Nations and Nationalism **12** (2), 2006, 261–278. © *ASEN 2006*

Race, state and nation in early twentieth century Ecuador*

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to explore the ways in which the tensions involved in nation-building and state consolidation during the half-century following the Liberal Revolution of 1895 in Ecuador were refracted through the locus of race and the manipulation of racial ideologies. It centres the state as the primary motor of nation-building and racialisation, arguing that nation-building and state formation in Ecuador operated in close conjunction, and that race was central to each. Through case studies of citizenship, education and the integration of territory and resources, it explores how state discourse and policy shaped the racial boundaries of national inclusion, and how these were negotiated and contested by subalterns at the level of the state.

Introduction

This article explores the relationship between nation-building, state-formation and the creation of racial ideas and categories in the context of the Liberal Revolution in Ecuador, which came to power in 1895 and retained political and ideological hegemony until 1944. The period represented a crucial phase in the development of Ecuador as a nation-state, and reflected a transfer of regional power from the highland land-owning interests which had ruled in alliance with the Catholic Church since independence in the early nineteenth century to the commercial bourgeoisie of the coast. Coastal Liberal elites sought to impose a far-reaching political and economic programme, which centred around the development of a secular state, integration into the world economy and the development of a more fluid national labour market.

*The research on which this article is based would not have been possible without generous financial support from an Arts and Humanities Board doctoral studentship, an Institute of Historical Research Scouloudi fellowship, as well as travel grants from the Royal Historical Society, the Society for Latin American Studies, the Hale Bellot Fund, the UCL Graduate School, and the University of London Central Research Fund. A Research Fellowship from the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin also greatly aided this research. The help of all these institutions is gratefully acknowledged.Thanks also to Nicola Miller for her help and suggestions with this article and the thesis on which it is based.

Through the creation of a national currency, the instigation of formal military service, the expansion of state secular education and the opening of the Quito-Guayaquil railway, the idea of the state as the mediator between equal citizens protected through legal provisions began to be disseminated. This was also a period of capitalist expansion and demographic change, the era of the cocoa and rubber booms and rapid integration into the world market economy.

Ideas of race were central to the Liberal agenda. Ideals of universality and inclusion were mediated by the reality of the existence of large populations of racially subordinate groups, who had been excluded by previous regimes. While few racial statistics were collected in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 1930 civil registry data classified the nation's population as ten per cent white, forty-one per cent mestizo [mixed-race], thirty-nine per cent Indian, five per cent black and mulatto, and five per cent other, and it is likely that the ethnic composition of the population was similar at the start of the Liberal period (Direccíon Nacíonal de Estadística 1944: 55). Racial groups were also markedly regionalised: ninety per cent of the indigenous population was located in the highlands, with most of the remainder in the Amazon, while blacks lived mainly on the coast, especially in the province of Esmeraldas on the Colombian border. The status of racially subordinate groups – and of Indians in particular – possessed direct relevance for the Liberal project of political and economic modernisation. Core Liberal goals such as the transfer of state resources away from the highlands towards the coast, the secularisation of the state and the integration of Ecuador into the world economy were considered to be inconsistent with the socio-economic location of indigenous populations. Indians were perceived to be under the control of the Church and the highland landowners, while the exploitation of their labour – essential to the development of an effective market economy – was constrained by the institution of debt peonage. The nomadic traditions of Amazonian Indians were perceived as a threat to the effective development of the Oriente (the Ecuadorian term for its Amazon region). Elites were also influenced by the growing influence of Social Darwinist ideas which presented the racial composition of nation-states as the determining factor in their success or failure. Race was also pushed onto the Liberal agenda from below. The participation of black and indigenous troops in the civil war of 1895 which brought the Liberals to power was central to the Liberal victory, and their military support reflected a genuine belief in the possibilites of liberalism. Popular pressure meant that rights for ethnically subaltern groups were part of the agenda of the revolution from its very outset. These conflicting pressures served to entwine racial concerns into the nationalist agenda in a number of conflicting and often contradictory ways.

This article will explore the way in which these tensions were played out at the level of the state. While the link between state and nation formation is widely asserted, a full understanding of how ideas about nationhood were filtered through the institutions of the state with relation to Latin America have been impeded by a *de facto* division of labour between those who have

studied nationalism as a manifestation of political power, focusing on the state, and those who work on national identity as a cultural community focusing on society. This has cemented the discursive separation of the creation of the idea of the nation and the process of nation-state building, and obscured the role of the state in the process of racialisation. In Liberal Ecuador, state formation and nation-building existed in close and complex relation. A new ‘state idea’ (Abrams 1988) and nationalist project operated in conjunction and – even if the capacities of the state always lagged behind nationalist goals – the expansion and strengthening of state institutions was used to foster a sense of belonging and nationhood, while the racialisation of the boundaries of this emerging nation occurred at least in part through state structures. Moreover, state structures served as touchstones of national identity across a wider sector of society than is typically acknowledged, including for subalterns. This article will explore these issues through case studies of three core areas of state and nation-formation: the negotiation of citizenship, education policy and the politics of national integration. Throughout the article black, highland and Amazonian indigenous groups are examined in explicit conjunction, in contrast to commonly used Latin Americanist methodologies which typically focus on a single ethnic group (Wade 1997). As such, it is hoped that the article will contribute to a fuller understanding of the workings of racial categories and their intersections with national identity.

Imagining the national community: blacks, Indians and the negotiation of citizenship

A key part of both the new ‘state idea’ and the effort to articulate a more inclusionary form of national identity was the concept of the state as the mediator between equal citizens, thus citizenship was at the core of the Liberal project. The negotiation of citizenship took many forms, dominant among which were the establishment of legislation related to immigration, military service, tax regulations and labour systems, as well as the establishment of constitutional provisions. Each of these debates set the racial paradigms of national inclusion, and centred around the concepts of ‘civilisation’, ‘uplift’ and ‘racial danger’.

The effects of Social Darwinist racial ideas on the negotiation of citizenship can be seen most clearly in relation to the issue of immigration, which was discussed in terms of a civilising discourse, intimately related to social and moral upliftment. Implicit in projections of immigration as a tool for economic development and demographic expansion was the ideal of social whitening. It was assumed that immigration would bring white Europeans who would help ‘dilute’ the disadvantageous strains of indigenous and negro blood, and thus help to transform and ‘civilise’ the population as a whole. Successive Ecuadorian liberal governments went to great lengths to attract

European immigrants, granting extensive land rights, paying the cost of their passage from Europe, making concessions regarding the practice of religious and cultural traditions, and passing legislation allowing European colonies a significant degree of autonomy over their own municipal jurisdiction.

Racially filtered moralism played into discussions surrounding Europeans and citizenship. Europeans were characterised within immigration discourse by traits such as attachment to the land and responsibility to the state, and it was imagined that these loyalties could be transferred from the immigrant's homeland to Ecuador through the granting of citizenship. Thus it was always explicitly assumed that European settlers would be granted citizenship: the core issue of debate was always at what point the settlers could reasonably be considered to be national citizens, with most legislators pushing for this to occur at the earliest possible moment. The need to secure national boundaries by settling citizens in underpopulated regions was a factor in the rush to grant citizenship, as was the cost to the central government of having to provide for their administration – if the settlers were considered to be citizens they could staff their own judicial and administrative functions.[1] However, there was still an additional racial aspect to this debate. The question posed was always when, not if, European settlers would be granted citizenship. This stood in contrast to the explicit exclusion from citizenship of those in a similarly strategic location who were of a race considered to be undesirable: for example, the West Indian labourers who were recruited to work on the rubber plantations during the rubber boom.

This is an important distinction because, despite the government's efforts, ideals of social whitening through immigration were not to come to fruition. Rather than the hoped-for Europeans, the main immigrant groups attracted to Ecuador were Chinese labourers and black West Indians. Despite the fact that few European immigration contracts came to fruition, no effort was made to embrace the Chinese and blacks who did come. In fact, Chinese immigration was banned outright in 1899, and contracts for the construction of roads and railways consistently specified that no workers of the black or 'yellow' races could be used.

The difference between the rhetoric of immigration as a boon to national development and the treatment accorded to black and Chinese arrivals is striking and reflects the contradictions of pro-immigration policy, as well as the centrality of racial concerns to this discourse. It is likely that the competition Chinese merchants posed to Ecuadorian merchants on the coast underlay anti-Chinese policies. The paradox of Chinese people being persecuted for doing exactly what it was hoped the granting of citizenship would encourage Europeans to do – make their permanent home in the country and establish successful enterprises – was resolved by invoking racial danger, centred on the alleged vices of opium smoking, prostitution and gambling which were claimed to cause the degradation of Ecuadorian workers. A similar formula was applied to West Indian workers who were widely blamed for the violence, gambling and alcoholism that was endemic among workers

on the Quito-Guayaquil rail line.[2] As the work spread to the highlands the Chief of Police of Pichincha blamed black immigration for the wave of drunkenness in the province, and singled out black immigration as a threat to the customs and even the 'life itself' of the national society.[3] Much of this was due to the fear of the consequences of West Indian influence on Ecuadorian 'blood' if miscegenation occurred: as an article in the *Grito del Pueblo* put it, 'It is said that crossing invigorates the races, but . . . .not with these 'blacks fishes' [(*sic*) English from the original text] with their . . . big rolling eyes.'[4]

This idea of racial danger was applied with equal vigour to Ecuadorian blacks. Alfredo Espinosa Tamayo, one of the pioneers of Ecuadorian sociology who was strongly influenced by Social Darwinist thought, summarised the general contempt in which the black population was held thus:

> There is no point in even studying the psychology of the black race, as it has been thoroughly undertaken by other authors and all sociologists are in agreement in pronouncing against the bad influence of their mixture with other races in the constitution of South America, which has brought only the most inferior psychological characteristics and mental qualities. This influence is notorious and has been felt in the distinct regions in which blacks exist in Ecuador. . .A servile race, created in slavery, and that has enjoyed liberty for only two or three generations, but is nonetheless the most restless and most excitable of groups. . . is the least suitable for incorporation into civilisation. (Espinosa Tamayo 1979 [1918])

Blacks and mulattos were consistently blamed for the country's political instability, with one writer even positing the importation of African slaves in the colonial era as having 'disrupted the course' of Ecuadorian history due to the 'bloody and war-like ways' of the blacks (Heiman Guzman 1942). Other writers emphasised the laziness and indolence of blacks and their alleged tendencies towards criminality as a source of racial danger. Blacks were specifically perceived as a corrupting influence on the Indian population. Missionaries and government ministers in Esmeraldas argued that blacks represented a 'degenerate influence' on the Cayapa Indians of the region,[5] while the provincial Governor proposed that blacks be prohibited from entering Cayapa territory and urged their expulsion from lands they had previously settled.[6] Efforts were also made to negate the national identity of Afro-Ecuadorians, through the construction of blacks as Colombian, not Ecuadorian, in discussions of government policy and the reporting of crimes in the province of Esmeraldas. This effort to deny the legitimacy of black populations within Ecuador may have been due to the weight of anti-blackness within international racial thought: so difficult was it to reconcile the negative conceptions of blacks with the national self-image that it was easier to simply ignore their presence.

This denial of blacks can be seen in ideas about state recognition for military service. As we have seen, both black and indigenous peasants played an important role in the military struggles that brought the Liberal Revolution to power. Yet it was black and mulatto peasants from the coastal provinces of Esmeraldas and Manabi that formed the core of revolutionary

leader Eloy Alfaro's army. Radicalised by more than a decade of liberal guerrilla activities in their regions, many had suffered personally from the consequences of state repression directed at the guerrillas. They became convinced of the possibilities that liberalism offered for a radical democratic transformation, and fought out of genuine conviction (Ayala 1990: 119). While indigenous people played a key role in the battle of August 1895 in Guamote, Chimborazo – the decisive victory of the civil war, and from whence Alfaro's troops marched on into Quito – indigenous involvement with *Alfarismo* and radical liberalism was far less longstanding than that of blacks. Yet the need to recognise and reward indigenous participation in the military struggle became a key part of Liberal policy, while black participation was written out of official histories.

Immediately after the victory at Guamote, Alfaro appointed the three Indian leaders who had organised the indigenous troops colonels of his army and pronounced new rights for Indians, repudiating the territorial taxes and the forced labour programmes that had impinged on indigenous communities. While these rights were not guaranteed by law until much later, the gesture served to place Indian rights at the top of the political agenda, and Alfaro made a concerted effort to push this legislation through congress, arguing that it was essential to recognise the efforts Indians had made. Yet no effort was made to extend any analogous rights to blacks, and the Afro-Ecuadorian military effort is rarely explicitly recognised in histories of the period. This is true even of primary documentation: government records, such as the reports of the Minister for War, mention the bravery of various columns and name them individually, but their ethnic origin is not specified. In view of the regional concentration of ethnic minority populations it is possible to deduce the ethnicity of soldiers from the information provided in Ministry of War files on the locality from which individual columns are drawn, while photographs depicting the Alfarista military struggles of the 1880s and 1890s also clearly include blacks. Yet the fact that official state records omitted the evidence of black participation while celebrating that of indigenous soldiers is extremely telling, and reflects wider efforts on the part of state officials to deny the legitimacy or existence of Afro-Ecuadorians, essentially writing them out of the founding covenant of the Liberal state. Indeed, blacks were the only one of a triumvirate of subaltern fighters to be denied recognition in this way.

A small group of elite white and mestizo women had also played an important strategic role in Liberal military struggles, providing access to their haciendas and resources, transporting messages and provisions, and playing other gendered support roles. In recognition of this, three women were also named colonels of Alfaro's army in an act of political symbolism parallel to the gesture towards Indian leaders. Moreover, as with Indians, Liberal ideologues emphasised that rights were 'owed' to them as a result of their military aid – a point consistently reiterated by women intellectuals and activists who struggled for women's rights. This conjuncture facilitated the implementation of a series of important legislative reforms which sought to

transform the legal status of women and facilitate their entry into public life, including the opening of the universities to women, the legalisation of divorce and the protection of married women's rights to work and hold property (Jimenez Vega 1998). Of course, the legislative reforms enacted in the case of both women and Indians advanced the political goals of the Liberal state, and aided in the symbolic and practical deconstruction of the power of the Church and the hacienda complex, yet the exclusion of Afro-Ecuadorians from any form of service recognition remains stark.

The difference between the treatment of blacks and Indians on this issue can be explained in part in terms of the way in which the two groups were constructed within official discourse. Rather than the biological ideas which were used to frame the rejection of Chinese and blacks as potential citizens, Indians were considered to be incapable of participating fully in the nation because of their history – a history of oppression by the Catholic Church, by highland landowners and by local officials (Clark 1998). However, it was argued that Indians were capable of cultural transformation, and that policies which focused on freeing the Indian from abuse and overcoming the legacy of their history could transform them into beings capable of participating in national life. Thus as the Liberal period progressed, the universalising ideology of the equality of men was combined with paternalistic statements and led to the argument that Indians deserved special consideration and protection from public officials. 'National pride' and 'patriotic duty' were routinely invoked by ministers in an attempt to convince their colleagues to follow their lead in working for the uplift of the Indian population. Such appeals were not made on behalf of blacks who were not viewed in the same terms.

The debates surrounding the abolition of debt peonage, known in Ecuador as *concertaje*, illuminate this duality most strikingly. Freeing indigenous labourers from an indentured, servile status was central to the Liberal project; essential to the creation of a free market economy based on contracted wage labour, and to undermining the power of highland landowners. Reforming this institution was seen as key to the transformation of Indians into citizens. *Concertaje* was often equated with slavery, and argued to be counter to both Liberal and Republican principles and the anti-slavery provisions of the Constitution. Yet this analogy of debt peonage with slavery often contained a veiled anti-black racism, and was used to lament the fact that Indians had somehow fallen 'below' blacks – their alleged social inferiors – on the ladder of social stratification. The Bishop of Guayaquil, for example, in a presentation to Congress, declaimed: 'It is now acknowledged that the Indian is more intelligent than the Negro, and yet he remains a slave all his life.'[7] This counterposing of Indians and blacks dismissed the fact that many black peons were also victims of debt peonage, and that black support for Eloy Alfaro was largely based on his commitment to dismantle the oppressive system. Yet few politicians publicly acknowledged this connection, and when attempts were made to push the issue into the limelight they were summarily dismissed.

When, for example, a liberal representative from Imbabura argued that any protection clause for Indians in the constitution would have to include Afro-Ecuadorians since this group were equally oppressed and exploited, the Vice-President of the Assembly insisted that the condition of blacks was not as bad as that of Indians, since they were not subject to the institution of *huasicama*, by which Indians undertook domestic service obligations in their patron's home, nor did their wives and children have to serve the local authorities.[8]

This focus on state protection of indigenous groups led to the reconstruction of the 'Indian' as a separate category, childlike and incapable, and somehow distinct from other Ecuadorians, even as they were earmarked as future citizens (Prieto 2003:10). This was institutionalised in the Constitution of 1896 which established the state as the protector of the 'miserable' Indians, a provision which remained in place until 1945. The power of this category can be seen in the fact that Indians remained excluded from military service until 1938; considered to be too weak to withstand the rigours of military activity, and to lack the physical and psychological characteristics to make a good fighting force.[9] This stood in contrast to the military strategies employed in most other Latin American countries in this period, where military service was used to expand the authority of the state over indigenous populations, and reflects the feminisation and infantilisation of Indians through state policy. Moreover, the marginalisation of Indians from the military contrasts strongly with the prevalence of blacks within the institution, for whom the military provided a key opportunity for social mobility. The disparity highlights the flip side of the 'non-imagining' of blacks within the national community; that because of their lack of status as a particular legal or sociological group they could be more easily be fudged into the generalised classification of 'the masses' (Wade 1993), while Indians were excluded from service awaiting their transformation into citizens.

The reconstruction of this legal category of 'Indian' underlines that in Ecuador, in contrast to the case studies that have been presented for many other Latin American nations (Hale 1994; Gould 1998; de la Cadena 2000), Indianness was not displaced from liberal discourses of nation by *mestizaje* (the ideology of racial mixing), and that ideas of racial distinctness remained strongly intact, recreated through the institutions of the state.

Race and the expansion of education

State policy was also central to the racialisation of the identities and geographies of nationhood. Education policy represents a good case study of the centrality of racial ideas to state aims and practices, reflecting both the ideal of transforming ethnically subordinate groups in order to 'fit' them for citizenship, and the divergent application of state policy to black and indigenous groups. A focus on education also reveals the limits of state power, and the problems created for the implementation of nationalist aims

by the weak treasury and the division between the central and local branches of the state.

A commitment to free, obligatory, lay education was at the heart of Liberal philosophy, and enshrined in the 1906 Constitution. Education was conceived as one of the core duties of liberalism, and as indispensable to the exercise of a successful Liberal project, as well as – more pragmatically – a means to ensure the triumph of liberalism over conservatism, by embedding it in the 'hearts and minds' of the population.

Education was also seen as a moralising endeavour, a means of transforming the behaviour of the lower classes. Significantly, the immorality and negative characteristics attributed to the poor were often seen to derive from the racial degeneration held by the exponents of scientific racism to have undermined the capacities of even the mestizo majority. For example, Alfredo Espinosa Tamayo argued that it was the mixture of Indian, black and Hispanic blood that accounted for many of the social problems encountered in Ecuador. However, he suggested that education could be used as a means to overcome the racial shortcomings that Social Darwinist theory ascribed to the Ecuadorian nation (Espinosa Tamayo 1916: p.113). Effectively, traditional Social Darwinist analysis was turned on its head as the argument developed that the unwelcome characteristics of the 'Ecuadorian race' could be directly attributed to a lack of education. The insistence that 'education and education for all' was the solution to all Ecuador's political and social problems represented a direct challenge to racist Social Darwinist ideas about the educability of non-European peoples.[10]

However, education was seen as especially important with regard to the Indian population, and was viewed as the critical means of integrating the indigenous population into national life. It was hoped that instruction would 'remake' the indigenous peasantry, expanding their loyalty beyond the local community to the Ecuadorian nation, bringing them away from their imagined fatalism and superstition and into the realm of science, and allowing the introduction of their produce into the national marketplace. This integration would transform and renovate the nation, massively increasing the number of 'productive' citizens.

The idea developed of creating a specifically 'indigenous education' especially adapted to their 'particular psychology and mentality'. This became a central principle of Liberal education policy, and reinforced the construction of Indians as a 'separate' subordinate category, going hand-in-hand with parallel ideas about protection and citizenship. Alfredo Espinosa Tamayo was the most influential proponent of this theory, arguing that:

> This race has its own psychology, distanced from civilisation by two or three generations of backwardness and ignorance. It would be necessary to begin by raising their moral and intellectual state and [we] would need to begin to educate them with special methods and systems, inculcating through schooling notions that it would not be necessary to teach to other inhabitants of the country who are much more advanced in terms of civilisation. (Espinosa Tamayo 1916: 113)

In practice, 'indigenous education' consisted of two to four years of basic instruction in history, geography and natural sciences as they referred to Ecuador, as well as practical agricultural education, with the aim of awakening within the Indian population an awareness of common national interests, and 'equal economic ambitions'. It also placed a strong focus on teaching students to believe in a glorious and prosperous future in order to override the supposed Indian tendency to view the future in fatalistic terms of misery and pain. 'Indigenous education', then, was adapted to the state's needs in terms of its project of civilising the Indians, and focused on those aspects that would integrate them into the national community. It did not treat the specific problems that indigenous people faced in receiving education such as the language barrier, and the economic imperative for Indian children to work, nor indeed take any account of the customs, beliefs and traditions of the indigenous people. As such, it represented an inherently civilising discourse, mediated through the concepts of (Indian) backwardness and (white/mestizo) progress. In treating the Indian as the *object* of education policy, and in presenting their culture as in need of direction and control to enable them to 'catch up' with the more advanced state of the white-mestizo population, the discourse surrounding indigenous education both stemmed from and served to perpetuate ideas about Indians as child-like and dependent. Yet at least the special status of the indigenous population and the clear visibility of the 'Indian problem' meant that attention was given to the issue of Indian education. This was not the case with regards to blacks, and the continued failure of elites and intellectuals to acknowledge the existence of a significant black population with special problems caused by a particularised system of racial neglect meant that the education of Afro-Ecuadorians continued to be ignored.

It is here that the role of the state in defining the parameters of national inclusion can be most appreciated. School provision in the province of Esmeraldas lagged dramatically behind that of the rest of the country. As an ex-maroon community which had maintained its centrality to the black population in the large-scale movement of freed slaves to the area after emancipation in 1854, the province had always been neglected by the state. The government in Quito regarded the province as backward and defiant and was reluctant to allocate funds for the needs of the area. As late as 1900 there were neither paved roads nor hospitals in the provincial capital of Esmeraldas. Less than a dozen schools existed, and recurring epidemics had wiped out a considerable number of its inhabitants.[11] Liberal policy manifested little effort to change this situation. In his annual report to the Minister of Education in 1907, the Director of Studies of Esmeraldas noted that of the forty-two schools that existed in name in the province, only twenty-eight were actually functioning. The rest were without teachers due to the absolute scarcity in the province, 'not just of qualified teachers, but of any vaguely suitable person whatsoever'.[12] The appointment of teachers from outside the province proved virtually impossible, since the educated classes refused to

work there because of fear of the 'bloodthirsty and depraved' black inhabitants.[13] Esmeraldas was the most politically unstable of all the provinces, and was embroiled in civil war between 1912 and 1916, yet the fact that the concerns of potential teachers focused directly on the 'depravity' of the inhabitants, rather than the more abstract fear of political disturbance, suggests the primary role of anti-black prejudice in these fears. The failure of the state to take any action to resolve this problem suggests that unlike indigenous groups, black people were not seen as redeemable. The result was that the people working as teachers in the province were all Esmeraldans without qualifications, who were often forced to undertake secondary employment in order to survive, and school closures and illiteracy rates continued to grow year by year. In view of the close connection between indigenous education and the wider ideal of 'uplifting' racially subordinate groups in order to 'fit' them for citizenship the exclusion of blacks from the new pedagogic focus was particularly significant. The failure of intellectuals and policy-makers to engage at all with the issue of black education reflects the extent to which blacks were not seen as part of the newly expanded vision of the nation, and underlines that this was based on a conception of them as non-transformable.

A different set of tensions and contradictions shaped state education policy as applied to Amazonian Indians. It is striking that the ideal of 'indigenous education' was applied almost solely to highland Indians. While some efforts were made to establish boarding schools in Quito for Amazonian children, these were the exception to the rule. The general deficiency of indigenous education in the Oriente is epitomised by the initiative developed by the Governor of the Oriente in the late 1910s, who developed Sunday schools for adults and children held in the offices of the parish *teniente político* (political lieutenant), in which they were taught 'the rudiments of the Spanish language, and elemental precepts of morality, hygiene, arithmetic and writing; then if possible, some manual trades and the cultivation of certain vegetables'.[14] All of the *teniente político*'s employees who possessed some form of education were obliged to teach whatever knowledge they had 'in the form indicated by their sectional authority', with no apologies made for the fact that this was an unashamedly amateur system of education.

This underlines the fact that not all Indians were seen as equal in the formation of national policy. While highland Indians were effectively seen as a type of 'model Indian', as transformable future citizens, lowland Indians, meanwhile, were seen as more problematic: as savage, backward and fundamentally uncivilised.

This distinction is essential to understanding the logic behind the entrustment of indigenous education in the Oriente to Church officials and missionaries. Despite the prominence of lay education as a key foundation of Liberal education policy, the shortfall in state capacities to provide education was such that the state had no choice but to turn to the Church to fill the gap. This allowed Amazonian missions to consolidate their position

in the Oriente, even as the development of commerce and the extraction economy and the advance of white-mestizo immigration threatened to destabilise their pre-eminence in the region. In an attempt to resolve the paradox of an anti-clerical state reinforcing Church power, the Liberal government sought to attract North American Protestant missionaries, who were favoured for their development projects and the packaging of US values, beliefs and culture in which they wrapped the word of God. However, the Protestant missions preferred to work in the coastal cities and with the highland Indians; they were slow to penetrate the Oriente where state educational provision was most lacking (Goffin 1994). The result was that Catholic missions remained the dominant force in the education of the Amazonian Indians, and were allowed to retain a more general role in indigenous education. The willingness of Ecuadorian Liberals to compromise on the issue of education suggests that the power of the Church in an area that was politically peripheral was seen as less of a threat than leaving the indigenous population in a state of 'uncivilised backwardness', and their education by whatever means won out as the clear priority.

The paradoxes apparent in the issue of Church involvement in indigenous education also reveal a fundamental problem at the heart of the Liberal nation-building project: the gap between policy ideas and state resources. Government authorities made extravagant gestures in speeches and proclamations, but the ability of the state to implement its goals was notably weaker. Ultimately, indigenous education failed because rural schools were under-funded, ineffective and extremely limited in their operation, plagued by teacher absenteeism, inadequate material conditions and an absence of furniture, books and teaching supplies.

Yet despite the limits of its reach, state policy still played a central role in demarcating the ethnic boundaries of nation-building policy, and in determining the racial mapping of the nation. The state concentrated its limited resources in those areas where it felt the population had the most 'national' claim and potential. The power and persistence of racialised regionalisms as a factor in state policy underlines the dual sense of place within constructions of national territory and identity, and the intersection between geographical place and social status. Race in Ecuador was not simply reflected in spatial categories; it was constituted in spatial structures, and state policy played a primary role in creating and reaffirming these.

National integration, foreign enterprise and subaltern protest

Nation-building, of course, is not solely a top-down process, and the elite project in Ecuador was contested and negotiated by the ethnically subaltern populations which were the object of nation-building policy. An exploration of subaltern engagement with official discourse and policy further underlines the role of the state in linking concepts of race and nation. Black and

indigenous groups engaged with liberal discourse to demand their rights, but crucially, they did so through the organs of and at the level of the nation-state.

This can be seen especially in relation to the politics of national integration and the activities of foreign corporations. A primary goal of the Liberal project was the integration of national territory and resources, deemed imperative to overcome the problems of communication, develop the national economy and establish a shared sense of belonging and identity. In view of the limited financial resources of the state, contracts were made with a range of foreign corporations authorising them to undertake key infrastructural projects. The most (in)famous example was the Quito-Guayaquil Railway Company which undertook the construction of the major railway between the highland capital and the principal coastal port. Other companies arrived to extract gold and other minerals, drill for oil and organise rubber tapping, and to construct other railroads and highways. There was a strong civilising undertone inherent in such projects, and certainly these enterprises had a particular impact on black and indigenous peoples, since the majority of extractive materials were located in Esmeraldas and the Oriente, while these groups generally provided the labour force for infrastructure projects. Indeed, one of the principal aims of inviting foreign capital was to advance the development of capitalist relations in the country, and to bring black and indigenous peons into the cash economy.

However, the presence of foreign companies did not always equate with the furthering of state goals. Far from integrating peons into the cash economy, many foreign companies sought to establish a separate form of labour relations outside of the national economy, which in many respects bore a greater resemblance to the system of debt peonage operated by the highland landowners than to the modern system of contracted, capitalist labour relations that the Liberal government sought to introduce. Workers were routinely issued with tokens redeemable only on company commissariats in place of cash wages, often in violation of their contracts, while many road and rail companies established elaborate systems of fines and discounts which prevented workers from claiming their full wage. Force was frequently used to make Indians work, most notoriously in the case of the rubber industry, where Ecuadorian Indians were routinely captured by rubber traders, and sold at vast slave markets in Peru and Brazil (Foote 2004: 104–10). Most ended up in the infamous Putumayo region where Indian slaves were found to be subject to starvation, torture and rape (Stanfield 1998).

Significantly, black and indigenous communities sought to resist such ill-treatment through appeals to the ideals articulated in Liberal discourse. In protests against public works programmes and non-cash payments by foreign enterprises, black and indigenous petitions invoked the Liberal principles of equality and free wage labour. Both groups presented petitions to Congress insisting on their right to a legal contract with a fair and stipulated wage, and protesting against the way which the use of tokens allowed the companies to doubly exploit them. Such principles were also invoked in the frequent strikes

that arose over such issues.[15] Most notable is the equation workers made in these protests between non-wage labour systems and slavery. Workers repeatedly described their treatment as akin to that of slaves. In part, this may have reflected recognition of the power of this term within the context of a liberalism committed to equality and freedom, and which had very publicly made slavery in all its manifestations anathema. However, it also appears to hint at tensions between elite and subaltern concepts of free labour. Working for foreign companies was aspirational, and was considered to be a passport to a better life. Thus workers were not prepared to accept the same conditions as they had been used to on the haciendas. The kind of renegement on the agreed contract whereby cash wages were replaced with tokens of some kind, or where force was imposed upon them, unhinged the workers' plans while undermining their own conceptions of the kind of wage labour they were prepared to engage in.

Indigenous groups also sought to use the discourse of dependence and protectionism to their own advantage; this was invoked especially by the Amazonian Quichua and their supporters in their struggle against the depredations of rubber gatherers. Missionaries wrote letters, petitions and sermons invoking Indian 'ignorance and docility' and calling on the government to intervene on their behalf. They were backed up by outraged news article editorials condemning the complicity of local authorities in the 'torture of innocents'.[16] A complaint made in April of 1912 by a deputation of Indians from Archidona who walked to Quito to present their demands also drew on this language of protection as they described themselves being hunted 'like wild animals' and treated as 'slaves'.[17]

Thus in Liberal Ecuador, the discourse of equality and universality created the 'field of force' within which different social groups were constrained by the actions and projects of others, and which enabled individuals who were only marginally or partially perceived as members of the community to use its inclusive language to make claims for equal treatment. Liberalism, then, represented a means by which racially subordinate groups could engage with the nation. In this sense it can be considered a nationalising discourse, even if it was not always a hegemonic one. This embrace of state discourse by marginalised groups reveals the centrality of the state as a touchstone for political opposition and control, as well as its symbolic power as a site of contestation and contention.

The inability of the state to respond favourably to these complaints also reveals the limits of Liberal and state hegemony. While the government made regular complaints to companies about the use of commissariats, tokens and other forms of non-wage payment, these were simply deflected by the corporations, and the power of foreign capital was such that the practice continued into the 1940s. Likewise, state power was so weak in the Amazon that it had no practical means of addressing concerns about the exploitation of rubber workers, and these incidents served to underline the loss of regional hegemony to Peru. While the Ecuadorian government passed the most

extensive laws of any of the Amazonian nations to protect local indigenous communities, they were powerless to enforce them, and it is significant that the international community placed pressure on Peru, Bolivia and Brazil to reform the industry, leaving Ecuador alone.

The blind eye that the state was forced to turn underlines the way in which the state was forced to compromise core ideological aims in the pursuit of national integration. The state was effectively forced to choose and prioritise goals, with economic development by whatever means considered to be more important than the ideals of legal equality, wage labour or the enactment of free contracts. This sheds light on the relationship between race and class and demonstrates that the operation of race was not just ideological, but also influenced by material factors, with racial ideas informed by political and economic relations and their associated labour systems.

Conclusion: the state and the racialisation of the Liberal nation-building project

Race, nation-building and state-formation, then, were intimately entwined, and the influence of these categories and ideas operated in multiple directions. Nationalist prerogatives changed the meaning of racial classifications and affected the way ethnic categories were imagined. These ideas were enacted through state policy and contested by subalterns through engagement with state discourse and legislation.

This link can be seen most strikingly in the way in which state policy helped to create the differences in how black and indigenous groups experienced the nation-building project. Both groups were seen by elites as problematic minorities threatening the project of national homogeneity. Both were at the bottom of a ladder which represented parallel hierarchies of education, civilisation and race. Both were seen as the objects of a progressive, modernising process of whitening the nation. Yet the divergence in the way in which the two groups were 'othered' was arguably even more important. While elites accepted Indianness as a key part of national identity, and Indians as part of the national population, there was no such willingness to incorporate blacks. In part the dissimilarities in black and indigenous experiences of liberalism and nation-building can be attributed to the different legal and ideological categorisation of the two groups. Despite the conceptual opposition of liberalism to different categories of citizen, the colonial construction 'Indian' possessed an enduring power, and was actively reconstructed by Liberal statesmen and intellectuals. Blacks were not imagined in this way, and this made their exclusion from state discourse much easier. However, the evidence presented here suggests that the conceptual situation of blacks was more complex than that articulated by Whitten and Wade, which holds that blacks were imagined simply as a non-distinct sector of the poor; that they were 'blended' into the masses, with this being the paradigm within which their simultaneous inclusion and exclusion should be theorised (Wade

1993; Whitten 1986). By looking at slightly earlier racial ideologies in the period immediately before mestizaje became an explicit discourse, it becomes clear that with regard to blacks' exclusion was always the much more dominant of the tendencies, and indeed that national inclusion was never meant to be extended to blacks. It was not that blacks were invisible because they were linguistically and culturally less distinctive than Indians: they had been seen as blacks, recognised as blacks and rejected as such. Their supposed invisibility was itself socially constructed and ideologically charged, and was played out through the institutions of the state.

The negation of Afro-Ecuadorian nationality centred around the denial of black potential. Citizenship was dependent on transformation, on redeemability, and blacks were not considered to possess such potential. However, the separation should not be seen in overly polarised terms of blacks versus Indians. Rather, the inclusion and exclusion of racially subordinate groups operated on a sliding scale, with definite parallels between the situation of blacks and Amazonian Indians, who were also largely excluded from the Liberal rhetoric of citizenship and inclusion on the basis of their alleged savagery. In other words, there were multiple and shifting hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. Liberal nationalist rhetoric was directed towards shaping the inclusion of a particular kind of racial subaltern, one that possessed the qualities and capacities considered to be consistent with the acquisition of national citizenship, and it was to these 'model' subalterns that state policy was directed.

The findings presented here suggest a new path towards the conceptualisation of the relationship between state, ethnicity and nation. While those who analyse the role of the state in nation-building usually emphasise a political version of nationalism, this study has shown that in the case of Liberal Ecuador, the state also contributed to a racialised nationalism. By taking the state as a central site of investigation then, the relationship between race and nationalism comes into much clearer focus. However, in order for our understanding of the relationships between these categories to be fully advanced, a reformulation of the meaning of the state is required which takes account of the different levels and layers at which it operated. In recent years our sense of what society is, and of the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups, has become significantly more complex, yet this complexity has not fed into a truly revived sense of what constitutes the state, nor of the process of state formation. Despite a wave of theoretical revisionism, there is still a tendency to see the state a monolithic entity, a 'thing', even as the need for deconstruction and re-reading is proclaimed.

This study suggests the need to develop a more nuanced understanding of the state that integrates the structural and political components of the state with its ideas dimension, and that takes account of the different levels at which the state operates, the divergences between state capacities in its different arms, and the role of the state as a sphere within and against which competing enterprises such as the Catholic Church and foreign enterprises have contended for cultural and political power. Of course, the linkage of state and nation does not hold for

all times and all places, and there is a need to be careful of overstating the power of the state, and to avoid blurring the distinctions between state-building and the formation of nationalism. Yet it is significant that in Liberal Ecuador the areas of state strength (the monopolisation of debate and the projection of official discourse) and weakness (reliance on competitors for the implementation of core goals) were reflected in the fragmentary implementation of the nation-building project. The Liberal state was able to articulate an inclusionary vision of the nation which became a touchstone for elites and subordinates alike, but struggled to turn ideals of national integration and unity into reality. Looking at the relationship between race and nation through the locus of the state therefore provides a framework for overcoming the analytical separation that has hindered an understanding of the interactions of these three concepts, and for seeing state-development, racial ideas and national identity as interlocking relationships, mediated through one another.

Notes

1 'Nacionalidad and Cuidadana' in Leonidas Plaza Galo, Mensaje Presidencial 1903, *Mensajes e Informes, 1903,* ABFL.

2 *El Grito del Pueblo,* Guayaquil, 6 de Noviembre, 1900; *El Grito del Pueblo,* 10 de Diciembre, 1900.

3 Informe del Señor Intendente General de Policía, Provincia de Pichincha, 10 May 1901, in Informes de los Gobernadores al Ministro de lo Interior, 1901, *Mensajes e Informes 1901*, ABFL.

4 *El Grito del Pueblo,* 9 de Diciembre de 1900.

5 It is ironic that the demonisation of blacks was perhaps even stronger among the Cayapa than it was among white officials and missionaries described above. The Cayapa referred to Afro-Ecuadorians as *juyungo,* howler monkey or devil, a result of rivalry emerging from competition for land, in which the Cayapa accused blacks of resorting to witchcraft to 'spoil' their land – an interesting parallel with white views of the Chinese who were believed to get ahead through using an unfair advantage. Blacks were seen as barbaric and even cannibalistic – Cayapa folk-stories tell of blacks feasting on Cayapa bones, and Cayapa tribes would shout '*Comecayapas*' ('Cayapa-eater') whenever blacks approached. There was also a gendered dynamic to these tensions: hostilities centred around indigenous fears of black men raping Cayapa women (Ortiz 1943).

6 Luis Tello, Informe del Gobernador de Esmeraldas al Ministro de lo Interior y Policia, Julio 18 de 1903, *Mensajes e Informes, 1903*, ABFL.

7 Contained in Lawrence to FO, 2 April 1896, in FO 25/81.

8 *Convencion Nacional, 1896–97,* ABFL.

9 Ley de Reclutas y Reemplazos, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Cultos, Justicia etc., 1903 *Mensajes e Informes 1903,* ABFL. Código Militar, 1905, *Mensajes e Informes 1905,* ABFL. *El Comercio,* Quito, 10 de marzo 1925.

10 Mary Kay Vaughn has argued that this also occurred in Revolutionary Mexico; however, she emphasises that this was achieved through the homogenisation of categories of class and ethnicity (Vaughn 1996). As will be argued below, this was not the case in Ecuador, where educators and elites maintained a conceptual and policy distinction between mestizo peasantries and indigenous peoples.

11 This political and economic neglect has strong parallels with the experiences of black provinces on the Atlantic Coast of Central America.

12 Dirección de Estudios de la Provincia de Esmeraldas al Ministro de Instrucción Publica, Esmeraldas, Junio 27 de 1907. *Mensjaes e Informes, 1907*, ABFL.

13 Dirección de Estudios de la Provincia de Esmeraldas al Ministro de Instrucción Publica, Esmeraldas, Mayo 25 de 1917. Anexos al Informe del Ministro de Instrucción Publica 1917. *Mensajes e Informes, 1917*, ABFL.

14 Informe del Gobernador del Oriente al Ministro de Instrucción Publica 1917, Informe del Ministerio de Instrucción Publica al Congreso Ordinario de 1917*, Mensajes e Informes, 1917*, ABFL.
15 See for example the strike at the Playa del Oro Gold Mine in Esmeraldas in 1902, and the 1935 strike at the Zamora mine (Foote 2004: 121–3).
16 Miguel A. Román, missionary, to General Eloy Alfaro, Rio Napo, Archivo Nacional Histórico, Sección Indígena, Caja 178, 1909. *El Comercio,* 19 de febrero 1909.
17 Jerome to FO, 14 May 1913. 'Slave dealing on the Napo', FO371/1736/26488.

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