the Incan Empire is lost, just like other regional Indigenous groups who were absorbed into the empire. The Inca Empire spanned the Andes, and from the early 1200s through the mid-1500s they allied with or conquered various tribes, incorporating them into the empire (Malpass 2009). The conquests began around A.D. 1438 due to an invasion of their territory by a rival society and set in motion the development of the Inca Empire, which would only end with the Spanish conquest (ibid). This makes it difficult to parse what shared aspects of dress between smaller Indigenous groups came from assimilation or from long distance Andean trade that predated the Incan Empire (Korovkin 1998). As previously mentioned, there is overlap between Puruhá and Otavaleño women who wear a black wrap skirt called the *anaco*, with a visible difference being the white underlayer that is distinctive to Otavaleño women. Therefore, many questions about the pre-Incan Puruhá identity and aesthetic are left unanswered, but more relevant to my research is the fact that for many of my research participants there is an agreed upon pre-Incan identity.

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When the Spanish arrived there was a relative favoritism toward the Inca, who were thought to be more 'civilized' in part because of their dress, which was understood by Spanish colonists as more complex in construction compared to other Indigenous groups and also because some of these smaller groups were associated with 'nakedness' and therefore 'primitiveness' (Melendez 2005). As mentioned in chapter two, there was also a subsequent relative favoritism towards Otavaleño Indigenous people, which rested in part on their dress and commercial success (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998, Saenz 1993). This was not lost on my participants; Otavaleños were mentioned repeatedly, sometimes as examples of how to grow a dress market internationally, sometimes as examples of copying within a market, sometimes as pioneers in style and exporting, and sometimes in terms of cultural exchange. In this case talk about dress also required an assertion of difference against other Indigenous identities, regardless of whether this difference was positive, negative, or neutral. References to cultural exchange with *and* cultural difference from other Indigenous groups were centered around what they wanted to reproduce of Puruhá-ness, not what they wanted to take from other Indigenous identities. Moreover, this difference was also complex and varied, not static or homogeneous as government and cultural institutions sometimes portrayed. Take the image below of an Indigenous Waranka outfit at the *Museo Etnohistorico de Artesanias del Ecuador Mindalae* (similar in style to the Puruhá). The clothing is displayed on wires, against a black backdrop. It has no previous owner, no story of who made it, or wore it, why, and how. It instead has a few lines of text to relate its general region of origin, or a brief overview of the people. It gives a false sense of 'completeness' because all the pieces are seemingly there, but it is a shell. It does not move, or change. The shawl never gets

wrapped over a t-shirt when the wearer gets cold at work, and the skirt's hem never needs upkeep after getting dusty with street grime. It teaches only as much as it can in this context. Indeed, the fight against erasure is also against institutions that may be working against complex Indigenous identities even as they try to increase visibility and understanding.

Museums take on a key role in how certain segments of the population view Indigenous culture and identities. Much has been written about the tension between trying to do collaborative work that is beneficial to the communities who are often the subjects of displays, as opposed to historicizing and primitivizing them (Ames 1992, Boast 2011, Peers and Brown 2003, Moser 2010, Sleeper-Smith 2009). The underlying problem is that museums are based on and emerged from imperialism, even as they try to preserve heritage and raise consciousness (Ames 1992). This is certainly the case in Ecuador, where the categorization of Indigenous groups via material tokens is often done

Figure 4.9 Display of Waranka dress at The *Museo Etnohistorico de Artesanias del Ecuador Mindalae*

Figure 4.10 Chart with the 'typical' Indigenous dress of various regional groups also at *Mindalae*

in an innovative way but still harkens back to the *casta* paintings of colonial periods. Architecture, lighting, design and other co-occurring signs, as in the Mindale Museum display are significant in how museum objects get read and by whom (Moser 2010). In this case the darkness and spotlight, as well as the blackness of the display figure create a striking and ghostly image that highlights the artistry and brightness of the dress itself. This is significant, because it is framed more as an art piece, removed from not some but not all historical and social context. I wonder, then, how this would be interpreted by a visitor who was Indigenous, *Mestizo* or a *gringo.* Even as a museum artefact, not a daily worn dress, this object constitutes and instantiates social relations; it helps to bring social relationships into being (Henare 2005). It has traveled to get here and is seemingly contemporary, most likely donated by an individual or community though I don't recall that there was this information available on the placard behind the dress. This movement and subsequent status as artefact has affected the relationship of the donator, the museum staff, and the visitors, creating a bridge of information but losing some along the way as well. Moreover, although this display does try to categorize more specific groups, there is also a history of early museums that decontextualized Indigenous objects and set them as primitive against the modernity of the colonizer (Sleeper-Smith 2009). This started improving in the mid 20th century (ibid) but there remains the problem of what context to give. Is it better to give less, which could avoid some stereotyping and assumptions, or is it better to give more, to avoid this sort of timelessness, placeless-ness, and overall lack of identity? There is no easy answer, but what we can say is that in choosing these co-occurring signs the way they are taken up by a given interpreter (here, visitor) changes.

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Moreover, not all museums are doing as much work to parse out different communities (even as they might homogenize those communities). Some museums in Quito conflate certain Indigenous Andean groups and the overall narrative from the nation-state is that there are 14 distinct communities with Quichua being one of these groups although it encompasses many communities, such as the Puruhá (Minority Rights Group 2018). Even though many Indigenous people will mention Quichua as one of their identifiers they nearly always qualify it with another community, like Puruhá. These other forms of categorization, including the racial and ethnic mapping on Indigenous identities to particular locations, are processes of hegemonic, generally White, institutions (Sleeper-Smith 2009). Thus, interpreters may take up understandings of broad and homogeneous Indigenous identities, based around a single object or ensemble as both a token *and* a type of that identity.

On the other hand, the way designers, vendors, and at times wearers insist on the uniqueness of individual pieces and imbue them with meaning for both the individual and the community work against this homogeneity, even at the level of a singular Puruhá identity. Ultimately, Puruhá dress taken as a whole, as a phenomenon embedded in and produced through material tokens is a means of creating, contesting, and reinforcing identities, and negotiating the boundaries of these identities through relationships. There is no perfect model of a 'complete', and 'traditional' Puruhá ensemble, because it is not a formula, a display, but a practice, a continual choice and reevaluation even in a museum setting where it is assumed to be wholly representative. So too, is there no perfect model for what it means to be Puruhá, no clear designation of cultural belonging, but instead there are actions that create and recreate "Puruhá-ness". At the same time, these

processes do have certain expectations when it comes to, for instance, the intersectionality of gendered identities. Indeed, in highly dualistic gendered societies there are fairly clear designations of gendered identities, even as they exist within Puruhá-ness.

4.4 I. SEMIOTIC RE(PRODUCTION) OF GENDERED IDEOLOGIES

Women's Puruhá dress is the focus of designers regardless of their gender. Male dress is far less commonly produced, sold, and worn, yet it is very semiotically significant within and, to some extent, outside of the Puruhá community. It can index expectations or complications of idealized Puruhá masculinity and community resistance. The basic element of the male Puruhá dress is the poncho, which was also the article of male Puruhá clothing mentioned most commonly. Aside from the poncho, literature and participants also reference an all-white lightweight pant and shirt combination, although this is often reserved for special occasions. There was some mention of a hat, both for men and women, although I only ever saw women's hats, and primarily in museums. Footwear never came up at all. In general, discussion men's Puruhá dress falls a bit short, and when asked, interviewees mentioned that more women than men wear the traditional style today. Therefore, the male ensemble is basically made up of these three items (shirt, pant, poncho), with the poncho being most common and generally worn over fast fashion clothing, like jeans and T-shirts, a means of sartorial code-mixing that I discuss further in 4.5. The poncho is also, like some aspects of Indigenous female dress, used across various Indigenous Andean communities. It is a sign of indigeneity writ large, and the social movements Indigenous peoples in the region have taken on. Moreover, it incites physical, emotional and other reactions as interpretants, that continue to affect

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participants. Within the Puruhá community specifically, there might seem to be little distinction in contrast to other ponchos, but throughout my fieldwork a quality (redness), and certain embroidered symbols (the *cruz chakana* or *cruz Andina)* have been claimed as specifically Puruhá in relation to the poncho.

4.4 II. THE PONCHO ROJO AND THE CRUZ CHAKANA

The *poncho rojo* within Ecuador acts as a sign that may index indigeneity, cultural heritage, and a social movement. It is associated with Puruhá people in and around Riobamba who contributed to that movement. Along with the use of redness in women's wardrobes, the poncho's redness was also said to signify Indigenous blood, and a spirit of rebellion, but in addition it is tied to a particular uprising. The June 4, 1990 Indigenous uprising, organized by CONAIE, was a response to agrarian reform legislation and neoliberal policies, as well other ongoing class-based and ethnic troubles (Becker 2011). This was a turning point for Indigenous rights in Ecuador, and it was symbolized in part by the *poncho rojo.* Although several different Andean Indigenous populations across Latin American countries use red ponchos, and red has global associations with revolution, the *poncho rojo* in Ecuador is unique in both what is said about it, and what is not said about it.

Academic resources on the *poncho rojo* in Ecuador generally point to its use in particular cultural events and ceremonies, or the way it is representative of Andean thought, the wisdom and therefore power of the community (Carmilema 2016; Valdivieso 2013). Franklin, designer and founder of *VISPU,* mentioned that in the past red ponchos would be designated for a professional or leader in the community, although now anyone who wants to can wear it. This was repeated to me at the museum in Cacha, where the

other poncho colors were said to be representative of different individuals' roles within the society. Many interviewees simply mentioned the *poncho rojo* as traditional to the Puruhá, or to Cacha specifically. Unlike redness in women's dress, which held to more or less one narrative, the red poncho seems to indicate a broader variety of things depending on who you consult, similar to the varied narratives of embroidery. For example, the association with the 1990 uprising explicitly came up twice with interviewees. The first time was during my master's fieldwork, the incident mentioned in chapter two involving street harassment. The participant was a Puruhá man who lived in Quito and wore the full male outfit frequently. He was walking down the street when a group of men began yelling at him, calling him names, and citing his red poncho's association with Indigenous resistance, but in this case they also attached it to communism. Although I did not witness any incidents like this in person, it was a moment where a particular semiotic process mediated through dress became evident, and the interruptions of interpretation that shift the (in this case physical and verbal) interpretant. The sign here is linked not only to the body in question, but also to resistance as a threat, and to other ideologies that may or may not actually be associated with the poncho's significance for my participant. In turn, this interpretation has incited actions which could harm or otherwise affect the participant/wearer. Here we see how statements about dress (as a sign) entail ideological positions, and how social action based on ideological positions requires a semiotic basis since it requires orientation to the world that relies on signs (Gal and Irvine 2019). In this instance, ideological difference is evident and the contestation between these ideologies is played out through the sign of the *poncho rojo*. In other instances, meaning is (re)made through discourse alone, talk about the poncho without it being present. Patricia, who

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grew up in Licto, and identifies her parents as *Mestizo,* but with Puruhá ancestry. She stated that during this Indigenous uprising in the 1990s, the Indigenous people around Chimborazo played a significant role. They moved into Riobamba from the mountains, wearing their typical red ponchos, and *Mestizos* who lived in the city closed up their shops, and houses, afraid of the protesters. This uprising would result in a shift of political consciousness for Indigenous people (Becker 2011), and the subsequent political and social gains seen over the last two to three decades. The *poncho rojo* was a part of this shift, not only because of its use in this moment, but because of its continued popularity among the Puruhá over all other available colors, and their increasing visibility in Indigenous rights movements. During the 2019 protests previously mentioned, a friend of Sisa's was watching the news on her phone and told me that Puruhá people were coming from Riobamba and the surrounding country so now things were going to get done, but she also explicitly referred to their red ponchos, reiterating and (re)establishing the stance embedded in the use of this poncho and, more directly, her own contextually situated understanding of this stance. She was speaking to an Indigenous Puruhá rebelliousness and ability to sway political policy decisions, which she was ultimately correct about. However, this statement required the context of an emerging protest and the listener (me) being ready to take in information about ideologies embedded in dress, which Sisa's friend knew.

In other instances, the meaning of the red poncho might shift, dependent on who I was talking to, what their role was, and how their memories served them, as much as on their expectation of who I was and what my role was. These varied and changing constructions of meaning reflect the multitude of discourses surrounding this deeply

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intertextual garment. The *poncho rojo* may invoke rebellion, or class status, or any other number of things but is centered on the conscious processing of 'redness'. To understand how this quality (redness) is attached to a medium with other qualities (the poncho, its material, cut, etc.), I return to Peirce's (1991) notions of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Firstness is aligned with quality of feeling, secondness with relation or reaction, and thirdness to representation or mediation. As an example, the abstracted quality of 'redness' (firstness) as embodied in the poncho (secondness) relates many meanings (the 1990 uprising, historical Puruhá leaders, political liberation) through thirdness (in this case the consciousness, thought of my participants). 'Redness' in the poncho is thus intimately tied to its medium, and therefore all the other qualities and stories associated with this medium. It is the processing of these linkages, the meaning and networks established through them, that are central to Puruhá dress.

Another such quality among the Puruhá, those from Cacha in particular (Carmilema 2016, Valdivieso 2013), is a weaving pattern that incorporates the *cruz chakana*. The *cruz chakana* in the Puruhá cosmology is said to represent time and space, the four directions, and the four times of day (dawn, morning, sunset, and dusk (Janeta Janeta 2015)). It also represents gender duality, day and night, equilibrium, and numerous other cosmological values (Carmilema 2016). I have seen the four seasons and the four elements of air, water, earth, and fire, represented on the *cruz Chakana* during the seasonal ceremonies of *Inti Raymi* and *Pawkar Raymi*. It is a symbol and a guide, not just among the Puruhá, but also for Indigenous people throughout the Andes. Christian, an Otavaleño tour guide, explained to me that the Otavalo poncho mimics the *cruz chakana*, and can be lain on the ground to represent the cardinal directions. Despite its popularity,

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the history of the pattern itself is convoluted and unclear (Miguel 2017, Timmer 2003, Tone and Freddy 2010, Urton 1980), which infringes on what some consumers/viewers might consider its 'authenticity'. The term authenticity is itself mutable, but some colloquial arguments for authenticity imagine a distinct historical meaning for a symbol, passed down through generations, changed as little as possible. In this understanding of authenticity, the changing and varied significances of the *cruz chakana* would indicate a lack of or at least questionable authenticity. However, depending on the expectations, background, and positionality of the consumer/viewer, they may formulate authenticity in any number of ways that may or may not align with some Puruhá users of the *cruz chakana.* Ideologies of authenticity that don't align can be problematic in the world of buying and selling Indigenous goods, since authenticity itself is a double-edged sword. It can protect Indigenous producers if, by virtue of their ethnic and cultural identification, they are deemed 'authentic' producers, but it also forces them to reproduce certain models of ethnicity (Lamrad and Hanlon 2014, Scafidi 2005).

Regardless of notions of authenticity, the *cruz chakana* is a central sign in the Puruhá cosmovision and is most notable within the Puruhá world as a feature of the Koko poncho or Cacha poncho (Carmilema 2016). There are other places where this particular pattern emerges, such as on the handmade *shigra* bags that I have watched Puruhá women make and sell in open air markets and shops, but the application is different than on that of the male poncho. The poncho has its own name/designation because of these layered (co-occurring) signs of the poncho, redness, and the *cruz chakana*. However, any use of this pattern is part of a part of the story of a pre-Incan Puruhá society that has lost much of its history but is reemerging with aesthetic symbols that revive or recreate this

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history, depending on who you ask. Still, this particular instance of the Koko poncho indexes a shared identity of Puruhá men from Cacha specifically, in a way that other male

Figure 4.11 Textile for poncho at *Museo Cultural Pucara Tambo* in Cacha, Ecuador

Figure 4.12 Cruz Chakana painted on concrete ground at the *Universidad Central de Ecuador* in Quito for Pawkar Raymi

dress may not. While not all Puruhá men, or all men from Cacha may wear this particular poncho, it is emblematic, appearing on billboards, worn by community leaders in interviews, and in media that shows "traditional" dress from Cacha. It is significant for the (re)construction of Puruhá male identity today and is most visible in places where this identity might be reasserted, at weddings, festivals, or political venues, for instance.

4.4 III. CHANGING PURUHA MASCULINITIES

These details are mutually intelligible within a particular semiotic community, wherein a number of signs are encompassed, and thirds are held in common or in contrast to another group (Kockelman 2005). The semiotic community's reflexivity about the multiple meaning of thirds (ibid) is not just a means of understanding, but also a means of sharing and creating those meanings. What happens then when those details and those

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garments are contextualized by other garments in an outfit or by the body of the wearer himself? We can look at the poncho as a singular article of clothing, and in many instances it is all that is necessary to 'read' someone as Puruhá. It was also often the only aspect of male Puruhá dress used in a man's ensemble. *Mestizo* or Western styles supplemented the rest of the outfit, indexing a daily balance of assimilation and rejection. Similar to female Puruhá dress, there were high rates of what I am referring to as code-mixing, using pieces of dress that are *Mestizo* and Indigenous together in a particular instance and/or switching between these styles (see 4.5). As an example, men commonly paired a poncho with jeans and tennis shoes, or a Western dress pant with dress shoes. Yet somehow the poncho, perhaps because of its size, or its recognition within Ecuador, remains a strong index of indigeneity, and in certain iterations Puruhá-ness, even if it is the only Indigenous element present. The simple removal of the poncho could facilitate '*Mestizo*-ness' very easily, depending on any other number of co-occurring signs.

One element that enhances or diminishes certain semiotic discourses of the poncho is the way that physical features are perceived in relation to racial/ethnic categorizations. The body is always part of dress, because dress is made with the body in mind (however abstract) and does most of its communicative work on bodies. The body is both a social product, and a social process (Foucault in Kopnina 2007), so social and cultural developments can be read on the body (Kopnina 2007). This occurs in many ways, including how the movement of the body conforms to societal norms (Bourdieu 1984), which bodies are seen as legitimate or illegitimate within a certain constructed categorization (such as Indigenous), and in how individuals adopt and adapt aspects of their bodies to play with such norms and categorizations. Dress is obviously a part of this

play, and perhaps the most mutable. Yet, in the case of Puruhá (and indeed other Andean Indigenous) men, changing their dress styles was less 'play' and more survival. The history of discrimination in Ecuador against Indigenous people meant that Indigenous men who moved into the cities in search of work, even as recently as the 1990s and early 2000s, would purposely discard any articles of clothing that would mark them as Indigenous. As Franklin, the head designer of *VISPU* who himself often moves between wearing *Mestizo* and Puruhá dress noted (also see chapter two):

Lo que se puede decir es que ha cambiado ya al respeto de muchas personas por lo que nosotros somos ... incluso aceptar ya como se viste cada persona y todo eso. Antes eran criticados, o eran de risas y veras a un hombre así con poncho y todos, pero ahora no. ... Se puede decir que ya casi no hay como antes ya la discriminación racial.

What can be said is that it has already changed, to the respect of many people for who we are … even accept how each person dresses and all that. Before they were criticized, or they were laughing and you will see a man like that, with a poncho and everything, but not now. … You can say that there is almost no longer racial discrimination like before.

His statement is a hopeful one, and also one that explains how the poncho became reintegrated as discrimination waned, and to be visibly Indigenous no longer cost an individual a good job, and in turn financial comfort. Thus, the development of a new

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common male style emerged. It combined the practicality of wearing *Mestizo* jeans and t-shirts, which would get far less dirty than an all-white cotton outfit, with the poncho, a clear indicator of indigeneity (and also very warm during the colder season). This is an example of agency and performance, how the dressed body acts as both the subject and object of dress *practice* (Hansen 2004:369). Puruhá men perform certain masculinities through dress that are also racialized as *Mestizo* or Indigenous, to support certain ideas or ensure certain outcomes. Again, dressing the individual relies on the body as context, to carry through or challenge a meaning. Within Puruhá dress styles, body as context for dress, or dress as context for body, relies on socially (re)produced understandings of gender and ethnicity. In the case of male Puruhá dress, the two are intimately intertwined.

Although facial structure, skin tone, and other characteristics may or may not contribute to 'reading' an individual as *Mestizo* or Indigenous within Ecuador, another more mutable characteristic mentioned was hair. Hair is a special case among Indigenous populations in Latin America because it can be manipulated easily, but it is a strong ethnic marker. Perhaps it makes sense that something more mutable would be a stronger indicator of Indigenousness, in many cases, than a non-mutable bodily feature. There is a long history in Latin America wherein ethnicity (and whether explicit or not, racial categorizations) are linked to physical environment (Andrade 2002; Bauer 2014; Cervone 2010), to embodied practices like drinking or eating (Wade 2005), and to education, or other socially sanctioned moralities (De la Cadena 2001). Long male hair is both characteristic and practice. It can be cut or grown, requires certain kinds of maintenance, and is often manipulated to reflect cultural or ethnic belonging. Some regard hair as sacred to Indigenous peoples in Latin America. For the Puruhá hair was cut at 12 years

old, during puberty, the first stage of learning, and then at 24, the age of adulthood and responsibility (Janeta Janeta 2015). Under Incan rule it was first cut at seven years old, only to symbolize respect to the seven natural powers (ibid). During the Spanish conquest Puruhá hair was cut as punishment, in part because of the resistance of the people (ibid). This is the same theme of resistance that is embedded in the quality of redness. This history of hair is just that, a story of hair as resistance, which lends itself to contemporary subversion.

Multiple individuals mentioned long hair on men as an Indigenous characteristic that has become rarer alongside attempts to assimilate to *Mestizo-ness*, or just to be able to function in the *Mestizo* majority world. When I met Elena and her husband Christian, both Otavaleños who work in tourism and sell Indigenous made goods, I also met their son. Elena told me that he has always had a ponytail, and when people come up to her they tell her what a cute baby girl she has. I found this strange, because although he was around four or five years old, there was nothing about him, to me, that indicated female-ness in particular. In fact, I had assumed that she had dressed him to present as a boy. Constructions of gender are fluid and change along with societal norms, but within Ecuador young children are highly gendered into a dual system. The *Mestizo* version of that duality, and increasingly the Indigenous version, suggests that short hair on a child is an index for maleness, and long hair for femaleness. When I asked about the hair, her response was that he has long hair because they are Otavaleños. The father, Christian, also told me that long hair was sacred, and mimicked Atahualpa, which is why they punished the Inca leader by cutting his hair. Long hair for him was also a symbol of resistance, and the strength of a people. Therefore, hair is part of a particular gendered

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discourse that is read in conjunction with dress, one that focuses on resistance to conquest and assimilation. Long hair is part of the Puruhá "traditional" dress styles, an element that contributes to code-mixing the same way a poncho or a sandal might. Its meanings are also dependent on the context of the rest of the body, and of dress, much in the way any other dress article might be.

Thus, male Puruhá dress, as with female dress, is constantly shifting in context and with co-occurring signs, even as shared sartorial semiotic processes build ideologies around this dress, and subsequently communities centered around these dress-ideologies. It is a process of creating identities and making visible histories, particularly those histories that focus on pride through strife. This dress is also a process of mediating relationships between those who do or don't have access to particular sartorial codes. What relationship is created, for instance, when some individuals see a *poncho rojo* as a threat, and not a symbol of cultural pride? What relationships are formed when gender is ascribed to long hair, and not Indigenous identity? For Puruhá men, it is unclear if and when their dress will have as strong a revival as female dress, but it is clearly still central to sartorial discourse about Puruhá dress and materially mediated sign triads.

4.5 I. OBJECT AGENCY AND CODE MIXING

In thinking then, about dress as semiotic processes enacted in context, I have privileged a thematic analysis that can be applied to semiotics, and a Peircean model that focuses on the human intentions and interpretations that create or disrupt semiotic communities. However, this should not mean that we forget about the agency of dress objects. Worn on the body, clothing restricts and enables movement, both physically and socially. In many instances the dress style trains the body, whether it be physically, in

taking small strides to keep a wrapped skirt from unraveling, or mentally, enacting

certain behaviors in fancy dress that would seem far less necessary in jeans and a t-shirt.

Of course, this is always an interplay with societal expectations as well, a relationship

between object and society that is ever-present in Puruhá cosmology. In fact, object

agency is especially interesting within the context of Indigenous Andean populations

broadly, wherein a cosmovision exists that takes into account what things *do*, in

particular within the natural world. Things, like mountains, physically act, through

landslides, changes in the surface, and other physical shifts. These "actions" guide human

movement, in part because they are given value and intentions (Bauer and Koshiba

2016). For instance, among the Puruhá, *suerte* (luck) was understood to be transferred

from mountains through rum, and thus one must drink with the mountain to receive this

suerte, and to transfer it back and forth between communities (see Swanson 1994). In one

instance material changes affect human behavior, and in the other bouts of luck or lack

thereof are attributed to the mountain, which therefore indirectly causes more human

action. Either way, it is clear that the relationship of Indigenous Andean populations with

the physical world is still present today. For instance, the love story between the beloved

mountains *Taita Chimborazo* and *Mama Tungurahua*[37] still comes up in conversation and

is a popular story to tell locals and tourists alike. The dramatic love story makes it clear

that there is still a form of animism present among Andean people, where objects can act

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[37] There are several variations on the story, including several different mountains, but the main couple is Chimborazo and Tungurahua. In some, Taita Cotopaxi (an active volcano) fights with Taita Chimborazo (Ecuador's highest mountain) for the love of Mama Tungurahua (another volcano). Mama Tungurahua has several different love affairs, depending on the story, and in the end marries Chimborazo, and some say, they have the Pinchincha volcano.

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outside of the will of people (loving, fighting, having children), even if those actions later affect local populations, such as in the eruption of a volcano. Of course, the natural environment and manmade objects have many differences, and if some Puruhá recognize the agency of a mountain, or a river, it does not mean they are thinking about dress the same way. However, it is still important to contextualize ways of talking about dress in a cultural environment where *things* matter, not just as tools, but also as agentive objects. Puruhá dress may not have the same power that the natural world does, but much of its significance *is* tied to the natural world, through embroidery, colors, and fabrics, and this relationship itself is culturally powerful.

Puruhá dress reveals both the agency of the object and human interpretation that, at times, uses object agency as a means to explain other socio-cultural phenomena. For example, the skirt portion of Puruhá dress, the *anaco*, is a strong indication of Indigenous identity in general, and in specific forms[38], an indicator of Puruhá identity specifically. However, many young Puruhá women forgo the *anaco* for blue jeans or other pants. Again, the reasoning for many of these women was comfort, that it was easier to work, particularly when doing manual labor, easier to ride the bus, and to get around in the city. In other words, the freedom that pants allowed was different from the restrictions of the *anaco*. This makes sense; a wrap skirt needs to be tightened every so often as you move, so as not to fall open, and since neither the skirt nor the belt are necessarily fitted with closures, you're dependent on fabric wrapping over itself for security. Jeans would allow

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[38] Like other Indigenous Andean populations, the Puruhá *anaco* is a long Black wrap skirt, but it is distinguishable from Otavaleño versions in that it only has a Black layer, not the distinctive white under-layer that traditional Otavalo dress has. The Puruhá *anaco* can also be embroidered at the edges or retain a strip of fabric on the edges indicating origin of production (often European).

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for different postures, different ways of sitting, and depending on the pair, eliminate the need for adjustment. This is a form of what I call code-mixing.

Although they cannot be exact parallels this use of Indigenous articles of dress with *Mestizo* articles of dress, for instance an Indigenous blouse with jeans, is akin to code-switching. Code-switching is a process, enacted in social moments, utilizing two or more different grammatical systems or subsystems (Gumperz 1977). This would include systems of communication that may not be spoken language, but material culture is distinct because although it is not a language, it is a semiotic process. As Kockelman (2005) notes, the constituents of material culture are thirds, based on the Peircean tripartite model. Peirce's third (the sign as a whole), is made of the relationship between its components, of the object, sign (vehicle), and interpretant. Any one of these components can generally act as another component. I am most concerned here with how these sets of thirds (signs, objects, interpretants) become shared in common, creating codes (ibid). Dress objects act as various thirds, and as they are interpreted and understood between individuals, a shared code is created. This code is not one, but many, although some individuals may only share particular codes for a dress item. Therefore, when one item which is already laden with so much significance and which produces and mediates behaviors and relationships, is paired with, say jeans, which have their own shared codes, it is reminiscent of a dual language speaker code switching. The wearer and the observer must share two (or more) different codes in order for successful communication to occur[39].

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[39] What is deemed "successful" communication may vary, but at least some recognition of a shared sartorial code or codes would be its basis.

However, dress is visual, and all the information dress styles present is received more or less at once. It might be argued that some details are uncovered over time, much in the same way looking at a painting first gives an impression, and then reveals its brushstrokes, color layers, and techniques. This can certainly be true, but for most individuals going about their daily lives this deep analysis never happens with regard to dress as it is encountered in passing, and secondary to the individual wearing it. Therefore, these articles and aspects of dress are cotemporaneous; they exist and give an impression primarily in the same instant. In this way, there is less construction of information over time, less back and forth, in contrast to a conversation that uses code-switching. Both language and dress are semiotic processes, but for dress the interpretive process is usually shorter, which is interesting since the dress object is also less ephemeral than spoken language[40] In conversation with a friend, words come and go, co-constructing conversations and meaning making, but the dress remains a constant, only continuing to create meaning after the initial impression in certain cases where it is the topic of conversation, or where it changes while the individuals are talking. Therefore, I find it useful to think of using different dress 'styles' or 'genres in one look as more of a 'code-mixing' rather than a code-switching.

This is one of many reasons control over the sartorial discourse about Puruhá dress, though desirable for many of my participants, is an impossible task (ibid). The mixing of clothing aspects and articles can change the interpretants of dress and thus,

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[40] Of course the auditory sensory experience of language isn't always ephemeral, nor is the visual sensory experience of dress always a longer experience, but usually in a conversation with someone words come and go throughout the interaction, while dress remains visible in more or less the same state until the interaction is over.

interrupt signs that would be part of a shared code. In addition, cultural sharing among Andean groups makes for some similar overall ensembles, which often require an eye for variation of small dress details. Sometimes, Puruhá dress will only be read as Indigenous dress, often by *Mestizo* and *gringo* viewers. This mixing of dress items, histories of cultural exchange, personal choice, weather, comfort, and any other number of factors makes it impossible to say Puruhá dress is always one static combination of features. Questions arise, like how many articles need to be present to make a supposedly complete Puruhá outfit? Which are the crucial pieces or aspects that distinguish it as Puruhá, as opposed to say, Otavaleño? How much *Mestizo* or fast fashion can be added to the outfit before it becomes unrecognizable?

As I mentioned, a blouse, *faja,* and *anaco* combination is what I would recognize as a full ensemble, with the blouse being a central marker, but I have also seen women wearing the *anaco* and *faja* with a commercial T-shirt and hoodie, which also felt very genuinely Puruhá. At times this combination felt more "authentic" in the sense that it was so common to see in the daily working lives of women. Here economic and physical restrictions seem to contribute to motivations for this hybridity. In the Andean highlands it can get cold remarkably quickly, and in some seasons the weather changes dramatically over the course of a day. It makes sense that one might need a layer that provides warmth, and the traditional *bayeta* does not cover the arms completely. It is also pinned together and might not allow for the same freedom of movement as a sweater or jacket. Moreover, commercial t-shirts are far less expensive than Puruhá blouses, which can run a wide range of pricing, but generally sell anywhere between $35 and a few hundred dollars, with the most common pricing being $50-$70. Although producers and sellers of

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blouses gave me various price ranges, they were the article of Puruhá clothing that had the potential to be the most expensive. For many buyers the cost would restrict these blouses to special occasions. Even at $35, for a machine made, not very elaborate piece, these were well over the cost of a T-shirt, which could start around $5. This, of course, depends on where you shop, the country of manufacture, and if you are looking for particular brands. Still, t-shirts can be extremely cheap, and if you are working and getting dirty during the day, it is unlikely you would want to wear an elaborately embroidered blouse, especially since the base fabric color is nearly always white.

Many Puruhá women work inside shops, at their homes, and in other locations where a Puruhá blouse would not be unusual, but many also work on farms, or as street vendors. If the *Mestizo* elements present are only the t-shirt, or jacket/hoodie, the outfit can still conform to the overall shape of a Puruhá outfit. Moreover, by my observation this combination was so prevalent for Puruhá women that it never seemed to invalidate a Puruhá or Indigenous identity. In fact, I came to recognize these Western jackets and hoodies as 'traditional', i.e. commonly used as part of the Puruhá wardrobe. This was due to both the commonality on the street, and the fact that they were often sold in shops that specialized in Puruhá dress. In these cases, there was no distinction between *Mestizo* and Puruhá clothing, and everything sold was meant to serve the same clientele, as part of Puruhá dress, including these hoodies and jackets. Therefore, I understood that though these articles of clothing would not be explicitly called Puruhá because they were not Puruhá made, they were very much a part of the Puruhá wardrobe. However, those who are unfamiliar with Puruhá dress when it does not reflect models seen in museums or travel guides may not interpret this code-mixing in the same manner. Like other forms of

communication, verbal, bodily, written, this is not an all or nothing process of communication. There are differences of interpretations, and different indexes that may or may not be shared, to varying degrees.

It is this variability, this (re)creation of difference that makes shared semiotic codes viable as bases for sartorial semiotic communities. There is no definitive number of shared codes that would create a semiotic community but certainly having more in common could create a stronger relationship between community members (Kockelman 2005). In addition, it is not simply that one belongs to a singular community or not, but rather they may belong to one or many groups to varying extents. This is evident in shared 'rules' of code-mixing, just as it is in *qualia* mixing. For example, one sartorial semiotic community may share codes for 'traditional' Puruhá dress (such as members of the older Puruhá community), and another sartorial semiotic community may share codes for a genre of Puruhá dress that mixes 'traditional' and 'contemporary' (such as younger Puruhá individuals using *Mestizo* design elements, and fast fashion articles of clothing with 'traditional' dress). There is no reason that, for instance, a young Puruhá designer can't belong to both of these sartorial semiotic communities (even if they transgress the rules/expectations of one or the other at times). I question, for instance, if older Puruhá individuals might allow for mixing articles, a *Mestizo* jacket over a Puruhá blouse, but not allow for mixing *qualia,* like using Chinese synthetic fabrics with Puruhá embroidery

Indigenous Andean designers, sellers, and buyers might seem to share at least a recognition of code-mixing that allows for *Mestizo* and Indigenous elements within contemporary Indigenous dress. Yet, Puruhá designers are not just mixing articles from both categories, but also utilizing Indigenous and *Mestizo* elements, or *qualia* within a

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single garment, such as a corset structure emboldened with common embroidered themes and a familiar color palette. These designers still consider the dress item wholly Puruhá, but some individuals who are not Puruhá might question the authenticity of these clothing pieces. In the interview with Malvi, she said she believes that although Puruhá people have gotten accolades for modernizing[41] their styles, they also seem to have lost some of what was there before. She sees more of a distinction between Indigenous dress and *Mestizo* dress, regardless of a long history of dress change and exchange within all Indigenous communities, including her own Otavaleño community. Yet, she also participates in mixing *Mestizo* articles of clothing with Indigenous articles of clothing, which for her, seems to be less problematic than *qualia* mixing. In all these instances, the choice to wear both *Mestizo* and Puruhá dress at the same time or to mix features of each do not invalidate the significance of dress for the maker and wearer. Code-mixing, as co-occurring signs, simply evidences the complexity that already exists in ideologies of difference that dress presents. In turn, it evidences the intricacies that exist in the semiotic communities formed around recognition and shared ideologies.

4.6 SEMIOTIC COMMUNITIES: EMBROIDERING GAPS IN GENERATIONS

A semiotic community encompasses a number of signs (not just linguistic), and thirds can be held in common or in contrast to another group (Kockelman 2005). Groups can be reflexive about the multiple meanings of thirds. This involves multiple interpretants, and often social or intentional statuses (ibid). For example, within a

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[41] In many cases modernizing meant incorporation of Western dress elements, but the term itself is complex and often used contradictorily. At times it would be used to critique the loss of more "traditional" styles, but in other instances it meant the revival and preservation of these same "traditional" styles.

community wherein dress is used as one of many signs, and has many interpretations, it can be used as a sign that stands for the object (in the case of Indigenous dress perhaps this object is identity or affinity) and has other individuals as it's interpretants. A shared understanding might be considered a code (ibid). However, there is another, or several other thirds at play including the relationship between one's role as a wearer of a particular dress, the status this confers and again, multiple interpretants with their own attitudes about that dress. A semiotic community is never homogeneous in their ideologies (and an individual's ideological frameworks are not necessarily static) but do share one or many central ideologies that are embedded in semiotic processes, like dress signs. Indeed, of all the things a signifier could signify only some belong to the ensemble (of knowledge) that constitutes the knower (Kockelman 2011).

Although I am not a part of the Puruhá community, I am being given access to particular semiotic codes, generally through discourse, where my linguistic code is lacking. In other words, what would be lost to me as a non-Quichua speaker and non-Native Puruhá community member is being translated, though not completely, through the dress and Spanish language simultaneously. In this way my relationship shifts. I cannot "read" that swirl symbol of the *churrito* as a Puruhá individual would, not just because of lacking language skills, but by virtue of my positionality. Yet I do have access to a newfound code, granted to me by these designers, that marks my own difference from those *Mestizos* and *gringos* who have not taken in this particular discourse. While my accuracy in interpreting the object is incomplete, it is a bridge to the community, something she is offering me so that I can then engage in my own process of translation, to the academic, non-Puruhá community, and the non-academic community in the U.S.

(presumably in English). What is lost in all these layers of translation certainly matters but what is created in its place are layers of relationships that form through the material object. In fact, that is the exact type of work that many designers intend for their creations, to make evident Puruhá difference and incite mobilization against cultural erasure through the expansion of semiotic communities.

This expansion necessarily includes non-Puruhá individuals and interactions that occur outside of the Ecuadorian context, but it also includes semiotic processes that involve other dress signs, not just Puruhá. For instance, the shared sign of Indigenous Andean dress can result in establishing relationships which would otherwise not seem significant until they are out of a local or even national context. Silvia who I mentioned earlier with regard to education is a Puruhá designer who embroiders blouses out of her home for customers under the brand name *Bordados Galilea*. She is young, educated, and intent on finding new, creative imagery for her designs. She lives in Quito now, and commented to me that Indigenous dress isn't striking to her here (in Ecuador), because it's so common. However, when she was visiting the States, in Missouri, she saw a woman in Indigenous Andean dress, which was a pleasant shock and incited conversation between the two. In this instance it was not even Puruhá dress, it was Otavaleño, but outside of the Ecuadorian Andes this was enough of a shared code that it created a relationship where one did not exist prior. In other words, seeing this dress style in the context of Missouri was jarring for Silvia, which actually led her to speak to the woman wearing the clothing, establishing a new social network. At the same time, it expanded her expectations of Indigenous Andean dress, that it (and its wearers) were not so

restricted in their movement or reach. The change of context opened up both her expectations and her relationships.

Still, despite the fact that dress can help facilitate, maintain, and change relationships, there remain certain disconnects, such as those between what younger generations do and what older generations think they do with regard to making and wearing traditional or *Mestizo* dress styles. This movement of contemporary Puruhá dress, and contemporary Indigenous dress styles in general, is primarily spurred by young designers, sellers, and buyers, often in their 20s and 30s, while older individuals, who generally sell items in markets or tourist areas, say that the younger generation *doesn't* wear 'traditional' styles anymore. They reference girls wearing jeans or pants as a part of this shift. Margarita, who is 56, sells in the plaza in Riobamba certain days of the week. She makes *shigras,* traditional hand-woven bags, herself, as she sits in her stall. She has items that are distinctly from Cacha, although she also sells items that are undeniably similar to Otavaleño and other mass made Indigenous products. She said that young people don't wear the traditional dress like her, or if they do, they don't wear the whole thing, just parts that are easier to buy and wear. Here, she seems to call into question the legitimacy of code-mixing in a way that it often isn't among younger individuals. For Margarita, code-mixing and wearing traditional dress are not really the same thing, but for many young Puruhá individuals traditional dress *also* encompasses *Mestizo* style; there is no distinction. A contemporary Puruhá blouse that features a sweetheart neckline and corsetry boning is *still* Puruhá. A leather jacket worn over a blouse, *faja,* and *anaco* outfit, doesn't make the outfit less Puruhá. Of course, I was speaking primarily with designers, sellers, and consumers who bought this contemporary style and there may well

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be young Puruhá individuals who don't recognize this code-mixing as 'really' Puruhá. Still, among all my interviewees the age gap in production and consumption of this style was very noticeable.

Though not as remarked upon, this shift in contemporary Puruhá dress, of code-mixing as legitimate and of mixing *Mestizo* and Indigenous design elements, is also related to changes in embroidery. There is an emerging discourse by designers and producers of the individual meaning present within embroidered designs and playfulness with novel images and symbols. Many Puruhá designers mentioned individual choice and inspiration that came from daily life as an explanation for their designs generally, and embroidery particularly. Sisa uses floral patterns, which are common but are also what she is personally drawn to. She mentioned that she gets inspired in dreams sometimes or by a certain feeling and then sketches, but she also said that the world around her provides design inspiration. She sees people and things that inspire her on the street or in malls and might take a photo to draw from. Carmenita gets her inspiration from a variety of sources as well; online, from antique and ancient Indigenous objects, from her grandparents, or just people she knows. She then draws out a design and picks the thread colors she needs. Franklin is interested in the history of the dress but focuses heavily on updating styles for younger people and tries to target what they want to wear with a feeling of cultural retention. Silvia mentions that she has her own unique designs, and although she too uses floral motifs quite often, she is also very playful and experimental in her embroidery. On her Facebook page she posts pictures of local flowers, citing *la Pachamamita* as her inspiration. Many of her blouses do have popular floral designs, but there are also more unusual images, a hand embroidered cartoon penguin dancing atop

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pink and purple blooms, for instance. She mentioned to me in conversation that she loves penguins, and so she played with putting one into a design. She also said she wanted to begin experimenting with designs that incorporate Mickey Mouse[42].

Here we see a brightly colored floral design by Silvia, fairly typical of Puruhá blouses, but surrounding a cartoon penguin in the same color palette. She is combining very recognizably Puruhá elements with something that is seemingly new, in a garment made to target children. Most Puruhá children's clothing (and in fact children's clothing

Figure 4.13 Embroidery design by Silvia, posted on *Bordados Galilea* Facebook page on October 16, 2017

from other Indigenous Andean groups as well) is the adult version scaled down, without anything specifically targeted towards children. Moreover, animal embroidery or woven

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[42] This is an interesting use of a sign that carries with it a lot of indexical weight, which changes when moved from the United States into the context of Ecuador. It is also a sign that is legally protected within the United States, but for Silvia's business does not seem to pose any sort of legal threat, likely because of her fairly local reach.

images on Puruhá dress are always (outside of what I've seen from Silvia) geometric, without facial expression, and not done in a cartoon style. Here, Silvia is using Puruhá traditional style with contemporary children's wear and her personal love of cartoon penguins to create a garment that feels new and exciting. Her blouse speaks to other Puruhá garments and other *Mestizo* or global children's wear, and the penguin itself speaks to other cartoon animals, shows, and books, different textual forms. No Puruhá designers are static in the styles they produce but none were as playful with embroidery as Silvia.

Since embroidery is understood to have strong cultural significance it is understandable that it might be riskier to play with that element. This could be seen as upsetting the strong index of Puruhá identity and other cosmological and social values within that identity. However, even those that did not stray far from common design elements did mention personal choice and uniqueness in their designs. These designers are participating in a certain discourse about Puruhá culture and identity (maintenance or (re)creation of this identity), and yet that discourse also speaks to self-determination and economic autonomy of Indigenous people. What is gained in reasserting this identity, in remembering embroidered meaning?

The sartorial discourse of Puruhá embroidery (and dress in general) as laden with tradition, culture, and embedded ancestral knowledge also fluctuates with other discourses around the fashion designer as an individual artist/genius, who draws inspiration from the world and manifests it as something new. These designers are using *Mestizo* and Western notions of the artist genius to position themselves (and Puruhá culture mediated via dress) as on par with the artist geniuses of global high fashion.

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Conversations about how Puruhá culture and identity *are* related to artistic creativity, innovation and play in contemporary Puruhá dress make this visible. What's more, designers in particular[43] may have access to certain sets of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) that individuals who frame themselves only as producers or sellers do not. This access to cultural capital is increasingly important when thinking about tensions between designers who brand their items, and producers or sellers who do not. Still, regardless of the individual's cultural capital those who are part of the larger semiotic community and those who are also or only part of the Puruhá ethnic community benefit to some extent from the work of designers, producers, sellers and buyers at all scales. By sharing certain sartorial signs these community members also share reactions and mobilizations that emerge from dress and talk about dress. In this way cultural heritage is simultaneously preserved and allowed to change, without question to its authenticity, at least within these semiotic communities.

4.7 CONCLUSION: A HISTORY OF LO NUESTRO

Dress signs are interpreted by different communities, including Indigenous communities, *Mestizos,* foreign visitors, elderly Puruhá people, and other fashion designers. For the Puruhá there is a particular type of mobilization in talk about and wearing of this dress, an attempt to move beyond past and continued erasures and reiterate their existence. This growth also counters the violence and racism Indigenous Puruhá individuals have had to negotiate on a daily basis throughout their history. Confrontations with White and *Mestizo* terror have made, and continue to make being visibly Indigenous difficult, and

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[43] Arguably models of these high-fashion Puruhá brands, or anyone else who works with the brand (graphic designers, etc.) might also have access to these particular sets of cultural capital.

yet a sense of cultural pride was never erased. It is fitting that I end this chapter discussing Silvia's innovation in creating Puruhá dress that targets children through playfulness with embroidery. It is children, after all, who will be tasked with retaining cultural memory, but who will also, if today's trends are any indication, increasingly be moving away from their ancestral homes into new cities, countries, jobs, and lifestyles. Moreover, it is not just cultural identity but ideologies of race, ethnicity, and gender that are entwined with these dress styles, and thus it has yet to be seen how ideological shifts will affect interdiscursive readings of Puruhá dress. Creation and maintenance of Puruhá sartorial semiotic communities is one way of keeping certain signs and stories alive, but like the Puruhá individuals themselves, these semiotic communities cannot be static.

Puruhá dress designers and producers intrinsically understand this. They create new sartorial discourses, in particular the discourse of contemporary Puruhá dress that is traditional but not outdated, that can borrow from *Mestizo* fashion, but remains wholly Puruhá. This dress doesn't just represent a culture; it creates, sustains, and encourages cultural pride while allowing producers and consumers to play with individual expression. Like the use of 1950s Americana hyper-femme dress in some contemporary drag culture, or the chameleon quality of what are arguably *not* post-semiotic blue jeans (see Miller 2012), dress does not have to be static for it to retain meaning. In fact, it is this openness to change in the Puruhá dress market that has, in conjunction with cultural and political shifts, revived the style for younger generations, and thus ensured that the stories and codes embedded within its dress signs have a chance to endure.

CHAPTER 5

OWNERSHIP, APPROPRIATION, AND AESTHETIC PROPERTY

5.1 QUESTIONS OF OWNERSHIP AND APPROPRIATION

Notions of ownership and appropriation are fraught even within the narrow circles of academia, let alone within broader conversations through news sites, social media, and other public resources. In the Puruhá dress market, the same rings true; notions of ownership and in particular copying, vary by individual and individual experiences or motivations. This is perhaps unsurprising, but it does create conflict between various forms of 'branding', between the nation state, broader Puruhá culture, and individual designers, producers, and vendors. In particular, the Ecuadorian nation-state has incorporated various aspects of Indigenous identity into its national identity, as a sort of multicultural nation-state brand (Olson 2010). This concept of absorbing Indigenous heritage into the nation-state narrative (whether through heritage sites, land, resources, art, or any other tangible and intangible cultural products) is not uncommon in settler-Indigenous relationships (Hill 2007, Robertson 2015; Rodner and Kerrigan 2018, Thomas 1999). However, this absorption and reframing is also not the only story of Indigenous aesthetics. There are also aesthetic cultural commons within Indigenous communities that work to support a communal Indigenous 'brand' of sorts. For the Puruhá, this cultural commons is a well that includes shared designs, color palettes, textile processes and other

aesthetic features that both supports claims to, and are in conflict with, the term 'original'. This term varies, as many of my participants used 'original' across diverse demographics to legitimize particular artistic works or commodities that also were highly variable in terms of materials, inspiration, price, maker and many other features. This claim to originality is not always a claim of singularity but it is more often than not a claim to quality. Moreover, the idea of the aesthetic cultural commons and different understandings of originality also speak to ideas within the Puruhá community about ownership and, by extension, may also relate to or differ from other forms of Indigenous ownership.

In the subsequent chapter, I therefore review conflicts between Indigenous notions of ownership and the Western legal system's[44] definition of ownership, which subsequently affects the ways in which cases of appropriation may be undertaken. I do find however, that by virtue of the way the Puruhá dress market is set up today it is able to avoid external appropriation, at least on a large scale. At the same time, this also limits the customer base of Puruhá designers and sellers, and response to this varies. This is a base problem to the question of appropriation in the first place; it is as much a problem of cultural identity as of individual identity. We should not assume appropriation is always cultural exploitation or always reciprocal exchange. Cultural exploitation is the appropriation of a subordinate group's culture by a dominant group without reciprocity, permission, or compensation. The problem with investigating exploitation is that it operates from a model of culture as a clearly bounded, distinct entity, which then

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[44] In discussing Western legal systems I am speaking not just to legal systems that exist in the Western world, but also those who have taken from this model and applied it to legal entities that work under the national governments, wherever they might be.

contributes to the idea that there is a bounded culture to be exploited (Rogers 2006).

However, reciprocal exchange ignores the fact that cultures that are 'equal' in one way

may be unequal in several other ways (ibid). Rogers (2006) instead suggests

transculturation, which incorporates multiple cultures, multiple acts of appropriation, and

unequal power distributions. It assumes that hybridity is a modern condition and

therefore complicates potentially historicizing or stereotyping notions of purity (492-

493). This does not discount cultural imperialism or champion anti-materialism but rather

looks at all acts of appropriation as actions that do not take place within a vacuum, but

rather are dependent on context, relationships, and agency from both (or many) sides.

This is certainly the place of the Puruhá, who are in control of the narrative they are

relating through national and global promotion of their dress style. However, I do

continue to use the term appropriation in discussions on legal cases or non-Indigenous

use of Indigenous aesthetics, in part because that is the term that most often circulates

within these spheres. Furthermore, both transculturation and appropriation as terms that

describe cultural exchange must inevitably be considered through the daily negotiation of

individual designers, producers, and vendors. Only in looking at individual artists that we

can begin to reconstruct appropriation as a hermeneutic procedure that allows us to

analyze structural imbalances and their effects on exchanges between individuals

(Schneider 2003).

In fact, among Puruhá designers and vendors the lack of external appropriation

aligns with a lack of fear about potential appropriation. Histories of cultural exchange,

with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals (Bowen 2011, Colloredo-Mansfeld

1999, Rowe and Meisch 1998) seem to compliment, not threaten, Puruhá narratives of

their unique dress style. As expressed in chapter three, the multitude of influences and global materials only serve to support Puruhá dress as a singular and unique blend of local and global influences, that is nonetheless, completely Puruhá. However, embracing change and exchange is not the same as embracing what some designers deem internal copies, which are both a product of the cultural commons and a bolster to a shared Puruhá identity, but complicate the work of individual Puruhá dress brands. Therefore, in seeking to understand how the Puruhá dress market curbs external appropriation and self-validates, we must first examine how forms of branding are expressed at various scales, of the nation-state, the Puruhá community, and the individual designer, producer, or vendor.

5.2 I. BRANDING THE NATION-STATE

The concept of the nation-state as a brand is relatively new in academic literature (Jansen 2008, Varga 2013) and yet it is a significant tactic used by nation-states to expand external consumption, increase power and visibility globally, provide new narratives for internal consumption, *and* contribute to the self-government of individuals (Jansen 2008, O'Shaughnessey and O'Shaughnessey 2000, Varga 2013). Many governments hire small consultant groups to consolidate their nation-state into a few images, that can then be used both internally and externally (ibid). In the case of Ecuador a very vibrant and massive brand undertaking masks or erases the complexities of its citizens broadly, as all nation-state branding does. However, it highlights Indigenous-ness as an element in multiculturalism, a key feature of the Ecuadorian brand, while simultaneously ignoring the lived experiences of its Indigenous people and their own narratives of identity. Although nation-state branding may be a more contemporary tactic,

undertaken as a specifically economic and neoliberal project (Varga 2013), in Ecuador it overlaps and supports the project of nation building. Certainly, nations are always composed of images that may vary internally and externally, and they use symbolic forms to establish sovereignty (Jansen2008, O'Shaughnessey and O'Shaughnessey 2000). The Ecuadorian state has used imagery of its ancient Indigenous past, particularly the strength of the Inca Empire and the mythological Kingdom of Quitu (Foote 2010, Radcliffe and Westwood 1996), as well as a dominant *Mestizo* identity, a supposed homogeneous pan-Latin American core identity (Bauer 2014, Roitman 2009), in the service of creating a unified national identity. Today nation building, or rather nation maintenance and rebuilding, is based on a multicultural and to some extent plurinational, ideal of the mixed, diverse nation (Becker 2011, Radcliffe 2012). The *brand* of Ecuador also utilizes this harmonious blend of different cultures, with Indigenous groups being emphasized for 'culture' and *Mestizos* emphasized as the exemplary citizen. *Mestizo-ness* acts as the perfect embodiment of European and Indigenous mixing which conveniently elides the exploitation and horrors that produced this citizen and ignores the ethnic diversity within the *Mestizo* category (see chapter two).

This detangling and defanging of complex histories is to be expected in the process of branding. Instead of inventing traditions and creating historical narratives, as nation building seeks to do, nation-state branding actually works in the opposite direction, de-historicizing and taking away from the nation's complexities in favor of a simple, marketable identity (Varga 2013). This is the case in Ecuador, where taglines like "*Ama la Vida",* "Love Life", or "All you Need is Ecuador", and a rainbow swirl trademark of sorts, are visible across tourism media, but also in and on other government

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institutions. The rainbow swirl in particular marks government buildings in public space. Alongside these taglines and trademark are almost always images of diversity, whether that be diversity in the natural landscape or in its people, focusing almost exclusively on various Indigenous groups presented in cultural dress styles and often doing some form of 'traditional' work. This makes sense, since the use of Indigenous identity as part of a nation-state's identity is not a new concept (Hill 2007, Robertson 2015; Rodner and Kerrigan 2018) and in Ecuador Indigenous heritage of the nation-state is often regarded as a foundational patrimony. As an example, former president Rafael Correa commissioned a shirt that used pre-Columbian imagery and was meant to reflect an imagined shared ancestry and multi-cultural origins, a version of which he would at times also gift to foreign leaders (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2012). The shirt was later copied and mass-produced against his direction, primarily by Otavaleños, revealing tensions between communal (and Indigenous) property and individual (state) intellectual property. Correa imagined himself, as a nation's leader and *Mestizo* man, to have the freedom to not only use pre-Columbian aesthetics, but to actually then mark them as his property once they were arranged on the shirt itself, which was then challenged by the actual market, and by Indigenous (re)producers. This attempt at branding via the body of the nation-state's leader was complicated precisely because it relied on historical imagined imagery of indigeneity while failing to take into account the daily lives, motivations, and values of its contemporary Indigenous communities. This is only one example in a long history of politicians, intellectuals and artists promoting their own visions of national identity through images of Ecuador's Indigenous population. This includes instances where White and *Mestizo* Ecuadorians ventriloquized or performed stylized indigeneity, identifying

with Indigenous history while distancing themselves from the contemporary problems of the Indigenous present (Olson 2010). Because of the Ecuadorian context, this performance of indigeneity gained greater force as a source of national legitimacy than other Indigenous appropriations could in places where Indigenous people are imagined as always entirely other (ibid). It is therefore difficult to distinguish between explicit branding of the nation state and contemporary reinforcement of non-Indigenous ventriloquism that has long been part of the Ecuadorian story.

This also makes it difficult to say whether adherence to these mythos and continued performances of indigeneity by non-Indigenous actors are part of self-governance encouraged by nation-state branding, or simply fit into the brand easily because of this history. While there have been many failed attempts to brand or rebrand a nation in the global market (Jansen 2008, O'Shaughnessey and O'Shaughnessey 2000), Somogy Varga (2013) argues that one of the key benefits of branding a nation state is internal in that it allows for people to self-govern. It encourages citizens to act as models for the nation state's new identity, creating a form of nationalism that supports, rather than hindering, the neoliberal state and its monetary motivations. Although I have certainly heard this notion of the diverse yet harmonious whole reiterated at events and in everyday conversation, particularly by *Mestizo* individuals, it is likely a continuation of earlier myth making by the nation-state. Moreover, not all citizens adhere so strongly to the nation-state's brand. Among my Puruhá entrepreneurs, references to diversity often focused on diversity within Indigenous communities, such as the multiple communities that made up the Quichua designation. There were also references to discrimination and competition that did not support the simple, peaceful, inclusive branding that Ecuador

continues to set forth. These entrepreneurs foregrounded their specific Puruhá heritage, which is far more central to their brand's successes than a generalized multiculturalism would be. As increased movement deconstructs boundaries between local, national and global identities, the imagined local community becomes increasingly valuable as both cultural capital (Robertson 2015; Willmott 2014) and economic capital. However, for the nation-state this manifests as success in tourism, NGO support, and increased market power, which may overlap with support for Indigenous communities but often doesn't. Ethnicity as a commodity can reshape groups in an attempt by these groups to better market themselves nationally and globally (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009) and this ethnic identity is often a successful 'brand' in its own right, but it matters a great deal who is marketing ethnicity, and who or what it has been shaped or reshaped for. In Ecuador, the Puruhá dress market has been countering a history of elite *Mestizo* and foreign use of Indigenous aesthetics to sell their own products and benefit from global demand for ethnic commodities.

5.2 II. BRANDING INDIGENEITY, ERASING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Although Puruhá dress is an exception, non-Indigenous people still largely undertake the branding of Indigenous-made products in Ecuador. This is significant for two reasons. First, doing so highlights indigeneity in very broad strokes, often glossing over or entirely erasing the identity of individual producers or cultural and community complexities. Second, it takes up a place in the market that would cater to higher price point buyers and global consumers, where similar products could be sold highlighting Indigenous producers directly. Instead, galleries and online shops run by non-Indigenous people create a sort of mediated experience of Indigenous art and design. Puruhá

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designers are working against this model, but it is nonetheless prevalent in Ecuador, and therefore may affect the markets and strategies my participants used, including ways of branding their businesses that use methods derived from global capitalism. In order to see where this might align, however, I take a step back to analyze the market for Indigenous goods in Ecuador, where and how these products become visible, and what is obscured in this visibility.

Arguably the most famous artisan, now deceased but leaving behind a very profitable legacy is Olga Fisch. A Jewish refugee who received asylum in Ecuador, she began collecting Indigenous art from various groups and then creating her own products out of or inspired by this art (Fenyvesi 1982). An article in the Christian Science Monitor attributes her success to her ability to see the value in Indigenous art:

> Largely because of the efforts of Olga Fisch the artifacts produced by Ecuador's 250 Indian tribes are no longer regarded as trash. Over the decades she has helped thousands of Indian artists and craftsmen acquire the means of placing their wares in the world market. In so doing she introduced their beauty to a once skeptical public (Lenhart 1981).

It seems a rather explicit example of non-Indigenous Ecuadorians being praised for the work they do to bring Indigenous art to the "outside world", while profiting from their designs (Shigra bags on the Olga Fisch site cost about $130) and branding themselves as designers. The Olga Fisch brand is very well known in Ecuador and globally; it is held up as a prime example of the Ecuadorian aesthetic. On the street outside of Olga Fisch's

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flagship store in Quito is a historical plaque that praises her work. There are several other brick and mortar stores throughout Ecuador, plus an online store, all associating her name with Indigenous 'inspired' products. The online store says of her history:

> Once in Ecuador she was mesmerized by the colors textures and tradition of folk art and began to collect and curate the first popular art collection in Ecuador, a collection that would later be touring the world. Olga´s arrival to Ecuador caused such an impact on her that it did not take long for her to start applying what she saw and what she collected into different designs, which led her to work very closely with artisans. Among her most famous designs are her rugs which were featured at the MOMA, at the Lincoln Center, at the UN building and several other renowned collections (Olgafisch.com 2019).

There is no attempt to hide the fact that the original designer collected Indigenous products and then based her own designs on them, selling them at much higher prices than what she herself would pay for the Indigenous art she bought. Moreover, she gained international recognition for her work, which the 'artisans' she worked 'closely with' never did. Her work was appropriative, and it seems the current brand, now headed by her grandniece and great grandniece, has recognized some of the problems with Olga's original work. Today the brand helps to sell products from local artisans but these artisans seem to largely remain anonymous, overpowered by the Olga Fisch brand. Moreover, they focus on the *Ecuadorian culture,* what they call *our* culture in their

mission statement (Olgafisch.com 2019), not the culture of the various Indigenous groups or the stories of the individual designers.

Although Olga Fisch is an older brand, this is a model that has never really been taken to task and continues to play out in Ecuador. A non-Indigenous designer uses Indigenous designs and Indigenous labor, branded under the non-Indigenous designer's name or shop name, with reference to helping the community or artisans. These Indigenous artisans are referred to broadly, with few if any identifiers as individuals. They act as a well to draw from, but not as designers in their own right. Two Ecuadorian *Mestiza* designers I spoke with utilized this model but restricted their work to accessories. This seemed to be a form of negotiating the boundaries of appropriation. They did not seem to be comfortable with using full Indigenous outfits, for example, but a small piece of a *faja* they bought would be added to a necklace, or a hat. This was a common practice for the designers I spoke with and was often said to represent Ecuador, much in the way the Olga Fisch brand focuses on the Ecuadorian identity (which encompasses indigeneity but is also accessible to *Mestizos*). In chapter two I analyzed this in regard to the complexities of race and ethnicity in Ecuador but this sort of 'mixed' national identity is also necessary to support the mythos of the Ecuadorian government and its institutions, which is why specific, individual, Indigenous businesses that gain similar visibility can be so disruptive. The brand of these individual companies also relies on the brand of the Puruhá community, a shared narrative and aesthetic cultural commons that support various modes of income.

Of course I am not suggesting that the Puruhá community is directly marketing itself as a product, but rather that what is shared within the community can and often is

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used for economic gain in much the same way as a nation-state or commercial brand can, even if that is not the most important role for a shared Puruhá culture and identity. The brand is not just material culture, but rather a symbol that stands for a debate about material culture (Manning 2010:33). When an individual or an item cites a brand, they are not necessarily citing the legally sanctioned trademark or only the material qualities of a brand. Rather they are often referring to an immaterial 'quality' or 'style' (Nakassis 2012). At the same time, it is still experienced through its material products via consumption (whether real or imagined). Sometimes the material object itself can stand in contrast with the immaterial brand qualities, like when a designer bag has low quality production. Thus, the way we understand material culture, the value we give to it, how we determine its worth, and the way we question its impact, is often reflected in discourse on and expectations of brands. In one sense, Puruhá dress itself is a product of Puruhá culture as brand. It indexes those abstract, intangible qualities of Puruhá-ness, the rebellious spirit, the adherence to certain traditions, the importance of family and community, the respect for the natural world, among others, or simply Indigenousness in Ecuador, depending on the interpreter. Still, while community control over these shared narratives significantly counters nation-state and non-Indigenous branding of Indigenous communities in Ecuador, it does not entirely displace these brands, and this could actually be a benefit to the community. Referring back to the distinction between economic power and economic sovereignty (Lewis 2019) too much economic power can incur backlash from the nation-state. In the case of the Puruhá, they have not yet retained enough economic power to act as a threat to the nation-state, and since they are working in an aesthetic that the nation state already sees as part of its patrimony, their work may

be seen as ultimately supporting the nation-state's narrative of a diverse, multicultural and harmonious whole, even as it is simultaneously subversive. However, it is difficult to say if this will ever become a problem, or if the balance between economic autonomy and not being understood as a threat to *mestizo* or import dress markets will continue to benefit Puruhá entrepreneurs at all levels. Moreover, within the Puruhá community some individuals are pulling from this more loosely defined Puruhá brand but others are additionally creating individual business brands that use some of the same tools as these non-Indigenous run businesses.

5.2 III. BRANDED AND UNBRANDED PURUHA DRESS

Contemporary Puruhá dress that is unbranded[45] is often sold in outdoor markets, or indoor malls where unnamed stalls with nearly identical products sit side by side. There are also stand alone shops for Puruhá dress, where the shop itself may have a name or be known by its owners name, but the clothing is not known as a particular brand. The far rarer but much more nationally visible Puruhá dress is branded in similar ways as global fashion brands. There are business cards, websites, Facebook pages, bags with store names, and labels inside of clothes. These brands do events, like runway shows, and interviews in magazines, newspapers, and on TV. There is a distinction here between designers and people who frame themselves primarily as vendors or shop owners, who may or may not make the products themselves, but who are more focused on the goal of selling to the customer in front of them than they are on creating a brand and expanding

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[45] I use unbranded here to signify that there is no formalized store or company brand name, although they may still be marketing their clothes in a way that highlights Puruhá identity, a sort of "Puruhá brand".

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awareness in the hopes of gaining global recognition.[46] For instance, for the most part primary sellers who agreed to be interviewed either explicitly or implicitly expected me to buy items from them, and/or asked me to direct visiting friends to their stores. In one case, a potential primary seller responded to my request for an interview by directly asking if I was going to buy anything, and when I couldn't buy anything at that exact moment, refused the interview.

Then there are those individuals who frame themselves as fashion designers, not artisans but artists, comparable to other *Mestizo* Ecuadorian designers who participate in the same practices as other designers in the high fashion world, and aim for brand recognition and global expansion. They did not expect a return for their time via a direct purchase of goods or indirectly sending other people to their stores. In fact, that question never came up. Instead they showed an interest in the research itself and were more likely to ask me questions about my trajectory, including where the information will circulate. They understood and responded to questions about design inspiration and cultural value in a way that shows they are marketing themselves more broadly. My return to them was not a direct purchase but rather assistance with circulating their information to increase brand value and recognition.

In some ways this is similar to the circulation of items like shells and canoes in Nancy Munn's (1986 [1992]) now classic ethnography on Gawan exchange processes. These items not only allow an individual's name to travel and their fame to expand in

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[46] This is not to say that primary sellers or vendors do not have branding and expansion ambitions, but rather that they were not making moves to do these things at the time I encountered them, for a number of possible reasons. Yet in many cases they did favor direct in-person sales to time spent creating an image or brand, and the individual selling these items did not necessarily make them.

their lifetime, but they also provide that key aspect of fame, being known outside of your own spatio-temporal restrictions. While the names of Puruhá designers do not travel the same way as Gawan leaders, a similar sense of expanding beyond spatio-temporal restrictions via the circulation of goods is consistent; perhaps some of the attempts at branding are seeking out this particular form of 'fame'. It is a spatio-temporal expansion of self via product that reaps both immediate tangible, as well as a more distant and intangible forms of value. Still, both sets of producers act as entrepreneurs, and in so doing work to circulate the Puruhá identity, which is shared but not singular.

Neither primary sellers nor primary designers are more important to the overall success of contemporary Puruhá dress, and the way they measure success may be very different, but they do exhibit distinct economic and social strategies premised on Puruhá dress. There are indications that some individuals are succeeding in this brand fame, at least at a nation-wide level. Sisa Morocho is a name that garners recognition. I was in the central artisan market in Quito buying Christmas gifts for my family one day, and I bought an intrecately embroidered pillowcase from a young woman who was kind, but busy with clients, and uninterested in my indecisiveness. When I went to pay, however, I began to ask a few questions. I found out that she was from Riobamba, and mentioned Sisa's brand, *Sumak Churay*. The woman's face lit up, she became very chatty, and other customers were suddenly being ignored in favor of her continuing a conversation with me. She did not know Sisa but she knew *of* Sisa and *Sumak Churay*. This was not the only time this happened, and always with regard to that particular brand. The things that Sisa and a few other Puruhá designers do to promote themselves *as* fashion designers, and their designs *as* branded commodities, contribute to this new discourse of Indigenous

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Ecuadorian producers as designer-artists, not just a cultural resource, or unnamed artisans.

However, brands are dematerialized through discourse that defines them in opposition to their tangible objects, which results in conflicts when the semiotic ideologies of brand clash with real world materializations (Manning 2010:35). Brand is, therefore, a very particular third. It can be substantiated in an object, but the legitimacy of the brand or of the material object that mediates that brand can be called into question if something doesn't align the way the interpreter expects it to. Take, for instance, a designer bag that is made of faux leather, when the consumer expected that it should be real leather. These disruptions of expectation are the gaps that leave brands open to non-normative citations (Nakassis 2012). The object is supposed to stand for a brand type, to fulfill that expectation. It is more than just the commodity; it is a representation of the immaterial qualities of the brand. When they don't do that, the brand is called into question. What makes the brand if not the commodity? Yet, commodity objects are tokens, brand instances of the type, the brand, and its immaterialized qualities (Nakassis 2012). *Sumak Churay* products must fulfill a multitude of expectations that are based on both expectations of what Puruhá dress is and also what the brand itself is, a difficult balance of creativity and tradition, of mass appeal and supporting individualism, of being a designer product and a cultural, ethnic commodity. There are expectations of quality and ingenuity that may change when buying from an un-branded seller, replaced instead by other expectations, such as varying price points and a large variety of items to choose from. While I did not experience or hear from Puruhá entrepreneurs about instances where there was a gap between the expectation of their goods and the actual product,

certainly not all customers can be satisfied all of the time. The brand is more than the commodity and can exist beyond it, while still depending on it (which is the citational gap referenced by Nakassis (2012)). What happens then, when another commodity, which is not produced by the brand (as a company or designer) cites this same brand essence? Even more problematic, what if the 'fake' is better (in whatever way the consumer deems it) than the 'real'? In some cases, copying may be in taking a similar shape, pattern or directly using the name of the brand, or an iconic brand mark, but what makes something a 'copy' can often be questionable, as in the case of Puruhá dress. Copying within the Puruhá community is seemingly widespread but this copying doesn't necessarily seem as detrimental to the overall Puruhá brand, or even of individual designer brands, as it might seem in other contexts.

5.3 THE QUESTION OF 'ORIGINALITY' AND 'COPYING' AMONG THE PURUHA

'Copying' is an aspect of global fashion at all levels and it is increasingly visible in Puruhá dress, not in terms of outsider appropriation but within the Puruhá community. For the Puruhá, notions of what a copy is vary and although nearly all of my participants referenced the 'originality' of their products, the central meaning of 'original' seemed to shift. Although Puruhá designers who brand their items have particular qualities, a major part of their branding is the notion of cultural heritage and pride. Therefore, they retain certain key elements discussed earlier that allow individuals to recognize the item as Puruhá. Without embroidery, colors, garment cuts, the way the outfit is put together, or any other elements, designers run the risk of losing that Puruhá identity which is simultaneously a brand identity. Yet, the same aspects that make an object recognizable

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as Puruhá also make it difficult to parse where the line is between copying a designer or simply being part of the same aesthetic (see chapter three (3.4 II)).

This notion of copies as problematic comes not just from those with brands but storeowners and sellers too. Rosa, a storeowner who does not brand her items, still made sure to mention to me that her clothes are not copies that are sold cheaply on the street- they're *originals*. This came up again and again, often alongside the notion that hand-made items were more 'original, although just how hand-made is defined is also complicated and has no defined boundaries. In this case original means handmade. It is a marker of quality, of not being cheaply produced. In the case of Margarita, who sold her products in the *Plaza Roja* in the center of Riobamba, original was directly aligned with place of origin, in her case the rural town of Cacha. Her products were original because they came from Cacha, and presumably Puruhá people, not elsewhere. Anna, who had a shop in Quito, referenced price and tradition as markers of originality. Malvi, who is Otavaleña and not a producer but a consumer of Indigenous fashion, aligned originality with being made by Indigenous hands and having ancestral meaning. Other producers and consumers mirrored many of these sentiments. Originality in these instances is not about being one of a kind or a novel idea. It is not about being from a specific individual designer, but rather it is aligned with a variety of features including place of origin, the ethnic identity of the maker, being made by hand, being of good quality (whether in materials or in craft), being traditional or having ancestral ties, and being more expensive. With this variety of markers, it is easy to understand how vendors, both branded and un-branded, both high fashion and more accessible, at all price points and from various backgrounds, can call their items original, and I would argue, rightfully so based on the

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potential qualities that originality indexes. Also, the question of why the claim to originality is so consistent is likely due to an awareness of the historical and continued demand (especially by buyers outside of the community) for 'original' or 'authentic' Indigenous products. This idea of the 'authentic' is predominant for buyers and sellers of indigeneity worldwide, but also for the consumption of Indigenous identities in media and in the fight for political, economic, and social justice (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Lamrad and Hanlon 2014, Scafidi 2005, Varese 1996). However, among my participants originality and its flexibility as a term predominates, perhaps because again, they are primarily selling to Indigenous buyers. Nevertheless, not all my participants would agree with the validity of using the term original across such a broad swath of products, particularly when they call into question whether or not their own artistic visions are being endangered through copies.

Although it is unclear what actually constitutes a copy aesthetically, it is very clear in terms of economic and social difference. There is a particular discourse around the notion of copies in Ecuador; they are cheap, they are sold on the street, and they are often attributed to other Indigenous populations, like Otavaleños. In other words, they have traits that are opposite of those associated with originality. Therefore, what it means for a Puruhá dress object to be a 'copy' is more about what it means for one's own product to not be a copy. It is a means of justifying its brand, its cost, or the designer/seller's status in comparison to other producers and sellers. Therefore, when Puruhá designers are claiming ownership over orignality, they must define that originality with regard to the brand, but also remain tied to the shared cutlural heritage that is embedded in the brand. Since Puruhá cultural heritage is not something that they can

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claim ownership over by itself, there must be other elements, significant to *only* their designs, that they claim as their own. This is a difficult and unique position as an Indigenous designer, to be both representative of the self as an individual artist, and of a cultural group as a member.

5.4 WHAT BRAND PIRACY TELLS US ABOUT 'ORIGINALITY'

As previously argued, these different types of producers and vendors at different price points actually support one another within the Puruhá dress market, and copies are part of maintaining a healthy consumer market as well. Puruhá and other Indigenous buyers can buy according to their needs, and whatever their understanding of 'originality' is, if that is something they find significant to their purchases. Although not a mirror for the Puruhá case, other researches who have focused on brand piracy of well-known global companies, like a Nike or Hollister, allow us to imagine the ways in which the process of 'copying' is not about trying to trick a consumer, or divert money away from a brand, but rather about filling a consumer desire that is often ignored by larger companies and reasserting a form of creative agency. This will later allow us to examine why Western legal systems that often protect corporate brands are not prepared to deal with the concept of a broader cultural and ethnic 'brand' or shared cultural aesthetic, and what the repercussions of this capitalist ideology in legal systems might be. Brent Luvaas' (2010) investigation into Indonesian independent clothing labels is useful here. He uses the concept of bricolage to discuss the reworking of designs from international pop culture into something new (Luvass 2010). This is not an act of resistance, but really a means of social self-positioning (Agha 2015, Luvaas 2010). It reworks the hierarchy of production and allows individuals to assert themselves as cultural producers (ibid).

Agency as a form of power is evident in an authorship that creates even more intertextuality (Luvass 2010:10).

We can return here to the commissioning of ex-president Correa's pre-Columbian influenced shirt. The design, production, and use of the shirt have all been called into question. The specific designer was hired by him but produced by another individual, convoluting ownership on the production/design end, but once finalized and worn Indigenous producers throughout Ecuador began making copies to sell (Colloredo-Mansfeld, et al 2012). Though this angered some, the shirt was now an Ecuadorian symbol, and because it drew from national and specifically Indigenous heritages, arguments for the legitimacy of Indigenous-made copies are reasonable. In both cases, the copying is takes place in the citational gaps that result from the actual object of the multicultural jacket and the meanings its Ecuadorian 'brand' is meant to indicate (Nakassis 2012), and although distinctions in the dress objects are pointed to as evidence of originality and copying, the central question is really about ownership. The designers or producers who are copying contribute to the intertextuality of the items they are copying, which is inherently complex in all ownership (Luvaas 2010), calling into question the notion of ownership in the first place.

The same is true in Kendron Thomas' (2013) research on the Maya fashion world in Guatemala, and those who make branded apparel based off of global companies, to buy and sell in regional markets and on city streets. Although the nation-state's legal system, including intellectual property protections and trademark law, criminalizes the use of brand logos and names, the Maya producers are not using these features as markers of authenticity but as design elements, which mark things like ethnicity, class, and global

modernity (ibid). Theirs is a form of morally and economically legitimate imitation among the community because they aren't stealing ideas from their neighbors and they are creating individual creative works using brand elements, which Thomas (2013) likens to a zig zag shape that is prevelent in *huipil*s, for instance. It is an Indigenous form of branding that is less concerned with corporate protections and more concerned with supporting creativity within the community while pulling from a similar aesthteic pool, much like the Puruhá do with their design elements. Moreover, it is a way of gaining economic power through one's Indigenous community as opposed to nation-state vehicles, which is significant in a state like Guatemala that has threatened more than protected its population (ibid). These cases support the idea that there are clothing producers who utilize corporate brands as design elements in support of fulfilling a market gap, that of individuals who want a particular style of dress that reads as global, but cannot afford and, in some cases, cannot even enter stores (Thomas 2013) where these goods are being sold. The process of bricolage (Luvass 2010) that they use is still an individual creative process, and arguably worthy of claims to originality even as they are also examples of copying, which again leads to questioning ownership at a very basic level. For many of my Puruhá participants the question is centered on the merger of capitalism and Indigenous Andean economics.

This is not to say that capitalism suddenly created the idea of individual ownership, but rather that emphasis on that idea as it relates to a brand, and specifically high end fashion brands, has forced many Puruha designers who want to compete with their *Mestizo* and global designer peers to focus on company branding and their roles as individual creatives as much as being part of the Puruhá community. Moreover, they are

not removed from bricolage processes themselves. For instance, several times I saw a variation of Puruhá shoes by these designers that utilized weaving patterns on wedges, or heels as opposed to the flats that are deemed 'traditional' for the outfit. However, since many of these designers are not also shoemakers, they take the base of a mass-made shoe, sometimes with the other designer label still in it, and refashion it with the textiles they make. It is enough in context to make the shoes recognizable as part of their brand and some designers will even make their own label to go over the previous designer's label on the shoe's interior. This is not intentional brand piracy and in fact some efforts are being made to erase the prior commercial brand, but it is a form of bricolage that, however unintentionally, challenges the notion that a branded item can or should only serve as a vehicle for the indices associated with that one brand. In fact, these shoes now become signifiers of both the Puruhá 'brand' and that individual company brand, often erasing the initial producer brand in a sort of reverse of what commercially made products that appropriate indigeneity do to Indigenous producers and designers. It is subversion through ingenuity and reuse, an eco-friendly product that within the Western fashion world, could be framed as a negative because the shoes were once (or still are) branded by a company, whereas non-Indigenous individuals taking handmade textiles from Indigenous producers (which are unbranded) and using them in new products is often considered innovative and uplifting. This confusion, between what deserves praise and protections, and who those protections support, is becoming more complex as those who participate in global capitalism in ways that had been previously invisible or ignored make their autonomy and aesthetics known.

5.5 LEGALIZED OWNERSHIP: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND LEGAL PLURALISM

Claims to ownership within Indigenous communities are often in conflict with existing nation-state legal systems because the fundamental notion of ownership as collective, particularly with land and in relation to cultural identity, is central to Indigenous worldviews globally (Riley 2004, Wiessner 1999). Rights of groups work against the grain of Western rights, which are based on the theory of a social contract between the individual and the state in a hierarchized and vertical society, as opposed to the network-based and more horizontal society of many Indigenous communities (Wiessner 1999). At the same time, although ownership of land in particular is often based on a collective identity, we should not see group rights as only Indigenous and as diametrically opposed to individual rights, framed as only Western (Ivison et al 2000). This could have detrimental effects on, for instance, internal minorities and lead to a dismissal of the heterogeneity within Indigenous communities (ibid). It is instead necessary to integrate communal ownership in addition to individual, familial, or other forms of ownership where determined within Indigenous communities. Moreover, despite differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews there is a dependence on gaining rights and validation through the formalized processes of the nation-state, such as constitutions, and the Western legal systems those nation-states create. This is a circular problem, since the imbalance of power between nation-states and the Indigenous populations within these states is also the reason the formalized respect of nation-states must be sought in the course of establishing sovereignty and national recognition. This is tied to processes of the juridification and bureaucratization, as well as the expansion of

the law into more areas of social life throughout Latin America. Here Indigenous people's movements stake claims to greater autonomy by mimicking state legalities and constituting alternative 'para-legalities' (Seider 2010). This isn't to say that these groups do not have their own distinct legal theory and systems, but rather that formalizing legal processes based on Indigenous theory is a response to the power of the neoliberal state and their forms of legality. This is a counterhegemonic use of law[47], which is itself a principle tool of neo-colonial power (ibid) and is therefore subversive at its core. One way this has been done throughout Latin America is through various pushes for inclusion of Indigenous theory and worldviews into the nation-state constitutions. Another is through the bolstering of local community-based forms of authority to deal with disputes.

Constitutional reforms in Latin America often include rights to customary law, collective property, and bilingual education, with the expectation that Indigenous rights to political and legal autonomy would be respected (Seider 2010). Indeed, the Ecuadorian constitution recognizes the concept of *sumak kwasay*, a theory of good living. According to Lalander (2015), it is based on everyone having enough and, in turn, challenges dominant understandings of common good that focus on development and commercialization to increase revenue. *Sumak kwasay* strives for continual better living, the same constant striving that much of the capitalist market encourages and thrives on. However, Sarah Radcliffe and Nina Laurie (2006) point out that it is problematic to see culture as distinct from development, as something non-Western and non-modern, when in fact culture is a creative and continually created process. For Indigenous people this

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[47] Although Indigenous formal legalities may otherwise exist, in this case I am referring to the specific cases in which Indigenous groups and individuals have utilized Western based legal systems to seek inclusion and rights through the nation-state.

may be in contrast to certain neoliberal forms of development but is itself development. Moreover, collective rights are given equal status to individual rights in the Ecuadorian constitution, which is key in also supporting the legitimacy[48] of communal ownership (Lupien 2011). In most cases this communal ownership is supported by and premised on the ownership of land (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Herández-Ramíez 2010, Lalander 2015, Ortega 2004, Wiessner 1999). Land is essential here because there is a global consistency of (at least rhetorically if not institutionally) recognizing the particular bond between Indigenous peoples and land (Wiessner 1999), and the sustainable use of that land that benefits the community and the environment. This is one reason, for instance, that community-based tourism is so popular within Ecuadorian Indigenous communities. There is empowerment and ownership not just of the land, but also of the natural resources as a means to social and economic development (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Herández-Ramíez 2010). This is community owned, not individually owned land, and *cabildos*, local administrative governing and legal bodies, ensure how participation in and wealth gained from these forms of tourism is implemented (ibid). Despite both constitutional protections and local economic success, however, rights to land are still fraught with contention. In Ecuador this is visible with both highland and lowland Indigenous communities, who often clash with the Ecuadorian government over extractivism of oil, minerals, and other natural resources, although there may be

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[48] Meaning legitimacy from the perspective of the Ecuadorian government, and other nation-state governments, even if within different groups, such as the global Indigenous community or international institutions and NGOs their cultural histories and self-declaration of communal ownership would be legitimate in and of itself.

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contention within Indigenous groups as well over those who support these processes[49] (Lalander 2015, Ortega 2004). The Ecuadorian constitution embraces the idea of strengthening the rights of nature and, in concert with the natural environment/land, the Indigenous groups who have rights to that land (Lalander 2015). Yet in practice the government relies on extractivism and the exploitation of land and natural resources, even as it espouses pluri-nationalism and protections of Indigenous land (Lalander 2015, Yates and Bakker 2014) and often fails to carry out adequate consultation with Indigenous groups as is set forth in the constitution (Ortega 2004). This is significant, because while collective ownership is recognized by the Ecuadorian constitution, which has implications for things like a collective aesthetic or dress style, there is still a failure to take seriously the community's desires when it challenges or threatens the desires of the nation-state, even in something that is understood to be so integral to Indigenous identity as land. This is true not just in constitutional discrepancies, but in conflicts between local and national legal entities as well.

Legal pluralism in Ecuador is granted via the constitution, but there is debate over just what the scope of Indigenous authorities is when administering customary law (Thomas 2016). Still, these *cabildos* are relevant to both legal and economic communal protections (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Herández-Ramíez 2010, Thomas 2016), even as they

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[49] For instance, President Rafael Correa went back on his implementation of Yasuní ITT, a program that was supposed to protect Indigenous land in the Amazon and its oil resources, because he claimed he did not get enough support from the international community for the project, and needed the money from extraction to support social reform programs that would directly benefit Indigenous people in the Amazon, such as education and healthcare programs. There were factions of Indigenous groups that supported Correa's choice to do this, just as there were many who did not (Lalander 2015).

come into conflict with legal entities of the nation-state. This is significant, since these village councils have actually existed since colonial times, when they had substantial power in the countryside, but then decreased over the 19th and early 20th centuries, only to increase in power again in the most recent half of the 20th century (Thomas 2016). The resurgence is tied to a resurgence in the recognition of Indigenous rights and the implementation of customary law alongside national law and is therefore a potential threat to the power of the nation-state over a particular subset of its population. This is evident in the fact that while *cabildos* can claim a degree of jurisdiction, cases that might expand that jurisdiction are more often than not taken over by national legal entities. Moreover, rules that would define personal, territorial, and material jurisdictions of both forms of law have not been approved, leading to this sort of fighting over jurisdiction happening on a case by case basis and no regulations based on, for example, the degree of seriousness of a case (ibid). The relegation of a case to local or national authorities is convoluted and seemingly based on the retention of hegemonic power. This is significant because it limits the legal sovereignty of Indigenous communities, and in so doing makes it clear that laws guided by social values of reciprocity, solidarity, and collectivity among a community (ibid) are still secondary to the nation-state's formulation of legality, which is based on Western legal models. Therefore, while many cases are still decided at this local, communal level, based on these principles, the ultimate decision as to whether or not the cases will be remains with the nation-state, not Indigenous communities. The expression and recognition of Indigenous rights still requires a sort of translation of the challenges, interests, and theory of Indigenous communities, which is even more of a burden since it is done in the context of an imposed, non-Indigenous legal framework

(Ivison, et al 2000). Moreover, working through this imposed legal framework can lead to the essentialization and homogenization of Indigenous identities. What then, of legal cases that involve questions of collective or individual ownership over aesthetics, over design, or over both tangible and intangible cultural heritage? Is something like a particular symbol taken into account in the legal sphere on in its material instantiation, as a tangible painting, skirt, or sculpture for example, or also/primarily as intangible heritage (the idea of the symbol itself)? Where would those cases be decided, locally or nationally, by whom, and with regard for collectivity or with a favoritism towards individual claims to ownership, or with a recognition of both? These are the types of questions that would be informed by the complexities of land rights and legal jurisdiction. At the core of the conflict is the distinction between ways of understanding rights and ownership within Indigenous communities in Ecuador, and within the Ecuadorian government. This is not to disregard the progress Indigenous communities have made in getting constitutional recognition, and a degree of legal sovereignty, but rather to ask how the remaining problems might reflect on the potential conflicts within the Puruhá entrepreneurial community I've worked with.

5.6 I. THE IMPACT OF APPROPRIATION

Questions of appropriation emerge alongside questions of ownership, since to be charged with taking something it would be assumed that 'something' would first belong to someone else. The same legal problems that plague ownership plague struggles against appropriation, primarily that western legal systems were built and continue to operate on Western ideologies of individual intellectual property in opposition to collective cultural property, despite the fact that Indigenous claims of loss via appropriation speak to the

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interplay of individual and collective ownership. In fact, the objects or aesthetics themselves are often denied, as Coombe (1993) suggests, "histories of their own". Charges of appropriation rely heavily on agreements about authenticity, which often denies the historical agency, transformations, and creative expressiveness of individuals and the group or groups they identify with, but adherence to certain forms of authenticity can also contribute to historicization and essentialism of an identity (ibid). The problem remains that these discussions surrounding appropriation, and the right to claim an appropriated thing, practice, or aesthetic focus so much on this paradox and where to draw legal lines, that the justice underlying these claims is not given enough attention. Legal cases of appropriation are struggles to dismantle, reclaim, or shift power (Coombe 1993 Schneider 2003, Rogers 2006). At the core of appropriation is the fact that histories of cultural violence, where Indigenous people have been made visible by others while being denied their own voice, demand cultural reparations. In part, this reparation is done by recontextualizing that which has been taken, including Indigenous knowledge, spirituality, practices, and certainly material culture. This requires not just the positive histories and experiences of Indigenous people, but also the ever-present colonial histories, racism, institutional mistreatment, erasure, and physical, emotional, and cultural abuse suffered.

Although Ecuador's 2008 Constitution did take steps to curb appropriation, practical applications of the constitution are lacking. Article 57 of the constitution recognizes collective rights of Indigenous communities including the right to uphold, protect, and develop collective knowledge, science, technologies, ancestral wisdom and genetic resources, *while* it also prohibits all forms of appropriation of such knowledge,

innovations and practices (Nwauche 2015). Despite this, appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics remains so widespread in Ecuador (section 5.5) that it is significant that Puruhá dress remains in context, made by and for other Puruhá and Indigenous people. In being historically devalued by the majority of *Mestizo* and White Ecuadorians, the use of this dress simply decreased, to be revitalized alongside contemporary social and political shifts. The value here is that there seems to be less concern by producers and consumers about revealing the complexities of the dress' history, often including the impact of colonialism and racism, as well as historical Indigenous and contemporary global trade. These styles act as both individual art pieces and speak to a shared cultural artform. They are produced in support of aesthetic sovereignty, which itself encompasses an increase in economic autonomy, social mobility, and visible Puruhá identities, and relies on the lack of appropriation of Puruhá cultural style. This style has yet to be widely used by non-Indigenous Ecuadorians or foreigners, but were this to happen, it would presumably be on the terms of Puruhá sellers and producers. Ideally, they would remain the center of production and thus of constructing and relating Puruhá identities in all their complexities, at least as mediated through dress aesthetics. This strength may seem to negate the need for a discussion of appropriation, but I will dive deeper into cases of Indigenous appropriation for a few reasons. First, appropriation does plague other areas of Indigenous intellectual property in Ecuador, which shapes how non-Indigenous Ecuadorians understand Indigenous cultures more broadly. This in turn affects other forms of self-determination outside of the narrow window of fashion aesthetics, which Puruhá people *are* still struggling for, including political recognition.* Also, we cannot predict what changes might take place as Puruhá visibility in the fashion world grows and

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they may yet face external appropriation. Finally, despite the failings of institutionalized law to deal with appropriation in many cases, the legal system has yet to be upended. Therefore, understanding exactly where Indigenous people, specifically in Ecuador, have been successful and unsuccessful may also help to build case law and legal resources that will yet be helpful.

5.6 II. APPROPRIATION OF INDIGNEIETY

Questions of authenticity and appropriation exist in a space where cultures are understood to be discrete categories (Thomas 1999) and where legal recognition bestows social, economic, and political power. We cannot ignore individual agency in this space, which would homogenize group identity (Schneider 2003) but in the same turn we cannot ignore that shared and agreed upon cultural attributes form the basis of individually led claims to rights of culturally based aesthetics. Whatever internal disputes exist, shared aesthetics are not only integral to cases of cultural appropriation but have also had a place in Indigenous Andean culture long before these legal questions arose. The boundaries of copying, influences, and shared aesthetics are so muddled within the legal world that it is hard to know when and where to fight for protections or intellectual (artistic, design) property, as Franklin mentioned. Moreover, the same laws that protect against external appropriation may not help with attempts to curb copying within communities. Individuals who come up with new artistic and expressive designs may not get the same protections they would if they were commodifying their culture and acting in a way that would be consistent with western intellectual property law (Riley 2004). In other words, designs that stray too far from cultural traditions may not get protections from appropriation because they are deemed not traditional enough, but those that are deemed

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more traditional may not get protections from internal copying because they are part of a shared heritage and would be expected to have similar qualities. Still, intellectual property is not only Western and there may be different concepts governing property rights, relationships, and customary ways of working out compensation and problems of copying that work outside of Western legal frameworks (Riley 2004). Moreover, for many Indigenous individuals there is a rejection of Eurocentric conceptions of territory, property, and governance that have been designed to control labor and bodies, in favor of alternative modernities which include the pluriverse and resist the colonial organizations of time and space (Carcelén-Estrada 2017). Therefore, the legal and political structures that support, for instance, Western standards of property may or may not be acceptable means to sovereignty or self-determination depending on individual and/or community goals and values. Therefore, in many cases there may not be attempts at curbing appropriation via channels like legal systems, which have at best underserved Indigenous people and at worst criminalized and persecuted them. This is especially true in terms of internal minorities, such as Lavinas Picq's (2012) analysis of where Indigenous women in Ecuador seek support and justice in domestic violence situations and why. She analyzes how women defend customary law and local systems of justice even when they fail to protect women from domestic violence, because state justice has historically failed them based on their racial and ethnic background and focused on punishing minorities rather than the prevention of violence. Although I have not analyzed my research consultants' feelings about legal processes for appropriation or copying, their apprehension toward state legal institutions would not be surprising. That is, there are several reasons why western law may not be the best option in cases of appropriation, and

so any case studies will inherently be lacking because of the multitude of designers and producers who chose not to address state legal systems, or were rejected by them.

There are a few instances, however, of Indigenous communities within Latin America who did attempt to take cases based on rights to material culture as heritage to court. A group of *Mestizo* stoneworkers in Ecuador fought through political and legal channels to gain patrimonial mining status in an area of the Chimborazo National Reserve in order to create decorative items for sale and sustain their sculptural craft (Hill and Fernández-Salvador 2017). They drew on claims to cultural heritage with 'ancestral roots' and have gained some recognition from state entities, including the National Institute of Cultural Patrimony who issued a statement of ancestrality, despite the fact that there is no international or national definition that uses that as a valid criterion to cultural heritage rights (ibid). The state has asked for more evidence to support the stoneworkers' claims but what this brings to light is the fact that these sorts of movements in Ecuador, whether they come from Indigenous or 'peasant' populations, are often rejected and the opposition targeted, regardless of how they do or do not support the nation-state's (contradictory) ideologies of development and preservation of natural land. In the end, local sovereignty is overwhelmingly overridden by national forms of sovereignty and control (ibid).

Other cases within Ecuador speak to protections of traditional knowledge in terms of the benefits and uses of Amazonian flora and fauna (Tsioumanis et al 2003). In fact, biological knowledge has also been extensively contested among populations throughout Latin America. Indigenous individuals in Latin America often seek protection for medicinal knowledge, and knowledge of sites or particular areas where there is some

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plant or resource desired by a biomedical company (Greaves 1996:28). Thomas Greaves (1996) suggests Indigenous individuals are looking for control of the resource and the knowledge, which is different than ownership and compensation; many times they are aware of what is happening with their information and want to be a part of saying what gets protected and how information and resources are used (31). The Kayapo, for instance, have made arrangements to supply forest products only to the English cosmetics firm The Body Shop and Brazil nuts only to Rainforest Crunch Candy (Greaves 1996:33). Stefano Varese (1996) mentions that there are always Indigenous perspectives present within economic dealings centered on environmental resources, and a great deal of biological and cultural resistance and adaptation to protect indigenous stances and interests. In fact, while there is a tendency to only see Indigenous movements as relevant to the dominant society's social agenda and even to only see Indigenous political resistance when it looks like 'our' political resistance, in reality resistance has been happening for five centuries in most of Latin America (Varese 1996:128-129). This is in part due to what he calls the "moral ecology of environmental ethics", including a moral understanding of economic relations, a tendency to hide ethno-biological information while actively exploring and conserving, and a political adaptability and plasticity (123). In addition, transforming cultural products into property can discourage understandings of common ownership within communities and it may be that group ownership comes with its own internal complications of consensus, or lack thereof (Scafidi 2005:37).

While fighting for rights to resources for traditional crafts and fears of biopiracy are legitimate responses to certain forms of appropriation, there are far fewer cases in Ecuador of design appropriation. There are government institutions that exist within

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Ecuador, however, to protect artisans and artists specifically. The *Servicio Nacional de Derechos Intelletuales (SENADI)* for instance, states that, "Intellectual rights refer to the creations of the mind, such as literary, artistic, scientific and industrial inventions, as well as the symbols, names and images used in commerce" (Servicio Nacional de Derechos Intelletuales ND). It also categorizes this property into three areas, industrial property, copyright, and rights to traditional knowledge, including plant varieties and properties (biodiversity and ancestral knowledge). They also publish a gazette available online that includes brands, inventions, and plant uses. Again, however, there seem to be mainly two categorizations. The first is protection of inventors, the language of which tends to center around a singular individual, or traditional knowledge, which focuses pretty much exclusively on preventing biopiracy and protecting genetic resources from the natural world. The JNDA may be beneficial in granting a certificate or artisan qualification, which they say gives tax, work and social benefits (Junta Nacional de Defensa del Artesano 2015) but it too seems to lack in any information on protecting shared Indigenous aesthetics, or even having any comment on appropriative practices. Still, it makes sense that most contention about appropriation would go directly to the courts, whether they be local or state entities. However, there is little in the way of case law in Ecuador that is readily available and covers themes of appropriation. Still, I can look to two *Mestiza* designers who I referenced in chapter three, and their use of Indigenous elements in their designs as particular case studies.

5.6 III. APPROPRIATION IN ECUADOR (AND THE RETURN TO CULTURAL BRAND)

The use of Indigenous aesthetics by *Mestizo* and non-Indigenous artists, intellectuals, and politicians has an extensive history, supported by ideologies of *mestizaje* and nationalism (Olson 2010, Schneider 2003). Perhaps this is part of the reason that finding legal case studies on appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics *within* Ecuador is so difficult. There is a sort of acceptance of this absorption or mixture of Indigenous aesthetics into products made by non-Indigenous Ecuadorians. This isn't necessarily an issue for my participants, who only ever spoke about problems of appropriation as problems of copying from other Indigenous designers and producers. However, this also isn't to dismiss the effects of appropriation regardless of how, when, and by whom it is recognized, nor should I ignore the fact that my positionality and my study might have affected the way participants thought about or wanted to talk about appropriation. While I have already mentioned the effects of these appropriative ideologies broadly, I want to touch on two particular cases of designers who use Indigenous aesthetics and the tensions that arise as a result. Mirta is an Ecuadorian woman with European ancestry; she doesn't necessarily present as *Mestiza,* with fair skin and blonde hair, and she focuses on narratives of national identity as opposed to racial or ethnic mixing when she discusses her designs. With regard to her panama hat designs she said:

If you give it another kind of context on the product, and you twist it, then they feel like oh my god, that's so nice, and then you just try to bring this national

pride through a product, you know? I mean, in some kind of way … It's helping to the society too …

Although she is very aware of the problems in businesses like hers and tensions between wanting to help and support communities, without falling into a sense of savior-ship, she also falls into a trap of thinking about Indigenous products as stagnant without the intervention of a non-Indigenous designer. She positions herself as the one that has the capacity to change public opinion (in this case *Mestizo* and global opinion) about Indigenous aesthetics, to create value and pride where there was none before. Unfortunately, this trivializes the extensive reach Indigenous aesthetics in Ecuador *do* have, not with non-Indigenous intervention but in spite of it. It also ignores the creative and innovative work of Indigenous designers and producers. Promoting the idea that her intervention is necessary, Mirta builds off of histories of the Ecuadorian national identity which used indigeneity for marking uniqueness (Safa 2005). She does make explicit that much of the work is being done by Indigenous individuals of various communities, such as all the work that goes into the construction of a Panama hat, which she then paints and markets. However, she is centered as the designer and owner with a group of nameless and faceless individuals working for her. In this case she is not only pulling from the aesthetics of Indigenous individuals but also hiring labor from Indigenous communities. This is a fairly common model of appropriation that supports forms of nation-state branding (see 5.2 I) and individual business branding with global recognition.

The other non-Indigenous designer I spoke with is *Mestiza* and uses both Indigenous aesthetics and actual pieces of Indigenous art in her own designs. For

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example, she has made bracelets that are crafted from a piece of a *faja* she bought in a market, or she and her mother craft dolls that are meant to be representative of different Indigenous cultures. Andrea was working with her mom on these dolls, but also on her individual jewelry when I met her. She said the dolls were a response to the lack of representation her mom saw in the market, so her mom quit her job and then went to different communities to do an ethnographic investigation on traditional clothes and jewelry. This would later become a successful brand called *Nina Folk*, which has garnered both national and international interest. Andrea's narrative about the brand is one that includes nationalism to an extent but more so with a broader Latin American syncretism of both people and ideas, which she explained in relation to an Indigenous cosmovision with Catholicism. While it is true that citation and copying are established practices in the history of art (Schneider 2003) the problem remains that recognition and praise for work that does mix Indigenous and non-Indigenous styles is still primarily reserved for non-Indigenous designers, not the other way around. In Latin America broadly artist appropriation is an unequal exchange because the populations remain unequal even if economic transactions are equal (ibid). Moreover, there are similar models to those presented here that have emerged outside of Ecuador, something which Mirta actually mentioned when she spoke about a past job in the United States. She worked for a business that was similarly working with Indigenous communities to produce products that they branded and sold globally, but according to Mirta they didn't treat the communities fairly in terms of this economic exchange. Other companies like Mayan Traditions and Peruvian Connection are also examples of this model selling Indigenous-made goods by advertising techniques, fabrics, or color schemes they call

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'traditional' while simultaneously altering some other aspects of the textiles people have made for themselves in the past to support their current business goals (Demarary, Keim-Shenk and Littrell 2005:158). Would these company practices be considered fair cultural exchange since they are working with the communities in some capacity? If we take into account Richard Rogers' (2006) definition of cultural exchange as the reciprocal exchange of symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals or technologies between cultures with symmetrical power (478), they are not equal exchange practices. Still, at least in terms of creative work in the world of fashion, Indigenous communities are getting some more recognition than they might have been even 10 years ago, as newspapers and other media begin to focus on Puruhá fashion designers as contemporary and hybridic artists to an extent. On the other hand, the focus remains heavily on reproduction of traditional dress and is still not integrated with mainstream fashion coverage throughout Ecuador.

5.7 CONCLUSION, BEYOND INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY

As Indigenous communities and individuals worldwide continue to question the appropriation of not just aesthetics, but the narratives of identity wrapped into aesthetics, there will also continue to be tensions in the availability and usefulness of existing legal channels to do so. As more communities make claims to cultural distinction, regardless of the aim, they are using legal discourses and international policy to ground their claims (Coombe 2011). In many cases these international organizations and NGOs, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, are contributing to the assertion and protection of Indigenous communities in a way that nation-state institutions are not. Ecuador in particular seems to have a very fraught history of adopting indigeneity into its nation-state brand (Hall 2007, Robertson 2015; Rodner and Kerrigan 2018) while offering little

or no intellectual property protections to its Indigenous people as a community or as individuals. Indigeneity is exhibited as part of "Ecuadorian-ness", made manifest through material objects, often in museums and/or for tourist consumption, or by adoption of certain aesthetics by White and *Mestizo* designers and entrepreneurs. Moreover, while customary law may help to ease tensions that arise based on notions of copying at the local and regional level, the state judicial system ultimately reasserts its dominance when cases seem to threaten their jurisdiction. This is troubling, because as long as appropriation serves the nation-state, it is unlikely cases against these uses of Indigenous aesthetics and intellectual property will favor the plaintiff. Moreover, the fact remains that the Western legal system as it stands now is insufficient in dealing with the varying Indigenous value systems and how they interpret copying, appropriation, and rights to ownership.

Within my research, the idea of ownership seems to be twofold, the idea of individual artistic property overlapping with a shared aesthetic commons. While at times this can produce tensions for some individual designers, particularly because copying in the Andean world is commonplace and predominantly accepted, it can also reveal the types of considerations that may complicate case law on aesthetic ownership and appropriation. It is difficult to know among my designers what the impact of copies have done to their businesses, since not everyone would agree on the markers that signify a copy in the first place, and even so, choices in buying seem to rest on a number of factors, not just originality of design. Also, although these internal tensions certainly exist, they do not, as of yet, seem to threaten the expansion of Puruhá dress. As argued in chapter three, if anything copies support the higher end designer brands, just as the higher

end brands support less expensive sellers who may or may not copy designs. It is also encouraging that there seems to be very little, if any, appropriation of Puruhá dress outside of the community so far, among non-Indigenous Ecuadorians or in global brands and buyers. The reasons for this are varied, but the protection that it affords is that Puruhá designers and sellers are the ones getting direct economic support through the sale of dress that also makes visible "Puruhá-ness". In so doing, they move against some of the ways that the state has historically attempted to integrate Indigenous populations into its "brand", but the larger question of whether or not tensions between Indigenous and Western legal systems can be resolved, and who will ultimately benefit from this resolution, remains.

CHAPTER 6

MUJERES LUCHADORAS AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

6.1 STILL FIGHTING

While back in Quito, in September 2019, things took an unexpected turn. I waited for Sisa by the San Roque Market, an open-air food market at the edges of the *centro histórico*. It appeared to be closed although a few people walked by and tapped on certain spots on the metal wall, which would then open a crack to let them in. It reminded me of movies where the houses had hidden doors, something I loved as a child. I peered into cracks as I waited, but there were only a few people resting, stray dogs huddled up together to sleep, and mostly empty stalls. I had a bag of food on my shoulder to bring to her, because she said she had been organizing to make food for the protestors and anyone else who needed it. Protests had just started against President Lenin Moreno and his withdrawal of fuel subsidies as part of a loan deal with the IMF, which would cause the price of gas to spike. The response was swift and helmed by Indigenous and poor communities who would suffer the most from this decision. Though I had initially been trying to meet up with Sisa to talk about my dissertation, now there was no time for that. I was there to help and although I only intended to give her the food, chat, and return home to write, I quickly got caught up in her plans.

When she met me, she had three other women with her, with two children in tow. They were going to the market because the plan was to make a hot meal, mainly of rice

and meat, to take to protestors. The day before they had only been able to give out sandwiches. Sisa had been getting money gifted to her from people via social media, where she posted live videos of what she was doing and what was happening. She had about $70, although more would come in later and with that we walked up and down the market, which it turned out was not behind the hidden metal doors that day. It was a block or so further down, just outside the entrance. I was captivated by the way she spoke with the vendors, explaining what she and her friends were doing, asking for help, getting discounts and at times extra food thrown in. She and one of the other women would be posting on social media as they did this, more live videos showing the support they were being given. Once we had all the supplies we realized they were too heavy to carry all the way back to the house, given that we were making food for as many people as possible, so Sisa's brother came to pick up the food as we walked back to the house. We chatted, and rested. They decided to cook through the night and give out food the next morning, so I took my leave around 4:00 in the afternoon.

I woke up to live streams of them giving out food and returned to Sisa's house a few hours later to help a new group of women cook while Sisa and the other girls rested from their long night. I sat next to a soft-spoken and sweet woman, as I learned to chop garlic cloves in my hand, without a cutting board. Pots that must have been made for industrial kitchens boiled with rice and meat. We would add noodles and a sauce from the garlic, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and herbs later. As we worked and chatted I noticed something that had struck me yesterday, that Sisa has really funny friends. The asides and jokes from two women in particular kept me smiling. When the men dropped in later to help pack up the food, we had formed a sort of assembly line, where two women were

putting the food in containers and then I was handing them to the men to put tops on them, a much more tense and rapid process than I would have thought. At one point I dropped a container on the couch because it was so hot, and one of the women, thinking it was one of the men that did it, yelled, "Who did this?!" When I sheepishly said it was me she just softly said okay and helped me clean up, and everyone found it hilarious. Why her shift from a demanding anger with the men to quiet sympathy with me was so funny I can't explain, but it was.

We did finally pack up the food in one of the men's cars, and I was grateful that the protests were now in the *Parque Arbolito*, since it was close to my house and there were no cars anywhere in the *centro histórico*. They were my only means of getting home. We pulled up in the center of the protest, handing out food as quickly as we could, and when it was gone I gave my friends a hug and began the walk home, smoke bombs still going off and the smell of burning thick in the air. I mention all this because the idea that Indigenous women in Ecuador are central to the retention of cultural values and identities (O'Connor 2007, Radcliffe et al 2004) is true not only in terms of educating children, speaking Kichwa, wearing Indigenous dress, or maintaining certain practices, but also in actively aiding and participating in rebellion that supports the community. Though cooking may seem like gendered work, it is also strategic. Food is sustenance to keep fighting and it was what was needed at the time. Moreover, it's something that is easy for people to donate to and support, a vision of giving to all who need it in contrast to narratives of violence and aggression. This is particularly important as messages in the news and on social media, usually from White and wealthier *Mestizos* reiterated ideas about Indigenous protestors being 'thugs' and pleading with them to remember that

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Ecuador is a nation of peace. Food is subversive resistance in a similar way that seeing masses of protestors in Indigenous dress, including the semiotically heavy red poncho, is subversive resistance. Indigenous women are still treated as bearers of tradition both within their communities and in Ecuador more broadly, and certainly the use of the Indigenous woman as a marker for the boundaries of nationhood (Radcliffe 1997) is still evident. Yet in contrast, Indigenous women are also constructing their own complex identities, which includes but is not limited to independence and a fighting spirt. To paraphrase Sisa when her friend's daughter got a bump on the head and started to cry, 'Remember you are a strong girl, a fighter.'

Images produced by and for Indigenous women are particularly significant in spreading new narratives and dress brands are certainly spreading this imagery. Still, while there is more reach to *Mestizos* of this imagery through news and other media, there are also many who don't see these images at all. Moreover, there remains a strong dualistic gender dynamic in both *Mestizo* and Indigenous Ecuadorian culture, which impacts both men and women (and presumably other gendered individuals whose identities are erased). In some cases, the focus on Indigenous rights creates tension with women's rights and erases the struggles and violence women suffer (Cervone and Cucurî 2017, Lavinas Picq 2012). At the same time, networks of women, like Sisa and her friends, do much to support one another despite their marginalization, and this was also something I heard from other Puruhá dress designers and vendors, that this type of work can often be done at home, and therefore helps to support women who cannot work outside of the home. In fact, though my experiences are primarily with young 20 and 30 something year old women, many of who run businesses or work outside the home, I do

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believe that they are indicative of a larger shift in gender dynamics within the Puruhá, and likely the broader Indigenous community in Ecuador as well. Being Indigenous, being Puruhá is such a deep part of these women's identities, but it is layered in complex ways with other identities, including gender. I focus, therefore, first on how this intersection of being Indigenous and a woman has been formulated historically by the nation-state as the symbolic *mujer Indígena,* which still affects representations today.

6.2 A HISTORY OF THE MUER INDIGENA: CONSTRUCTING A CULTURAL LIMIT

Histories of Indigenous women in Ecuador continue to inform how Indigenous women self-identify, as well as how their own communities and the nation-state identify them. Like other women of color, they are at the intersection of various forms of oppression, which inform their political location (Radcliffe et al 2004), but also inform how they reframe themselves as resistant to those oppressions. Here I focus on power relations between Indigenous women and *Mestizo* or other elite Ecuadorians but will subsequently discuss the gender dynamics within Indigenous communities. It is significant that although Indigenous women are embedded in nation-state ideologies in ways that are unique to their intersectionalities[50], the relationship between Ecuadorian women more broadly and the nation-state shares some gendered ideologies. Through media like newspapers, discourse about women and nationhood has emerged in Ecuador with women being framed as nostalgic, as female revolutionaries but positioned via their

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[50] I use intersectionality to talk about the particular experience of Indigenous women in Ecuador here, but recognize that the term, coined by Kimberlé Willliams Crenshaw (1989) was created to discuss the oppression of Black women specifically, and its context of Black scholarship should be given in order to understand how it might change when applied to another marginalized group of women.

male familial ties and with an emphasis on their retention of femininity (Radcliffe 1996). Development of the nation is also based on standards of comfort for women, but here is where the distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in significant. Poorer, rural women, many of whom might today align with Indigenous identity, are seen as holding national development back, whereas 'whiteness' and 'pink collar' jobs, things associated with non-Indigenous women, are seen as supporting national development. Moreover, although women in Ecuador broadly are treated as reproducers, caretakers and socializers of future generations (ibid), there is a deeper tension between this role and the life of a contemporary Indigenous woman, in part because her own ethnic and cultural community also relegates her primary value to child rearing, marriage, and the domestic sphere.

Still, some of the gendered relationships within communities suffer from internalized colonial and post-colonial oppression, which makes it difficult to parse, for instance, the layers of cultural and personal violence that perpetuate familial violence today. Moreover, internalized notions of beauty or of women's roles in society are still being influenced by visual mediums, from the *carte de viste* to the image making of the *mujer Indígena*. During the 1800s discourse about human variation, facilitated by photograph technology, produced *carte de viste* images (Poole 1997). The circulation of these images helped to create race as a shared biological 'fact', and promoted stereotypes about populations and 'negative', i.e. what were coded as non-white physical features (ibid). This visual economy also spoke to gendered differences in image, including paintings where Indigenous women were framed as a lower class than their male Indigenous counterparts (Radcliffe 1997). Here we can see early origins of elites using

Indigenous women as the limit of hierarchical ordering. By the mid 19th century, however, *indigenismo*, promoted by non-Indigenous Ecuadorians, attempted to challenge the scientific authority of previous constructions of race and promote a vision of Indigenous people that would support their political motivations (Poole 1997). It is at this point the figure of *La India*, the image of an Indigenous woman on shields, flags and other nationalistic regalia as a way for elite *Mestizos* and *criollos* to claim a regional authenticity and mark themselves as different from their Spanish ex-colonial masters (Radcliffe 1997). Despite this seeming elevation of the Indigenous woman archetype, in new republican economies Indigenous women were denied agency and used only as context. They were again a limit by which to measure citizenship, but in this case as the 'most exotic other', a means of articulating difference and distinctiveness of the nation that would continue into the 20th century. Now the Indigenous woman figure represented a new 'limit', a marker for the extent of nationhood. If *mestizaje* was the assumed route to modernity, then these women were the ultimate target of development projects, the absolute border of national belonging and the nation's potential (ibid). Moreover, power structures during the 20th century hacienda regime encouraged a narrative of submission (Cervone and Cucurí 2017) that continues to affect gender relationships in Indigenous communities today. Violence against women at the hands of hacienda owners created a mentality of submission used to control obedience and maintain order (ibid). Violent behaviors used to control women and children within communities today are in part reproductions of this hacienda violence, and feminist movements to address these problems are interpreted as a threat to broader Indigenous movements that focus on ethnic and cultural identity by many within those same communities (ibid). Interestingly,

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Indigenous women I spoke with had their own counter-narratives, which did not ignore suffering but focused heavily on the way that suffering bred strength, resilience, and a fighting spirit.

In the world of *Mestizo* and White Ecuadorian elites, however, Indigenous women have been used predominantly as an image, regardless of how they are characterized, and turned to a symbol of political, social, and economic processes. One of these is the process of *mestizaje*, wherein they were not only assumed to be key to development but also the embodiment of possibility through childbearing, where they could act as 'whiteners' for Ecuadorian society (Radcliffe 1999). The legacy of women was one of distinction, representing the 'exotic other' who could fulfill her purpose for the nation by choosing a 'whiter' partner and passing that on to her family lineage (Radcliffe 1999). Women therefore were, and are, constructed via the state as biological reproducers and reproducers of ethnic group boundaries or transgression of these boundaries (Alonso 1994). In this sense they were/are also framed as bearers of tradition (Rogers 1998, Weismantle 2001), as those who could keep alive what made Ecuador different for *Mestizo* and other elites, or for the Indigenous communities they belonged to. The figure of woman has not been constituted as the subject but as the ground on which male competition is fought (Mallon 1996), whether that be competition over a political identity or around resistance to colonialism and *mestizaje*. The push and pull of moving towards 'whitening' via *mestizaje* and resisting this whitening with the solidification of 'pure' Indigenous identity has been contested through and on the body of women. This is still true to a great extent today, where Indigenous women's bodies, associated with tradition and essentialized during colonialism (Radcliffe 1997), still symbolize 'authentic' identity

through cultural features including dress, language, food, and child rearing (O'Connor 2007). Tied to this essentialized figure is a preoccupation with sexuality, since as reproducers they, again, can either protect against or participate in processes of 'whitening' (Radcliffe 1997). They are not only bearers of tradition but can also be reproducers of, or detrimental to, those traditions.

This burden is not something Indigenous women are unaware of. Many of them spoke to the way that histories of dress knowledge have been passed down through female lineages, particularly grandmothers and mothers. It became clear to me in fieldwork that while there are men who have knowledge about dress, it is still predominantly women who are keeping 'traditional' dress alive, both in knowing and wearing. Luis, an older Otavaleño man who runs a shop near the *Mercado Artesanal*, mentioned that his wife almost always wears the traditional dress style, but he only does in meetings or events. He also noted that at those events you can distinguish between people who buy more or less expensive clothes. In fact, every time I asked a participant who used the traditional dress style more, whether they were Puruhá or from another Indigenous community, they would immediately say women did. Still, in many ways what might be a burden of keeping tradition alive has become more of an opportunity, and a means economic success for my participants. Through dress women are not casting off their roles as bearers of tradition but digging into that as a source of power and mobility, while also shifting into their own narratives of modern women who are navigating and using their sexuality. This is in contrast to the sexuality controlled by hegemonic institutions and men; they construct themselves not only for the male gaze but for their own reflective gaze. This is not an easy task in Indigenous communities where

the remnants of 19th century White *Mestizo* patriarchal guidelines, outlined in civil law, continue to influence both the state's and the community's gendered relationships (O'Connor 2007). Yet there are differences in Indigenous patriarchy and gender roles within Andean Indigenous communities, which Indigenous women within the Puruhá community have been able use to their advantage. In many ways they have circumvented White and *Mestiza* feminism and have relied on an intersectional feminism (though never using that term in my experience) which integrates personal, gendered, and cultural values.

6.3 I. GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE PURUHA COSMOVISION

Among the Puruhá, as with other Indigenous Andean communities, there is an emphasis on a dualistic gender dynamic of man and woman, which are central to the harmony and wellbeing of the community (Janeta Janeta 2015). In my fieldwork, I did not encounter any individuals who identified outside of a man/woman binary, nor did I encounter anyone who spoke about gender existing outside of this duality. It is difficult to know, however, what has been lost or subverted by colonial powers. In fact, Pedro Janeta Janeta's book which describes the Puruhá cosmology mentions the fact that much was lost during the Incan and Spanish conquests but never suggests that the idea of two complementary genders might be more complicated. He firmly reiterates the duality of man and woman and its permeation through other aspects of Puruhá culture, such as the masculine sun and feminine moon, masculine heat and feminine cold, and any other aspect of the natural world (ibid). He states that in the ancestral culture you are not a full man or woman without your opposite, that you are, in Kichwa, *chawpi hari* or *chawpi warmi,* half man or half woman, and this incompleteness can manifest as bad personal

characteristics (ibid). I wonder then, at the many single women I encountered, and if this idea influences the way they are viewed in their communities, and what the reaction is toward single men. In this vision of the Puruhá culture, it should be that single men and women are treated equally since, "*En la visión Indígena, nada es independiente de nada, solo se complementan,*" or "In the Indigenous vision nothing is independent of anything, they only complement each other (Janeta Janeta 2015)." A problem that arises, however, is that one form of this duality has become women/men as a traditional/modern dichotomy (Radcliffe 2002). This reduces women to the home sphere, to the reproduction of cultural practices, and simultaneously ignores men's role in the reproduction of cultural practices (ibid). Still, this could be understood as a result of colonial and contemporary influences. Post-conquest social structures work against the Indigenous cosmovision, because the Inca system destroyed the Puruhá social system and began practices of machismo and domination, which he argues worsened with the practice of Catholicism and the violence of Spanish colonialism (Janeta Janeta 2015). The idea that women are now trying to recuperate a status lost through these successive conquests makes sense, but Janeta Janeta (2015) also argues that women's recovery of their complementary role in a contemporary context may create competition with men. He contends that women are beginning to leave their role as the center of the home, abandoning their children, conforming to Western and consumerist ideas, and thus loosing cultural values (96).

However, the fear of losing women as the 'tradition bearers' actually plays into patriarchal discourse, including lingering colonial patriarchies, since the state also created the *mujer Indígena* as the bearer of tradition and positioned her figure as the limit of

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citizenship. Her role, in both state and Indigenous societies has been delimited and domesticized, even if it is rhetorically positioned as equal and complementary to the man's role in the Puruhá cosmovision. Moreover, an increasingly 'masculine' role, i.e. one that is not tied to strictly gendered cultural roles, is often positioned as a threat to Indigenous masculinity, which is itself already called into question by the broader Ecuadorian society. Indigenous people are understood to have an inherent 'femininity' by the state, and therefore be subservient to the masculine *Mestizo* population, even if the *Mestizo* individual is female and the Indigenous individual is male (De la Cadena 1992). This is also tied to work, since both women and Indigenous people are believed to have less of an ability to work. Thus, Indigenous women's work is therefore particularly devalued because it is 'doubly feminized' (ibid). The supposed threat of Indigenous women leaving their gendered roles is as much about fear of losing cultural traditions and ideologies as it is about further feminizing Indigenous men, a remnant of colonial violence that remains to this day.

For women, however, the influence of colonial violence in forcing Indigenous submission plays a significant part in their continued oppression, as does the expectation that they are to keep up the role of maintaining the home both economically and culturally (Kyle 2000). In this role they focus on the family, their productive and reproductive work is assumed to be 'traditionally available' and Andean Indigenous divisions of labor give women tasks within agricultural cycles that are undervalued or underacknowledged by both community members and census categories (Radcliffe et al 2004). They are therefore often poorer than their male counterparts and have fewer work opportunities outside the home that could garner them a higher income (ibid), even

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though they are expected to organize and sustain that home. Again, these gendered divisions of labor are part of the Puruhá cosmology, but the way that they currently marginalize women is perhaps a result of how those divisions are valued and have shifted in contemporary life. For instance, historically both men and women made Puruhá dress, but were assigned different roles. Men shear the wool, women wash it, the women spin the wool, the men dye it, the men knit the fabric, and the women finish it (Janeta Janeta 2015). Today all aspects of Puruhá dress are either outsourced (such as the spinning of wool) or primarily done by women. Even Franklin, who is now a very prominent Puruhá designer, admitted that at first he didn't want to work in clothing because of his own *machismo* (his word), but out of necessity and because he wanted something of his own, he began working in fashion, and little by little he began to value what he did. In other words, what was once a practice that both genders contributed to in complementary ways has become much more female centered, perhaps as a response to *Mestizo* and White ideas that dress and fashion are primarily the realms of women, but also that for Indigenous women this is particularly true since they uphold tradition. If a balanced practice like dress production can shift so dramatically, it is likely the same has happened with other aspects of cultural and economic production among the Puruhá, and that the role of the woman in reproducing tradition through the home sphere is as much a phenomenon of Indigenous Andean cultures as it is Western colonial influences. In contrast Pedro Janeta Janeta's warning that Indigenous women are leaving their households and abandoning their children in a shift towards accepting Western values and abandoning Indigenous ones, the reality is much more interesting.

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I will use Sisa and her friend Angie as an example. Sisa is a single woman in her 30s with no children, and a thriving business that employs other women. In Ecuador as a nation and among the Puruhá as a community, this is rather unusual. In Ecuador romantic relationships are still central to shifts in identity. I have heard time and time again, that often children don't leave their parents' home unless and until they find a partner and get married. Of course, that may not always be the case but among my close *Mestizo* friends I have found this idea to ring true. It is, I would argue, a partial reason 'love' motels that can be rented by adults who live with their parents are still popular, and public displays of affection are, in my observation, much more common than in the United States. Of course, these are observations that could be colored by a number of factors, but the fact remains that partnership and marriage are still markers of individual progress for many Ecuadorians. Moreover, for Indigenous women the pressure to marry young may also still be present. Sisa's friend Angie touched on this topic, as we walked to the bus line from Sisa's workshop/home. I needed to get back to my apartment and she needed to deliver a blouse across town, so we headed the same way to the station. I found Angie to be engaging, and as we walked down the uneven cobblestone of the *centro histórico* we chatted about both Sisa's and her own life. Angie had grown up in the country and her mother had grown up with the understanding that women get married very young. She said at 13 years old she had been talking to a boy and was encouraged to marry him, but she felt she was far too young, a sentiment her mother didn't share. Now, as an adult in her 30s, she has had many experiences that further shaped her understanding of the world. She had gone to college but not finished because she got pregnant with her son, although she said she would eventually like to return to school once he was out of the

house. She was overt about her distaste for what she called *machismo* and explained that she was raising her son to help with everything in the house so that he would be a good man and know how to take care of himself. Angelina was also very focused on his education and affording him opportunities that she felt would help him in the future, like doing an exchange program in the U.S. once he was in high school. Her story and Sisa's seem to reflect a shift in certain behaviors centered around home and family. Angelina agreed that in general Puruhá women are not marrying as young and they are also more educated, but the idea that this is only a Western influence or that it means abandoning Indigenous culture is far too overstated. In fact, these two women, who are deviating exactly from certain traditional patterns of marriage and family, are also the ones who are deeply invested in the preservation and elevation of Puruhá tradition *and* contemporary culture through their work and their support of their community.

It is difficult to say just how broad this shift to 'non-traditional' forms of home and personal life is, but throughout the entirety of my fieldwork the idea of not being partnered and focusing on one's work (when asked about my own home life) was met with praise by several women I spoke with. Although significant for women and the Puruhá community, if the home sphere and protection of cultural identity are the main or only priorities ascribed to Indigenous women it does become easy to erase them from other aspects of society. For instance, domestic violence cases are often ignored, stifled or hidden (Cervone and Cucurí 2017, Lavinas Picq 2012, Radcliffe et al 2004). Development projects generally only create opportunities to grow within those domestic/reproductive roles (Molyneux and Thomson 2011, Radcliffe et al 2004). Yet, while this literature on domestic violence and gendered development is very useful in

thinking about how the intersections of gender, poverty, and ethnicity intersect for Puruhá women and contribute to oppression, I have found that the counternarratives of my participants paint a much different picture of Puruhá women's identities.

6.3 II. HIDDEN VIOLENCE AND THE STRONG INDIGENOUS WOMAN ARCHETYPE

Indigenous women certainly suffer more violence in Ecuador than is reported or acknowledged, and arguably there is already concern for interpersonal violence among Ecuadorian women in general. During my fieldwork, there was a small festival against domestic violence in Quito's *Parque Carolina*, with artisan booths and a stage where singing and dancing acts were performed. I saw newspaper articles with huge graphic layouts that gave percentages of victims of abuse. Still, the particular case of Indigenous women was not always discussed in broader conversations about domestic violence and sexual assault. This is both an external and internal community problem. Speaking about domestic violence has often been interpreted as something that threatens the Indigenous movement, and Indigenous women are accused to falling prey to the rhetoric of Western feminism which focuses on individual rights (Cervone and Cucurí 2017). This is seemingly the opposite of Indigenous communal values that focus on the good of the community over the good of the individual. Moreover, forms of justice outside of Indigenous systems are often inefficient, costly, and discriminatory (Lavinas Picq 2012). In response, many female indigenous leaders are employing pre-colonial concepts of gender harmony in counter to Western feminism (Cervone and Cucurí 2017) and seeking reconciliation in local indigenous courts or seeking the support of global rights organizations and laws (Lavinas Picq 2012). I mention this to highlight another space

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where, like my participants, indigenous women in Ecuador are navigating aspects of both Indigenous and Western ideologies on gender that affect their lives and the lives of other women in their social networks.

However, there is also a very subtle way that women re-center themselves as equals to their male counterparts, and that is by drawing on narratives of strong and rebellious Indigenous women who resisted and persisted through the horrors of colonialism and continue to fight today. This archetype encompasses a strength that is gendered but is also inherently Indigenous and in service of the larger Indigenous rights movement. Most of the time I heard this directly from women themselves, but I did also hear a reference to this idea from a male[51] museum guide at the Pucara Tambo museum in Cacha. Although I have never heard explicit references to the abuse of women during the colonial period in any other museum, here the guide mentioned that Indigenous women were often sexually assaulted and abused by military men during the colonial period, and that they would fight back with wooden weapons that were on display. It is also in Cacha, where many Puruhá are from, that Fernando Daquilema fought alongside Manuela Leon. Although she is mentioned less frequently, she too was an army leader from Cacha, who contributed greatly to the revolt in 1871 and was executed along with Daquilema (CCE Benjamin Carrion n.d.). These histories of women fighting against oppression in moments where Indigenous men were also fighting for their rights and freedoms help to support the notion that all individuals work towards the good of the community. In this sense genders are represented as equal and harmonious, with the same ultimate goal.

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[51] The guide did not mention his personal racial/ethnic identification.

I saw this myself during the *paro* (strike) mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. On the last day of the protests, before President Lenin Moreno met with CONAIE and it was announced he would repeal the decree later that night, the rebellion was at its height. The *Parque del Arbolito* outside of the *Centro Cultural Benjamin Carrión* was full of people, many seeking refuge inside the auditorium of the cultural center where humanitarian aid had set up. Fires littered the streets, rocks and debris were everywhere. A man asked me if I could roll up his sleeves because his hands were dirty, and I noticed they were blackened with soot. I had been hearing explosions all day, which continued to ring out while I was there. I had initially gone to find Sisa, since I knew she was there and her last video post was concerning. When I couldn't find her I instead did what little I could to help. There were lines set up to carry rocks, papers, eucalyptus branches, gas, and other materials forward, where they would be burned in protest. As I moved objects forward in line I noticed the gender dynamics. I was receiving and handing things off to men and women in equal measure. The labor of protest was not gendered, nor was its organization. A voice that rang out over a loudspeaker (although it could also have been a traffic cone, which I had seen employed just as well) was a woman's. She was finding and arranging a few protestors to move to a different area of the city. An image that would later circulate on social media around the world was from the Washington Post, of an Indigenous woman in her knee length skirt, black heels, fringed shawl and fedora hat, with a mask on her face to protect her from the smoke that loomed behind her. This wasn't unusual. Indigenous women had and continue to participate in fights for their communities, and in my experience often in leadership roles. As Malvi, a young Otavaleña women, said during an interview:

Como definiría una mujer Indígena, o sea Indígena, sea Otavaleño, de cualquier tipo de nacionalidad, como una mujer luchador … porque como bien sabemos que el Ecuador o todo Sudamérica fue invadido por los españoles y todo los Indígenas hacían sidas esclavas durante mucho tiempo. Y hasta, pues, mi vestimenta misma es de los esclavos que, los que … los españoles los dieron esta vestimenta a nosotros. Se puede … El original vestimenta es … no se este, es nada. (Crosstalk). Entonces yo le define como gente luchador.

How would you define an Indigenous women … that is, Indigenous, whether Otavaleño, any type of nationality, as a woman fighter ... because as we well know Ecuador, or all of South America was invaded by the Spanish, and all the Indigenous people were slaves for a long time. And even then, my clothing itself belongs to the slaves who … the Spaniards gave this clothing to us. You can … The original dress is … I don't know, it's nothing. (Crosstalk) So I define them as fighters.

When I was with Sisa at an earlier protest, the daughter of one of her friends got hurt when she accidently hit her head on the truck they had traveled in. Sisa scooped her up quickly and to ease the crying reminded her that she was a strong girl, a fighter. It was something I had heard before, and the *mujer luchadora* continued to pop up around me, like the image of Mamá Transito Amaguaña, a leader of the Indigenous movement and founder of the Ecuadorian Indian Federation along with Dolores Cacuango in 1944 (Valverde 2016, Picq 2018). She was a feminist and Indigenous fighter, but I hadn't

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heard about her until I visited the Contemporary Art Museum in Quito, a favorite place of mine to relax on Sundays. There was an exhibit there, around the same time as the protests, made from art of various elementary through high school students at different schools throughout Ecuador. The exhibit was supposed to focus on the idea of human rights and equity. On one wall there was a version of the Mexican *Lotería* game, entitled *Lotería Mega Kool,* where a student was asked to make symbols that represented cultural diversity in her area. Alongside the *cuy* (Guinea pig) and *el panacello* (the angel statue who overlooks Quito) was an image of Mamá Transito, and *mujer luchadora* underneath her.

She passed in 2009, just a few months shy of 100 years old, but her legacy seemed to be very much alive in the discourse of Indigenous women I spoke with. Moreover, though violence against Indigenous women is still a major problem in Indigenous communities, women in these communities continue to find ways to integrate women's rights into broader Indigenous rights movements, and assert their role as leaders and fighters alongside their male counterparts, not based on being romantic partners to male revolutionaries but as single women who are holding onto tradition, insomuch as that tradition also includes the strength and equality of women within Indigenous communities.

6.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEAUTY

A similar shift in narrative seems to be happening with regard to beauty and sexuality. Certainly, both colonial and Indigenous histories have influenced the emphasis on particular feminine ideals and deviations, but so too have Indigenous women today taken control (at least more visibly) of the power that comes with claiming or performing

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Figure 6.1 *Lotería Mega Kool* by Daniela Merino under teacher Christian Torres, *Centro de Arte Contemporaneo* Quito, 2019
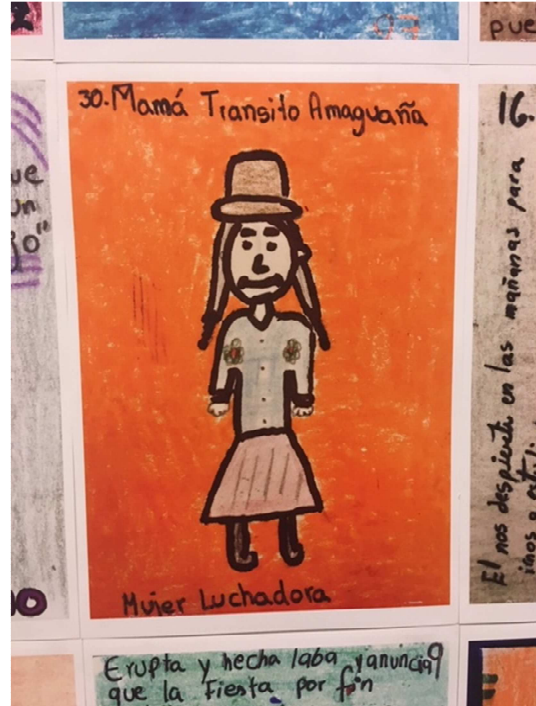
Figure 6.2 Mamá Transito Amaguaña, detail

'beauty'. Unsurprisingly, within the Puruhá fashion market beauty is a central selling point, as it is in global fashion. Yet because of historical attempts to control and categorize Indigenous women's beauty and sexuality, there is a lot at stake in how women portray themselves and are portrayed by others, in images, runway shows, social media, and other visual mediums. Early images of Indigenous women in Andean nations, for instance during the Age of Enlightenment, were attempts at categorizing difference much in the same way plant and animal species were being categorized (Poole 1997). By the 1800s photography emerged as a way to circulate these images and reiterate race as a shared biological 'fact'. However, along with these images that dehumanized Indigenous women, emphasizing the 'undesirable' features they shared based on a Euro-centric and white-centric physiognomy, were also instances of White and *Mestizo* elites exoticizing

and sexualizing them (ibid). In early republican era paintings Indigenous women are fetishized as surface, as the clothing that covers the body and not the body, or the woman herself (Poole 1997). They were pictured as chaste and simple, as context for national difference but without agency (Radcliffe 1997). Yet, this in no way means sexual aggression or violence towards Indigenous women by non-Indigenous men stopped, and in fact was present through the extent of the hacienda period. The hacienda system began in the colonial period but did not disappear until the mid 20th century (Lyons 2006). This tension between framing Indigenous women as both unattractive and yet as targets of sexual desire may seem contradictory, but they are simply two sides of the same societal fear. Sexuality is at the core of questions about race and culture, because of concerns about procreation and populations (Radcliffe 1997). Indigenous women's bodies, like women's bodies globally, were and continue to be targeted for control and policing (ibid). Thus, Indigenous women in the Andes may have historically been framed by elites as less attractive than *Mestiza* or White women, but they were also a means of changing and 'whitening' the population through sex, and in that sense were desirable. Moreover, the desirability of the 'other', the exoticism of sexualized difference, is something that continues today, not just for Indigenous women but any women who are understood to represent ethnic or cultural alterity.

Dress acts as an immediate marker of this 'alterity' and thus as a marker of all the associations that come along with it for those who see the wearer as an 'exotic other'. This is why to a great extent choice in using or not using Indigenous women's dress is tied to power dynamics in sexuality, as well as their gendered role in Indigenous society. For instance, in the 1990s many women who moved into cities would wear more *Mestizo*

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clothes to avoid discrimination but at the same time young women would be hired in locations like hotels, wearing Indigenous dress, as a symbol of 'exotic otherness' for foreign businessmen (Radcliffe 1997). In Indigenous Andean patriarchal imaginations, however, Indigenous dress was more a means of retaining cultural identity and not threatening Indigenous masculinity. Femininity was associated with the risk of losing cultural essence and women could not adopt aspects of White or *Mestizo* dress as easily as men in the 1990s, in part because it was associated with deviant sexuality and a threat to Indigenous masculinity (ibid). Women who migrated might feel shame returning to their hometowns and continuing to wear *Mestizo* clothing, which signified a lack of cultural pride and might mark them as outsiders to the community (Lentz 1995). Thus, in many ways, retention of traditional dress was subject to male approval, both inside and outside of Indigenous communities but often to different ends. Indeed, it has been argued that women are often only mentioned for their clothing, again as symbols of cultural difference (Radcliffe et al 2004). However, today there is both a pride in cultural dress and a notion of this dress as something sexually attractive regardless of to whom it is attractive. Yet there are particular constructions of beauty that circulate between women who use these dress styles and it is difficult to distinguish between what aspects of beauty are tied to historical discourses of 'whitening' and its concomitant hierarchies, and what aspects are related to perceived physical similarities across populations resulting from *mestizaje*.

Malvi, who is Otavaleña, mentioned that women like to use Indigenous dress because it's more beautiful and more men say it's sexy. According to her, anywhere you go men look at you, and she doesn't make a distinction between Indigenous or non-

Indigenous men. Franklin, of VISPU, noted that the Puruhá dress style emphasizes and complements a woman's body but it doesn't show everything like, as he says, is common nowadays; it's more reserved. His wife certainly seems to wear the style frequently, at least enough that all the photos I've seen of her on social media have been in Puruhá dress. There does seem to be some appeal to the male gaze, and in particular the notion of contemporary women's dress as being too 'showy' in revealing skin is not limited to Puruhá or Indigenous societies. I can't claim to know where this idea came from as a means of framing Indigenous dress as superior or more attractive. However, I did hear at least one other reasoning for the use of Indigenous women's dress that I found surprising. Martha, who ran *Tejidos Naomi,* agreed with the rest of my interviewees that it is more common for women to wear this dress style than men, but she also mentioned this is because women are vainer (*vanidosas).* Immediately after she mentioned cultural pride and not forgetting about one's Indigenous community. It is possible she was aligning vanity with those ideas of liking the beauty or sexiness of the dress style. Regardless, it is clear that cultural retention and pride cannot be the sole reason for the popularity of Indigenous dress today, particularly among young women who are also looking to feel good in the clothes they wear. I also wonder what appeal this dress has for those who don't identify as Indigenous but *Mestizo,* and how does this affect beauty ideals for Indigenous women?

During my return visit, I sat with Sisa and her friend Angie. I asked them for any corrections to my work so far. Angie noted that it is not only Indigenous women who use Sumak Churay dress but *Mestiza* women as well, and she pointed out some of the models are also *Mestiza.* This was interesting to me, because it signaled that although it still

seemed to be a predominantly Indigenous market there were more *Mestiza* women buying and wearing Puruhá dress than I previously thought. Moreover, all the models I had seen in *Sumak Churay* photos, as well as in other brands, were simultaneously uniquely (and subjectively) beautiful, but still had certain commonalities. For the most part they were petite and thinner, though not to the extremes of the fashion industry in the U.S., up until a recent shift in modeling. They most often had long dark hair, delicate facial features (what I perceived as smaller noses and mouths, and rounded faces), and a skin tone that might be described as tan or bronze, although some are fairly pale as well. These are, of course, subjective interpretations. What qualifies as delicate features and how can skin tone be accurately described? Still, the fact remains that there are many similarities between the models across different brands and even outside of those brands in billboards and signs across Riobamba, or in the Reina de Riobamba. These similarities are reminiscent of early 'problems' that the Spanish crown had with individuals dressing above their station because physical characteristics were impossible to use alone as a marker of identity for many people. However, in some instances this has also been reversed, with *Mestiza* women using Indigenous dress styles during, for instance, local pageants. In Otavalo and the Amazonian town of Archidona there are local festivals which were once primarily Indigenous that were recreated as municipal folkloric festivals (Rogers 1998). The community, in search of local distinction and tourist income, used these festivals as markers of authenticity and folkloric attractions, and though White and Indigenous people participated, they did not compete with one another (ibid). Mark Rogers (1998) noted that pageants in Ecuador in general are strongly divided along ethnic lines, between White pageants and Indigenous pageants. Although Indigenous pageants

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also vary between populations they share a focus on the political ideals of the contestants, often awarding the most attention and points to the woman who answers a typically ideological and political question the best. This may be done in an Indigenous language or the Spanish language but having a proper response in the language (and in the case of Quichua in the right form of that language) are also essential to a woman's score. All Indigenous competitions also involve a 'traditional dress' category that mimics either older historical costumes or a form of dress that is a fancier form of their daily dress. Even in White/*Mestizo* pageants there is also an 'Indigenous dress' category, which integrates Indigenous culture but as a secondary ethnicity that allows White/*Mestizo* women to 'be their own Indians' and transcend them at the same time (ibid). Therefore, these pageants have two conflicting uses of folklorization, one of which legitimizes the White/*Mestizo* pageant contestants as elites and one that challenges folklorization as the purview of a dominant group. However, using these pageants to represent an idealized form of Indigenous womanhood is a spectacle, not a reflection of reality or even the desires of the population it is meant to represent. It is instead overtly political and an intensification of the boundaries of local Indigenous identities (ibid). Today, however, it does seem like pageantry may be more integrated. For instance, the Reina de Riobamba has had both Indigenous and non-Indigenous queens, and some of the Indigenous queens have worn *VISPU, Sumak Churay,* or other high end Puruhá designs both on stage and in promotional photos, while other contestants have not. Regardless, at least in Riobamba the pool of pageant candidates also reflects the makeup of the city's population to a good extent, at least with regard to the two largest racial and ethnic populations there. At the

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same time, many contestants share visible similarities, so this particular beauty ideal seems to transcend ethnicity and adhere to a sort of broader Ecuadorian ideal.

There is some research on just what this ideal is, and how it affects young girls in particular. A case study I mentioned previously was by Erynn Masi de Casanova (2004), who conducted interviews with youth in Guayaquil, Ecuador. She found that there is general acceptance of two ideal beauty types, what she calls Caucasian and Latina. They vary slightly, in that the Latina is less thin and more hourglass, but also in that this beauty incorporates personality traits that are 'feminine' and 'Ecuadorian'. This type still holds up virtues of whiteness and *mestizaje* but the young women she spoke with, despite acknowledging this ideal, also supported and celebrate one another's 'positive' traits even if they did not overall fit the 'Latina' type (ibid). Moreover, a lot of what were considered positive traits were aspects that focused on the notion of being well-groomed (ibid), itself a problematic and often misleading term. The notion of cleanliness as a 'whiter' trait, one associated with 'civilizing' Indigenous populations by a White or *Mestizo* population throughout Ecuador's history, was also an accepted way to discriminate against and even distinguish between Indigenous and more *Mestizo* individuals (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1998). Sadly, this alignment of indigeneity with being 'dirty' is something that still exists, although to what extent is unclear.

I was (perhaps naïvely) shocked to find that this discourse was still present, but it didn't take long for it to come up during fieldwork. It was still early in the *paro* and I was heading to Sisa's house to help make more food for protestors, so I got an Uber. The driver was making small talk with me and get excited when I told him I was born in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. He had family who now lived there and he said it was a much nicer city

than say, La Paz. When I asked him why he thought that, he said that La Paz has more Indians and they smell bad. In my confusion, he continued to talk about how at least 'we' bathe once in a while. For whatever reason, be it my appearance, the neighborhood he picked me up in, or some other aspects I couldn't discern, he aligned himself with me and assumed that I would agree with him, maybe even laugh along with him. After my reaction he backed off a bit, but I also noticed his confusion when he brought me to Sisa's neighborhood. The driver mentioned a fear of leaving me a few blocks away to walk up to the house, since his car couldn't pass through some of the narrow colonial streets, but he also seemed to think it impossible that it was the right location in the first place. The driver may have been concerned about theft because of the *paro,* something Sisa herself mentioned to me later. However, I also sensed that he was confused as to why I had a friend in what was known to be a more Indigenous and somewhat less wealthy neighborhood at all. It made me feel angry that he thought he had found a confidant in me, but this also made me directly confront my privilege and the way I'm viewed in Ecuador. Part of this privilege is adhering to a 'whiter' look in the context of Ecuador and therefore being treated well by a larger swath of Ecuadorians, including those who hold racist ideologies against Indigenous people. Although in this moment it was made obvious to me, I couldn't say how many other people held the same ideologies and I just didn't know, because the way I look, sound, or any other number of features meant that I never received their backlash.

Beauty, therefore, is about more than gender dynamics and the male gaze, although certainly that is part of it. Beauty in Ecuador is also about avoiding discrimination and 'elevating' the status of both the individual and, in this case, the

community to which the individual belongs- all of which are positioned in terms of local racial hierarchies. Beauty as power in Ecuador is very strong, and having desirable traits, including those that despite structural barriers are assumed to be within one's own power completely, such as 'good' grooming, are ways that Indigenous women can be understood to 'elevate', in this case, all Puruhá people. The fact that Indigenous and *Mestiza* models are presented side by side in some images, such as in Sumak Churay's promotional photos, may be a choice being made to speak to the fact that Indigenous women are just as beautiful, however subjective or culturally entrenched that idea is, as their *Mestiza* peers. I would also argue that while images of Puruhá women do highlight features that might be marked as Caucasian or even what Masi de Casanova codes as Latina, it is also difficult to know whether this ideal comes from existing commonalities in features, the lingering preference for 'whiteness', or a combination of both. Regardless, it is clear that the burden of beauty rests heavily on Indigenous women in some respects, although of course I am doing research in an industry that generally focuses on beauty and sexuality. Still, the way that human value is tied to beauty for Puruhá women also evidences its use and usefulness outside of direct desirability to men.

With so much at stake, having control over images that reinforce beauty ideologies can be very powerful. However, the ability or even desire to change what those expectations of beauty are depend on who your customer base is and what forms of media or publicity you are seeking. Surely many women do see themselves in the media of Puruhá designers and many others don't, but this is also a very specific part of the dress market. There are also stores like those in Riobamba that don't use media at all. They sell directly, with no promotional imagery upholding expectations of feminine

beauty. In these neighborhoods what is actually worn greatly varies, and the blouses (which tend to be the most expensive items) are the least common article of clothing worn. Instead variations on the *anaco,* from the traditional wrap skirt, to woolen varieties, to fitted pencil skirts, are held up with a *chumbi,* and worn sometimes with commercially made sweaters or more traditional shawls. The older women in Riobamba seem to more commonly wear the hard, white circular hats deemed traditional and some wear fedoras. Young girls more commonly wear the embroidered blouses and play with their look, such as a girl I spotted wearing very high bright gold heals with her *anaco* and blouse. That is to say, in actual daily wear there is a much more eclectic collection of both demographics and of dress styles, though they are all Indigenous.

6.5. NETWORKS OF SUPPORT

Though the concept of beauty can help to elevate the status of Indigenous women, it can also be exclusionary, and yet in the Puruhá dress market there is also a sense of inclusivity in terms of both customers and production networks. Because they are independent businesses, shop owners and designers can make use of family, friend, and community networks in a way that, for instance, some development projects have attempted to do with varied results. Development programs in Ecuador have often included women, but only within certain spheres (such as home and tradition maintenance), or as primary targets because they are understood to be among the most disenfranchised, especially if they are from rural areas (Molyneux and Thomson 2011, Radcliffe et al 2004). Yet these programs often fail to take into account the diversity of work, both within and outside of the home sphere that women do, and what networks of women have done for one another where development projects have not. Neoliberal

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restructuring continues to differentiate between women and men in pro-Indigenous development measures, and while women are central to forms of social capital that are mobilized for development they are still rarely the central agents of these programs (Radcliffe et al 2004). Perhaps unsurprisingly, women have therefore found their own networks of support for forms of development that are internal rather than externally imposed. Still, this is true not just of the fashion designers and sellers that I spoke with, but also of Indigenous Andean communities writ large. Where externally supported development programs may have tried to include Indigenous Andean cultural features and to some extent succeeded, there is every day *internal* economic development that naturally incorporates both Andean Indigenous and Western capitalist economic systems.

Again, there has been much discussion among Andeanists about community networks and reciprocity as bases for economic systems, specifically within Indigenous communities. In Korovkin's (1998) article on commodity production in Otavalo, Ecuador, she suggests that over the past fifty years Indigenous identity became hugely varied in socioeconomic categories, and the use of the word 'peasant' as a synonym for 'Indigenous producer' was finally called into question (125). The long history of bank loans, credit cooperatives, and textile booms is interwoven with a continued reliance on subsistence farming and the modification, but not disappearance, of communal institutions (Korovkin 1998). While weavers who became successful could act as independent producers, they recruited based on kinship and reciprocity and often chose to remain small-scale in order to avoid labor legislation, as well as to appeal to tourists and foreign buyers based on notions of 'authenticity' (Korovkin 1998:143). Therefore, small-scale textile economies that were based on a combination household and wage labor

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became a regionally specific alternative to 'full-fledged capitalism' and allowed them to retain cultural identity and economic security despite other disadvantages (Korovkin 1998:246). In many cases the Puruhá dress market is also based on a combination of household and wage labor, but it is not a chimaera; it is an entirely new species. For some producers, like *VISPU*, they seem to have more industrial machinery (Sagñay Sagñay 2015), though it is unclear the size of their production, both in terms of people and space.

For Sumak Churay, her work studio is inside her house and has ample space but is still small scale in terms of production size. She and a handful of other women she employs work with her. Some work in Quito, helping to craft and finish the products, although Sisa seems to do the bulk of the sewing. Some help deliver items, manage the stores (in Quito and Riobamba), or any other number of small tasks, like grabbing food for lunch in the middle of the day or rolling up bolts of thread. It all seems rather informal, and though these women are certainly working together they are also very much friends. The home/personal sphere and work sphere are not separate but a fully integrated mixture. In fact, the home/workspace becomes the center of other social and political activity as well, such as a gathering spot for support during the *paro* mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. In modern economic anthropology there is an increasing visibility of individuals who participate in global markets through small scale businesses run from the home, or who trade internationally while retaining local community responsibilities (Gudeman 2001:11). Also, if we suggest that the household is an important site of information, we must not forget to take into account that the household is not one individual but a network of individuals, often making decisions together depending on shifting 'membership' (Chibnik 2011; 120-122). Thus, the two

presupposed models of Émile Durkheim, one made up of complimentary tasks like the production line and the relationship between corporations who trade for what they lack, and the other whose base is self-sufficient units like linages or households, do not play out in daily life (Gudeman 2001:144-145). Self-sufficient units trade while corporations are imbued with social traditions (ibid). Moreover, feminist anthropologists and economists have long advocated for the reintroduction of the household as a part of, not divided from, the economic sphere (Wilk and Cliggett 1996).

Homes and communities are dependent on larger economic systems, but global and national economic systems are also dependent on communities (and thus households). For Indigenous women in the Andes, whose work has long been devalued, in part because of its association with the home sphere and not being 'real' work (De la Cadena 1992), the visibility of this economic system which relies on the interdependency of home and wage work can help to bring some recognition to the value of their labor, both monetary and social. Whatever the external perspective of this work is, the women themselves do recognize what their contribution to the larger community is. Carmenita, for instance, spoke about how their work helps the economy of Ecuador broadly but especially the women who can work in their houses, where they might not otherwise be able to work. As she said:

> *Ayudamos a las mujeres que, le damos trabajo nosotros. Trabajamos, bordando, y ayudamos a que la economía del Ecuador y las señoras ama de casas, mas que todo dedican hacer este bordado, que también pasan en casa y … Damos trabajo y eso es bueno porque es como un pequeño mini empresa, pero aun esta*

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reconocido pero si ayudamos, a los demás para que haya puede mantener sus familias.

We help women, we give them work. We work, embroidering and we help the economy of Ecuador and the housewives. More than anything they dedicate to this embroidery, which also happens at home, and … We give them work and this is good, because it's like a small mini business, but it is still recognized, but if we help others so that they can support their families.

Moreover, some entrepreneurs like Silvia have plans for other forms of expansion that support women in their community. She wanted to focus on a learning program for women, a tourism and community project where she can sell more than blouses, do embroidery, and work within the community. Therefore, while it is not unusual for Indigenous artisans (and arguably artists) in Latin America to be part of multiple income strategies and types of production, it seems a primary focus within the world of Puruhá fashion is to help networks of women, particularly in a way that allows them to make an income despite the demands of family or homelife. This is significant because it still ties to the notion that women are the embodiment of culture (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006), but it is not limited to the home or away from home-work sphere. Instead, chains of production are situated simultaneously within and outside of the home, without there being any loss of cultural guardianship. This is not to say that there are only forms of reciprocity and networking that create solidarity and not conflict (Cook 1966). For instance, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld's (1999) book the *Native Leisure Class* focused on

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how racial ideologies, the entrepreneurial ethic and subsistence ethics affected one another in Otavalo in the 1990s. He found that although economic success provides a means to a higher social status it is still dependent on the social network of artisans, and the communal nature of *mingas* or work parties that have often failed in development terms are successful in terms of community engagement (ibid). However, there is also a rising Indigenous elite and it is not uncommon for there to be divisions in understanding and relationships between wealthier and poorer Indigenous community members (ibid). Indeed, in the case of Puruhá dress, if there are women who work from home being included in these production networks then it stands to reason that there are also many women looking for jobs who would be passed over. It is unclear how these practices affect internal community dynamics negatively, if they do at all. However, there is at least one case where a business relationship became fraught, although it was over tensions of copying. As mentioned in chapter three, Carmenita used to work for Sisa, but then began to copy Sisa's designs for her own business and Sisa ended the relationship. The details are murky, in part because Sisa didn't seem to want to talk about it at length, but clearly not all attempts to support and/or work with other community members are successful.

Regardless, there is still a sense of responsibility to one's community, however that might be defined or limited. This means that women are the ones predominantly at the helm of creating the image of Indigenous Puruhá women, but not only through media that presents a form of idealized beauty. They are also creating this image of the woman as a producer, which incorporates both working within and outside the home, and participating in markets in ways that highlight their independence. Some of the female

producers I worked with did have partners and children, such as Silvia who arrived for our interview with her husband and child, and some did not. Some had the support of their parents or other non-romantic family members. However, all the female designers I spoke with were still the center of their businesses, the primary contacts and the head designers. Whatever their relationship status, family support, or lack thereof, the diversity of these women's lifestyles was evidence enough that ideologies of an absolutely necessary male and female partnership are being challenged. I see this particularly among young Indigenous women who are not just Puruhá but from other Andean communities as well. On Facebook posts and other social media they write statements and post memes rejecting traditions of marriage, for instance. When I speak about my own life as a single woman in her 30s there is often surprise but never shaming. Instead, what follows surprise is often some form of appreciation or positive evaluation of my subsequent career and position. This is not to say that those traditional gendered roles within Indigenous communities are going to be eradicated any more than they would be within *Mestizo* society. Rather, in addition to these traditions there are new ways to negotiate a woman's positionality that do not counter Indigenous culture but work within it. Just as forms of Indigenous Andean feminism that attempt to deal with domestic violence and sexual assault work within, not against, Indigenous cultural expectations, so too do forms of non-western feminism that support women's economic growth and networks. These networks are evidence that female designers are digging into their power as *mujeres Indígenas*, not just economically but politically and socially as well. This may not be a conscious effort, but there is an effort to live their lives outside of some of the cultural demands placed on them by their own communities, families, and by broader Ecuadorian

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society. If the power to define what it means to be Indigenous, to assert one's own dignity and autonomy as a member of an ethnic group, is part of a reclamation of control for Indigenous people (Beck and Mijeski 2000), than doing so at the meeting of gender identity *and* ethnic identity surely returns some power to these Indigenous Puruhá women. In a nation like Ecuador, the state insists that the only relevant identity for Indigenous peoples is external (ibid) and these designers shift that narrative to one where their own internal and intersectional narratives take center stage.

6.6 INDIGENOUS FEMALE LEADERSHIP, WITHIN AND BEYOND THE NATION-STATE

This responsibility to community and the overlap of cultural, gendered, and other needs and responsibilities is not limited to the sphere of dress or even the Puruhá, but is a phenomenon of Indigenous female leadership, including regional Andean female leadership. As previously discussed, there is a lot lacking at the intersection of women's and Indigenous rights movements, and so Indigenous women are often put in a position to make tradeoffs rather than these movements creating more intersectional spaces in their frameworks (Parisi and Corntassel 2007). For example, the grassroots organization REDMUJCH, the *Red Provincial de Organizaciones de Mujeres Kichwas y Rurales de Chimborazo* was formed to merge women's rights with collective Indigenous rights, in lieu of other indigenous organizations that did not center women's issues alongside broader plurinational agendas (Cervone and Cucurí 2017). The potential tradeoff here is losing the clout or support of larger and more well-known organizations for the ability to focus on Indigenous women's issues. Jaquette (2013) suggests there are three ways that this might be dealt with: the exit strategy, which involves full Indigenous autonomy, the

waiting strategy, or waiting for broader social forces to make the debate obsolete, which would require a compromise in both Indigenous and women's rights movement, or the reframing strategy, where these issues would be attacked more indirectly by changing cultural attitudes and behaviors on a broader scale. The author suggests there is no clear answer, but that an indirect method may be best. However, it seems Indigenous women are already taking on potential remedies. For instance, they've created new diplomatic spaces at global, regional, state, and local levels (Parisi and Corntassel 2007). Moreover, these scales are intermingled with particular spaces, like families, communities, states, and the international community, which are also interlocking entities (ibid). This is a form of layered citizenship that challenges the nature of Western diplomacy, which favors state boundaries, as well as Indigenous diplomacy in international communities, which still favors male Indigenous leaders (ibid). In fact, it is this very union of different political scales, along with different social spaces and forms of belonging, that helps facilitate Indigenous female leadership. Still, this form of leadership requires constant negotiation of indigeneity and a gendered identity.

Indigenous Andean women's motivations and goals in leadership may differ from broader *Mestizo* leadership in Latin America, and even than their male Indigenous counterparts. My own observations among female Puruhá designers and creators support Bown and McClellan's (2017) claim that Indigenous Andean women often express a motivation[52] to improve communities and an Andean cosmovision, taking into account

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[52] These findings are based on Bown ad McClellan's (2017) study and paper, but ring true for broader research on Indigenous women's positions in Andean society. While certainly not true for every Indigenous Andean, or even Puruhá woman, overall the motivations and goals seem to align with many of the female designers, vendors, and producers that I worked with.

the interests of not only the organizations they belong to but also the personal needs of their followers. In Latin America broadly, leadership is often characterized by a high level of power and wealth inequality, a personal 'likeable' quality referred to as being *simpatico*, high levels of machismo, and a forceful response to opposition (ibid). Indigenous Andean women instead focus on open communication and talking things out, motivating and honoring women in their community, mentoring, job training, socializing, and providing for their followers' wellbeing (ibid). These are ways of leading that I have seen some of the female designers I work with enact, particularly the care for the wellbeing of other women, open communication, and mentoring. However, Indigenous women are also leading at national and international scales, and their forms of leadership are central to the particularities of Indigenous women's push for rights. In turn, their ability to succeed in pushing for political and social rights in the international sphere, while acknowledging national and local power dynamics, seems to be another central feature of these Indigenous female leaders.

REDMUJCH, the *Red Provincial de Organizaciones de Mujeres Kichwas y Rurales de Chimborazo*, mentioned at the start of this section, embody a lot of these leadership characteristics. They are doing politically what Puruhá designers and producers are doing economically. They are seeking out and succeeding in the recognition of new forms of sovereignty, which simultaneously use and bypass nation-state power. Indigenous practices of plural authority, unbounded from states, and feminist perspectives in global politics have exposed failures in international relations and existing political methodologies (Picq 2013). In so doing, counter narratives of Indigenous

women as leaders in an anti-colonial women's movement[53] emerge. The power of Indigenous women in particular to create counter narratives is incredibly upending in a nation where they've been used predominantly as symbols by nation-statist institutions. Manuela Lavinas Picq (2012, 2013) takes on the case of *Red de Mujeres Kichwas de Chimborazo,* since it is a prime example of how Indigenous Andean women in Ecuador have challenged nation-state sovereignty without entirely undermining it. This is similar to Puruhá women designers who are employing economic and aesthetic sovereignty while not entirely eschewing the economic and political roles of the nation-state. In advocating for legislation that would protect the intersecting rights of Indigenous people and women, its members used international law fused with local Indigenous ideologies but manifested through the role of the nation-state. They merged universal discourses on gender equality with norms on cultural autonomy, balancing international law and Indigenous justice, while simultaneously expanding the legal sovereignty of their community beyond the nation's borders (ibid). Although this did subvert some nation-state control, it also utilized that same nation-statist power to validate that this relationship between international law and Indigenous law existed at all, thereby using state strategies as a means of strengthening their own sovereignty beyond the state. This is also visible across the global community of Indigenous female leaders who are asserting their agency at international forums, including the UN Working Groups of Indigenous Peoples and other UN conferences, to affect change at local, national, and global scales (Parisi and Corntassel 2007).

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[53] I use the term 'women's movement' because I am not sure if terms like feminism would be accepted by Indigenous women leaders. In my observation it was only used in spaces that were being led by *Mestiza* women.

Although many of the women doing this work are designated leaders, there is also a significant amount of work being done by Puruhá and other Indigenous women in Ecuador who would never call themselves leaders. In fact, among Indigenous women in the Andes it is considered a negative quality to self-proclaim you are a leader (Bown and McClellan 2017). Many do not choose to 'lead'; they are simply put into that role through an election or because they saw a need to be filled, but understand their role as more of an exchange of knowledge or experience for the common good (ibid). Arguably the same is true of the Indigenous designers and vendors I work with. They would not necessarily call themselves leaders but, as with Sisa during the 2019 *paro* and uprising, they certainly fulfill that role. Puruhá dress, as a form of both economic autonomy and aesthetic sovereignty, similarly balances relationships and resources from local, national, and international spheres, although there are still fewer global ties than the use of international law by the *Red de Mujeres Kichwas de Chimborazo*. Nevertheless, these designers and vendors are using international resources, both in materiality (imported fabrics and sewing notions) and in economic and aesthetic influences (global capitalism, international designers). Still, those that have clients abroad only have a few, and they are not regular clients. There are, however, international admirers of the brand, as evidenced by Sisa's social media relationships and the donations she received from this virtual community for assistance to protestors. In these small but significant ways the international community is a space being used by Puruhá female designers, but the emphasis remains on the 'local'. This 'local' may be physical place or the Puruhá[54]

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[54] I would add that it is not just Puruhá women who are a part of the "local" community, but also Indigenous women from other communities who might be connected to this sphere either through regional associations or kin ties, and even Mestiza women. These

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community, who is mobile but still tied to the Chimborazo province. Thus, Puruhá female designers' leadership, like their move towards economic autonomy and aesthetic sovereignty, side-steps nation-statist recognition and yet is constantly influenced by the nation-state. Just as economic autonomy is still affected by taxes, imports, and economic policy, Indigenous female leadership is still affected, and constrained, by national court systems, missing constitutional provisions, and gendered ideologies perpetuated by state institutions. At the same time, these women are also influenced by the Puruhá community in ways that might challenge and hinder strides they are attempting to make, whether economically, socially, or otherwise. In all facets, Indigenous Puruhá women continue to shape and reshape their place and visibility in varied local, national, and global communities they belong to.

6.7 CONCLUSION: NEGOTIATING EXPECTATIONS AND AMBITIONS

Indigenous women in Ecuador have long been negotiating external expectations with their own internal motivations and goals. Though they have historically been framed as bearers of tradition, in childbearing and rearing, as sexualized objects within their own communities and Ecuador broadly, and as symbols of the limits of citizenship and progress for the nation-state, these women persist in creating and disseminating their own narratives of identity. One of the primary ways they are doing this is through their aesthetic choices, particularly dress. Like their dress choices, they are shifting between expectations of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in their daily lives, with all the loaded connotations these words take on in Ecuador. This is a subtle shift, where they play with

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Mestiza women again, might have ties to the physical regional place that is also tied to the Puruhá, or have friends and family in that place/community.

the tensions between indigeneity and gendered identities. It is, for instance, not a direct challenge to ideals of Indigenous Andean family systems but rather a push to see more and beyond that. Recently Sisa posted a photo of herself and her friends, who happen to also be the women she works with and wrote "Familia *Sumak Churay*". In the photo six women and two children sit in the beautiful, vibrantly green countryside. They are clearly a family, though not all blood related, and treat one another as such for better or worse. What's significant is that this isn't the picture that's been painted of Indigenous women historically, as impoverished, relegated to only domestic tasks, central to romantic partnership and motherhood above all else. It encompasses notions of womanhood that could be enmeshed in traditional Puruhá values, including traditional dress styles, community orientation, raising children (even if alone), and the rolling green of the countryside. At the same time, it is also far more complex, eliciting ideas about a collective of women who are not only in charge of their own lives and the lives of their children, but are also visibly active and respected in their community. Of course some might argue that collectivity of women supporting one another is not a new or novel concept within Indigenous communities globally. Yet the heavy emphasis from Indigenous Andean individuals that I worked with on the heterosexual pairing of man and wife, and on having children within this unit, makes the visibility of this 'other' version of family potentially disruptive.

The hidden violence toward Indigenous women within domestic spheres and the violence of coloniality that contributed to it is still a massive problem that has no easy solutions. Indigenous women in Ecuador are still among the most marginalized and disenfranchised people within the nation and yet they are also consistently used as a

symbol for both the nation-state and, in the case of my research, the Puruhá community. Nonetheless, women are digging into their power as *mujeres Indígenas,* not just economically but also politically and socially. They contribute to counter narratives of the *mujer luchadora,* but also of women who are not beholden to external expectations and demands. Again, this may or may not be a direct confrontation, and in the case of Puruhá dress designers they are in fact speaking to the preservation of tradition, heritage, culture, while simultaneously carving out new spaces for themselves often as independent entrepreneurs. In this way, they are balancing their multifaceted citizenship, belonging, and responsibilities while exposing the nation, and to some extent the world, to the complexities of being a Puruhá woman.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: (RE)DESIGNING THE WORLD

Outside of attempts to flesh out the main themes I might encounter during my fieldwork, my methodology was predominantly inductive. In flipping back through my fieldnotes I am reminded of the time before I was drawn to Puruhá dress specifically, while I was still trying to understand what was happening in Ecuadorian fashion broadly, who was benefiting, and who was being left out of the conversation. Now I can confidently say I don't have a singular, clear answer to any of those broad questions, but I do have a large amount or rich data that tells (partially of course) a story about the growth of the Puruhá dress market as cultural retention, revival and resistance. I can also say that I am working towards producing scholarly research that incorporates transmodernity (Dussel 2002, 2012) and decolonization theory (Babb 2018, Mignolo and Escobar 2010, Solano 2011). While transmodernism is an attempt at post-western and post-modern theory, there are arguments that it returns to a modernist meta-narrative (Alcoff 2012), but I do find its insistence on reversing narratives of information flow useful. Decolonizing methodologies and theories provide a return to the pluriverse for scholars and activists who wish to move past knowledge making that is entrenched in imperial/colonial purposes and reproduced through shared semiotic codes (Mignolo 2009). Some of these codes, for instance, are reproduced in education systems in the West. Therefore, I still have a great deal of work to do on eschewing some of these particular codes in support of those centering the production of pluriversal knowledges

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elsewhere. My main objectives in this dissertation, therefore, only goes as far as they can at this moment. Yet, in addition to practical goals, such as contributing research about Puruhá dress and entrepreneurship that centers the producers' knowledge to Western, English language-based academia, I also return to the framework of contributions in chapter one.

7.1 REFLECTION ON CONTRIBUTIONS

Appropriation is central to my intervention in anthropology because it is not only related to dress objects, but community relationships, stance, ideologies, and boundaries of belonging including racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. Appropriation is not predefined, but rather something that is (re)created and contested in specific political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts, mediated through the materiality of dress. Questions that reoccur throughout the dissertation speak to this in a multitude of ways, not always as appropriation per se, but also as theorization about copies, citationality, branding, community belonging, exchange and distinction. Therefore, I am looking at ongoing negotiations that surround a particular aesthetic, material commodity, and artform, but through a semiotic lens. This allows me to see not only meaning, but also actions and responses to that meaning-making, and longer-term behaviors and ideologies that are produced as a result. It is also a framework for analysis that can be applied in other contexts, where dress is felt to be significant by producers, sellers, and consumers, but could benefit from research that centers situated sartorial semiotics.

In doing this, I am in conversation with someone like Eduardo Kohn (2013), who employs decolonial perspectives and semiotic theory to show how non-human beings interpret signs, via the Indigenous perspective of the Runa Community in Ecuador.

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However, the research presented here is grounded in understanding how the political economy that encompasses Puruhá design and production works in conjunction with semiotic analysis to produce different kinds of interpretations. In this way, I am also in dialogue with Sidney Mintz (1985) and his insistence on the return to political economy and deep historical contextualization to ground theory that can sometimes float free in other frameworks. I have attempted throughout to speak to historical trajectories as well as contemporary political and economic shifts that inform the way my participants make, sell, talk about, and use dress. In so doing I can address existing power dynamics within certain spheres and moments, but focus on how these are inherently associational, and thus shift away from a perspective that assumes a top down creation of meaning and looks instead to horizontal linkages that address power and meaning in a multitude of overlapping, shifting, and complex ways.

Part of these (re)assertions in semiotic processes are political. Dress can be a tool for seeking self-determination and even sovereignty, and indeed often is where other forms of access to sovereignty are blocked. I unpacked these concepts in chapters three, four and six, but they are present throughout. This prevalence may seem overwrought since none of my participants explicitly mentioned the political significance of Puruhá dress in contemporary Ecuador when asked directly but would later allude to this significance when answering other questions or in casual conversation. This fact further supports the idea of aesthetic sovereignty as useful *because* they are not explicitly political. They are ways of promoting ideologies and seeking rights that are not institutional in the way that, for instance, a court petition would be.

This approach in general balances a thematic analysis that can be applied to semiotics and a Peircean triadic model that focuses on the interpretant, although in future research and with the benefit of extended fieldwork I will be able to focus more on a Peircean analysis and unpacking processes of aesthetic sovereignty. In future research I will also continue incorporating recent scholarship on qualia (Chumley and Harkness 2013, Harkness 2015), and branding (Nakassis 2012, 2013, Manning 2010), to look at how sartorial semiotics can be used to decode the relationship between shared cultural aesthetics and individual creative production. This is particularly important in Indigenous communities that are seeking to establish shared cultural aesthetics as a part of their claims to identity and sovereignty based on that shared identity. Yet, it is also significant for individuals who seek recognition as designers or artists in order to participate in larger national and global markets.

Thus there are both very practical and theoretical contributions to be made through this and further research. Chains of semiotic networking connect everything, including markets, politics, ownership, appropriation, exchange, and cultural commons. This dissertation centers on how this is happening via dress as both a medium and a participant. This semiotic approach allows for a complexity that moves beyond what is the 'typical' dress of an area, what are the (assumed to be static) aspects that are meaningful, and how can we preserve it so that it retains its cultural impact. Instead, we begin at how is and has this dress been co-constructed and re-constructed consistently throughout time, what are the daily processes of meaning-making and how do they allow for simultaneous conflict and agreeance, and what is the impact not just on community cultural retention, but on economic systems, politics, social interactions, and shifting

individual and community identities. In addition, as place is transcended with more Puruhá social actors moving into cities and globally, as well as technology like social media and smartphones increasing networks and reach, these semiotic processes are occurring in new ways. The addition of semiotic analysis to dress as itself mediated through technologies, for instance, has the potential for further engagement.

Another potential thread for further work is entrepreneurship of Indigenous Andean women outside of narratives of development and looking at activism that is not necessarily directly tied to political channels. This research does contribute some of these new narratives as they relate to being an Indigenous Puruhá woman in the world of fashion. Design is ontological and can therefore support or erode difference (Escobar 2017). In Latin America design has been central to pushes for autonomy and against colonialism and neocolonialism, because design is ultimately a way of being, knowing, and doing in the world (ibid). For Puruhá women their design is inherently about the (re)creation of their worlds, multiple and fluid, and therefore contrasts with Western design practices that are (re)colonizing. The visibility of this dress in public space has the potential to be politically and socially constructive and disruptive.

When certain things are recognizable as Puruhá in context, they play a role in the politics of recognition (Zamosc 1994). Dress has always been part of this power play, of relationships and mediation, of visibility and rights. Yet my framework is bolstered by the fact that Ecuador's Indigenous Andean communities and the nation-state have a long history of recognizing the power of dress, for better or worse. Tensions of sovereignty were and are tied to shifts in how people seeking those rights frame themselves as a community. The shift from alignment based on a predominantly peasant and agrarian

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identity to Indigenous ethnic identity in contemporary Ecuadorian resistance movements (Jackson and Warren 2005, Zamosc 1994), coupled with a history of *mestizaje* that relies, in part, on cultural markers like dress for distinction, made it clear that there was a space and a need for this particular type of project. I only hope to continue in this vein alongside those participants and friends who had the ingenuity and determination to co-create and recreate the Puruhá dress market.

7.2 ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Although I spoke to some ethical questions in my introduction, here I want to reiterate a few points. Although there is some research on Puruhá dress and culture being done in Spanish, much of it has not been translated to English or been published in academic journals. This evidences one of the problems with power dynamics in academic scholarship, that significant research is expected to be published and/or be in English for it to have an impact on a discipline. While I cannot translate the work of others, I can contribute my own findings while taking to task this broader issue of scholarly work. The research presented here has the potential to impact future work done within the Puruhá community, ideally alongside Puruhá researchers, writers, and designers. Yet ultimately, I am not the one to make a judgement call about if and how I should be doing this work. I can only say that I am and should be accountable to the people I work with. At the same time, I will always be writing for and answering to multiple communities (Subedi 2006). Although all of anthropology (and life) is relationships, not just to other people but to other living forms, the natural and built environment, to histories and potential, these relationships are in no way stable. The only way for anthropology to move forward productively is to incorporate more and varied relationships, to not only rely on 'native'

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anthropologists studying 'their own' but to rely on postcolonial and decolonial researchers studying whatever they want, White Western anthropologists included. Moreover, all anthropologists need to practice rigorous reflexivity, that fine line between introspection and vanity that is further complicated being a woman or person of color, since the value of those personal experiences as a way to theorize difference is often interpreted as less scientific (Subedi 2006). Still, anthropologists of all backgrounds must, at the very least, see themselves as enacting hybridity in their writing, belonging to both the world of scholarship and everyday life (Narayan 1993). Therefore, the main ethical questions I have will not be answered by my positionality but rather by how I practice reflexivity of those positions and to what end, keeping always in mind that there is, "…no guarantee that oppressors will be less oppressive just because they become self-conscious" (Fabian 1990:768 in Subedi 2006). In other words, I must not only recognize but actively work against ethical problems I come across, however deeply rooted they are in myself, my communities, or my discipline.

Where then, to go with this and future research while considering these questions? I plan to continue on a trajectory that focuses on the relationship between aesthetics and identity in Latin America. This dissertation will at the very least inform future publications and presentations, but ideally would be the basis for a book manuscript. In preparing the manuscript I would like to return to the field for updates and to get a deeper grasp of how being involved in this market has affected my participants over time. However, comparative work in other Latin American countries such as Bolivia may prove useful in continuing to unpack the malleability of race and ethnicity in the region, and how those identities are created and contested via dress as a semiotic process.

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Representation of Indigenous women plays a pivotal role in the nationalizing and modernizing agendas of the Andean elites (Chen 2007), and in the cases of both Ecuador and Bolivia the dress of Indigenous women helps to craft identities where a history of *mestizaje* has made assumptions about 'Indian' and 'Spanish' designations difficult, if not impossible. However, in Bolivia *cholita* dress is very classed, and its visibility may contribute to the erasure and devaluation of other Indigenous identities, particularly lowland populations and internal Andean minorities (Hirseland and Strijbis 2019). Still, *cholita* visibility creates narratives of Indigenous Bolivian women as economically and socially mobile, as integral to the political processes of the nation-state, and as central to the Bolivian state 'brand' internationally, all tied to the material culture of *cholita* style. By comparing this to my research on Puruhá dress, I can explore how these contextualized styles speak to the process of nation-building in Latin American Andean nations. I can also explore the ways in which marginalized, predominantly Indigenous Andean women, employ fashion as a way of asserting themselves politically, economically, and socially, while seeking forms of aesthetic sovereignty where other paths to self-determination have faltered.

However, this is only one of many potential research projects that might make use of the information presented here. Cross-cultural research need not be limited to those communities we assume to be more 'like', such as Andean Indigenous communities. In fact, global indigeneity and the global design market are much broader categorizations from which to draw potential comparative work, although even these have fluid boundaries. All anthropological research is ultimately comparative and relational, since it asks questions contextualized by the researcher's worldviews. Even when the scholar is

part of the community, the research itself asks new questions in an old context. Moreover, even after analysis and writing meaning shifts over time, since what we make of other people's statements changes as we accumulate experience (Cohen 1992).

Therefore, this dissertation research is not static simply because it is written; it will change alongside the discipline of anthropology, as we continue to explore decolonial options. I will likely need to take myself to task in the future for something presented here, but this is hopeful rather than disheartening. Ideally, it will mean that there is a more concerted effort to detach from the hegemonic and Euro-centered knowledge matrix, a future that is de-Western and de-colonial (Mignolo and Escobar 2010). These new forms of knowledge are obviously not new at all, but rather another comparative between Western education and 'other' knowledges, a dichotomy which itself is undermined by this very de-colonial mindset. In the pluriverse knowledge is always produced in relation to others without 'othering'. This is a truer form of collaboration, one that emerges from a different theoretical lineage entirely and which may just have the capacity to (re)design the world.

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